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The 161st nine-day deer hunt closes, but heritage continues through stories

By: WDNR Weekly News story published November 27, 2012

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Wisconsin's deer hunting heritage lives and grows through the sharing of hunting stories. If each licensed hunter created one new story to share at camp this year, there are 633,460 new stories to pass along, with more than 243,000 of them ending with the harvest of a deer. This year's preliminary tally indicates 243,739 deer were registered by gun deer hunters between November 17 and 26.

"It's great to see the level of hunter participation that we do in Wisconsin, and equally as great to see that more hunters had success than last year," said **Kevin Wallenfang**, big game ecologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. "I've talked to several hunters that saw more deer than in past years in much of the state but also to some who saw less. So there are areas where deer observations were low, as we knew there would be. This sort of feedback, along with the harvest numbers, is important as we continue to work with hunters to best manage deer populations in the state."



The lack of snow this hunting season didn't keep hunters from taking to the outdoors. DNR Photo

The preliminary nine-day harvest numbers are collected through a call-around survey of 600-plus deer registration stations all across Wisconsin and likely will increase when all registration tags are officially counted. This year's preliminary harvest totals are up 7.7 percent from 2011. The preliminary tally showed hunters harvested 114,822 bucks and 128,917 antlerless deer. This compared to 2011 preliminary harvest figures of 102,837 bucks and 123,423 antlerless, for a 12 percent and 4 percent increase respectively.

A breakdown of the [harvest](#) by DNR region and county is available in portable document format (pdf) on the DNR website.

"Once again Wisconsin was the deer hunting destination for hundreds of thousands of hunters. Hunting is about family, friends, fun and tradition. More than 600,000 people were out connecting with the land, and in doing so renewed their commitment to sustaining our natural resources for generations to come," said DNR Secretary **Cathy Stepp**.

Of the total number of licenses purchased this year, nearly 29,000 were First Time Buyer licenses. New female hunters represented 33 percent of this total, and another 33 percent of first time buyers were youth, ages 17 and under. Additionally, 80 First Time Buyer licenses were sold to hunters 80 and older.

"Seeing so many new buyers, along with some returning or new hunters over the age of 80, illustrates how deep our deer hunting heritage runs," said Sec. Stepp. "Getting women and youth involved in hunting is essential for continuing our state's hunting heritage. When women and moms are involved, the family follows."

Late seasons now open

There are additional opportunities to hunt deer in Wisconsin after the close of the nine-day season. The muzzleloader season is currently open through Dec. 5. The late archery season is also underway and continues until Jan. 6, 2013. There is also a statewide antlerless hunt Dec. 6-9, and a holiday hunt in the [Chronic Wasting Disease \(CWD\)](#) zones of south central Wisconsin, which starts Dec. 24 and runs until Jan. 6, 2013.

Please visit dnr.wi.gov and search keyword "[deer](#)" for more information on season dates and regulations.

Shooting incidents below average, but one fatality in 2012

This year, seven shooting related incidents were reported, one was fatal.

"Our sincere condolences go to the family and friends of the fatally injured hunter. Any shooting-related fatality -- or injury for that matter -- is one too many," said Conservation Warden **Jon King**, Hunter Education administrator. Overall, however, hunter safety has increased over the years, said King. Total reported incidents for 2012 are below the 10 year average, which was nine.

"Statistically we have continued our safe hunting tradition. But for me to truly consider a deer season a hundred percent successful, all hunters would have returned home unharmed," said Sec. Stepp. "And that's a goal we all should continue to strive for."

More than 25,000 students complete the hunter's safety program every year, thanks to the work of more than 3,800 volunteer hunter education instructors. Wisconsin marked its one-millionth graduate in 2012. Before the hunter education course started, hunter fatalities during the season commonly ran into double digits. "As always, we want to remind hunters participating in the remaining seasons to remember and follow the four rules of firearm safety or TAB-K," said King. "Treat any firearm as if it is loaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction, be certain of your target and what's beyond, and keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot."

Hunters asked to participate in online Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey

The [Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey](#) is still active until the end of all deer seasons and wildlife managers are asking hunters to send in a report of what they saw during the just completed nine-day gun hunt and during any hunting trips they make through the end of all deer hunting seasons. This information provides valuable data biologists can use to help provide an additional human element to the completed deer season.

Share deer stories online

Wisconsin's 161st nine-day gun deer season may be over, but sharing stories of the hunt keeps the memories going, and builds the anticipation for the 2013 deer season. In addition to sharing stories with family and friends, hunters can share their stories with more than 9,000 friends on the DNR's Facebook page. Photos have been posted throughout the season and can still be entered into the first DNR Facebook photo contest. The contest ends November 28. Until then, hunters and deer season enthusiasts can send in photos that represent the traditions of the nine-day deer season and vote for their favorite. Several videos capturing stories of the season can also be viewed on the DNR's YouTube channel. One [video](#) highlights deer tales from hunters this season.

People can join the DNR's [Facebook](#) conversation. A suite of deer hunting videos can be watched on DNR's [YouTube](#) channel.

Additional information on the 2012 deer season, and continuing deer hunting opportunities, can be found by visiting [dnr.wi.gov](#), search keyword "deer."



Skorseth and Fleming recognized Wastewater Program employees

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At the November 8 Wastewater Program's statewide meeting in Wisconsin Rapids **Peter Skorseth** and **Kari Fleming** received nods as 2012 Wastewater Employees of the Year. Named district employee of the year, Wastewater Engineer Skorseth is stationed in the Baldwin. Fleming, who took home the central office award, is an environmental toxicologist in the permits section of the Bureau of Water Quality. Skorseth's nomination included testimonials from the facilities he regulates. Wastewater treatment plant operators' comments:



Supervisor Paul LaLiberte (right) joined Bureau Director Susan Sylvester in awarding Pete Skorseth the employee of the year award for field staff. DNR Photo

- "I have worked with Pete on many projects over the years and always come away more impressed with him the more I worked with him."

- “Pete’s positive attitude toward long-term preservation is obvious to the operators in the field. He has a way of expressing his concerns that people feel they need to do all they can to help. Many of us wish we could convey our passion as well as he does.”
- “Pete does a great job enforcing the DNR codes, and at the same time retains the respect of all the operators in the area. He does an excellent job promoting the DNR and the entire wastewater industry. Pete has helped many operators, including myself, to become the best operators that we can be. I truly feel Pete has had a very positive impact on everyone that he has dealt with.”
- “I feel Pete is reaching the pinnacle of professionalism and deserves to have his time in the spotlight.”

Nominators also lauded Fleming’s work

“Kari is very dedicated to helping coworkers and providing them the information they need,” said her supervisor **Mike Lemcke**. “Here’s a direct quote from her from an email to her coworkers, and I don’t think I could do a better job of describing her commitment to the program and fellow employees:”



Kari Fleming is flanked by her supervisor Mike Lemcke and Bureau of Water Quality Director Susan Sylvester. DNR Photo

“One of the many ‘hats’ that I wear is as the WET (whole effluent toxicity) program expert for the state. I believe that my job first and foremost is to help you do yours. This means that I get to do things like keep the WET guidance, rules, test methods, SWAMP (system for wastewater applications, monitoring and permits) tools and website up to date; assist with lab audits and enforcement cases; and provide advice to permittees, labs and DNR staff when toxicity problems occur. So any time that you have WET-related questions or problems, please feel free to call or email me.”

- “Kari was instrumental in representing the WPDES (Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit program during the development of the WARP (watershed assessment, restoration and protection) framework. Her membership on the Impaired Waters teams helped merge the WPDES program with the nonpoint program.”
- “She brings an exceptional level of professionalism to all her interactions with people and her follow-through on what she says she will do is always there. Kari is reliable and someone you can count on, which is why so many others look to her to participate in leadership assignments.”
- “Kari handles a complex variety of topics within the wastewater program and serves as an ‘expert’ in many areas. In each of these areas, Kari does a superb job and is always helpful to staff and the public. She works hard to make our jobs easier. She is an exemplary employee, and always produces a first-rate product. She totally deserves the “Outstanding Wastewater Employee Award!”



Hunters waiting until last minute to buy their licenses call it “tradition”

By: Susan Cook, Bureau of Customer Service and Outreach

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“Deer season.” No other time of the year generates the anticipation and excitement prior to opening day. It’s like its own holiday, when we do observe the “deer season eve.”



Customer Service Representative Lynn Erickson helped a customer with a license purchase at the Fitchburg service center Thursday morning. DNR Photo

That excitement is generated by our customers and DNR's customer service staff that rises to the occasion to get each one of them what they need, be it an answer to a regulation question, explanation of their tagging options, or even helping them find a place to hunt. The numbers are staggering:

- About 13,560 phone calls the week leading up to the opener, including a record 4,235 contacts Friday, November 16, the day before. Add to that number another 8,966 calls during the week of the hunt.
- From November 12 through the end of the hunt, the Call Center reached another 60,300 readers through the "Warden Wire," where some of the more unique Call Center questions and answers were posted for everyone to read. Thousands more visited the webpage as the hunt progressed.



Disabled hunter Richard Ferge purchased a replacement gun deer license from Lynn Erickson. Ferge hunts land in Richland County. DNR Photo

That's more than 87,000 public contacts in just 14 days, and that's not including the hundreds of customers who came to DNR service centers during that time to purchase their hunting licenses.

We've asked the hunters why they waited to buy their licenses, only to end up in line on the day before the hunt, and they tell us "It's tradition!" Yes, helping the same customers year after year, on the Friday before is part of that deer season holiday. So much so that on the Friday before the hunt begins, service centers' doors opened earlier and remained open later so we could be there for them.

So if customer service employees sounded a little hoarse, or appeared a bit disheveled, it is small wonder. This is what we in customer service live for, the hustle and bustle, the building excitement, and yes, even the chaos that comes with Wisconsin's deer season. It's tradition!

Footnote: Susan Cook is Chief of the Operations Section in the Bureau of Customer and Outreach Services.



Private or public? Pithy, punctual and purposeful

By: Joanne Haas, Office of Communication

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Forestry and wildlife team delivered fast and furious land access chat

The pitch, the swing and score after score when the team of six took over the chat room at noon on November 15, slamming through more than 80 rapid-fire land access questions from every conceivable direction.



(Left to right) Jim Warren, Ryan Marty, Meaghan Cibarich, Melissa Keenan, Janel Pike, Kathy Nelson and Alan Crossley staffed the chat this day. DNR Photo

It was Day Three of the four-day chat extravaganza leading up to the opening day of the statewide gun-deer hunt. The Tuesday kick-off featured "Women and Hunting," followed by Wednesday's "Big Game and Legal Eagle" crew. Hard acts to follow, no doubt, but the Thursday panel of experts who know everything about land access in the Managed Forest Law, Forest Crop Law, Voluntary Public Access and Public Lands programs were ready for anything. Representing the Division of Forestry were Public and Private Forestry Section Chief **Jim Warren**, Forest Tax Program and Policy Chief **Kathy Nelson** and GIS Program Manager **Janel Pike**. And in the room for the Division of Wildlife were Voluntary Public Access Program Coordinator **Melissa Keenan**, Rules and Regulations Assistant **Meaghan Cibarich** and Wildlife Biologist **Alan Crossley**, who filled the pithy prose quota. There was no down time for any of the members as questions were answered nearly as quickly as they popped up in the queue. Efficiency was their forte.

Tossed in among the questions about finding the public-access lands and then doing only the legal activities were others asking for advice about when to hunt, hunting from a canoe and how to best talk to a landowner. Nothing phased 'em – any of 'em.



Melissa Keenan made her point. DNR Photo

The pattern continued, with about 50 or so people online at a time during the 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. chat. And, **Ryan Marty** of the Office of Communication, who is the technical expert making sure the chats run smoothly from start to

finish, did his usual bang-up job with the polls. Thursday's polls were all about where people are hunting.

Question: What type of land do you hunt?

Answers: "Public," 59 percent; "Private," 41 percent.

Question: Of the private land that you hunt, what type of ownership is it?

Answers: "I own it," 13 percent; "Friends of family own it," 60 percent; "Open Managed Forest Law," 20 percent; "Forest Crop Law," none; "Voluntary Public Access," seven percent.

So good and so helpful was this team that the thanks came in, not only for the MFL mapping tool and other DNR maps, but for sharing their expertise.

"This is so helpful it answered a lot of my questions thank you!" And another good one: "Thanks for taking the time to do these open forums, they are very helpful. Hope to see more in the future."

And don't be surprised if you see some of the members of this crew running to take a chair in the chat room. Great job by all!

Footnote: *Joanne Haas is a public affairs manager working with the divisions of Forestry and Enforcement and Science,*



December issue of magazine suggests a different way of shooting, with a camera

By: Natasha Kassulke, Office of Communication

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The December issue of [Wisconsin Natural Resources](#) magazine challenges readers to get out and shoot, but with a camera this time, and participate in the DNR Office of the Great Lakes' Great Lakes photo contest.

"Get hooked!" casts an invitation to join in planning the future of the Driftless Area. This southwest part of the state has the highest concentration of trout waters in the Midwest. The DNR is updating its plans for the area and hosting open house meetings in 2013.



Learn to embrace Wisconsin winter by taking photos for the Great Lakes calendar. DNR Photo

"Lake Michigan's salmon fishery thrives" describes a stocking program that has been so successful that it needs adjustments. To make those adjustments, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and states, such as Wisconsin, have been actively tagging salmon to learn more about them.

Get into the holiday spirit with a look at Wisconsin's wreath-making industry and follow directions for making your own fragrant front door decoration.

Join an author in his interpretation of eagles playing aerial tag in "Eagle tag: musings about promiscuous play, or is

it something more?" Another author shares a new tradition--bow hunting on Christmas. Find out if he's successful. "Bow or gun?" This story asks several hunters why they grab what they do when they head to the woods. And find out what these hunters have in common.

"More than just luck of the draw" helps bear hunters understand Wisconsin's annual bear hunt permit process. "Little worms, big consequences" relays research showing that ground-nesting birds, such as the ovenbird and hermit thrush, may be silenced by invasive earthworms.

Looking for a last minute gift idea? If your answer is "yes," you'll need to check out "Good winter reads and gifts," which offers a little something for everyone from books to calendars and a gift subscription to **Wisconsin Natural Resources** magazine.

Gypsies take center stage when "Creature Comforts" visits a Gypsy Vanner horse stable. The "Wisconsin Traveler" will help you embrace the season of snow.

Consider the magazine as a thoughtful and inexpensive gift this holiday season and throughout the year!

Footnote: *Natasha Kassulke is the editor of the **Wisconsin Natural Resources** magazine.*



Hurry to get in Partners in Giving pledges and bid on Bo Ryan basketball

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Tomorrow, November 30, is the last day to submit your Partners in Giving pledge. It's also the last day to bid on a Bo Ryan autographed basketball donated by the University of Wisconsin Athletic Department. Place your bid by coming up to the eighth floor reception area by 3 p.m. SHARP on Friday. South Central Region staff can email your bids to [Hilary Bauman](#).

Donations for the week of November 19-23 came to \$4,422, bringing the total to date to \$64,600.

Campaign coordinator Tim Lawhern thanked those who donated additional drawing prizes. Drawings will be done for the last week of the campaign until all prizes are gone. Prizes left include:

- 6-pack craft beer
- Stainless tumbler
- DNR reusable grocery bag
- (4) 3-D pet frames
- Badger bag
- \$15 Scentsy gift certificate
- Hand-knit stocking cap and scarf in bright colors
- \$15 Grace Adele gift certificate
- Scentsy plug-in warmer and Scentsy bar



Around the state...DNR employees shine

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Central office success stories

• **Melissa Keenan**, Wildlife biologist for the Bureau of Wildlife Management at the Central Office in Madison received this thank you from a hunter: "I wanted to thank you for the VPA (Voluntary Public Access) program. I have hunted the Richland Co., Town of Forest, V1 property 3 to 4 times for deer and I was very excited to see VPA land by my home near Burlington, WI. I recently started coon and coyote trapping and land access can be very hard to find. I am so excited to access these places for fishing, turkey, deer, and trapping. I hope the program is a success, and I hope people respect the land owner's property. Last year I contacted a warden for misuse of a VPA property. An irresponsible hunter was shooting at deer from a VPA property but the deer were 300 yards over on private property and in the front yard to a house! I hope a majority of users of these lands don't pull this garbage because people will stop making land available to responsible users.

"Thank you again. This program makes my many years-worth of Patrons license purchases all that much more valuable. I find incredible value in this program." *Matthew Snorek, Burlington*

• Email sent to **Bureau of Law Enforcement** in response to news release on new sunrise/sunset application that tells hunters when they can begin/stop hunting based on the season and their location: "This is really cool, and a really good idea." *Neil Johnson,*

reporter, *The Gazette*

• “**Paul (Heinen)**, DNR policy initiatives advisor), please permit me, one more time, to extend my deep gratitude to you. Thank you for helping my family and me get Elmer Hall recognition on the walls of the Natural Resources Board room at DNR.

“It is a nice story for us to have. Your help and generosity surprises me in no way, given your cheerful approach in both DNR and the legislature. However, it is special enough to note that this will remain with me for years to come.

“As my Father regaled in stories about Elmer, rest assured I will be retelling a story someday about how Paul Heinen, my friend and colleague in government, helped Elmer get his due. Thank you, Paul. Sincerely, *Tim Gary*”

Editor’s note: Read about Elmer Hall’s life in the November 1 “MyDNR Digest” story [“First conservation commissioner’s portrait now hangs in GEF 2.”](#)

Northeast Region success stories

• “Thank you to **everyone who participated in the 2012 Fall Hardwood Marking effort on the Marinette County Forest**. Some of you travelled a long distance and all of you have plenty of other work you are trying to accomplish. And let’s not forget the wildlife folks who jumped in to help the foresters! We ended up marking about 680 acres and will start pecking away at an additional 82 acre job this week. And finally, special thanks to Marinette County who provided the food for our lunch on two days. Hot food is always appreciated.” *Dan Mertz, forester*

• **Shelley Wrzochalski** (forester): “THANK YOU so much for unloading the tires off my trailer. I was totally not expecting to find it unloaded when I went outside and it was a very nice surprise on a busy day. GREAT to have such wonderful co-workers that I do not even know, working for the DNR! By the way....the tires came from Peninsula State Park. Thanks again for your kind act.” *Kelli Bruns, park supervisor*

• **Mike Donofrio and Northeast Region fisheries staff:** “Thank you for all the good work you and your staff have done the past 10 years, since you have been at Peshtigo. I hear good things about the High Falls being allowed to run all summer over the old falls (about 10% of the Peshtigo must flow here instead of through the hydro). Our cabin is 1/2 mile from the falls but we can hear it on a calm evening. Our neighbor commented last summer how nice that has and people are stopping take photos all the time. Keep up the good work!” *Lee Meyers*

• **Mike Baumgartner** (Besadny Fish Station): “I wanted to thank you again for coming last night! You gave an excellent presentation on what’s going on at your facility! I hope the program continues and please let us know if there is anything we can do to help out in the future!! Thanks Again!” *Craig Uhlenbrauck*

• Wildlife Supervisor **Jeff Pritzl** shared with **staff of the Wildlife Management Program** a [letter](#) that he and Conservation Warden **Bob Stroess** received, along with a kudo of his own: “I’d like to share with you the sentiments of one hunter and his family. As a gesture of appreciation he shared with me a copy of the journal he has kept of his deer hunting exploits since 1975. His point is made in this cover letter.

“You all have folks that feel this way in your area. They just might not think of a good way to express it like this. *Jeff Pritzl, Northeast District Wildlife Supervisor*

• “While deer hunting at Hartman Creek State Park, I received considerable assistance from a wonderful young man and park ranger named **Fred (Viste)**, assistant property manager) when looking for blood of a wounded deer. He was extremely nice, polite, and helpful and a credit to the state park division of the DNR. I appreciate service above and beyond the call of duty and Fred certainly did that. Thank you.”

• Ensuring the Safety of our Hunters /Marinette County: The following message was sent to the DNR website: “We have been having problems with a reckless group of hunters in our area and wanted to praise Warden **Matt Meade** for effectively resolving the situation and bringing back order to the woods in our area. Great work by the DNR warden in Marinette County!” *Carrie Alloy/Crivitz*

Southeast Region success stories

• Mr. **(John) Hnat** (Remediation & Redevelopment hydrogeologist): “Less than a month ago I asked for your response, including some specific determinations that were not standard and required legal review. I was pleasantly surprised to return from the weekend to find your response letter. Thank you for dealing with the matter so quickly! Your rapid action and attention to the detail will allow my client to deal with his business issues in a very timely fashion!

“You have provided my client with several things to be thankful for, and I hope you also enjoy a Happy Thanksgiving. Best Regards, *Bill Scott, Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan LLP, Milwaukee*

John added: “This should include Pam **(Mylotta)**, **Lacey (Cochart)**, and **Terry (Evanson)** who aided in the final product on the two legal questions.”

• Congratulations to Hydrogeologist **James Delwiche**, Hydrogeologist **Andrew Boettcher** and Hydrogeologist **David Volkert** from *Mark Borucki*, instructor in Geosciences at the University of Wisconsin- Parkside: “This semester, I am introducing geology students here at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside to the challenges of environmental investigation. As a former long-time environmental consultant, I understand the relationship between possessing a strong working knowledge of environmental regulations to successfully completing a site investigation. As such, one of my goals is to make our students familiar with Wisconsin’s

environmental regulations and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (WDNR) role in the site investigation/closure process. As such, I made a request to the WDNR for a guest speaker to explain your policies and the BRRTS database system. I was very pleased to hear that three of your project managers, James Delwiche, Andrew Boettcher, and David Volkert, would present to the class! Jim's, Andy's, and David's presentations were comprehensive and appropriate to the audience. In addition, their talks stirred great interest from the students and the University staff that attended. I greatly appreciate the WDNR's ready willingness to assist in the education of our students. In particular, I commend Jim, Andy, and David for a job well done."

- Congratulations to Real Estate Specialist **Jim Jackley** for his generous donation of 100+ pounds of squash to United Way of Greater Milwaukee: "Jim generously donated 100+ pounds of a variety of different types of squash on November 2 to the United Way of Greater Milwaukee. They were very excited to receive so much fresh food for their Thanksgiving food drive. They immediately started calling their contacts at shelters, groups and food pantries. They found two good homes for the squash: Centro Hispano Milwaukee-Council of the Spanish Speaking and the Grand Avenue Club, a community in Milwaukee for adults who have experienced mental illness. Executive director of the Grand Ave Club Dr. Rachel Forman responds in an email to United Way: "Wonderful! We could use the squash for soup (we serve soup every day to 50 people at lunch); muffins for breakfast; a cooking demo to encourage people to cook veggies; a vegetable at lunch; Thanksgiving pies (squash endure well). We will take as much as you are willing to give us." They also sent a personalized thank you note and a really fun link to play the squash game.

- **Marcus (Smith)**, regional public affairs manager, I just wanted to thank you again for putting together a whirlwind Milwaukee media tour for Cathy going into opening weekend. Thanks!" **Bill Cosh**, DNR spokesperson

"Yes. Great work Marcus." **Matt Moroney**, deputy secretary

Statewide success stories

- A news release stated on November 21: "The federal district court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin—Green Bay Division today rejected a challenge to DNR and EPA decisions on the methods to be used for cleanup of PCB contaminated sediments in the Fox River." An assistant attorney general with the Wisconsin Department of Justice subsequently wrote: "THIS IS A MAJOR WIN....and it is largely due to all of the good work **WDNR** has done for the past 20 years. The court sees no need to question your efforts further, and has found the remedy sound.

"This substantially changes the trial...it is basically all about divisibility now! Congrats...." *Cynthia Hirsch, assistant attorney general, Wisconsin Department of Justice*

Read the entire release at ["Federal Court rejects industry challenge to Fox River cleanup decisions."](#) For the court's decision, go to ["USA and State of Wisconsin vs. NCR Corp. and Appleton Papers Inc."](#)

- Shared by the **DNR Call Center**: "I just want to say how impressed I am with the improvements to communication that the Wi DNR has implemented. I have been on the email list and getting the MFL website up is a huge help. In the past, all of (that) had to be obtained from Plat books which are expensive and only occasionally updated. Hunters need to know that there is land available to hunt and this will help tremendously. I have been reading all of the communication in the local newspapers and it is great to know what is going on. Feel more confident on going into the woods with the knowledge that has been communicated. Keep up the good work, this is the best it's ever been. Thanks to the Governor and DNR Secretary!

- From Northeast Region Warden **Steve Daye**: "Impressive, hardworking, dedicated - WOW! The words I would use to describe the (**Hotline Customer Service**) staff that I worked with this past opening weekend of deer season. This was my 26th deer season and while my duties have changed from being on the frontline as a field warden in Vilas & Marinette counties for most of my career to those of Special Operations Investigations for the most recent few years, this year I found myself assisting the hotline staff – and not because of light duty or disciplinary reasons! See my above words again. Your staff was high energy, enthusiastic, enlightening and most of all, knowledgeable of all resource laws. They carried a heavy workload with hotline calls (most of which require the utmost patience) and info calls. Always busy doing something. The atmosphere of team work, helping others and the occasional chatter & commentary made the time go by fast. They were able to dumb it down for me and gave me some slack. As I have told the wardens, it is an experience that like the State Fair, you should do once in your career to gain a full appreciation and understanding of the world we live & work in and people we serve."

- From *Administrative Warden Tom Van Haren*: "I thought it (Madison Call Center assistance) went well. This year I focused most of my time answering the information line calls and even responding to some chats, and let Steve Daye focus his assistance on the hotline calls. I found for me, I was able to take a lot of public questions and was more available to your staff who needed a quick answer to a question they had not received before and were not quite sure how to answer. I am very impressed with the overall knowledge on your staff on such a wide range of topics and their ability to respond to all the public's questions while also handling hotline calls, and assisting the public and license agents with license and hunter education certification record issues."

- Wastewater Engineer **Tom Ponty**, West Central Region, wrote Fisheries Management Director **Mike Staggs** a [letter](#) of praise for the condition of Wisconsin's trout streams, waters and environment. Included in his message was mention of a friend from Maine who, after fishing Wisconsin waters, declared them better than those in his home state.

- "The following was sent in a letter to Chief Warden **Randy Stark**: "I would like to take a moment to thank you for your **agency's contribution** in making the recent Oconto County drug trafficking organization (DTO) investigation a resounding success. Your

efforts helped to ensure that our National Forest lands will continue to be safe for the use and enjoyment of the public for which we serve. The solid execution of this operation was due in large part to the assistance provided by the Wisconsin DNR. Your staff's efforts made an overwhelming impact on the success of the operation. You should be proud of their accomplishments. I would like to specifically recognize Warden Supervisor **Ben Tremi** and Warden **Joe Paul** for their outstanding contributions as part of this multi-agency team. This group consisted of professionals from Federal, State, and Local law enforcement agencies, all working seamlessly to provide the level of expertise that an operation of this magnitude requires. These individuals along with the many others who assisted should be commended for the leadership and professionalism they displayed while representing the Wisconsin DNR. As we continue to fight the ever growing threat posed by these well organized, funded, and dangerous DTO's, I appreciate your staff's efforts that permit us to forge this path to even greater accomplishments. Please thank them once again for their efforts, and for their continued service to the protection of our Nation's public lands." *Sincerely, Mary V. King, Special Agent in Charge, US Forest Service*

- Received in the Call Center: "I just wanted to comment to you in general that I really like the work that the **DNR** is doing to improve communication with the sportsmen and women in Wisconsin. The DNR has had a long history of negative perception, and the work that is being done is going a long way to improve that image. LISTENING to the hunting community and providing updates on a regular basis will pay big dividends in the short and long term. Keep up the great efforts!!" *Pete Koenig Fall Creek, Wisconsin*
- Deputy Secretary **Matt Moroney's** reaction to hearing the news from Office of Communication Director **Laurel Steffes** that DNR's Facebook now has over 9,085 friends: "Congratulations all. Big accomplishment! Any bets when we go over 10K?"

West Central Region success stories

- **Jon (Robaidek, wildlife biologist)**: "I just had a conversation with **Kris Wimme** (forester) and he passed along some kind words about you that I wanted to share. He was very appreciative of you coming in this morning on your day off and on the eve of the deer season to sign some timber sale forms. Thank you for your constant dedication to the wildlife program. Though it sometimes goes unspoken, your extra efforts are very much appreciated by all within WM program, the other programs you work with within our agency and the people you work with outside the agency. Keep up the good work and best of luck hunting!" *Kris Johansen, area wildlife supervisor*
- Secretary **Cathy Stepp** received this [letter](#) from the *Conservation & Efficiency Coordinator and Natural Resources Day Facilitator* expressing his gratitude for the efforts of Fisheries Biologist **Marty Engel** and the **Baldwin fisheries crew** with the Leadership River Falls Class of 2012.



Watch for your Annual Statement of Benefits in your home mailbox

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The Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) has begun sending out individual employee Annual Statements of Benefits. These statements normally are available each spring, but preparation was slowed by 2011 law changes. All employees with Wisconsin Retirement System contribution balances as of December 31, 2011 will receive a statement. The statement includes such information as earnings and service, contributions, interest applied, separation and death benefit amounts, beneficiary information and retirement projections.

ETF will mail statements to state employees, using home addresses on file.

For more information, go to ETF's "[Statement of Benefits Distribution Underway](#)" webpage. You'll also find a Mediasite [video](#) featuring an ETF trust funds specialist's explaining the information contained in each section of a member's Annual Statement of Benefits. The video is divided into "chapters" for quick and easy access to the topics of your choice. When you're done with the video, take a few minutes to give ETF feedback on the presentation via a short poll.



Aerial forest fire surveillance improves with additional FLIR equipment

By: John Jorgensen, Bureau of Forest Protection

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The Bureau of Forest Protection has installed a second Forward Looking Infrared Radar (FLIR) system, now operational on one of DNR's Cessna 182 aircraft based in Rhinelander. The department installed the first FLIR unit in 2011, in the Cessna 337 Skymaster that is based either in Oshkosh or Madison. These aircraft are statewide assets available where and when needed.



The FLIR unit is mounted under a rotating bezel on the outside of DNR's Cessna 182, allowing for movement in all directions. When stowed, the camera lens rotates upward, protecting it from damage. DNR Photo

DNR pilots and representatives from DNR's warden service, the Department of Criminal Investigation and the State Patrol have been trained in the use of the FLIR equipment. Training included classroom, ground and flight instruction using the FLIR in both planes. Two additional training sessions, one for DNR pilots was held in Siren on November 7, and a second session for pilots and tactical flight officers (TFOs) is scheduled in Madison on December 18 and 19.

Funding of the majority of the cost of the cameras and associated hardware came from Port Security/Homeland Security Grants, with partner agencies providing the remaining funds.

DNR pilots and TFOs using this integrated system on a regular basis for search and locate assistance, fire control or other emergency requests helps to assure that they will be extremely proficient with the FLIR units and ready to respond to port security calls.

One of the great assets of using planes for fire control is that the pilot can see the big picture, while firefighters on the ground have difficulty seeing where the fire is going because of the smoke or a shift in the fires forward movement due to wind.

FLIR cameras use an imaging technology that senses infrared radiation, typically emitted from a heat source. The sensors detect infrared radiation to create a "picture" assembled for video output.

With the FLIR camera, firefighters battling a wildfire will have the benefit of seeing the bird's eye view of the fire in real time.

DNR's FLIR equipment transmits imagery in real time to firefighters on the ground. The downlink equipment transmits a digital signal from the FLIR to a handheld receiver on the ground. This allows those on the ground involved in the fire or other incident to see the same thing the flight officer is seeing. The FLIRs' downlink capability is a valuable asset for most every task it may be called upon to help with, whether it be a fire, search and rescue or other emergency.

The people and natural resources of Wisconsin will benefit from the addition of a second FLIR system to DNR's aerial surveillance capabilities.

Footnote: *John Jorgensen is the Aeronautics Team leader.*



Share your passion for the outdoors by leading a NRF field trip

By: Christine Tanzer, Natural Resources Foundation

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2013 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Natural Resources Foundation's vibrant Field Trip Program

If you have passion for Wisconsin's rich natural resources and want to share it with other engaged and interested people, the Natural Resources Foundation (NRF) has an opportunity for you to do just that.



Retired DNR Wildlife Biologist Bruce Bacon held an eagle during the June 2012 field trip "Eagle Banding & Pontoon Tour: Turtle Flambeau Flowage" in Iron County. Natural Resources Foundation Photo

More than 2,800 people annually join us in the field to learn about the wonders of Wisconsin's lands, waters and wildlife. They receive the added bonus of connecting with DNR personnel like you. We're hoping to engage even more people in 2013, and would appreciate your help doing that by leading a field trip.

To celebrate this 20th anniversary of the Field Trip Program, we'd like to have an exciting line-up of trips all over the Wisconsin map. We'll offer our usual core slate of trips geared toward adult life-long learners, who are our primary participants, and also continue our initiative "Connecting Generations to Conservation." To get more children to an outdoor outing, we want to offer trips geared toward parents, grandparents, or other adults who'll attend a field trip with their children. Let's start planting the seed for the next generation of natural resource professionals! .

To continue our celebration of the Wisconsin Bird Protection Fund & State Natural Areas Campaigns, we especially welcome trips that highlight birds or SNA properties.

Here's where you come in

The Foundation is looking for new field trips. We'd love to hear your great idea(s) for trips that you can lead to get citizens and visitors out in the field to experience our state's natural resources in a unique and profound way.

Leading a field trip is a great way for you to engage the public in learning about the natural resources and projects that you're so passionate about, and knowledgeable of, given your professional and personal experiences. A trip can be about any subject/property/resource that would make a solid two-to-three hour field experience.



DNR La Crosse/Mississippi River work unit employees demonstrated electroshocking of fish in Bohemian Valley, Vernon County. Fisheries Biologist Jordan Weeks led the crew consisting of James Webster (former DNR employee), Fisheries Technician Kevin Mauel and Beth Stuhr (former DNR employee). Photo taken by Dave Vetrano, retired DNR fisheries employee. Natural Resources Foundation Photo

To get you started, just complete the online ["2013 NRF Field Trip Leaders"](#) survey in no time at all. If you need trip format suggestions and guidelines, click on "YES--I'd like to see trip-leading guidelines & program info" to temporarily leave the form.

If you're going to lead more than one trip, go back to the [link](#) for the survey and complete the form for each trip. The deadline for submitting an online survey to lead a field trip is Wednesday, December 12. You don't have to have ALL the details worked out right now, but the more information you can provide us via the form, the less we'll have to bug you later.

You will be rewarded...

To show our appreciation for your help next year, we'll provide field trip leaders a Natural Resources Foundation membership/renewal and a snazzy t-shirt new for 2013.

I'd also appreciate it if you would pass the word along to anyone who you believe would be an excellent leader for one of our field trips. If you have questions regarding NRF's field trips, email me [Christine Tanzer](#) or call me at 608-264-8548. I'll be out of the office between November 30 and December 11. In my absence, Communications Director Maria Sadowski will review my emails, and you may call her at 608-261-4392 for further information.

Footnote: *Christine Tanzer is the field trip coordinator for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.*



Help assure "Digest" continuity by using dedicated inbox for contributions

By: Diane Brinson, Office of Communication

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There's nothing I like to see more than contributions from readers of stories, photos, kudos or ideas for "MyDNR Digest." You can help assure that the six-year record for not missing a single issue continues by using the dedicated "Digest" inbox.

Just type "DNR My Digest" on the "To" line on your email, and I—or my backup--will find your message. Because "MyDNR Digest" is a departmentwide newsletter, a general mail account is appropriate. Then, if for some reason I'm unable to meet an upcoming "Digest" deadline, another member of the Office of Communication staff can go into this mailbox and retrieve messages regarding items for an upcoming issue.

I'd appreciate your cooperation in assuring that "MyDNR Digest" doesn't skip a beat.

Footnote: *Diane Brinson is editor of "MyDNR Digest."*



DNR partners with Wisconsin communities to protect homes from wildfire

By: Amy Luebke, West Central Region

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The Division of Forestry has identified 574 communities in Wisconsin that are at risk of damage from wildfires. DNR partners with interested communities to plan and implement projects to better prepare them for wildfire. These projects might involve reducing hazardous fuels (flammable vegetation types or dead trees and brush), reducing structural ignitability, education and outreach, firefighting capability and/or community readiness.



Brookhaven's Firewise project removed tree debris, lessening the danger that wildfire will threaten or destroy nearby buildings. DNR Photo

October was a busy month for reducing the amount of dead trees and brush because many of our partners in high risk oak-pine landscapes wait until after October 1 to ensure that the cutting of oaks won't lead to the spread of oak wilt. DNR had awarded State Fire Assistance funds to the towns of Rome (Adams County) and Grand Rapids (Wood County), both designated as very high risk for wildfire, for projects done last month.

In early October, Brookhaven Estates, a recognized Firewise Community, conducted its [Firewise](#) project by removing dead trees and brush from about one acre of commonly-owned property. Brookhaven Estates is a community of 50 homes on wooded lots which are surrounded by 10 acres of commonly owned properties which have buildups of dead and dying trees near homes.

Curbside brush pick-up is another type of Firewise project. The Town of Rome implemented a project from its Community Wildfire Protection Plan, when on October 15 they started their curbside brush pick-up project. With 22 percent of the properties in the project area participating, over took two weeks the town delivered brush to its transfer site, where a local company will chip and sell it for boiler fuel.

These are just two examples of projects valuable both to DNR and local communities. Because there's less fuel to burn, fires will be dramatically less intense and easier to contain and suppress. In turn, it will be easier to protect homes and create a safer work environment for our forestry personnel

Footnote: *A forester in the Fire and Law Enforcement Section, Amy Luebke is a Wildland-Urban Interface Specialist stationed in Wisconsin Rapids.*



Links of interest...don't miss them

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• **Title & link:** ["Wisconsin Plant Recovery Initiative—Two-year Report"](#)

Description: "The Wisconsin Plant Recovery Initiative: Stemming the tide of new brownfield properties," this report talks about the outcomes of DNR staff proactively responding to industrial and manufacturing facilities.

• **Title & link:** ["When to pull the trigger? Let DNR's new sunrise/sunset app be your guide"](#)

Description: This entry in the October 30 "DNR News" helps hunters through the aid of an Android phone application know the exact time to legally begin shooting and end shooting in their specific location during various hunting seasons.

- **Title & link:** ["Passing on tradition to new hunters keeping Wisconsin hunting heritage alive"](#)

Description: "Of the more than 600,000 licensed hunters taking to the field, about 25,700 were first time hunters, and more than 32 percent of those were female and 35 percent were youths age 17 and under, indicating Wisconsin's long tradition of deer hunting is being passed along to a new generation of hunters." Includes "2012 Opening Day Deer Season Telebriefing" MP3 recording.

- **Title & link:** ["DNR statement and Op-Ed: Tribes do not have authority to hunt deer at night in Ceded Territory"](#)

Description: This news release conveys "DNR Secretary **Cathy Stepp's** statement on confirmation GLIFWC has issued order allowing night hunting of deer in Ceded Territory." The secretary's comment specifically notes concerns that the tribes didn't notify the public early enough; circumvented the court's oversight of the and past rulings on night hunting; and public safety is at risk because of night hunting.

- **Titles & links:** ["Frequently Asked Questions-November 24, 2012"](#)

["Warden Wire"](#) Click the "Search" button at "Search all Warden Wire articles."

Description: Although the 2012 gun deer hunting season has ended, you might want to take a look at the interesting additional questions frequently asked (FAQs) of DNR Call Center staff during the season. FAQs appeared in the "Warden Wire" beginning on November 10. Find all installments of this hunting season's FAQs on the expanded "Warden Wire" webpage beginning with #35.

- **Title & link:** ["Wolf hunting and trapping"](#)

Description: This webpage provides a summary, so far, of the number of wolves taken by hunters and trappers since the season on wolves began on October 15.

- **Title & link:** Natural Resources Foundation's ["Wisconservation Update"](#) newsletter

Description: To learn the latest about the NRF's Foundation's field trips, grant opportunities and updates on projects across Wisconsin sign up for the monthly "Wisconservation Update," which is sent to more than 4,000 Foundation members, business, and nonprofit organizations. Simply email info@wisconservation.org or go to the ["Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin"](#) website and click the link to sign up.



Flickr photo feature for November: Let it snow, let it snow...

By: Carrie Morgan, Office of Communication

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Building a snow fort is a favorite winter pastime for Wisconsin kids. This one was built at Governor Nelson State Park. DNR Photo

This photo is for all you winter enthusiasts waiting for that big snow.

The [Flickr](#) collection contains photos of people outdoors in winter skiing, ice skating, ice fishing and snowmobiling. You may have a use for one of them. We're always looking for more photos of people playing in the snow or enjoying Wisconsin's winter wonderland. If you have some that you're willing to share, email them to me [Carrie Morgan](#).

Footnote: *Carrie Morgan is a DNR educator and Flickr administrator.*



The safety session chat that took the scenic route

By: Joanne Haas, Office of Communication

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Hold on to your keyboards: If you build it, these guys will market it.

When the Law Enforcement Safety Chat -- with a healthy side of wildlife info -- launched at 11:30 a.m. on November 16, it had the feel of a Friday. But, the relaxed steady rate the three wardens plus **Scott Loomans** of the Bureau of Wildlife Management's management systems section start at transformed into a first in the brief history of the DNR online chat: "the Speed Round."

Yes, Conservation Warden **Todd Schaller**, chief of Recreation Enforcement and Education Section, not only gave the chat's last blast a name, he offered it with a deadline. "The Speed Round has officially started. Five minutes to post your questions," Schaller directed at 1:26 p.m. Not only was it honored and the questions lined the queue, Schaller also blazed a second DNR chat trail by coloring the announcement red. Yes, a color. Note that use of flare and style, future chat leaders.



(Left to right) Tom Van Haren, Ryan Marty, Scott Loomans, Todd Schaller and Jon King handled the first Speed Round chat on how to assure a safe and successful hunt. DNR Photo

The speed and pick-up in the audience may have been bolstered from the Green Bay Press Gazette, WLUK/Fox 11 in Green Bay and Madison's popular news-talk radio station -- 1310 WIBA AM. All three tweeted its audiences that the law enforcement safety chat was live and active.

There were 142 participants on the chat that lasted two hours and 12 minutes and handled 59 questions. The general consensus in the chat room after more than two hours: "That went fast!"

Of course, there were safety questions which were handled skillfully by all, notably Hunter Education Administrator/Conservation Warden **Jon King** and Conservation Warden **Tom Van Haren**, the bureau's policy officer who can recite policies and regulations upon command, without missing a beat, while performing another task.

The four rules of firearm safety came up, along with where target shooting is allowed, and what about that blaze orange? Loomans did his share of heavy lifting, providing a round-up of new regulations, buckshot restrictions, and even a bit of insight into who was responding to the participants, and more.

The questions didn't stop with safety and regulations, either. One questioner asked if anyone online processes their own venison. From Schaller: "I usually process my deer to the roast and steak point. I take my scraps to a processor to be ground (for) burger or to make sausage." And from Loomans: "My family processes our own. We do steaks and roast and the rest becomes burger or goes into the locker to be made into sausage, brats and hotsticks." The benefit to the participants of such comments is it tells them these are real people tapping out answers. And, there were other questions that had more to do with the people online than the subject matter. That's the definition of a connection. Questions such as: "What's the best story you have from your time as a warden?" "Any interesting busts?" Schaller's reply: "Being a conservation warden is an awesome career. Some of the best memories involve introducing new hunters/anglers, helping someone in need, and the great people you meet and work with. We do get involved with some interesting situations. Check out Warden Wire to read about all the different things wardens get involved with and some "interesting busts." And, he provided the link to

That piqued questioner Phil's interest, and he followed-up: "When is the next warden recruitment class? How many recruits?" Schaller referred Phil and the others to the warden recruitment webpage "[Conservation warden: working the outdoor beat is a great, tough job,](#)" adding that there will be wardens hired in 2013. Ka-ching! It's a warden candidate.

The team of four also racked up points by directing people to: the Managed Forest Law map; the new DNR Sunrise-Sunset app; the first-time license buyer program; using the always-helpful Call Center and Hotline; and the new DNR safety page for the deer hunt season. And, if you read the transcript for "[Safe and legal, the keys to a successful hunt,](#)" you can pick out some of the Schaller answers strategically splashed in red.

And there was humor, of course. When one question asked where the wardens will be on opening day, Schaller answered: "Behind every tree, bush and rock. If in doubt, turn around."

The chat also got its share of thanks, like this one: "Thank you very much for doing this! This is great information and a great way to get our questions answered!"

Ryan Marty of the Office of Communication, who dedicates a lot of his time to serving as the master of the technical bridge for all the chats, took care of the polls. And he had some good ones this day, as always.

Question: Have you bought your license yet?

Answers: "Yes," 60 percent; "No," 40 percent

Question: What gender are you?

Answers: "Male," 50 percent; "Female," 50 percent

Question: What is your age?

Answers: "20 and younger," 6 percent; "21 to 30," 17 percent; "31 to 40," 55 percent; "41 to 50," 6 percent; "51 to 60," 17 percent; and "60 and older," none.

Question: Do you plan on taking a new hunter this year?

Answers: "Yes," 14 percent; "No," 86 percent

This week's four chats were productive and successful, all connecting to a lot more people than the chat leaders "heard" from over the Internet connection. Let the transcript reading continue. You can find it all on the [DNR homepage](#), type in keywords "Ask the Experts."

Footnote: *Joanne Haas is a public affairs manager working with the divisions of Forestry and Enforcement and Science.*



Produced by: Department of Natural Resources, Office of Communication

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Document Retrieval Date: Friday, November 30, 2012 at 11:24:50 AM