

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

SUBJECT: Congress Matters: Wisconsin Conservation Congress 2014 Spring Hearing Advisory Questions

FOR: January 2014 Board meeting

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Rob Bohmann, Chair

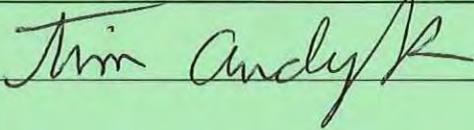
SUMMARY:

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress will present their 2014 advisory questions to the Natural Resource Board. These questions were approved by the WCC Executive Council at their January 10-11, 2014 meeting for inclusion on the spring hearing questionnaire and will be used to gauge public opinion on a variety of natural resource issues. The questions will be presented to the public for their input at the annual Department of Natural Resources Spring Hearing and Wisconsin Conservation Congress County Meeting held jointly in each county of the state on Monday, April 14, 2014.

RECOMMENDATION: Information only

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):

- Background memo
- 2014 WCC Spring Hearing Advisory Questions
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| Approved by | Signature | Date |
|-----------------------------|--|---------|
| Tim Andryk, Bureau Director |  | 1-13-14 |
| N/A, Administrator | | |
| Cathy Stepp, Secretary |  | 1/14/14 |

2014 WCC Spring Hearing Questions

Deer & Elk Study Committee

1. Provide additional deer registration process opportunities (680113)

Wisconsin currently limits deer registration to in-person registration at a DNR authorized registration station. This proposal would allow a hunter to register a deer in-person, phone in, or on-line. This change would allow a hunter to register a deer without the need to find an open registration station. This convenience is allowed in other Midwest states.

Do you support the additional deer registration opportunities to include in-person, phone in, or online?

2. White deer protection in CWD zones (570213)

It is illegal to harvest albino or white deer (which are white except for the hooves, tarsal glands, head or parts of the head) in Wisconsin, except in the CWD zone. Some people feel that because of their rarity and uniqueness they should be protected in the CWD zone also.

Do you support extending protection of white deer to the CWD zone?

Environmental Study Committee

3. Terrestrial invasive plants (440213)

Terrestrial invasive plants such as spotted knapweed and tansy can be found in private and public bulk soil supplies (gravel pits) across Wisconsin. The seeds from these terrestrial invasive plants are then being distributed by wind into the bulk materials (soil, sand and gravel). The bulk material being distributed from these public and private suppliers is then used in public and private landscape/construction projects such as yards, roads and parks. The seeds germinate and create a new invasive plant infestation problem.

Do you support new rules that would require publicly and privately owned bulk material providers to work on eliminating these invasive plants on their properties so as to prevent the spread of invasive plants?

4. Education on managing lead at shooting ranges (040313)

Lead at shooting ranges is a concern for shooting range users, operators and the public. Removing and recycling lead from shooting ranges has been addressed by the

Environmental Protection Agency, National Rifle Association and National Shooting Sports Foundation.

Should the WCC work with the DNR to create a voluntary seminar for shooting range operators to be offered throughout the state that instructs them on establishing an environmental stewardship program for recycling lead and how to safely and efficiently remove it from shooting ranges?

Fur Harvest Study Committee

5. Elimination of trapping hour restrictions (050113, 310113)

Current law prohibits trapping activity between the hours of 8:00 PM and 4:00 AM. There is no biological reason for this restriction and obligations such as work hours can interfere with an individual's ability to trap, or the extent to which they are able to trap.

Would you favor a rule change which would eliminate trapping hour restrictions?

6. Trapper Education requirements for landowners (540113)

Section 102.04(3) of the Wisconsin State Statutes defines farmers as those individuals who own and operate or rent the land which they operate as a farm. Currently, Wisconsin residents that are farm operators as defined in section 102.04(3) of the Wisconsin State Statutes, may purchase a trapping license which allows them to trap anywhere in Wisconsin where they have permission to trap, including public land, and private lands owned by others, without having first completed a trapper education class.

Would you favor legislation which would require that Wisconsin resident farmers as defined under section 102.04(3) of the Wisconsin State Statutes successfully complete a trapper education class before trapping in Wisconsin, except on lands they own or rent for agricultural purposes?

7. Trapping Mentorship Program

There is no age restriction in Wisconsin for people purchasing a trapping license. However, since new trappers are required to successfully complete a trapper education course, before they can buy a license that authorizes trapping, there is a practical limit as to how young an individual can be expected to pass the course, and therefore purchase their first license.

Many parents would like their younger children to come with them on the trap line, and assist in setting traps, and even set their own traps. It is hoped that trapping and selling their own fur will create an interest and excitement in young children which they will keep throughout their lives.

In 2009, the state legislature created a Hunting Mentorship Program to allow individuals who have not yet completed a hunter education course to obtain a license that authorizes

hunting provided they only hunt with an adult mentor under certain conditions (arm's reach, one firearm, etc.) A mentored trapping program would accomplish this same opportunity for beginning trappers.

Do you support legislation that would create a Trapping Mentorship Program to allow a person who has not yet completed trapper education to obtain a license that authorizes trapping, provided they only trap while accompanied by an adult licensed trapper?

Land Use Study Committee

8. Adequate free access to waterways (710413)

Free use of the state waterways "without tax, duty, or impost" is a right guarantee by Article IX of the Wisconsin Constitution. Individuals cannot exercise said right without access facilities. As with any constitutional right, the state and its municipalities share the responsibility to provide an adequate amount of free access to the waters of the state. The state's administrative code s. NR 1.91 specifies adequate access standards to waterways based on the type and size of the waterway.

State statute s. 30.77(3)(e) allows municipalities to charge launch fees and parking fees at sites they own and operate. The transfer of ownership of access sites from the state to its municipalities combined with the implementation of fees as allowed by said state statute has resulted in instances where either inadequate free access or no free access at all exist to some of the state waterways. The water resources account funded by a portion of the gas tax originally created to fund access site maintenance has been redirected to other purposes through recent acts of the legislature.

Would you support the Conservation Congress work with the Department of Natural Resources and the Legislature to modify the state statute to allow launch fees only after adequate free access has been established to the state's waterways and to reinstate the portion of the water resources account required to provide such adequate free access?

Legislative Study Committee

9. Establish a Senior Resident Conservation Patron License (200113)

Currently when a person reaches the age of 65 they may purchase a reduced rate fishing license, small game license and state park sticker. If they purchase a Resident Conservation Patron License, none of these discounts apply. This forces them to purchase individual licenses in order to receive their senior discounts. Many people would prefer to continue to purchase a Conservation Patron License, even though they may no longer use

all the benefits (licenses) of the patron license. There is currently a Junior Conservation Patron License available, but not a Senior Conservation Patron License.

Would you support establishing a Senior Resident Conservation Patron License?

10. Retrieval of hunting dogs from property without landowner permission (230113, 250113, 330113, 540313)

Hunting dogs can stray onto property where their owners do not have permission to be. Currently the animal cannot be legally retrieved without the property owner's permission. Property owners cannot always be located to obtain the necessary permission to retrieve a hunting dog. A quick retrieval is always in the best interests of the dog, dog owner, and property owner. In the states of Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa a person on foot may, without permission, enter private land without a firearm to retrieve a hunting dog. After retrieving the dog, the person must immediately leave the premises. This exception does not authorize the taking of wild game.

Do you support legislation that would allow the owner of a hunting dog the ability to retrieve their hunting dog without landowner's permission?

Migratory Study Committee

11. Mallard hen limit

Each year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) sets waterfowl bag limits. During the past several years, the mallard bag limit offered by the USFWS has been four mallards, of which only two may be hens. This is the only duck with a hen limit.

The waterfowl hunters of Wisconsin have chosen a one hen limit because band recovery data show that 69% of mallards harvested in Wisconsin were hatched in Wisconsin. Most of the hens from Wisconsin that are not shot return and nest the following spring.

Do you favor the DNR setting the mallard hen daily bag limit at two hens when offered by the USFWS?

Mississippi River Study Committee

12. Protective slot limit for Mississippi River walleye harvest (120113)

Current Mississippi River walleye regulations allow a 6 fish daily limit with minimum size being 15 inches. There is some evidence that suggests walleye numbers have declined; which further suggests that current regulations may not be providing ample protection for female walleye of spawning size/age.

Do you favor new walleye harvest restrictions for waters of the Mississippi River that establish a protected slot size limit (where fish within the slot size must be released) and allow the harvest of only one fish over that slot size limit?

Outdoor Heritage & Education Study Committee

13. Prevent non-resident novice hunters from applying for Learn to Hunt (LTH) bear programs

Currently, any novice hunter can participate in Learn to Hunt programs, regardless of residency.

Would you support limiting the LTH bear program to Wisconsin residents only?

Outreach & Public Relations Study Committee

14. Support for the Wisconsin Outdoor Education Expo

The Wisconsin Outdoor Education Expo has been held in Dodge County each year since 2006 with more than 32,000 4th and 5th-grade students from dozens of Wisconsin elementary schools attending each year. Students engage in many “see-touch-do” activities including archery, sporting dog demonstrations, firearm safety, fishing, trail recreation, heritage enrichment and wildlife conservation. The Outdoor Expo has received numerous accolades from students, teachers and parents and has enjoyed excellent attendance over the years. With the success of this endeavor firmly established, it appears the time is right to expand the effort statewide with funds donated by sportsmen and women for the future stability of our outdoor heritage.

Statutory precedent for voluntary funding from hunters, anglers, archers, ATV enthusiasts, boating, snowmobile and other outdoor users while applying for licenses has already been established. These include donations for combating invasive species, venison donation and for the general fish and wildlife account.

Wisconsin sportsmen and women have been most generous in support of youth programs in the past. With this initiative, the Outdoor Expo can be expanded to other areas of the state with financial support coming from the people who care most about our outdoor heritage.

Would you support legislation establishing a voluntary donation to support expansion of the Wisconsin Outdoor Education Expo statewide?

Trout Study Committee

15. Increase Wisconsin Inland Waters Trout Stamp fee

The trout stamp fees fund trout stream (cold water) restoration, improvements, surveys and maintenance activities have improved an average of 25 miles of stream and 1 spring pond per year. This has resulted in 865 miles of stream improved out of 13,000 miles of trout stream in Wisconsin.

Total trout stamp expenditures from 2008 through 2010 were on average \$1.6 million. An average of \$411,812 per year from 2008 through 2010 was also spent on inland trout habitat from general fishing license fees.

The cost of the trout stamp has increased from \$2.50 during 1978-1983, to \$3.25 during 1984-1991, to \$7.25 during 1992-2006, and is currently \$10.00 since 2006.

The number of trout stamps sold varies from year-to-year and averages 142,000 stamps annually over the last 10 years. In addition, Patron License holders (currently about 50,000) support the Inland Waters Trout Stamp program.

The costs associated with trout work crews have increased annually and the costs of fuel and materials have more than doubled in the past five (5) years alone.

Do you support legislation that would increase the Inland Waters Trout Stamp fee from \$10.00 to \$15.00?

Warm Water Study Committee

16. Reduce bluegill bag limit on Otter Lake, Chippewa County (090113)

The quality and quantity of bluegill populations on Otter Lake, Chippewa County seems to be declining. Many feel the current daily bag limit of 25 bluegills on Otter Lake is too high.

Do you support reducing the daily bag limit of bluegill from 25 to 10 on Otter Lake, Chippewa County, but still have a daily aggregate bag limit of 25 panfish?

17. Eliminate the size limit on northern pike on Lake Alpine, Waushara County, (700113)

Northern pike do not seem to be reaching the minimum size of 26" on Lake Alpine, thus anglers are unable to utilize the increasing number of northern pike present.

Do you favor eliminating the present 26" minimum size limit for northern pike on Lake Alpine, Waushara County, while maintaining the current daily bag limit of two?

18. Reduce daily bag limit and institute a 10" minimum size limit on crappies on Palmer and Tenderfoot Lakes, Vilas County (640513)

With increasing fishing pressure, the crappie fishery of Palmer and Tenderfoot Lakes, Vilas County, is not as good as it has been in the past. It is felt by some that a reduction in the daily bag limit from 25 to 10 along with instituting a 10" minimum size limit for crappies on Palmer and Tenderfoot Lakes may solve the problem.

However, the creel data that is available from 1992 and 2009 show that there is not a problem with the crappie population. In Palmer Lake, the harvest of crappies has increased, the harvest rate has improved, and the mean length of harvested fish has increased.

Year-round public access is available to Palmer Lake at the county boat landing. Access to Tenderfoot is through a river channel from Palmer Lake that does not provide safe ice in winter. Tenderfoot is Michigan boundary water that is managed for walleye, not panfish.

Do you favor reducing the daily bag limit of crappies from 25 to 10 and instituting a minimum size limit of 10" on Palmer and Tenderfoot Lakes, Vilas County?

19. Streamlining local fish rule changes (040113)

Currently the process to get a local bag limit or size limit change on a particular lake takes at least four years. More often than not, the local proposed rule change for a particular lake has been introduced to the local fish biologist by a group of concerned anglers, Conservation Congress member(s), and conservation club or lake association and is reviewed by the biologist for its need and effectiveness. The citizens group and the biologist meet again and a final proposed rule is formulated and presented as a citizen resolution at the spring hearing in the county where the particular body of water is located. The resolution then enters the process and maybe three years later the rule is implemented. Fish population dynamics change so rapidly on some waters that the rule proposed four years ago is no longer the proper rule for the lake.

Do you favor the creation of a process whereby the local fisheries biologist working with local citizens, conservation clubs, lake associations and the Conservation Congress can streamline local fish rule changes?

Wolf Study Committee

20. Wolf Trapper Education (500113)

Wisconsin citizens now have the opportunity to manage wolves in our state. Regulated trapping is an important aspect of harvest management. In 2012, 52% of the wolves harvested were by licensed trappers and in 2013, 65% of wolves were harvested through trapping.

However, this did not come about without concerns and protests by various user groups, especially upland bird hunters and citizens concerned about their dogs coming into contact with traps.

Although basic trapper education has been mandatory since 1992, wolf trapping is new, specialized and requires larger traps. For these reasons the Wisconsin Trappers Association, in cooperation with the DNR entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that identified the duties of each organization in offering voluntary wolf trapper education workshops tailored after the highly successful Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program.

Feedback from the voluntary wolf trapper education workshops suggests that this course was extremely useful for those who trapped wolves in Wisconsin. Other states such as Montana and Idaho already require wolf trapper education.

Do you support mandatory wolf trapper education for everyone before they can trap wolves in Wisconsin?

Executive Council

21. Tundra swan season (050112, 200412, 630112, 670612, 680112)

The tundra swan is the most common swan in North American and has very few predators. Wisconsin is within the range of the eastern population of tundra Swans and could develop a state tundra swan hunting proposal for consideration at the flyway and federal level. Tundra swans tend to favor larger bodies of water in great numbers as compared to the trumpeter swans, which commonly stay in smaller groups and prefer smaller ponds and marshes. The trumpeter swan is well established as a breeding swan in Wisconsin and was removed from the state endangered list in 2009.

Studies have shown tundra swan population numbers are currently rising, even with hunting allowed in other states. Each year we have tens of thousands of tundra swans migrate through Wisconsin with recent peak population counts on the Mississippi River of over 30,000 swans. Wisconsin could benefit from allowing a hunt unique to very few other states.

Are you in favor of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress asking the Wisconsin Legislature to give the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources authority to develop a hunting season for tundra swans?

22-23. Transferring of license or permits

Currently, there are two different applications (Transfer of License or Permit to Youth Application and a Wolf License Transfer Application) and statutory authorities for the transfer of certain licenses or permits to another individual.

The Transfer of License or Permit to Youth Authority/Application allows a person who has purchased a spring turkey, fall turkey, bobcat, fisher, otter, upriver sturgeon spearing, class A bear hunting, sharp-tailed grouse or Horicon/Collins goose license or permit to transfer that authority to a youth 10-17 years of age. Currently, a youth may only be the recipient of each type of transferred permit once in their lifetime.

The Wolf Harvest License Transfer Authority/Application allows a person who has been awarded a wolf license to transfer that license to a minor who is under the age of 18, is eligible to use the approval, and has not been previously transferred a wolf harvest license. A youth may only be the recipient of a transferred wolf license once in their lifetime.

However, a person who has been awarded a wolf harvest license may also transfer that license to another person who is at least 18 years of age and is eligible to use the license, and there is no limit to the number of times an adult may receive a wolf harvest license which is transferred under this authority.

In an effort to simplify the current license or permit transfer application process and expand opportunity by creating one application for all license or permit transfers:

Would you support legislation that would allow a person authorized to purchase a spring turkey, fall turkey, bobcat, fisher, otter, upriver sturgeon spearing, class A bear hunting, sharp-tailed grouse, Horicon goose or wolf harvest license or permit to transfer that license or permit to anyone that is eligible to use the license or permit?

Would you support legislation that would allow a person authorized to purchase a spring turkey, fall turkey, bobcat, fisher, otter, upriver sturgeon spearing, class A bear hunting, sharp-tailed grouse, Horicon goose or wolf harvest license or permit to transfer that license or permit to any immediate relative (husband, wife, son, daughter, grandson or granddaughter) that is eligible to use the license or permit?