

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

SUBJECT: Results of input on the Bureau of Wildlife Management's 2021 spring fish & wildlife meeting agenda of rule questions.

FOR: June 2021 Board meeting

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Scott Karel, Wildlife Policy Specialist

SUMMARY:

These rule questions were the subject of input at the online 2021 spring fish & wildlife meetings held virtually beginning the second Monday in April. Department staff will summarize and discuss voting results for the following questions:

1. Allow falconry to take place on the Richard Bong State Recreation Area after the 2 p.m. closure.
2. Increase the time that cable restraints are allowed during regulated tapping seasons.
3. Return to a three-zone framework for mink and muskrats.
4. Allow the department to regulate target shooting on department properties in Columbia County
5. Extend the date of the gray and fox squirrel seasons.

Staff will also update the board on the status of the rule related to these questions.

RECOMMENDATION: Information Only

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

- Background memo Type name of attachment if applicable
 Type name of attachment if applicable Type name of attachment if applicable

Approved by	Signature	Date
Eric Lobner, Bureau Director	DocuSigned by: <i>Eric Lobner</i> 49A5E090CF88465...	6/14/2021 12:45 PM CDT
Keith Warnke, Division Administrator	DocuSigned by: <i>Keith Warnke</i> 9D69747CE78D4CA...	6/14/2021 12:47 PM CDT
Preston D. Cole, Secretary	DocuSigned by: <i>Todd Ambts</i> 6793A7BA427C4CD...	6/14/2021 12:55 PM CDT

For

cc: Board Liaison – AD/8

DS
WR

by Todd Ambts

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 10, 2021

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: Secretary Preston Cole

SUBJECT: Results of input on the Bureau of Wildlife Management and Natural Resource Board's 2021 spring fish & wildlife meeting agenda of rule questions.

This memo will summarize the results of input and anticipated future action on the five wildlife-related questions and one Natural Resource Board advisory question that were on the 2021 spring hearing agenda.

Background:

Annually, the department submits rule change proposals relating to hunting, trapping, and wildlife management. The statewide April Spring Fish and Wildlife hearings are the traditional vehicle for citizen input. The origins of these rule change proposals are primarily from department staff specialists in the relevant bureaus and Conservation Congress advisory questions from prior years. Initiating the process promulgates rules recommended by the Conservation Congress fulfills a role the board and congress established in s. 15.34 Stats. Wildlife questions may also include Conservation Congress questions that have gained support in previous years and questions proposed by the Natural Resources Board.

Summary of Agenda Items:

Table 1 provides a description of each question and a summary of statewide voting results. Table 2 summarizes the questions and results for the Natural Resource Board questions. The full spring hearing questions are found in Appendix 1.

Table 1. Wildlife Management advisory questions.

	Question Description	Yes	No	No Opinion	Statewide Support	Local Approval*
1	Allow falconry at Bong State Rec Area after 2 pm	5,237	1,405	3,045	78.8%	Kenosha Yes: 210 No: 64
2	Increase time cable restraints are allowed during trapping seasons	4,383	3,022	2,267	59.1%	
3	Return to a three-zone framework for mink and muskrats	4,123	1,392	4,129	74.7%	
4	Allow DNR to regulate target shooting on DNR lands in Columbia County	4,893	2,044	2,607	70.5%	Columbia Yes: 488 No: 169
5	Extend the date of the gray and fox squirrel seasons	6,402	2,039	1,190	75.8%	

* Includes input from individuals who indicated that they either live or recreate in the impacted county.

Table 2. Natural Resource Board advisory questions.

	Question Description	Yes	No	No Opinion	Statewide Support
10	Collaborative scientific CWD working group.	7,348	1,655	912	81.6%

Status of the 2021 Wildlife Spring Hearing Rule

A rules package on these items is forthcoming but has been delayed. We anticipate holding a hearing on these questions later in the summer and presenting it for board approval shortly thereafter. Because the timeline has been delayed, we anticipate that most of these proposals would go into effect for the 2022 fall seasons, particularly because some of the questions alter season dates.

Drafter: Scott Karel

Appendix 1.

STATEWIDE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT RULE QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1: Allow falconry to take place on the Richard Bong State Recreation Area after the 2 p.m. closure.

Falconry is a unique sport that has a low or no impact on other activities. Due to Bong’s popular managed pheasant hunting program (8,770 average annual pheasant hunters from 2015-19) and high number of falconers have stopped practicing their sport during legal hunting hours due to safety concerns of the falcons used. Due to the nature of pheasant hunting, falconry birds are at a high risk of being mistaken for pheasants while partaking in their sport. This proposed change will specifically allow falconry hunting on the Bong property after the 2p.m. hunting closure to ensure a safe continuation of the sport. At this time two hunting activities are allowed after 2p.m. (waterfowl and bow deer), this proposal would add falconry as a third.

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Do you support requiring the use of non-toxic shot on all state owned or managed properties, except for department designated shooting ranges? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> NO OPINION |
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QUESTION 2: Increase the time that cable restraints are allowed during regulated trapping seasons.

Currently, trappers cannot use cable restraints until December 1st. This proposal would allow the use of cable restraints beginning on the dryland trapping opener (Saturday nearest October 17th) for bobcat, fox and coyote. A study evaluated the use of cable restraints on dryland was conducted in Wisconsin from 2001-2002. Results of this study resulted in new regulations allowing the use of cable restraints on dryland from Dec 1st – Feb 15th for fox, coyote and bobcat. The start date of December 1st was chosen to avoid any incidents involving the new cable restraint and other hunting dogs in the months of October and November. A review of previous trap incident reports involving cable restraints has confirmed this tool is selective and doesn’t pose a threat to domestic dogs. .

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- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Do you support allowing cable restraints to be used for trapping beginning on the Saturday nearest October 17th? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> NO OPINION |
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QUESTION 3: Return to a three-zone framework for mink and muskrats.

In 2014, as part of a larger rule simplification effort, the department switched to a one zone, one opening day format for managing muskrat and mink. This resulted in earlier opening dates in the central and southern zones and a uniform end date (beginning on the Saturday nearest October 25 and continuing through the Sunday nearest March 7). Prior to this simplification, the department had managed mink and muskrats through multiple harvest zones. At one time, the muskrat and mink season framework included a north zone, central zone and south zone all having progressively later starting dates. Additionally, there were at least two local zones with later closing dates. There is a segment of the trapping community requesting a return to a three-zone (plus Mississippi) system and extend the spring season.

Below is the suggested framework change:

- 1) To return to three zones (plus Mississippi Zone).
- 2) The south zone should open on the Saturday on, or the first Saturday following November 1, and should close on March 15.
- 3) The Central zone should open on the Saturday on, or the first Saturday following October 25, and should close on March 22.
- 4) The Northern zone should open on the Saturday on, or the first Saturday following October 18, and should close on April 15.
- 5) Maintain current Mississippi zone including start and close dates (beginning on the second Monday in November or the day after the close of the duck season in the Mississippi River Zone, whichever occurs first, and ending on the Sunday nearest March 15).

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3. Do you support returning to a three-zone framework for mink and muskrats as described above?
- YES
 NO
 NO OPINION
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QUESTION 4: Allow the department to regulate target shooting on department properties in Columbia County

Currently target shooting is unregulated on DNR owned lands unless these lands are in counties listed ch. NR 45.09(5), Wis. Adm. Code. Prior to the opening of a public shooting range at the Mud Lake Wildlife Area in 2018, problems existed regarding target shooting on state lands in Columbia County, including littering and bullets ricocheting into inhabited areas. Local support was resistant to closing properties until a public range could be built. The state secured funding for a public range and the range has been open to the public since 2018. However, even after the opening of the new range, vandalism and littering is still taking place from individuals target shooting on nearby state lands. Closing the remainder of state-owned properties to target shooting would funnel those activities to the public range.

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4. Do you favor adding Columbia County to the list of counties covered under ch. NR 45.09(5), Wis. Adm. Code and restrict target shooting on DNR owned lands?
- YES
 NO
 NO OPINION
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QUESTION 5: Extend the date of the gray and fox squirrel seasons.

Currently, hunting season for gray and fox squirrels opens on the second Saturday of September and closes on January 31st. This regulation change would keep the original start date of the second Saturday in September but extend the season to be open through the last day of February. This proposal would potentially simplify the closing dates for small mammal hunting by synchronizing the season closure date of squirrels with the that of cottontail rabbits.

5. Do you support extending the closing date of the gray and fox squirrel seasons to the last day in February?

- YES
- NO
- NO OPINION

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD ADVISORY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1: Collaborative scientific CWD working group

Regulatory actions to control the spread or prevalence of CWD have failed to be effective. Collaborative scientific research is the only solution to control the spread and prevalence of CWD. Research grants and money is limited and a collaborative effort to minimize duplication or meaningless research must be a priority. Currently the DNR alone prioritizes and chooses the research studies.

The deer farming community for years has been conducting epidemiological and applied live deer research to identify answers to the root cause and prevention of CWD. A collaborative effort of sharing that includes all research will move us quicker to a solution. It is time to get past the blame game or who gets credit. The public wants a solution to CWD, a deer is a deer no matter what side of the fence it is on.

1. Do you support the formation of a collaborative scientific working group composed of DNR, NRB, DATCP, WCC, CDAC, Wildlife Groups, Deer Farming Organizations and Native American Tribes to collaborate on the scientific research efforts to address health related issues leading to the development of CWD in deer and elk in our state?

- YES
 - NO
 - NO OPINION
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