

**DNR'S DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL  
COUNCIL PURPOSE/MISSION**

To advise the Department of Natural Resources on matters pertaining to the accessibility of all department programs and services by persons with disabilities.

- To draft recommendations to the Department for legislation, administrative rules, or department policy.
- To identify and evaluate needs of persons with disabilities and to communicate them to the Department.
- To help to increase public awareness and sensitivity to the needs of persons with
- To communicate with individuals and other organizations dedicated to similar purposes.

**MEETING MINUTES  
DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL  
Friday December 15, 2023  
Held virtually via Microsoft Teams or call-in.**

Members Present: John Martinson, Keith Pamperin, Calvin Richtig, John Mitchell, Kirsten Engel, and Shannon Columb. All joined virtually on MS Teams.

Members Absent: Andrea Frisch

Others Present: Nick Zouski, Shannon Holt, Deanna Sell, and Barry Gilbeck. All joined virtually on MS Teams.

Guest presenters: Dan Hellenbrand

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Chair Martinson called the meeting to order at 10:01 am.

Introductions: None

Next the Council reviewed the agenda.

**Keith made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Shannon C. seconded the motion, and all were in favor. It was later noted that the agenda stated previous minutes to approve were from June 2023; this was a typo and should have read September 2023.**

The Council next reviewed the meeting minutes from September 7th, 2023.

**Calvin made a motion to approve the minutes. Shannon C. seconded the motion, and all were in favor.**

## **Accessible Outdoors Fund- Nick**

Accessible Outdoors Fund Brochure is ready. The fund is set-up and ready to accept donations; we are still working on online/ credit card donations. The DNR has received two donations this past week, totaling \$550.00. Funds are to be used to improve accessible opportunities for outdoor recreation on DNR properties. This is a general accessibility fund and does not get held up due to specific use. Calvin asked, "What is our internal process to determine how funds are used"? We will work with Parks and Recreation Universal Access team and follow guidelines similar to the process Capital Development and Operational funds use to purchase equipment and improve trails. These funds can be used to supplement money earmarked for specific use or can be used where Capital Development funds are not available. The DNR will prioritize partnering with other fundraising groups, such as "Friends" groups. DAC would like to ensure funds are used for *new* opportunities for outdoor recreation. Deanna and Nick will establish priorities list. Donation is a tax-deduction. Donations are tracked and acknowledgements are sent to contributor. DNR is not allowed to solicit donations, we can only increase awareness that the opportunity to contribute is there and the fund is available.

Link to website: [Wisconsin Accessible Outdoors Fund](#) | [Open the Outdoors](#) | [Wisconsin DNR](#)

## **Customer Service and Licensing- Barry**

### Gun Deer Season

- Went well – no issues.
- License sales remained consistent with previous year.
- Harvest was down from previous year.
  - o Harvest numbers can be found here: [Wisconsin deer harvest summary](#) || [Wisconsin DNR](#)
- Upcoming Holiday Hunt Dec. 24 – Jan. 1 in many units

### Hunting Seasons

- Archery hunting continues through Jan. 7 unless hunting in an extended Archery unit which continues until Jan. 31
- Turkey and Bear application deadline was Dec. 10
  - o Drawings will be conducted in the upcoming weeks. Bear will be conducted after the January Natural Resources Board meeting.

### Go Wild Agent Equipment Update

- Remaining equipment will be deployed.
- Transition has gone well and is almost complete.

### Legislative Updates:

- State ID Card Legislation Updates:
  - o Legislation allows for "access to Department of Transportation records to establish residency for approvals issued by the Department of Natural Resources."
  - o 10/17/23 - [23 SB 310](#) passed the Senate and received by the Assembly.

- 10/24/23 - [23 AB 306](#) - Public hearing held before the Assembly Committee on Transportation and department testimony given in favor of bill.
- New legislation introduced for nonresident archer and crossbow hunting licenses.
  - 12/08/23 - [23 SB 780](#) and [23 AB 799](#) both introduced
  - Nonresident archer and crossbow fees would increase from \$162.25 to \$197.25 (or from \$165.00 to \$200.00 with fees)
- Lifetime Fishing License Legislation Updates:
  - [23 AB 72](#) - 11/15/23 Public hearing held before the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage & department provided testimony.
- [23 SB 44/AB 71](#) – Disability rating for veterans to qualify for license authorizations, admissions fee exemptions. – No further action since last meeting
- [LRB-0907/1](#) relating to: a fishing license for a child with a disability. – No further action since last meeting

**Member, Keith Pamperin, had to leave the meeting at 10:45am. There are still 5 members in attendance.**

### **Outdoor Wheelchair Program- Nick**

Kick-off event was held at Point Beach State Forest in Two Rivers on September 28<sup>th</sup>. Member Calvin Richtig attended and brought Terrain Hopper chair for people to try. There were also several track chairs, beach wheelchairs, and the GRIT chair available for users. Buckhorn State Park now has their Action track chair and is ready to launch use; look for an official announcement and press release later this month. They received a grant through Ford Bronco Outdoors Program for Association of State Park Directors, WI DNR applied and received an award. Peninsula SP launched their Outdoor Wheelchair program in July and it's going well. Friends group at Newport SP was recently able to acquire a used track chair and are working through the logistics to launch use. Action Track Chair is hoping to have their new "AXIS" model available after the first of the year. This model will be less than 30" wide and have a lower center of gravity than the previous narrow model. The wheelbase of 30" or less will allow the chairs to fit through a standard door to be stored inside, as opposed to having to be stored in a garage or shed. Nick will ask for a demo in the spring. Other properties are also interested in obtaining an outdoor wheelchair and now that we have a process in place at some locations, will hopefully be following suit in 2024.

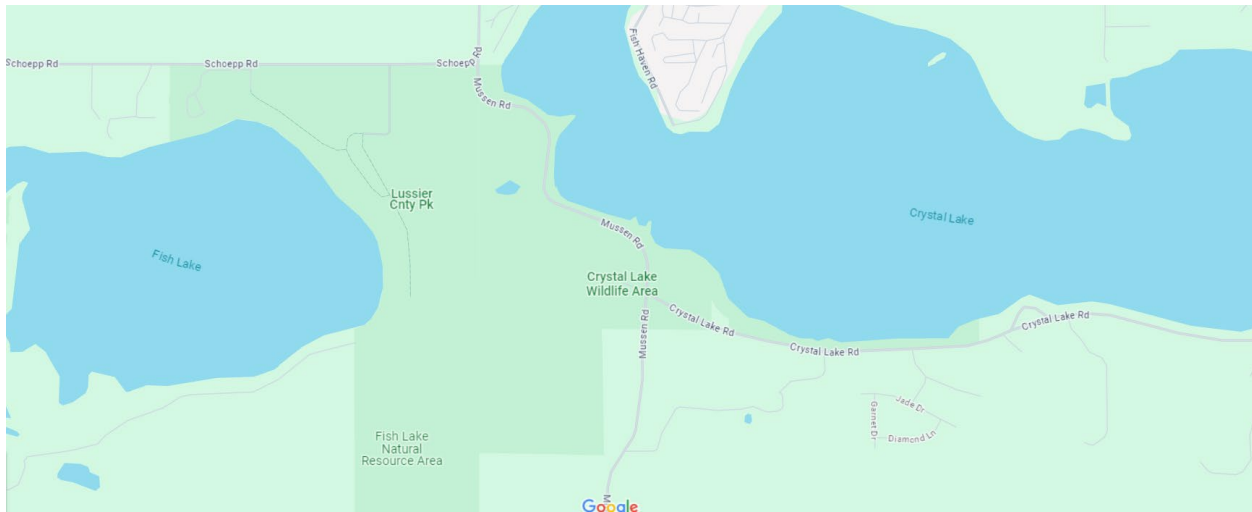
Vice-Chair, Kirsten Engel, asked if there was a way to add more upper-body, lateral supports, and headrest? Member, Calvin Richtig, responded that accessories are offered for sale for Action track chairs. They have lateral supports, adjustable headrests, leg supports, and lots of other accessories. Discussion ensued over the benefits of having additional accessories available versus the cost. Other organizations have found that the accessories are rarely, if ever used. However, not having them available would exclude a small group of potential users. Cost of accessories is minimal compared to total cost of chair. Nick has discussed with Action Chair the possibility of having a factory wiring harness for an extra battery built in.

The track chair has proved to be easier for users to transfer in and out than the Terrain Hopper. The addition of chairs at some State Parks and Forests have allowed some non-profits to relocate chairs to other areas in the state where they are needed but not available. To check availability of chairs for other groups, please see [External links | Open the Outdoors | Wisconsin DNR](#). Nick will work on updating and adding to list of external partners. The DNR will only list organizations whose equipment is available for use on DNR property.

### **Outdoor Wheelchair Program- Continued**

Nick also requested more feedback if there is anything else the DNR should be looking at when buying chairs and considering accessories. Calvin suggested the “rifle” mount is a frequent request because a lot of users will have a cane or walking sticks that they need to stow while using the chair. Battery life is a consideration and some organizations have purchased small portable generators to be able to recharge the chair when not in use. Nick also thought that the custom hitch carrier available on the Action track chair site would be useful and more economical than purchasing a trailer to transport the chair. Deanna asked about scheduled maintenance and having the battery replaced on a cycle. What is the experience with other program chairs? Calvin suggested looking in the user manual because a lot of the maintenance schedules is provided there. Battery life cycle is three to four years. Lifetime use of the chair is something that is yet to be determined. Other groups have chairs as old as eight years, but the chairs have not been around for long enough to determine life expectancy. Options for Independent Living has the Terrain Hopper available in the Green Bay and Door County area as well as track chairs at Superior and Stevens Point. Use of chairs by partner groups has spurred interest in Friends groups fundraising to purchase a site-specific chair.

### **Public Input on Crystal Lake – Dan Hellenbrand**



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Dan lives near Crystal Lake and would like to ask about making it accessible to fish for people who use wheelchairs. Crystal Lake is located in the Town of Roxbury near the Dane and Columbia County line. The area in question involves Lussier County Park and Crystal Lake Wildlife Area. The area is prone to flooding and Mussen Road has been closed where it connects with Crystal Lake Road to Schoepp Road. A gate has been installed that blocks access to Mussen Road for wheelchair users but allows foot traffic. An accommodation, perhaps a two-part split gate, should be made so that everyone can have access as Mussen road is close enough to the lake to fish from without a pier. We need to determine, who put up the gate. The road could also possibly be a township road. Kirsten found information on Dane County website. Mussen and Schoepp Roads are subject to flooding between Crystal Lake, Fish Lake and Mud Lake. Deanna found in DNR Managed Lands application that Dane County is listed as the owner. John Martinson is going to email his contact, Chris James, at Dane County Parks.

<https://parks-lwr.d.countyofdane.com/WildlifeArea/Crystal-Lake-Wildlife-Area>

### **Discussion tabled until 1:45**

### **Break for Lunch 12:00- 12:45**

### **Recruitment – Nick**

We received 12 applications. Nick, Deanna, Shannon H. and John Martinson will review and score applicants for the two open positions and one alternate. Nick wants to update the webpage to state when we are/ are not in an open enrollment period.

Nick will look at appointments to see what members are at the three-year term and he will be reaching out to them.

### **Next Year's Meeting Dates**

- **Friday, March 15th at Schmeckle Reserve in Stevens Point**
- **Monday June 10th – Tuesday June 11th at Mirror Lake and Devil's Lake in Wisconsin Dells**
- **Tuesday September 17th – Wednesday September 18th at Governor Thompson in Crivitz**
- **Friday December 6th – Virtual.**

**Member, John Mitchell, had to leave the meeting at 1:27 pm. Member, Andrea Frisch was not able to join the meeting this afternoon as planned. Meeting fell out of quorum.**

### **Public Input on Crystal Lake – Continued**

Kirsten found a master plan for Crystal Lake on the Dane County website to address flooding issues. John Martinson emailed his contact at Dane County Parks, Chris James, during the lunch break. It appears the county is still in the planning phases, and it would be a good time for some public input, so Mr. Hellenbrand was encouraged to contact Dane County Parks in addition to the email sent by John Martinson.

### **Accessibility Coordinator Updates**

- **Promotional Materials** – DNR did brochure and social media posts for Accessibility fund. Nick is also hoping to do a brochure to explain the different types of disability permits and the associated accommodations and privileges and other helpful information, like how to request an ASL interpreter.
- **Deer Hunt for PWD** – No change, if anything does change it will be a long process.
- **Trail signs** – Parks is working on a project to collect better trail data. Deanna and Nick have been helping to ensure that they are collecting the correct data, such as cross-slope. This project should not only improve upon physical trail signs, but also trail descriptions so people can know before they go.
- **Any other follow up items from last meeting** – When contacted by the public, if this is not an accessibility issue for this group, please refer them to Customer Service.
  - **Customer Service: 1-888-936-7463 (7am – 10pm Seven days a week)**
  - **Spills: 1-800-943-0003 (24-Hour emergency spill hotline)**
  - **Violations: 1-800-TIP-WDNR or 1-800-847-9367 (Confidentially report suspected wildlife, recreational, and environmental violations)**
- Question about steps on a segment of Ice Age Trail – Nick is asking parks. We do not know what segment or if it is on DNR land. This may be a remote segment that is not accessible. Also, Ice Age Trail is now part of the National Parks System and may have new rules that apply; Nick will look into this.
- One issue that will be upcoming is discussion on disabled persons being able to leave hunting blinds up overnight.

### **Setting Goals- Nick**

Moving forward Nick will be adding Goals to the agenda to help the group take a more proactive approach to shape policy. This can be more specific long-term goals, such as adding more cabins or more accessible trails; for example, increase trail accessibility by 20% in the next 10 years. Having written goals will help the DNR with future planning and budget requests.

### **Members' Updates -All**

- **John Martinson** – Adaptive Sportsmen is having annual board meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup>. They are looking for new members and board members. They help people with disabilities get outdoors and are very active in ATV riding, kayaking, hunting, and fishing. They also have grant money to help people offset the cost of adaptive equipment. <https://adaptivesportsmen.org/>
- **Kirsten Engel** – Access for All, the Friends of the Apostle Islands has raised the funds to build an accessible ramp and kayak launch at Meyers Beach.
- **Calvin Richtig** – **Options for Independent Living**

- Wheel Hike Together event
    - 6-day event @ Thunder Mountain Lookout in Marinette County w/ 10 outdoor wheelchairs available from 4 different sites throughout the state
    - 1 hour time slots to use Trackchair to explore trails and view fall colors from lookout.
    - 52 people used trackchairs, 129 total participants.
    - Survey indicated 97% participants were able to participate in an activity they otherwise wouldn't have been able to because of trackchairs.
  - Secured 4 grants worth \$17,000 for adaptive rec program.
    - Adaptive kayak
      - Host adaptive kayak clinics / trainings. \*\*\*Deanna, Nick and Shannon H would like to attend/ observe trainings.\*\*\*
    - Focus on mentoring to provide assisted experience for first time equipment users to help gain confidence in using AT to experience outdoor recreation.
  - Appointed to Wisconsin Assistive Technology Advisory Council – elected vice chair.
  - Appointed to SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan) advisory committee.
    - Identifying barriers to outdoor recreation for pwd.
- **Shannon Columb** – Is there any user data for school visits and opportunities for disabled children to attend with classmates? Nick does not know of any data that would have been collected agency wide. This would likely be tracked at the property level. Shannon recently attended an Environmental Education Conference in LaCrosse that included presentations and talks about accessibility and inclusion at nature centers and felt it was exciting to see that there was a bit more interest in creating more accessible experiences for school children.

**Adjourn:**

**Calvin moved to adjourn the meeting. Kirsten seconded. All present in favor.**

**Chair Martinson adjourned the meeting at 2:49 pm.**