



NEWS RELEASE

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SUBJECT: *DNR recommends one year moratorium on Earn-a-Buck program outside Chronic Wasting Disease zones*

MADISON – Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Secretary Matt Frank today announced the department will recommend a one-year moratorium on the Earn-a-Buck program outside of the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) zone for the 2009 deer hunt. Additionally, DNR is recommending 40 deer management units that had the October antlerless hunt last year (without Earn-a-Buck) will now have a regular hunting season for 2009.

“Deer hunting is a rich tradition in Wisconsin, and the DNR takes our role in protecting this important part of our heritage very seriously,” Secretary Frank said. “In light of the recommendation from the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, and the concerns of hunters expressed at annual DMU (deer management unit) meetings across the state and two legislative hearings sponsored by Sen. Holperin and Rep. Hraychuck, the DNR is recommending a one year moratorium on the use of Earn-a-Buck in DMUs outside of the CWD zone for the 2009 hunting season. Retaining Earn-a-Buck within the CWD zone maintains our commitment to controlling the spread of CWD by reducing local deer populations.”

The Conservation Congress Big Game Study Committee reviewed the department’s deer season proposal. The committee recommended a one year moratorium on Earn-a-Buck (except in CWD zones) and that all recommended Earn-a-Buck units be changed to Herd Control (October hunt) units. The Big Game Study Committee was clear that if, during this moratorium, the deer herd increased, Earn-a-Buck would return in 2010.

“We made additional efforts this year to gather hunter and public input,” Secretary Frank said. “We expanded our information collection methods to include over 40 public meetings around the state and more than twice as many people attended herd status meetings this year than last. For the first time, we offered an online survey, which was completed by over 6,000 people.”

Hunter frustration with the fall 2008 hunt was particularly pronounced this year, aggravating fundamental concerns with Earn-a-Buck. These final recommendations reflect feedback received from the Conservation Congress, the DNR's herd status meetings and the new online survey.

Deer populations were lower than anticipated in fall of 2008. The impacts of the harsh winter weather and the late, cool spring reduced fawn production and deer survival more than anticipated.

"We have taken action in response to avoid the problems encountered last season and improve our science base for decision making," Secretary Frank said. "One of the steps we have already taken is to establish more stations to measure winter severity and have a more complete picture of winter impact on fawn production and deer survival."

Deer population goals are established to ensure a healthy deer herd and habitat for the long term, ensuring the preservation of our great hunting traditions for future generations. A deer herd above a healthy population goal stunts forest regeneration and causes significant crop damage.

"Our population goals are also designed to protect the long-term vitality and economic viability of our forests and our agriculture lands," Secretary Frank said. "By achieving the right balance, we preserve Wisconsin's great deer hunting tradition for generations to come, and maintain hunting, forestry and agriculture as key components of Wisconsin's economy."

During the moratorium, the DNR proposes to work with the Congress, the Natural Resources Board, hunters, landowners and the public to consider potential changes to Earn-a-Buck or consider other herd control measures that effectively move the herd towards population goals. This year coincides with the regularly scheduled three year review of deer population goals that will provide additional opportunity for public input.