

Wisconsin DNR News & Outdoor Report
Edited by Paul Holtan
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
PO Box 7921
Madison WI 53707-7921
(608) 267-7517
Fax: (608) 264-6293
E-mail: paul.holtan@dnr.state.wi.us
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/news/>

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Candlelight ski/hikes planned at many state parks
Appointment of new DNR secretary a top story of 2003

[EDITOR'S ADVISORY: There will be no DNR News & Outdoor Report issued on Dec. 30, 2003. The next packet will be issued on Jan. 6, 2004.]

Candlelight ski/hikes planned at many state parks

MADISON -- People looking for a break from "cabin fever" or interested in seeing their favorite park trail from a new vantage point may want to consider attending any of more than two dozen candlelight events scheduled this winter at Wisconsin state parks and trails.

Over the next few months, various state parks, forests, recreation areas, and trails will be offering the candlelight events mostly for cross-country skiers, but in some cases also for hikers and snowshoers. Other specific activities may include guided tours, bonfires, ice skating, and refreshments.

"Candlelight skis and hikes provide a great opportunity to re-experience our trails," says Wisconsin State Parks Director, Mike Willman. "A favorite trail looks very different under the glow of candles and moonlight."

The entire list of candlelight events can be found on the DNR Web page. Click on the search button and enter key words "candlelight ski events."

For more information on these and other winter activities in the Wisconsin State Park System, contact your local state park property, the Wisconsin State Park System Office at 608-266-2181, or check out the State Park Web site at www.wiparks.net.

Candlelight Ski Events at Wisconsin State Parks, Forests and Trails

Saturday, January 3, 2004

- **Blue Mound State Park**, Blue Mounds, (608) 437-5711 - Candlelight Ski, Hike And Snowshoe. Candlelight ski on one- and two-mile loops. A separate 3/4-mile lit trail for hikers, snowshoers, and leashed pets. Bonfire, free hot drinks. Mount Horeb High School Track and Cross Country Team will sell chili, brats, hot dogs, and baked goods. Special glow-in-the-dark long-sleeved candlelight T-shirts for sale. If snow conditions are not favorable, all lit trails will be open for hiking. Sponsored by Friends of Blue Mound State Park. Ski trail head. 6-9 p.m.
- **Mirror Lake State Park**, Baraboo, (608) 254-2333 - Candlelight Ski. Ski on 1.5 miles of candlelit trails. Join the Friends of Mirror Lake for hot beverages, baked goods and hot dogs by a warming fire. 6-8 p.m.

Saturday, January 10, 2004

- **Lake Kegonsa State Park**, Stoughton, (608) 873-9695 - Candlelight Ski. Join us for a night of Candlelight Skiing! Ski along a trail lit with hundreds of glowing candles. When you are done skiing, warm up by the bonfire and enjoy refreshments sold by the Lake Kegonsa State Park Friends' Group. This event is weather permitting. Sorry, no pets or hikers are allowed on the ski trails. Meet at the Nature Trail Parking Lot. 6-9 p.m.
- **Lapham Peak Unit, Kettle Moraine State Forest**, Delafield, (262) 646-3025 - Candlelight Ski. Cross Country ski or hike on a 1.5 mile-long trail by candlelight. Enjoy the fireplace in Trecker Lodge or relax by

the pond-side bonfire. Enjoy refreshments provided by the Friends of Lapham Peak or bring your own food to prepare on the large outside grill. If conditions permit, there will be lighted ice skating on the pond. Bring your own skates. Ski rental equipment will also be available. Homestead Hollow Recreation Area. 5:30-9 p.m.

- **Wildcat Mountain State Park**, Ontario, (608) 337-4775 - Candlelight Ski/Hike. There will be 1.5 miles of torch-lit trail, bonfires, charcoal grills, popcorn, hot chocolate, and inside heated warming area. Dusk to 9 p.m.

Saturday, January 17, 2004

- **Governor Dodge State Park**, Dodgeville, (608) 935-2315 - Candlelight Ski and Walk. Ski or walk a trail lit with glowing candlelight. There will be a bonfire to warm up to after enjoying the trail. There will also be limited hot drinks available for sale. Didn't receive a park sticker for Christmas? Here's your chance to get one early and enjoy a year's worth of state park memories. Sponsored by Friends of Governor Dodge State Park. The trail will start at the Cox Hollow Beach. 6-9 p.m.
- **Hartman Creek State Park**, Waupaca, (715) 258-2372 - Candlelight Cross-country Ski/Hike. Ski on 2.5 miles of tracked trails lighted by candles or hike on a 1-mile hiking trail lit by candles. Warming and food cooking fires/grills and hot water provided. Free refreshments (bars, cookies, cider and hot chocolate) provided. Sponsored by Friends of Hartman Creek. Hartman Lake Shelter Building. Sunset - 9 p.m.
- **Kohler-Andrae State Park**, Sheboygan, 920-451-4080 - Winter Candlelight Ski and Hike. Enjoy the winter wonderland at night with family and friends while hiking or skiing the two-mile cross country trail. Almost 200 tiki torches will light your way for this annual event. Warm up afterwards by the fireplace. Refreshments will be available in the heated shelter building. Please, no pets or sleds allowed on the trail. Sponsored by Friends of Kohler-Andrae. Cross country ski trail - stop at park office for map. 6-9 p.m.

Saturday, January 24, 2004

- **Devil's Lake State Park**, Baraboo, (608) 356-8301 - Candlelight Hike/Ski. Hike or ski (depending on snow conditions) along a 1.5-mile trail loop around the closed Northern Lights Campground. A warming fire and refreshments will be available at the shelter. Sponsored by Friends of Devil's Lake State Park. Rock Elm/CCC shelter at the north shore. 6-9 p.m.
- **Governor Nelson State Park**, Waunakee, (608) 831-3005 - Candlelight Ski. Enjoy a warm bonfire near the pet swim area, sip on some hot chocolate and share skiing stories. Sponsored by Friends of Governor Nelson State Park. 6-9 p.m.
- **Kettle Moraine State Forest--Southern Unit**, Eagle, (262) 594-6202 - Candlelight Ski and Hike. Nordic Trail. 6-9 p.m.

Friday, January 30, 2004

- **Mirror Lake State Park**, Baraboo, (608) 254-2333 - Candlelight Ski. Gentle 1.5-mile ski or hike on our east lake loop trail lit by candles and torches. Sponsored by Mirror Lake State Park staff and Friends of Mirror Lake. Mirror Lake State Park Office. 6-8 p.m.
- **Willow River State Park**, Hudson, (715) 386-5931 - Candlelight Ski and Hike. Join us for a fun celebration of winter with an evening of skiing or hiking on candlelit trails. Expect to see a tethered hot air balloon, a bonfire by the boat launch, and goodies at the Nature Center. For skiers, about 2 miles of easy trails will be lit. For hikers, a half-mile trail will be lit. If there is not enough snow to ski, less total mileage of trails will be lit.

Saturday, January 31, 2004

- **Whitefish Dunes State Park**, Sturgeon Bay, (920) 823-2400 - Candlelight Ski. Cross-country ski a mile of candlelit trail and enjoy refreshments and a warm fire in the enclosed shelter. If the snow doesn't cooperate we'll have a candlelight hike. 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 7, 2004

- **Black River State Forest**, Black R. Falls, (715) 284-4103 - Candlelight Ski. Ski on a 1.5 mile loop. Warming fire with hot chocolate and hot dogs for sale by the trail friends group, which will also be conducting a raffle. Smrekar Trail, off County Highway O east of Millston. 5-9 p.m.
- **Blue Mound State Park**, Blue Mounds, (608) 437-5711 - Candlelight Ski, Hike And Snowshoe. Candlelight ski on one-and two-mile loops. Separate lit trail for hikers, snowshoers, and leashed pets. Bonfire, free hot drinks. Chili, brats, and baked goods for sale. Special glow-in-the-dark long-sleeved candlelight T-shirts for sale. Sponsored by Friends of Blue Mound State Park. Ski trail head. 6-9 p.m.
- **Brule River State Forest**, Brule, (715) 372-5678 - Candlelight Ski. Several miles of ski trail will be lit by candles. Hot beverages, a campfire, and grill will be provided. Sponsored by Brule Valley Ski Club and Brule River State Forest. Afterhours Ski Trail. 5-9 p.m.
- **High Cliff State Park**, Sherwood, (920) 989-1106 - Candlelight Ski/Hike. The Forest Management Trail will be illuminated for nighttime skiers and hikers. Stop at the warming fire at the halfway point on the trail. Concessions available in the beautiful High Cliff Pavilion. Sponsored by Friends of High Cliff State Park. 6-9 p.m.

- **Kettle Moraine State Forest--Northern Unit**, Campbellsport, (920) 533-8322 - Candlelight Ski/Hike. Cross-country ski or hike in the Northern Kettle Moraine State Forest by candlelight. At the bonfire join fellow hikers and skiers for hot drinks and snacks provided by the Friends of the Kettle Moraine. The trail is perfect for novice skiers with no steep hills or sharp turns. Zillmer Trail Area off of County Highway SS between State Highway 67 and County Highway G. 5:30-8:30 p.m.
- **Lake Wissota State Park**, Chippewa Falls, (715) 382-4574 - Candlelight Night Ski and Walk. Ski a 1- or 2-mile trail through a winter wonderland illuminated by glowing candles. If you don't ski, a .75-mile lighted trail is available for hiking and snowshoeing. Refreshments sponsored by the Friends of Lake Wissota State Park. Weather permitting. Sponsored by Friends of Lake Wissota State Park. Ski Trail Head (boat landing parking lot). 6-9 p.m.
- **Mirror Lake State Park**, Baraboo, (608) 254-2333 - Candlelight Ski. Gentle 1.5-mile ski or hike on our east lake loop trail lit by candles and torches. Sponsored by Mirror Lake State Park Staff and Friends of Mirror Lake. Mirror Lake State Park Office. 6-8 p.m.
- **Northern Highland/American Legion State Forest**, Boulder Junction, (715) 385-3365 - Candlelight Ski. The trails will be lit by hundreds of candles. Two loops, 1.5 and 3 miles. Admission is free. There will be refreshments served, warming fires at the start and the halfway point. The contact station will be open and heated and a cooking grill provided for those wishing to grill. The Raven trail will close at noon to allow preparation for the candlelight ski. Raven Trail. 6-9 p.m.
- **Peninsula State Park**, Fish Creek, (920) 868-3258 for current conditions. - Candlelight Ski. Ski a candlelit one-mile, double-tracked trail through forest and meadow. Bonfire and refreshments. No pets, sleds, or hiking on groomed trail. \$2 suggested donation. Enter at Highland Road and Hwy 42, near County A. Follow signs to Lot #5. 5:30 - 8 p.m.

Saturday, February 14, 2004

- **Interstate State Park**, St. Croix Falls, (715) 483-3747 - Candlelight Night. Candlelit luminaries guide cross-country skiers, snowshoers and hikers on separate trails at Interstate Park. Snowshoes available for use free of charge. Refreshments provided by the Friends of Interstate Park. Sponsored by Co-sponsored by the Friends of Interstate Park. The trails begin at the Camp Interstate Shelter across from the South Campground entrance. 6-9 p.m.
- **Kettle Moraine State Forest - Lapham Peak Unit**, Delafield, (262) 646-3025 - Candlelight Ski. Cross Country ski or hike by candlelight. Enjoy the fireplace in Trecker Lodge or relax by the pond-side bonfire. Enjoy refreshments provided by the Friends of Lapham Peak or bring your own food to prepare on the large outside grill. If conditions permit, there will be lighted ice skating on the pond. Bring your own skates. Ski rental equipment will also be available. Ski rental equipment will also be available. Homestead Hollow Recreation Area. 5:30-9 p.m.
- **Kohler-Andrae State Park**, Sheboygan, (920) 451-4080 - Valentine Candlelight Ski and Hike. Celebrate Valentine's Day while enjoying the winter wonderland at night. Hike or ski the two-mile cross country trail lit by almost 200 tiki torches for this annual event. Warm up afterwards by the fireplace. Refreshments will be available in the heated shelter building. Please, no pets or sleds allowed on the trail. Sponsored by Friends of Kohler-Andrae. Cross country ski trail - stop at park office for map. 6-9 p.m.
- **Lake Kegonsa State Park**, Stoughton, (608) 873-9695 - Valentine's Day Candlelight Ski. Bring your loved one for a romantic evening of candlelight skiing. When you are done skiing, cozy up by the bonfire and enjoy refreshments sold by the Lake Kegonsa State Park friends group. This event is weather permitting. Sorry, pets and hikers are not allowed on the ski trails. Meet at the Nature Trail Parking Lot. 6-9 p.m.
- **Potawatomi State Park**, Sturgeon Bay, (920) 746-2890 - Valentine's Day Candlelight Ski. Celebrate Valentine's Day with some candlelit cross-country skiing. The one-mile illuminated trail runs near the shore and through wooded areas. The Friends of Potawatomi will provide refreshments and warming fires. Sponsored by Friends of Potawatomi. 5-9 p.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Frank Hoppe - (608) 266-7301

Appointment of new DNR secretary a top story of 2003

Fox River cleanup, control of CWD remain top stories of the year

MADISON -- Among top stories for the Department of Natural Resources during 2003, was the appointment of Madison attorney Scott Hassett to head the agency. Gov. Jim Doyle appointed Hassett as DNR secretary in December 2002 and his appointment became effective with Doyle's inauguration on Jan. 6, 2003.

Now approaching his first year anniversary, Hassett said he expected to deal with three major issues in his first year: Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), the Crandon Mine application, and cleaning up the Fox River.

"On the whole," he said, "it has gone well with those issues.

"We clearly defined the area of CWD in the state, developed a comprehensive in-state sampling program, and provided the latest scientific information so people could make well-informed decisions about hunting, care of their venison and consumption. A panel of national experts endorsed our CWD management plan. As a result, hunters returned to the fields this fall in good numbers, and -- even in the disease Eradication Zone -- chose to keep their venison, as has been our long-standing tradition and value in the state.

"Clean-up of the Fox River -- the largest and most ambitious PCB clean-up in the country -- is progressing. We should at last have clean-up barges in the river this spring. To be sure, the clean-up will take years and great effort, but we are taking significant steps to assure a healthier environment for our children.

"As is our duty, DNR provided a thorough scientific review of the Crandon mining application and proposals. Now, with the tribal purchase of the mine site, we are working to close out the Nicolet Mining Company application and retire records.

"We face additional challenges. Continued state budget difficulties are impacting DNR, and we are losing valued employees to layoff and programs to budget cuts. Our goal is to maintain our most critical duties and services.

"Regulatory streamlining is also a priority for us. We are serious about doing the best job in the nation of balancing the quality of our natural resources and environment with the needs of our citizens and the regulated community. We are making strides in eliminating permit backlogs and paperwork and streamlining processes to help businesses invest in Wisconsin jobs," Hassett said.

Hassett noted that as part regulatory streamlining efforts, DNR would provide a special "feedback telephone number" by January 5th to help the public tell DNR how it's doing -- good or bad -- in working with the regulated and licensed community.

Lower Fox River Cleanup

In January, the first of two Records of Decision was issued by DNR and EPA for the 26-mile portion of the Lower Fox River from Little Lake Butte des Morts and Appleton to Little Falls operable units of the Lower Fox River. The \$66 million plan calls for dredging 784,000 cubic yards of PCB contaminated sediment from Little Lake Butte des Morts and \$ 10 million for monitored natural recovery for the reach of the river from Appleton to Little Falls.

In July, the ROD for the remaining 13-mile stretch of the river and Green Bay was announced. The cleanup plan for the two operable units from Little Rapids to the mouth of the Fox River at Green Bay calls for the removal of 6,466,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment containing approximately 60,600 pounds of PCBs. This estimated cost of this plan is \$284 million, with an additional \$40 million for monitored natural recovery in Green Bay.

In October, a Consent Decree to clean up Little Lake Butte des Morts was announced between DNR, EPA and P.H. Glatfelter Co. and WTM 1 (formerly Wisconsin Tissue Mills). This agreement signals the start of cleanup activities in the Lower Fox River, with dredging expected to begin in Little lake Butte des Morts in the summer of 2004. DNR, EPA and the other agencies, and the paper companies are continuing to negotiate other cleanup and

natural resource damage agreements and the progress that has been made so far is encouraging and additional agreement are expected to be reached in 2004.

CWD remains major issue but concerns eased from 2002

One year ago chronic wasting disease (CWD) was termed the state's biggest natural resources story. Though CWD remained a very high priority for the Department of Natural Resources in 2003, an additional year of learning about the disease and informing the public about what has been learned, eased some concerns of Wisconsin sports people and biologists.

"Management of chronic wasting disease in Wisconsin is still a very high priority activity, though after two years of knowing it is in the state's wild deer herd and learning about it, CWD management is transitioning from a new event to a routine," said Tom Hauge, director of wildlife management for the DNR. "I sensed a renewed hunter enthusiasm this year. It seems that hunters are beginning to accept that deer hunting is different now, but are still enjoying themselves in the field."

The DNR continued its CWD surveillance efforts this year to detect the presence and monitor the prevalence of the disease in Wisconsin. This fall, surveillance efforts focused on collecting deer from the known infected areas, areas surrounding known infected areas, areas where surveillance goals were not met the previous year, areas close to CWD-positive game farms, and areas adjacent to the Illinois border. Hunters and landowners were greatly depended on to make surveillance possible.

Hunters and landowners rose to the task, as indicated by a rebound in license sales after last year's 10 percent decline, the number of landowners permits issued, and the number of deer that were brought in for testing this year. To date, the DNR has collected 8,013 deer from the Intensive Harvest Zone (IHZ) and Disease Eradication Zone (DEZ), 3,783 from the Herd Reduction Zone (HRZ), and 2,179 from other areas of the state. The DNR expects to collect a total of about 14,000 deer by the time the season in the CWD zones ends, Jan. 3. Test results from these samples will provide crucial information and guide future management. Test result numbers change daily and are automatically updated on the DNR Web site under "CWD Testing Results."

Those hunters having deer tested for CWD are getting results quicker this year than last year. The Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Lab using a recently approved assay that screens samples for CWD at a faster rate than the gold-standard immunohistochemical (IHC) test that was used in 2002. All CWD-positive samples detected by the assay are confirmed using IHC. Hunters who submitted deer that did NOT test positive for CWD will be notified by post card. The DNR will directly contact a hunter, by phone call, in the event that the deer they harvested tests positive for CWD. Positive test results are not posted on the DNR Web site until the hunter is properly notified of the results.

According to Hauge, the 2003 hunting seasons in the CWD zones were "satisfactory." Though detailed harvest totals for the HRZ and IHZ will not be in until January, preliminary totals for the IHZ indicate a harvest approaching 13,000 deer. The department believes this harvest is sufficient to continue the reduction of the deer herd in the infected areas and help slow the spread of CWD.

The sport group, Whitetails Unlimited, partnered with the DNR this year to launch a pilot CWD Control Reward Program. The program has two parts, both designed to recognize and reward hunters and landowners who

harvest deer in the IHZ and DEZ to control the disease. The *Focus on Positives* portion of the program rewards \$400, with \$200 going to a hunter who harvests a CWD-positive deer and the other half going to the landowner on whose property the deer was taken. After paying out for the CWD-positive deer, a drawing will be held to randomly select hunters who will receive a \$20 reward for a deer they harvest. This *Every Deer Helps* reward drawing will occur at the end of the season, when all test results are in. Though the DNR does not have data to evaluate the success of this year's pilot CWD Control Reward Program, reports from the field indicate the program has been well-received by hunters and landowners as a tool to manage CWD. Whitetails Unlimited has begun mailing the \$400 rewards.

The Deer Donation 2003 program is approaching a record year for venison donation to food pantries. Hunters from outside the DEZ and IHZ have donated about 265,000 pounds of ground venison and \$18,800 to the program so far this year. The department is especially pleased with the number of deer donated in areas of the state where hunters are being urged to take more deer than in previous years in order to reduce the population. The high number of donated deer indicates that hunters are indeed taking more deer and taking advantage of the donation program to share meat they cannot use. Additionally, the department is pleased to see that upwards of 75 percent of hunters in the DEZ and IHZ are keeping their deer this year.

Finally, baiting and feeding of deer was banned in 23 counties in southern Wisconsin to reduce the spread of CWD. These counties were chosen because all or a portion of the county was in a CWD management zone, or within 10 miles of a tuberculosis - or CWD-positive captive animal. Hunters are encouraged to stay tuned, as changes to this rule may occur in 2004. Also on the horizon is the reformation of hunting regulations, including a possible elimination of the rule that hunting licenses must be purchased prior to the opening day of the hunting season and simplified tagging options.

To wrap up the year, Hauge offers the following: "On behalf of the wildlife program and the DNR, I'd like to say thanks to all those that gave generously of their time and talents to help us with our important CWD and deer management efforts. We wish you a happy 2004!"

Improvement in the air quality management program

In July, a voluntary effort to reduce air pollution in Dane, Rock, Brown and Jefferson Counties was announced. The Cleaner Air Faster partnerships with local governments and businesses represent a collective effort in these areas to reduce the emissions that lead to the formation of ground level ozone.

Significant rule revisions regarding atmospheric mercury emissions and hazardous air pollutants were also completed during 2003 and are currently awaiting legislative action.

In June, DNR Secretary Hassett announced the Air Permit Improvement Initiative, a two pronged approach that will streamline the permitting process for operation and construction permits in the Air Program, and retool Wisconsin's new source review regulations in response to federal rule changes in this area. A new source review advisory group met weekly from September to November and the revised rule that came from the group's work was submitted to the Natural Resources Board in December. Wisconsin is one of the first states in the nation to develop a revised and improved NSR regulation that will ultimately save time, money and work for both the DNR and

businesses. The longer term permit streamlining effort has also begun developing a number of tools that will help DNR staff be more efficient in issuing air permits without compromising environmental quality.

2003 designated "Year of Water"

The year 2003 was officially designated the "Year of Water" in Wisconsin as one result of a multi-year initiative led by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters to engage citizens, government, industry and environmental groups in discussions about the future of the state's water resources.

The designation was intended to encourage people to promote and pursue events and educational efforts highlighting Wisconsin's water resources and the threats to those resources. Such public awareness was to be an important component of building support for recommendations contained in the "Waters of Wisconsin" report, also produced through the Wisconsin Academy initiative.

That report, an assessment of the health of Wisconsin's water resources and its water policies, concluded that the state does not have an explicit comprehensive state water policy. The report called for the governor to work with the state legislature, and with Wisconsin's native American tribes and bands, to establish a Wisconsin Water Policy Task Force to identify gaps in existing water policy and outline steps toward developing a comprehensive state water policy.

A chronological list of other major natural resource and environmental issues in Wisconsin during 2003 follows.

January

Record numbers of eagles found along Wisconsin River

An aerial survey of bald eagles along the Wisconsin River from the Petenwell Dam to Prairie du Chien found 242 birds, which tied a 1996 record for the highest number of eagles counted since the surveys began in 1992. The lowest total was recorded during the first survey in 1992, when only 22 eagles were found along the Wisconsin River valley.

State rules will continue to protect isolated wetlands

Changes announced Jan. 10 by the federal government related to isolated wetlands had limited impact in Wisconsin, because a 2001 Wisconsin law authorizes the state to step in to protect isolated wetlands that federal officials determine they have no jurisdiction to protect from being filled in or dredged. Wisconsin has an estimated 1 million acres of isolated wetlands, which are wetlands not connected to waterways. The issue traces to a January 2001 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in an Illinois case, the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is often referred to as the SWANCC decision. The high court ruled that the Clean Water Act did not protect isolated ponds and wetlands based solely on their value as habitat for migratory waterfowl and songbirds. People pursuing projects affecting isolated wetlands would not be required to seek the federal wetland permits necessary to proceed with their projects.

February

Moose calf birth documented in state

A radio collar attached to an adult cow moose provided state wildlife officials with the first documentation of a moose calf being born in Wisconsin in more than a century. While there were no observations of the calf in Wisconsin, Wisconsin biologists were tracking the calf's mother during the spring and summer of the last two years. During that time she established summer range in northern Forest County, then during the fall and winter, headed back to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where she had originally been collared by biologists from the Michigan DNR. After she returned to Michigan in December, Michigan DNR biologists discovered she had a calf with her when they tracked her in southern Baraga County about 45 miles northeast of her Wisconsin home range.

State streams containing increasing populations of 'wild' trout

Fish surveys showed trout in Wisconsin waters are "wilder" than a generation ago because increasing numbers were wild bread and not the offspring of fish from state fish hatcheries. Improved water quality as a result of changes in land use and farming practices, combined with improved in-stream habitat as a result of state habitat improvement projects, are allowing growing populations of naturally reproducing trout to flourish in some waters. In waters previously bereft of trout, these factors are creating the conditions that allow trout to survive and reproduce.

Great Lakes trout and salmon fishing best in decades

Lake Michigan creel surveys confirmed that trout and salmon fishing on Lake Michigan was the best in nearly two decades. The 2002 trout and salmon catch rate was about 18 fish for every 100 hours of fishing, the best catch rate over 18 years of data.

Sturgeon season closes in 10 days

Lake Winnebago's lake sturgeon spearing season ended Feb. 17 after a 10-day season. Spearers registered 902 fish, including 11 that exceeded 100 pounds, the highest percentage of large fish in the harvest since 1982; the total harvest itself bettered the 2002 harvest of 847. Harvest of adult females stayed below the harvest cap of 400, preventing a repeat of the 2000 season, when the harvest exceeded the harvest cap by 52 percent and biologists became concerned about the impact on the population.

March

State delegates help establish international sturgeon society

A state sturgeon biologist and a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee sturgeon researcher traveled to Hamburg, Germany, in March to launch a nonprofit international organization dedicated to saving and enhancing sturgeon stocks worldwide. The idea for the World Sturgeon Conservation Society took root during an international sturgeon symposium held in Oshkosh, Wis. in July 2001. That meeting brought sturgeon biologists and fisheries experts from all over the world to Wisconsin and highlighted Wisconsin's successful program to protect and increase its population of lake sturgeon in Lake Winnebago.

Wisconsin wolves reclassified to federal threatened status

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced March 18 that the federal government will reclassify gray wolves in Wisconsin, as well as Michigan and the Dakotas in the Upper Midwest from endangered to threatened species. Wolves are already listed as threatened species in Minnesota. The new classification allowed state wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services to kill wolves that have been verified to be preying on pets or livestock. In Wisconsin, this will give the Wisconsin DNR and USDA-Wildlife Services more flexibility in controlling problem wolves. While the reclassification relaxed some of the federal protection of wolves, it did not allow for a public harvest, or for landowners to shoot problem wolves. Lethal control of wolves can only be done by governmental agents, and after depredation on domestic animals has been verified.

Jurisdiction over deer farms moves from DNR to DATCP

The DNR transferred jurisdiction of white-tailed deer farms to the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. A letter of agreement and a report on the state of the state's more than 600 whitetail deer farms aim to smooth the transition. The DNR retained authority for ensuring deer farms are properly fenced. DATCP will be responsible for rules regulating deer and elk farmers including tighter controls on animal movement, mandatory CWD testing, and reporting requirements for deer escapes.

April

Water pollution permit program earns high marks

A survey found that the state program that controls water pollution from factories and municipal wastewater treatment received high marks for its permit process and the staff who write the permits, with 93 percent of the municipal and industrial wastewater operators responding saying they were satisfied with the DNR process.

4,800 attend spring rule hearings

More than 4,800 people attended the 2003 Wisconsin Spring Fish and Wildlife Rules Hearings and Conservation Congress county meetings that were held in each county of the state April 14. The attendance was down from more than 11,000 in 2002, and below the average of about 7,000 over the past 20 years (with the exception of 1999, when more than 30,000 people turned out for the hearings to address a proposed dove hunting season). Voters rejected higher musky size limits on the northern lakes but approved them for Dane County waters. A series of wildlife rule proposals dealing with a possible hunting season for the state's recently established elk herd received general support from attendees.

Inland trout regulations simplified for 2003

The first major changes to the state's inland trout regulations in more than a decade were in force for the regular inland fishing season. The changes simplified but preserved the effectiveness of the regulation system established in 1990, which created five categories of rules to better match bag and size limits to different waters and the different fishing experiences anglers want. The revised system featured different regulations based on the water's size, its productivity, angling pressure, public access and other criteria. Together, the changes resulted in a net reduction of hundreds of waters do not have to be listed, and the reduction of special regulation types.

Revisions approved to state hazardous air pollution rules

The first comprehensive revision to Wisconsin's hazardous air pollution rules added 144 hazardous air pollutants to those currently listed and revised the emission standards for 116 of the 438 air pollutants already listed. The state Natural Resources Board approved revisions to NR 445 of the Wis. Admin. Code, under which the Department of Natural Resources regulates the emissions of hazardous air pollutants. The revisions represent the first comprehensive update of the rule since it was adopted in 1988.

Wisconsin named as finalist for National State Park award

Wisconsin was named one of three national finalists for the 2003 Gold Medal State Park Award, making the state's park system among the top three in the United States. The State Park Gold Medal, awarded by the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), is presented in odd-numbered years to the top state park system in the nation. The program focuses on the achievements of state park systems and their contributions in providing park, recreation and leisure services to the citizens of their state. Previous winners were Ohio (1997), Florida (1999) and Virginia (2001). New York won the 2003 award.

May

Researchers monitoring exotic blue-green algae

Wisconsin researchers and water quality experts are gearing up this summer to monitor an exotic blue-green algae that has been migrating northward in the United States and has been detected in Madison-area lakes over the past few years. The algae, *Cylindrospermopsis raciborskii*, or "Cylindro," was originally identified in Brazil and in recent years has been found in several southern states as well as in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Ohio. Experts don't know how the algae arrived in Wisconsin, but say it could have been transported here by a migratory bird or by hitching a ride on boats, boat trailers or other water-recreation gear from infested waters.

Lake sturgeon to return to the Milwaukee River

For the first time in more than a century, lake sturgeon were cruising the Milwaukee River, capitalizing on improvements in water quality and the removal of the North Avenue Dam that once blocked spawning runs of this ancient, gigantic fish. On May 12, fisheries crews transferred about 51,000 weeks-old sturgeon to the Milwaukee River at Grafton. The stocking was a milestone in the resurrection of the river, and for Wisconsin's lake sturgeon management program, which was 100 years old in 2003. Having protected and nurtured in Lake Winnebago what is now the world's largest lake sturgeon population, the program is focusing on restoring lake sturgeon in other parts of its original range in Wisconsin.

Daily coastal beach conditions available online

Results of water quality testing at Wisconsin's Great Lakes beaches was posted daily on a single unified beach health Web site. The daily postings were part of a new state beach health program developed by a team of state and local health and environmental officials to meet federal requirements for coastal beaches under the federal Beach Act of 2000. The program established the first uniform, comprehensive system for monitoring water quality and advising the public when there's an increased risk of illness for swimmers. Signs posted at coastal beaches remained the main way to advise people of water quality conditions, but the Web site was another important communication tool.

June

Wisconsin establishes 400th State Natural Area

Wisconsin reached a landmark in permanently protecting rare habitat in the state with the official designation of the 400th State Natural Area on June 9. Located in the Brule River State Forest, the 600-acre Mott's Ravine State Natural Area contains, among other features, remnants of pine barrens, a type of habitat that was once found across parts of northern Wisconsin. State Natural Areas are places that contain examples of outstanding natural biotic communities, provide critical habitat for rare species, serve as ecological benchmark, or have significant geology or archeological features. Wisconsin's SNA Program is the oldest natural areas program in the nation beginning in 1951. Since that time more than 150,000 acres have been protected.

Turkey hunters set spring harvest record of 42,237 birds

Wisconsin turkey hunters put another record spring turkey harvest into the books, registering 42,237 birds—an increase of 7 percent over the 2002 spring harvest of 39,336. Hunters took advantage of an expanding turkey population and an increased number of hunting permits. While hunter success rates have been pretty stable at around 25 percent overall in recent years, the state turkey population continues to expand its range. In addition, bird density within that range is increasing and both factors lead to a larger number of harvest permits. The season also set a high mark for hunter safety, being just the second spring turkey season since 1991 to be completely accident free.

Clam Lake elk herd expected to increase by 20 percent

Wisconsin's elk herd in the Clam Lake area was expected to grow by 20 percent in 2003, based on state wildlife biologists' observations of new calves born. Biologists with the Department of Natural Resources and University of Wisconsin Stevens Point wildlife researchers monitoring Wisconsin's growing elk herd in the Clam Lake area reported that the 24 elk they were watching over the spring produced 11 new calves. Based on previous years production, biologist estimated that around 25 to 30 calves were born this spring, roughly a 20 percent increase over 2002. Elk were extirpated from Wisconsin in the mid- 1800s. A failed attempt was made to reintroduce them in the 1930s but interest in rebuilding a herd remained. In 1994, a second reintroduction attempt released 25 elk, captured in Michigan, into the Clam Lake area.

New online DNR guide helps Wisconsin businesses understand permit process

The environmental permitting process got a little easier for Wisconsin business owners in 2003 with a new DNR Permit Primer Web site. The site, located at <<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/permitprimer/>>, offers an online tutorial that allows business owners to walk through the first steps of a virtual permitting process, learning which permits they need to comply with environmental standards and how to apply for them. Permits are the mechanism that regulators

use for pollution control, and the site covers all major permitting topics including air, solid and hazardous waste, water supply, storm water, waterways and wetlands. The Permit Primer is a product of DNR's effort to make the initial stages of the permit process more friendly and straightforward. The site guides users through an interactive question-and-answer session leading to personalized pollution prevention tips, appropriate DNR contacts and permit applications. Business owners cannot actually apply for permits or check the status of existing applications through the Primer, but they can use what they learn from visiting the site to streamline their application process.

July

Wisconsin wolf finds its way to Indiana

A gray wolf that was born to a Jackson County, Wis. wolf pack in 2002 was found dead in east central Indiana. This was the most southern movement ever detected of a Wisconsin wolf. This wolf was found more than 407 miles away in a straight line across the map, which cuts across the bottom of Lake Michigan, so he actually traveled much farther, especially considering he had to get around the greater metropolitan Chicago and Gary areas. The wolf was found in a soybean field in Randolph County, southwest of Winchester and only about 12 miles from the Ohio boarder. The cause of death was not know, but the wolf was less than 150 yards from a road, so it is possible a vehicle hit the wolf.

DNR fish stocking information now available online

Wisconsin anglers could learn with the click of a computer mouse whether their favorite lake or river has been stocked with game fish. The DNR put its fish stocking database online, giving anglers and others a quick and convenient answer to the question of where the state stocks fish. The Web site features an interactive map of Wisconsin that allows people to easily retrieve and view or print a stocking report for a particular county, all counties at once, Lake Michigan, or Lake Superior, Griffin says. The stocking reports contain information on the county, waterbody, species, strain, location and average length of the 45 million fish stocked in 2002 by DNR fish hatcheries, ponds, rearing stations and co-op ponds. Most fish that are stocked are not of a size to be caught by anglers for a year or even two or three. A link to the page can be found on the DNR fisheries Web page <<http://www.fishingwisconsin.org>>.

August

Wisconsin Supreme Court allows mourning dove season to begin

Wisconsin's first legal mourning dove season was held this year, following the state Supreme Court's denial in August of a request from an opposition group to temporarily stop the hunt. The hunting season previously had been scheduled to open on Sept 1, 2001 but had been halted by an injunction issued by Dane County Judge Daniel Moeser. The Fourth District Court of Appeals subsequently removed the injunction allowing the season to open this year. The petition before the Supreme Court was filed mid-June of 2003. An estimated 5.2 million mourning doves migrate from Wisconsin each year. Just over half die each year to disease, accidents, predators and other causes. But because of the dove's high rate of reproduction, hunting in Wisconsin will not threaten the state's population. The 60-day dove season ran Sept. 1 through Oct. 30 with a daily bag limit of 15 birds.

Wolves kill a young adult elk south of Clam Lake

A predator-prey relationship absent from Wisconsin for more than a century played out in August when a wolf pack attacked, killed and consumed a young adult elk near Clam Lake. What was significant about the relationship, state officials said, was that both species, wolves and elk, were once extirpated from Wisconsin -- meaning there were no longer found in the state -- but that populations of both species have now recovered to the point where they can again interact in natural predator-prey relationship. This was the first time that wolves killed an adult-sized elk, though wolves are believed to have killed three elk calves in 1999.

Terry Andrae State Park celebrates 75th anniversary Sept. 7

Terry Andrae State Park was created in 1928 through the generous gift of a 122 acres of property located just south of the city of Sheboygan along the shores of Lake Michigan by Mrs. Elsbeth Andrae of Milwaukee. Andrae donated her sand dune estate to the State of Wisconsin for the purpose of creating a state park in memory of her late husband Terry Andrae, a well-known Milwaukee industrialist of the time. Terry Andrae State Park and its adjoining sister park to the north, John Michael Kohler State Park, are administered together as one unit, the Kohler-Andrae State Park. Since 1927, the parks has grown considerably, and currently encompasses 1,000 acres and has over 2 miles of wide sandy Lake Michigan beach. Kohler-Andrae has also grown in popularity over the years as well. The park is now one of the busiest parks in the state with over 350,000 visitors and 60,000 campers using the park each year.

September

Fire danger prompts burning permit restrictions and caution outdoors

High fire danger in portions of west central Wisconsin caused state forestry officials to suspend issuing burning permits and to place other restrictions on outdoor use of fire in certain areas during September. A prolonged drought increased fire danger in the Black River Falls area resulting in an emergency order restricting the outdoor use of fire in parts of Jackson, Clark, and Eau Claire counties.

Proposal would remove wolves from state threatened species list

The population of gray wolves recovered in Wisconsin to the point under the state's wolf management plan that state wildlife officials proposed the species be removed from the state's threatened species list and managed as a protected species. The winter count of gray wolves outside of Native American Indian reservations in Wisconsin in 2002-2003 was 328; the winter count for 2001-2002 was 313. Under the Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan, approved by the state Natural Resources Board in October 1999, wolves should be removed from the state endangered and threatened species list once the population remained at above 250 wolves outside of reservations for one year. Removing wolves from the state list will have minimal effect on how wolves are managed in Wisconsin, because the species is also listed as threatened under the federal list.

Giant snakehead exotic predatory fish found in Rock River

A highly predatory exotic fish was captured in the Rock River between Janesville and Beloit, which state fisheries officials said was a clear indication that Wisconsin needs more stringent regulations on the possession of live, potentially harmful exotic fish species. DNR fisheries staff captured the 24-inch long giant snakehead (*Channa micropeltes*), also called the red snakehead, while conducting a fish survey of the river. The giant snakehead is a native of southeast Asia and a close relative of the northern snakehead (*Channa argus*), which gained notoriety last summer when an established population was found in a Maryland pond and subsequently eradicated by state fisheries crews to prevent its spread to neighboring waters.

State has new authority to fight asbestos violations

Building owners, demolition contractors, asbestos abatement contractors, general contractors, excavators, landfill operators, fire departments and others who violate asbestos regulations in Wisconsin could be subject to citations under a state authority that became effective Oct. 1. The DNR will be able to issue citations for violating any of three provisions of the state's asbestos law. These include: failing to notify the DNR of regulated demolition or renovation activities; failing to conduct an inspection prior to demolition or renovation; and not following asbestos landfill disposal requirements. Previously, DNR staff had to refer violations to the Wisconsin Department of Justice for prosecution. While that will still be an option, the new provision will allow DNR staff to deal more efficiently with less egregious, but still significant, violations.

October

Aztalan celebrates 75th anniversary as a park

One of Wisconsin's most important archeological sites -- Aztalan State Park located on the banks of the Rock River in eastern Jefferson County, celebrated its 75th anniversary as a park. The park contains the archaeological sites of an ancient Middle-Mississippian village and ceremonial complex that thrived between 1000 and 1300 A.D. The 172-acre park is a registered national landmark and is regarded as Wisconsin's largest and most important archaeological site. Aztalan's beginnings as a park date back to 1922, when a group of concerned Jefferson citizens purchased the few conical mounds remaining from a cluster that once numbered more than 40. At that time, the property was called Mounds Park. In 1927 the property was turned over to the Wisconsin Archaeological Society, and a formal dedication took place on Oct. 20, 1928. The park was converted to a State Park in 1952.

Invasive water fleas found in Wisconsin lake

Just weeks after the state's first snakehead fish turned up in the Rock River, another invasive species was found in Wisconsin waters. The University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reported Oct. 7 that spiny water fleas (*Bythotrephes cederstroemi*) have invaded the Gile Flowage, a lake in Iron County near Lake Superior. This is the first time the invasive water fleas have been found in an inland Wisconsin lake. Spiny water fleas -- a type of crustacean measuring up to one-half inch long -- had invaded Lake Huron by 1984 and spread to every Great Lake by 1987. Scientists suspect that the critter -- whose spiny, sharp tail makes up half its body length -- first arrived in North America in water carried aboard freighters from European ports.

New Office of Energy established at the DNR

A new Office of Energy was established at the Department of Natural Resources to organize environmental permitting and manage technical policy analysis for major utility and energy projects. The Office of Energy is responsible for coordinating utility project reviews with the Public Service Commission under a cooperative agreement between the two agencies. The agreement streamlines approval of power generation and transmission facilities to help Wisconsin deliver the electricity needed to support economic growth and high-skilled, high-wage jobs while maintaining environmental quality standards.

DNR restructures its air quality program

State environmental officials restructured Wisconsin's air quality program to better align a reduced workforce with the need to more rapidly respond to permit applications, especially for construction of new sources of air emissions. The DNR Bureau of Air Management readjusted work assignments to focus on activities that have the greatest impact on air quality in Wisconsin and on high-priority areas identified by environmental and business interests. The restructuring was necessary to address the most recent state budget, which reduced the emission fees account by \$1.1 million and eliminated 11.5 full-time positions from the Air Management Program. The restructuring also addresses federal requirements for the funding of operation permits and aligns the program's limited resources with available funding sources. The restructuring and staff reassignments took effect Oct. 6.

Revisions proposed to shoreland protection rules

An advisory committee finished developing its preferred options for how the state should revise its 36-year-old rules to better protect Wisconsin lakes and rivers while allowing waterfront property owners more flexibility to

develop their land. The proposals were the subject of public listening sessions statewide in November and December. DNR shoreland protection staff will consider the comments and ideas in drafting final rule proposals. The final rule proposals are expected to be ready for public hearing in summer 2004. DNR launched the broad-based initiative to update the rules governing waterfront development over concerns that the statewide minimum standards were not adequate to protect Wisconsin waters, that the rules were confusing to property owners and the local governments that enforced the standards, and that the rules were too limiting to property owners. A 28-member advisory committee of waterfront property owners, developers, environmentalists, university experts, county zoning officials and others has been helping DNR revise the rules. The rules, which apply to unincorporated areas -- and areas incorporated since 1994 or annexed since 1992 -- were mandated by Wisconsin lawmakers in 1966 to protect water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and scenic beauty along lakes and rivers. The rules seek to achieve their goals by controlling the intensity of development and creating buffers around the waters; counties are required to adopt the statewide minimum standards or can choose to administer and enforce more protective ones. .

Boats, snowmobiles and ATV online registered renewal available

Owners of snowmobiles, boats and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are now able to renew existing registration 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the state of Wisconsin Web site. DNR processes about 500,000 renewal transactions each year for owners of Wisconsin-registered boats, snowmobiles and ATVs. Snowmobiles and ATVs registrations are valid for two years, while boats are valid for three years. There has been a 36 percent increase in the number of ATVs registered since 2000, bringing the number of registrations in 2002 to approximately 176,000.

Hunters register 38,800 deer during early Zone T hunt

A preliminary count of deer registered in the Oct. 30-Nov. 2 Zone T hunt showed Wisconsin hunters bagging 38,803 deer in mixed weather conditions across the state. Oct. 30 also marked the start of the extended gun hunting season in the CWD intensive harvest zone, and the registration totals include some antlered deer that were shot in the CWD zone. A total of 47 Zone T deer management units and 15 CWD units were part of the hunt. There were 41 deer management units designated as Zone T in 2002.

Baraboo River dam removal project wins national award

The DNR won a national award for leading a "cutting edge" project that removed four dams and improved habitat along the Baraboo River to create the nation's longest river restoration through dam removal. The project, which brought together local, state and federal governments and conservation groups, has improved fishing along the river and allowed canoeists to traverse the entire 120 miles of free flowing water for the first time in 150 years. It also has sparked economic revitalization efforts along the waterfront. The project won the Sport Fishery Development and Management Award from the American Fisheries Society. The award is one of three given annually by the society's fisheries administrators section for outstanding projects that use federal Sport Fish Restoration funds, which are generated by a national excise tax on the sale of fishing gear and are distributed to the states based on the number of fishing licenses each state sells. SFR funding paid for the removal of the Baraboo dams.

November

Nominations open for Important Bird Areas

Under a new program launched recently by the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, people can nominate areas as Important Bird Areas in the state. The Initiative is a partnership of more than 120 organizations working in cooperation for the conservation of Wisconsin's avian wildlife. Wisconsin's Important Bird Area (IBA) program is part of an international effort to protect birds and their habitats. An IBA is a site that provides critical habitat for one or more species of bird. This includes sites used for breeding, feeding, wintering or migration and can range from a few to thousands of acres.

State receives 'Permitting Excellence Award' for work in waste management

The DNR waste management program received the '2002 Permitting Excellence Award' from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The award comes from achieving the goal set by EPA under the Government Performance and Results Act for safe waste management at hazardous waste facilities. By 2005, the national goal is to have 80 percent of existing hazardous waste management facilities with approved controls in place to prevent dangerous releases to the air, soil and ground water. Wisconsin reached 100 percent compliance and is one of only 11 states and territories to be at 100 percent.

Hunters register more than 304,000 deer in nine-day season

A preliminary total of 304,538 deer were registered by hunters at the close of Wisconsin's nine-day gun deer season. Hunters registered 277,755 deer during the same period in 2002 and 298,266 in 2001. Hunting conditions were extremely variable throughout the nine-day season and in many cases less than optimal but in spite of that hunters brought in a good harvest. Conditions across the state during the nine-day period ranged from mild but blustery to cold and wet. Snow in the north and west, either early or later in the nine-day period, enhanced visibility and tracking. Brown conditions persisted in the south and unfrozen marshes affected access in southeastern areas.

December

Snowmobile sound rule hearings scheduled

Public hearings were scheduled for December on proposed changes to the rule regarding the allowable noise level from snowmobiles operating in Wisconsin. The proposed rule will provide law enforcement with a testing

method that can be used to measure noise levels from snowmobiles while the machine is stationary. Current state law requires snowmobiles manufactured since 1975 to meet a noise level that does not exceed 78 decibels.

Revisions proposed to air permits rules

Changes to air pollution permit rules would make it easier for companies to receive permits for major new projects or major changes to an existing operation in Wisconsin, while continuing to protect air quality in the state, under a proposal that will be taken out for public hearings early next year. The state Natural Resources Board approved a request by DNR air management staff to schedule public hearings on revisions to what are known as Air Construction Permit rules. This rule package makes it easier to do business in Wisconsin while continuing to protect the environment, said DNR Secretary Scott Hassett. This represents the first phase in streamlining the new source review permit program, which is one of Governor Doyle's key regulatory reforms in his 'Grow Wisconsin' plan. Wisconsin is one of the first states in the nation to move forward with developing a revised new source regulation. The EPA set a deadline of December 2005 for submission of rule revisions and our schedule has cut that time in half. In December 2002, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency published regulations that significantly change the way new and modified sources of air pollution receive permits. In March 2003, Wisconsin joined 11 other states in challenging EPA's regulatory changes, based on the position that the changes would result in more air pollution reaching Wisconsin, thus causing difficulty in meeting the ozone standard in eastern Wisconsin.

Wisconsin purchases three rail corridors for trails

Three railroad corridors in Polk, Manitowoc, Brown and Langlade counties will be converted into trails for hiking, biking and other recreational uses, under a purchase agreement between the State of Wisconsin and Canadian National Railroad Company. The transaction will preserve 35 miles of corridor on 458 acres for trail use and possible reinstatement as railroads if needed in the future. The cost is \$790,000, which will be paid from the Knowles/Nelson Stewardship Fund. Wisconsin is the Nation's leader for rails to trails with nearly 1,700 miles of trails.

Third group of endangered whooping cranes completes ultralight-led migration

Sixteen whooping cranes following three ultralight aircraft reached their Florida winter home Dec. 8 after completing a 1,225-mile migration from Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin to Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge along Florida's central Gulf Coast. The 16 cranes left Necedah on Oct. 16, following ultralight aircraft. These birds are the third generation of whooping cranes to make this unique assisted migration from Wisconsin to Florida. All 20 cranes from the migration classes of 2001 and 2002 started or completed the return to Florida unassisted. Many of the previous year's birds spent the summer on a variety of state, private and federal lands during the summer.

DNR Waste Management Program achieves EMS certification

A state agency program charged with overseeing how solid waste is managed in Wisconsin has become the first such program in the nation to receive a prestigious international certification for its Environmental Management System (EMS). The DNR Waste Management Program achieved ISO 14001 EMS certification. ISO 14001 is part of a series of international standards on environmental management established by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), a non-governmental organization made up of representatives of national standards institutes of 148 countries. The main thrust for development of the series came as a result of the Rio Summit on the Environment held in 1992. The Waste Management Program within the DNR is responsible for waste and materials management in Wisconsin. Materials management refers to the use and reuse of materials now commonly considered wastes.

DNR seeks change to allow hunters to buy a deer license after season opens

DNR Secretary Scott Hassett announced the agency would pursue a change to allow hunters to purchase deer license after the annual nine-day season opens each November. Current law makes it illegal for most hunters to purchase a license after the nine-day gun deer hunt opens each November. This law was created decades ago to prevent people from killing a deer first, then buying a license. Current technology makes this law out-dated and no longer necessary and keeps some hunters from participating in the gun deer season, Hassett said.

Spring turkey hunting application deadline extended

The deadline for submitting spring wild turkey hunt applications had to be extended after an unprecedented demand for online applications. The Internet site that handles online applications for DNR was overwhelmed with the number of customers attempting to apply online for their spring permits. The DNR expects to issue over 177,000 permits for the 2004 spring turkey season.

State continues to lead nation in dam removals and river restorations

The removal earlier this month of the deteriorating White River Dam on the Fox River in Green Lake County brought to eight the number of dams removed from Wisconsin waters in 2003, with four removals already on tap for 2004. The projects cemented Wisconsin's status as the nation's leader in removing unsafe, obsolete dams, and highlighted the improvement in water quality, fisheries, and habitat that can be gained from restoring rivers to a free-flowing condition.

Hunters register 7,746 deer in Dec 11-14 Zone T hunt

A preliminary tally of registrations for the Dec 11-14 Zone T antlerless deer hunt in selected deer management units shows hunters harvested 7,746 deer over the four day period. Conditions were excellent with snow in many areas, there were ample tags available and there was a much less concern about CWD among hunters. This was the second and final Zone T hunt in the 2003 gun deer season. The first was Oct 30-Nov. 2. The preliminary tally for the early hunt was 38,803, which includes the harvest from the 15 CWD units. It is difficult to

compare the two hunts because the number of participating deer management units was different. The October hunt involved 62 units (47 Zone T units plus 15 CWD units) and the December hunt involved 33 Zone T units. The 14 Zone T deer management units north of Hwy. 8

[EDITOR'S ADVISORY: There will be no DNR Outdoor Report issued on Dec. 30, 2003. The next report will be issued on Jan. 6, 2004.]

Outdoor Report as of December 23, 2003

People looking for snow for cross-country skiing or snowmobiling over the upcoming holiday weekends will need to travel to northern Wisconsin unless the state receives some significant snowfalls in the very near future, which are not in the current forecast.

Snowmobile conditions were still being reported from fair to excellent in the most northern tier of Wisconsin counties as of this week, trails remained open in Lincoln County but were in marginal condition and most trails from Marathon County south remain closed.

Cross-country ski trails in the north remain open and generally in good to excellent condition, with some thin spots under dense tree cover and on south slopes. A warming trend in the last week dropped the snow base on many of the cross-country ski trails in the central part of the state, but conditions were still being reported as fair to good through much of central Wisconsin this week, especially for skate skiers. Many parks report they still lack sufficient snow to set tracks for classic skiers.

More than two dozen candlelight ski events will be held this winter at parks, forests and trails across Wisconsin. The events begin the first weekend in January and run through mid February. If there is insufficient snow for skiing, many parks will still hold the event as a candlelight hike, while others will cancel, so if conditions are questionable, it is best to call the specific park, forest or trail office for updates. The entire list of candlelight events can be found on the DNR Web site.

Ice conditions improved for ice anglers in the last week across much of the state, though major lakes in southern Wisconsin, such as the Madison area lakes, remain open. Many lakes in the north now have more than 8 inches of ice. And while there have been reports of people heading out on snowmobiles and ATVs, DNR recreational safety specialists are cautioning that many lakes still have areas thin ice and caution against using vehicles on any ice at this time.

Ice anglers in southern Wisconsin are reporting 4 to 5 inches of clear and very smooth ice on the smaller lakes. Rainfall after the lakes froze over created unusually smooth conditions creating a great surface for ice skating and ice boating where the ice is thick enough. Anglers venturing out on the ice may want to consider using ice creepers or cleats on their boots. Panfish anglers were reporting some action for bluegills and crappies, but the clear, thin ice was making panfish spooky, and some anglers were having better luck with tip-ups for northern and walleye.

The snow cover across southwestern, central and northern Wisconsin is providing some very favorable rabbit hunting conditions, with surveys indicating there are currently good number of rabbits.

Most white-tailed buck deer are still sporting their antlers, but have already been some reports from the far north of bucks shedding antlers.

Many birds are being seen at the bird feeders. Some northern shrikes have been seen in southwestern Wisconsin. Now is a good time to watch for rough-legged hawks in the southern part of the state as deeper snow cover tends to push these arctic-breeding birds farther south in search of small rodents.

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**A three-minute audio version of this report can be heard by calling (608) 266-2277.
A new report is put on the line each week.**

DNR Northern Region

Superior DNR Service Center area

Brule River State Forest - Sunday Dec. 21 the Brule Weather Station recorded 40 degrees for the high. Some ice houses are being seen out on the area lakes. Conditions at the Afterhours Ski Trail are still very good. The only exception to this is an un-named classic only trail constructed last summer which was groomed for the first time last Friday and is in poor condition. Another 1.5 inches of lake effect snow fell on the trail on Dec. 23. There is a 3- to 6-inch base on the trail and about 10 inches in the woods. The Brule Valley Ski Club is hosting Learn to Ski afternoons on Jan. 4 and Feb. 1. The dates were incorrect in an earlier posting. Due to heavy use the snowmobile trails in the area are in rough shape. Bucks have started shedding their antlers. Bears should be starting to give birth to their cubs in a couple of weeks.

Woodruff DNR Service Center area

Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest - All four ski trails McNaughton, Raven, Escanaba and Madeline, have been tracked. Most areas tracked well. There are some thinner areas of snow along lakes and under heavy cover (hemlocks, ect.)

Cumberland Area

Barron and Polk counties - Snow depths of 8-10 inches in the woods and slightly more in open areas mean winter is here. Conditions have been good for snowmobiling and cross country skiing. There are some great hunting opportunities out there for small game hunting and late season bow hunting. Squirrels and rabbits are very abundant and have been very active, especially during mid-day when temperatures warm up. Still hunting or sitting in almost any farm woodlot can guarantee a hunter a chance to harvest a limit of squirrels every time they go out. Rabbits can be found in brushy woodlots, lowland brush, marshes, pine plantations, and recently logged areas. Jumping on brushpiles, organizing drives similar to deer hunting, still hunting, or hunting with dogs are all methods that are used to harvest late season cottontails. Ruffed grouse are more predictable this time of year and snow helps reveal where they are. Young aspen, tag alder, brushy woodlots, and creek bottoms are all places to find late season grouse. Numbers are not great but birds are more concentrated in thick cover this time of year. Late season bow hunting is a good time to fill that unused archery or bonus tag. Deer are less abundant and still wary from the gun seasons. But, they are moving in a predictable pattern toward sources of food and cover. Picked and unpicked cornfields are good locations, as well as trails to and from bedding areas.

DNR Northeastern Region

Wautoma DNR Service Center area

Hartman Creek State Park

Cross-country ski trails are currently in fair/poor condition and some icy spots due to the warm weather over the past weekend. More snowfall is needed. Please remember that no hiking (or pets) are allowed on the ski trails. The pine trees are covered with snow, making a venture into the woods a breathtaking site! Portions of the park are open for the late bow deer season (Dec. 1-Jan. 3). Please check with office regarding rules and maps. The deer gun hunt in the park was successful for many hunters. Whispering Pines day use area is closed until next spring.

DNR Southeast Region

Ice anglers in Southeastern Wisconsin are reporting 4 to 5 inches of clear and very smooth ice. Although caution should be used, where ice is strong enough, ice skating and ice boating conditions are great. Rainfall after the lakes froze over created unusually smooth conditions. For a safe ice fishing trip consider using ice creepers or cleats on your boots to prevent injuries that commonly occur on slick ice. Panfish anglers on Delavan Lake were reporting bluegills and crappies hitting, and some tip up action on walleyes after dark. Bluegills and other panfish were being taken on Whitewater and Tichigan lakes. The clear thin ice can make early jig fishing for spooky panfish slow, and some anglers maintain they are having better luck with tip-ups.

Sheboygan County - In Sheboygan, the Sheboygan River has started to ice over, but open water can still be found below the Kohler Dam and in other fast moving stretches.

Kohler-Andrae State Park - Kohler-Andrae has received only a very slight dusting of snow. No measurable amounts of snow are expected. Hiking trails and roadways are in good condition. The trails may be slippery in spots. The cross-country ski trail is not skiable at this time.

Ozaukee County - There were no reports for Port Washington, but the power plant discharge should provide good shore fishing opportunities for browns and a few rainbows this time of year. Try using spawn, alewives, or spoons.

Milwaukee County - In Milwaukee, shore anglers near the Summerfest grounds have been catching a few browns on shiners. In upstream stretches of the Milwaukee River, considerable shelf ice has formed, making access difficult. Flowing slush and ice also worsened conditions, although it may dissipate on a warm weather day. Boat anglers have been finding decent numbers of brown trout off the Oak Creek Power Plant and around the main gap. Please use extra caution if you take a boat out this time of year.

Racine County - In Racine, water levels on the Root River have been dropping all week, but flows remain decent. A few browns and steelhead have been found in deep, slow pools in Island Park and downstream stretches of Lincoln Park. Most fish have been hitting a wide variety of fly patterns or spawn sacs.

Kenosha County - In the Kenosha harbor, ice starts to form but disappears on warmer days. Anglers have been able to catch a few browns on tube jigs and wax worms.

DNR South Central Region

Dodgeville DNR Service Center area Grant County

Wyalusing State Park - Many birds are being seen at the bird feeders, including a northern shrike. The ice is 3 to 4 inches thick and ice anglers were trying their luck. Eagles were still being seen at Point Lookout but in fewer numbers as the ice has covered most of the rivers below the park. Only 1 to 2 inches of snow are on the ground. Deer are seen almost daily throughout the park.

DNR West Central Region

La Crosse DNR Service Center area

Early winter snow means rabbit hunting. Rabbit hunting conditions have been favorable and spring surveys indicate lots of rabbits are out there. Now is the time to get back to your roots and spend some time pursuing rabbits. Brush piles are always good for producing rabbits but don't forget thick fence rows adjacent to cornfields and brush creek bottoms. Keep your eyes open for rough-legged hawks! These birds breed in the Arctic tundra and migrate to and winter primarily in the lower 48 states. They feed mainly on small rodents and often hunt for them by hovering above a grassy field before diving down on the unsuspecting prey. Deep snowcover tends to push the birds farther south.

Great River State Trail - The snowmobile trails in La Crosse and Trempealeau counties remain closed. When conditions permit, the trail will be open from Lehman Road in Trempealeau to Lakeview Restaurant in Onalaska. The portion of the trail in the City of Onalaska is closed to snowmobiles. Parking lots along the trail are at Trempealeau, Midway, County Highway B in La Crosse and the parking lot behind Lakeview Restaurant on highway 35 just north of Onalaska. For information on snowmobile trail conditions in Trempealeau County please call (715) 538-2311, ext. 205.

Perrot State Park - There has not been enough snow to groom the ski trails. The trails are all snow covered and skiing is possible on the ungroomed trails. Seven campsites will remain open for winter camping. The Friends of Perrot have snowshoes for adults and children available at the park office. A free-will donation is appreciated. Snowshoes and hiking are allowed on all ungroomed trails. Maps are available at the park office.

Merrick State Park - The channel along the south campground is froze. Ice anglers have reported moderate success. Visitors bringing ATVs or snowmobiles are reminded they are not allowed in the park. They can be unloaded at the boatlandings to access the backwaters. Ice fishers parking in the south campground need to park in designated parking areas which are the plowed campsites or plowed overflow parking areas.

Black River Falls DNR Service Center area

Black River State Forest - Ski trails have been packed to a 2-inch base. No tracks have been set. Snowmobile/ATV trails have been packed and are in fair condition. Two family campgrounds remain open for winter use they are Castle Mound and Pigeon Creek.

Eau Claire DNR Service Center area

Lake Wissota State Park - Cross-country trail conditions: warm temperatures have lowered the base to 4 inches. Ski trails are groomed and tracked. Last groomed on Dec. 17. Monday trails were still good. Some leaves are pulled up into the track. The dustings of snow predicted will make for excellent skiing. Trails open to snowshoeing have a 4-inch deep snow base. Hiking after a snowfall, with everything covered in clean, white snow is the best! Remember hiking or snowshoeing is **not** allowed on cross-country ski trails. Ice is over 5 inches thick at our boat-landing bay. A few fishermen are ice fishing. Be sure to test the ice thickness before venturing onto the water. Our boat dock has been removed for the winter. The road to the boat landing is not plowed or passable during winter months. Many of the bucks still have their antlers.

Wisconsin Rapids DNR Service Center area

Buckhorn State Park - Cross country ski trails and the snowmobile trail are in poor condition and parts are not useable. More snow is needed for good conditions. The park and wildlife areas A and B are open for the late bow season (54A). Deer may be registered at the office when it is staffed. Campsites 8, 9, 16 are open for winter tent camping. All other campsites are closed for the season. A winter use map showing ski trails and the snowmobile trail is posted on the office bulletin board and the board at the ski trailhead in the south parking lot. Ice is forming again on Castle Rock Flowage. Use caution when going out on ice. The park does not monitor ice conditions.

Roche-A-Cri State Park - The park's cross-country ski trails have been packed and are in fair condition. Grooming will have to wait until we have more snow to work with. Please remember that the mound stairway is not maintained for winter use and may be slippery. The Park's main gate is closed for the season. Please use the winter parking area located on Czech Avenue at the south end of the prairie.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT STATE PARKS, FORESTS, AND TRAILS WATCHABLE WILDLIFE OPPORTUNITIES AND INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

Check with the park or forest of your choice for additional activities and special events not listed. Most events are free

of charge; park admission sticker required unless otherwise noted. **Events and times subject to change.**

Sunday, December 28, 2003

- **Peninsula State Park**, Fish Creek, (920) 854-5976 - Tree Challenge. Can you identify buds and bark from five common trees? Nature Center. Come any time from noon to 4 p.m. Activity takes 10 minutes.

Monday, December 29, 2003

- **Council Grounds State Park**, Merrill, - Candlelight Walk. 5-8 p.m.

Tuesday, December 30, 2003

- **Peninsula State Park**, Fish Creek, (920) 854-5976 - Crystal Snowflake. Crystal has blown down from the North. Meet a real live flake, learn how snow helps animals, and fashion a snowflake. Nature Center. Come any time 10 a.m. - noon.

Wednesday, December 31, 2003

- **Peninsula State Park**, Fish Creek, (920) 854-5976 - Sentinel Trail Hike. The naturalist will lead a walk/snowshoe along a 1/2-mile loop. Provide your own snowshoes. Meet at the Tower. 10-11 a.m.

Friday, January 2, 2004

- **Peninsula State Park**, Fish Creek, (920) 854-5976 - Snow Snakes. Decorate a snow snake to take home. See how far your snake goes! An Algonquin Indian tradition. \$1 donation. Nature Center. 10-11 a.m.

Saturday, January 3, 2004

- **Blue Mound State Park**, Blue Mounds, (608) 437-5711 - Candlelight Ski, Hike And Snowshoe. Candlelight ski on one- and two-mile loops. A separate 3/4-mile lit trail for hikers, snowshoers, and leashed pets. Bonfire, free hot drinks. Mount Horeb High School Track and Cross Country Team will sell chili, brats, hot dogs, and baked goods. Special glow-in-the-dark long-sleeved candlelight T-shirts for sale. If snow conditions are not favorable, all lit trails will be open for hiking. Sponsored by Friends of Blue Mound State Park. Ski trail head. 6-9 p.m.
- **Mirror Lake State Park**, Baraboo, (608) 254-2333 - Candlelight Ski. Ski on 1.5 miles of candlelit trails. Join the Friends of Mirror Lake for hot beverages, baked goods and hot dogs by a warming fire. 6-8 p.m.
- **Whitefish Dunes State Park**, Sturgeon Bay, (920) 823-2400. **Family Activity: Snowflakes.** What do you know about snowflakes? Come make a snowflake for your own and learn about a man who captured them on film. Whitefish Dunes Nature Center. 3 p.m. **Winter Weeds and Twigs.** Can you identify plants in winter? Discover the hidden treasures beneath the snow. Dress for the weather. Meet at the Nature Center for this exploration hike. Whitefish Dunes Nature Center. 1 p.m. **Winter Wildlife.** Join the naturalist to discover how animals survive the winter. Watch out for tracks, scat and other signs of animals. Dress for the weather. Meet at the Nature Center for this family program. Whitefish Dunes Nature Center. 10 a.m.

Sunday, January 4, 2004

- **Brule River State Forest**, Brule, (715) 372-5678 - Learn to Ski Day. Free cross-country ski lessons. Equipment rental available for small fee. Sponsored by Brule Valley Ski Club and Brule River State Forest. Afterhours Ski Trail.
- **Kettle Moraine State Forest--Northern Unit**, Campbellsport, (920) 533-8322 - Nordic Heaven. Pack up and head out to Greenbush Recreation Area for a day of winter fun. The cross-country ski trails will be groomed and the shelter heated. The Northern Kettle Moraine Nordic Ski Club will offer a snowshoe hike, ski waxing demonstrations, and cross-country ski lessons. The sledding hill will also be ready for sledders. Sponsored by Northern Kettle Moraine Nordic Ski Club. Greenbush Recreation Area Group Camp. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Thursday, January 8, 2004

- **Interstate State Park**, St. Croix Falls, (715) 483-3747 - Nature Storytime. Join Naturalist Julie Fox Martin for a story and activity chosen especially for children pre-K through kindergarten and their parents. The short activity after the story will reinforce the story's nature-related theme. Nature Storytime will generally last between 30-45 minutes, depending on the participants. Ice Age Center. 10 a.m.
- **Whitefish Dunes State Park**, Sturgeon Bay, (920) 823-2400 - Winter Walks - Rocky Shores. Discover the lakeshore during winter. Watch for waterfowl and the bald eagle of this short in distance hike. We will be walking over uneven ground. Dress for the weather. Whitefish Dunes Nature Center. 1:30 p.m.

OUTDOORS CALENDAR

Through December 31 - Illegal during this time to shine for wild animals between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

December 31

- Pheasant season closes.
- Ruffed grouse season closes in the Northern Zone.
- Hungarian partridge season closes.
- Bobcat hunting and trapping season closes.
- Mink trapping season closes in the northern, central and southern zones.
- Fisher trapping season closes.
- Frog season closes.

January 3 - Late archery deer season closes.

January 16 - Application deadline for 2003 bear hunting kill permit.

January 26 - Winter crow season opens, through March 20.

January 31

- Squirrel season closes.
- Raccoon season closes
- Ruffed grouse seasons closes in western zone.

DNR Meetings and Hearings Calendar

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations, including the provision of informational material in an alternative format, will be provided for qualified individuals with disabilities upon request. Please call the contact person listed for the meeting or hearing with specific information on your request at least 10 days before the date of the scheduled hearing.

MEETINGS

December 23 –The Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing Board (LMCFB) fall quarterly meeting, will meet at 5:30 p.m. at the DNR Lake Michigan District headquarters, 1125 N. Military Ave., **Green Bay**. For more information, contact Allen Blizel at (920) 746-2866

2004

January 9 – The Executive Council of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, 7 p.m. at the Best Western in **Stevens Point**. Agenda items include Secretary matters (Secretary Hassett), Department Wildlife and Fisheries questions for the spring hearings; brief on Department fall regulation meetings, “Opening the future to the outdoors: The Wall of Fame. For more information, contact AnnMarie Kutzke at (608) 266-2952.

January 10 - A meeting to discuss the status of the Spotted Musky Program in Long Lake in Waushara County will be held at 10 a.m. at the Wild Rose Village Hall, 500 Main St. **Wild Rose**. Staff from the Department of Natural Resources will be provide information, answer questions, and take comments on the role of Long Lake in Wisconsin’s Spotted Musky program and the overall health of the Long Lake Fishery. Questions and/or comments regarding this open meeting can be directed to David Bartz, DNR Fish Biologist for the Upper Fox River Basin, at (608) 297-7058. Written comments can also be sent to David Bartz, Wisconsin DNR - Montello Work Site, 363 Church St., Hwy. 22N, Montello, WI 53949.

January 12 - State Trails Council quarterly meeting will be conducted by teleconference originating from Room 774A of the State Natural Resources Building (GEF 2), 101 South Webster Street in **Madison** from

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Agenda items include trail acquisition and development, a presentation concerning Wisconsin's two National Scenic Trails, Council appointments, and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and other trail issues For more information contact Brigit Brown, State Trails Coordinator at (608) 266-2183.

January 13 - A DNR Advisory Group for Landfill Siting Needs Analysis will meet at 10 a.m., in the 3rd Floor Licensing Conference Room, of the state office building GEF 3, 125 S. Webster Street, **Madison**. The agenda will include discussion of guidance for the needs analysis, site life analysis, and alternatives to landfilling portions of the waste disposal facility siting process. For information contact Brad Wolbert at (608) 275-7769.

HEARINGS

2004

January 5 – A rescheduled telephone conference in the matter of the issuance of a conditional approval for a high capacity well to Pioneer Metal Finishing and Contested by the Village of Ashwaubenon, Brown County. File No. 05-3-0029, Well Permit No. 03938. The Division of Hearings and Appeals will initiate the call at 2 p.m. For more information, contact the Division of Hearings and Appeals at (608) 266-7709.

January 5 – A rescheduled telephone conference call in the matter of the issuance of an approval for a high capacity well to Bay Towel, Inc. on property owned by Putnam Capital Group LLP, and contested by the Village of Ashwaubenon, Brown County. File No. 05-3-0028, Well Permit No. 03937. The Division of Hearings and Appeals will initiate the call at 2 p.m. For more information, contact the Division of Hearings and Appeals at (608) 266-7709.

January 7 – A Class 2 contested case in the matter of the application of George M. Reynolds for an After-the-Fact Water Quality certification to place fill in .19 acres of wetland on property located in the town of Liberty Grove, Door County. The project consists of constructing a driveway through a wetland. The driveway is 16 feet wide, 12 feet wide at the top and 2 foot slide slopes on each side. The maximum height 0.23 acres of forested wetlands. The hearing will commence at 9 a.m. in the General Meeting Room of the Door County Courthouse, **Sturgeon Bay**. The hearing will continue, if necessary, on January 8 and 9, 2004 at the same location. For more information, contact the Division of Hearings and Appeals at (608) 266-7709.

January 12 – A telephone prehearing conference in the matter of the reissuance of WPDES Permit No. WI-0003085-6 to Murphy Oil USA, Inc. located at Superior. The Division of Hearings and Appeals will initiate the conference call at 10 a.m. The hearing is a Class1 contested case. For more information, contact the Division of Hearings and Appeals at (608) 266-7709.

January 13 – This hearing has been adjourned.A Class 2 contested case in the matter of the denial of the Village of Glenbeulah's request for the proposed reconstruction of a private well for use as a municipal water source Project #W-2003-0092; PWSID#46004409. For more information, contact the Division of Hearings and Appeals at (608) 266-7709.