

# Dept. of Natural Resources: Announces changes in Sandhill Wildlife Area management

Posted on Thursday, Sep 23, 2021

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**MADISON, Wis.** – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced the planned discontinuation of its game farm license at Sandhill Wildlife Area in Wood County.

An information session on the decommissioning process will be held at Sandhill Wildlife Area at 5:45 p.m. on Oct. 6.

Since purchasing the property in 1962, the DNR has managed Sandhill to provide unique wildlife viewing, hunting and research opportunities to the public while maintaining a deer farm status per state regulation.

“Sandhill Wildlife Area offers opportunities for hikers, hunters, trappers, birders and paddlers to experience the unique landscape of Wisconsin’s Central Sands,” said Ryan Haffele, DNR Wildlife Management Area Supervisor. “Knowing a game farm license could jeopardize future public access, we made the difficult decision to relinquish our license.”

The department has held a game farm license for Sandhill Wildlife Area since 2003. Following the terms of this license, the DNR has maintained a perimeter fence around the property’s 9,150 acres.

Following state regulations, game farms affected by chronic wasting disease (CWD) must implement a biosecurity plan to prevent the spread of the disease. While CWD has not yet been found in any Sandhill deer, it has been found in Wood County.

If the disease were to be found on the property, the public would have restricted

access to the property and interfere with habitat management due to the required biosecurity plan.

The DNR will relinquish its game farm license to safeguard the public's continued enjoyment of Sandhill Wildlife Area. As part of this process, the department will follow all state regulations for decommissioning a game farm, including depopulating the deer herd within the existing fence and then removing the fence itself. A timeline has not been established for the decommissioning process.

While the property will no longer operate as a game farm, all other aspects of the property will remain in place at Sandhill Wildlife Area. Operations continuing on the property include the Outdoor Skills Center, dormitory, Trumpeter Trail, hiking trails and the wildlife refuge and operation as a Wildlife Demonstration Area.

The 9,150-acre State Wildlife Area was named for a series of gently rolling sandy ridges crisscrossing the property. Sandhill Wildlife Area lies within the bed of ancient Glacial Lake Wisconsin – an expansive region of flat, marshy land interspersed with forests covering parts of seven counties in central Wisconsin.

The property features low, sandy uplands of oak, aspen and jack pine forests, large marshes and many flowages. A small herd of American bison, ruffed grouse, Canada geese, ducks, loons, bald eagles, sandhill cranes, shorebirds, songbirds, hawks, owls and furbearers find a great home here at Sandhill.

[More information on Sandhill Wildlife Area is available on the DNR website.](#)