

Dept. of Natural Resources: Stevens Point resident named recipient of the 2021 DNR Ethical Hunter Award

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BARNEVELD, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is pleased to announce that Mark Moersch Jr., 29, of Stevens Point, received the 2021 DNR Ethical Hunter Award. Moersch was selected for helping a fellow hunter track a wounded deer after dark and, on a separate occasion, reported a potentially lethal bait pile. This is the 25th year of the award.

Midway through the 2021 gun-deer season, Moersch Jr. was deer hunting with his father and a family friend. After the group harvested a deer and loaded it into their truck, they received a text saying another friend was with a stranger who struck a deer with a vehicle and needed help tracking it.

Moersch Jr. was quick to reply yes to the late-day request from the stranger. No one had a great flashlight to help locate blood spots, and seeing in a dark, thick forest was difficult. To make things even harder, the location where the deer had been wounded was about a mile off the road.

“Another pair of eyes is always helpful,” Moersch said. “Even with the poor lights, lack of snow and thick woods, I had no regrets offering to help out.”

After more than two hours of searching, no strong blood trail was found, and everyone agreed to call off the search that night. “I agreed to come back the next morning, under better light conditions and begin again, but (the) friend did not call back, and I don’t know if they found anything,” Moersch said.

“Mark had never met this hunter and didn’t know him,” said Tanya Lauer, Mark’s

friend. “This was not an easy undertaking, but it’s the kind of guy Mark is. It goes to show his love for deer hunting and the deer. He’s willing to help others, even if it means taking away from his hunting and relaxing time.”

In addition to the deer search, Moersch demonstrated another ethical feat by reporting what he believed to be illegal baiting. He contacted DNR law enforcement officials with the GPS location and other details.

The Ethical Hunter Award selection committee members praise Moersch for his actions.

“This award recognizes people helping people when afield,” said Capt. April Dombrowski, DNR Recreational Safety Section Chief. “Hunter ethics is shown by a person’s actions – doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason. That’s what Mark Moersch did – twice.”

Committee members presented Moersch with an official plaque and a gift from the award co-sponsor, Vortex Optics, Inc., at a May 21 ceremony held at the company’s Barneveld headquarters.

2022 NOMINATIONS ARE NOW OPEN

To be eligible for the 2022 DNR Ethical Hunter Award:

- Any Wisconsin hunter of any game species is eligible to be nominated.
- The nominee must be a licensed (resident or nonresident) Wisconsin hunter.
- The ethical hunting act must have occurred in Wisconsin during the 2022 calendar year.
- Nominations are considered for any DNR-regulated hunting activity in Wisconsin.

Written nominations must contain the name, address and telephone number of the witness or witnesses, or be aware of the behavior which led to the nomination.

A four-person committee reviews the nominations and selects the recipient. The committee focuses on a singular action or event rather than individuals with long-term conservation-related programs.

Submit nominations by email or U.S. mail explaining the ethical act to:

Department of Natural Resources

c/o April Dombrowski

101 S. Webster St.

P.O. Box 7921

Madison, WI 53707-7921

Email: April.Dombrowski@wisconsin.gov

The creators of this award are Bob Lamb, retired editor of the La Crosse Tribune; Steve Dewald, retired DNR Conservation Warden Supervisor and Jerry Davis, a retired University of Wisconsin-La Crosse biology professor and outdoors writer.

The deadline to submit a nomination is Feb. 1, 2023.