



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

2005 Wisconsin Act 290
[2005 Assembly Bill 719]

Hunting in School Forests

School districts and certain other educational institutions are authorized under Wisconsin law to acquire land and manage that land for forestry purposes. This land, when acquired by a school district, is referred to as a “school forest.” A total of 25,000 acres of land is held as school forest land, and the parcel sizes range from 3 to 740 acres for individual parcels. School forests are owned by 193 different school districts (a number of these districts have more than one school forest parcel), seven private schools, five campuses in the University of Wisconsin System, and three technical colleges.

2005 Wisconsin Act 290 allows a school board to authorize hunting in its school forest. However, the school board may not allow hunting for a specific type of wild animal if there is not an open season for that animal on land adjacent to the school forest. The decision of a school board to allow hunting in a school forest does not restrict the authority of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to remove wild animals from the school forest that are causing damage or causing a nuisance.

If a school board authorizes hunting in its school forest, the DNR is required by Act 290 to establish and maintain open and closed season for game in that school forest. The open and closed seasons established by DNR must be consistent with the seasons for game located on lands adjacent to the school forest.

The current statutes contain various restrictions that prohibit hunting or carrying firearms in or near the grounds of a school, which includes a school forest. The Act makes statutes that do the following inapplicable where the school board has authorized hunting in the school forest and a person is hunting pursuant to that authorization:

- Prohibits hunting within 1,700 feet of the grounds of any school.
- Requires the school district administrator to suspend and commence proceedings to expel a student from school if the administrator finds that a pupil possessed a firearm at school or while under the supervision of a school authority.

This memo provides a brief description of the Act. For more detailed information, consult the text of the law and related legislative documents at the Legislature’s Web site at: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/>.

- Prohibits a person from possessing a firearm in a school zone, which is defined as the grounds of a school or within 1,000 feet from the grounds of a school.
- Prohibits dangerous weapons other than firearms on school premises.

Effective Date: 2005 Wisconsin Act 290 took effect on April 21, 2006.

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