

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

DNR 4/22/2025

LRB Number	25-2335/1	Introduction Number	AB-0117	Estimate Type	Original
Description hunting of sandhill cranes, programs related to sandhill crane damage, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

I. BILL SUMMARY

The bill directs the department, upon approval by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), to authorize a sandhill crane hunt in Wisconsin. The bill requires that DNR use permits to control the number of hunters and the number of cranes that may be harvested, and it authorizes DNR to establish closed zones or other restrictions to minimize the inadvertent taking of other bird species, including whooping cranes.

In addition, the bill does the following:

1. Requires the department to conduct a free sandhill crane hunter education program. A person must complete the program and pass a test before hunting sandhill cranes. The program must include specified information about sandhill cranes, such as how to distinguish them from other birds, and specified information about applicable hunting zones and regulations. The results of the test are valid for one year.
2. Requires the DNR to issue permits according to a cumulative preference system, if demand for sandhill crane hunting permits exceeds supply. For any given season, a person may apply for either a permit or for a preference point. A person who applies unsuccessfully for a permit is awarded instead a preference point. A person may accumulate and transfer preference points to certain other persons in the same manner as the cumulative preference systems used for other species. A person may transfer a permit to certain other persons in the same manner as approvals for other species, to the extent allowable by federal law.
3. Sets the cost of a sandhill crane hunting permit at \$20 for a resident and \$100 for a nonresident, in addition to a \$4.25 processing fee and a \$0.25 issuance fee for each application for a permit or for a preference point.
4. Directs the DNR to allocate the revenue generated from permit sales and processing fees as follows:
 - a. Fifty percent to a newly-established appropriation for developing, managing, preserving, restoring, and maintaining the sandhill crane population and for the sandhill crane hunter education program.
 - b. Fifty percent to the existing Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP) appropriation, to provide financial assistance for wildlife damage abatement measures and to make payments to agricultural producers for claims regarding damage to agricultural crops by certain wildlife.
5. Makes several changes to the cost of a wildlife damage surcharge, the proceeds of which will be deposited into the aforementioned WDACP appropriation. These changes include the following:
 - a. Increases the surcharge on resident hunting approvals from \$2 to \$3
 - b. Increases the surcharge on non-resident hunting approvals from \$2 to \$4
 - c. Increases the surcharge on resident conservation patron licenses from \$4 to \$6
 - d. Increases the surcharge on non-resident conservation patron licenses from \$4 to \$8
 - e. Creates a separate \$3 surcharge on resident sandhill crane permits
 - f. Creates a separate \$4 surcharge on non-resident sandhill crane permits

II. ASSUMPTIONS USED IN FISCAL ESTIMATE

1. Permit Sales: Contingent upon USFWS approval, the department assumes:
 - a. 30,000 individuals will apply for a sandhill crane permit
 - b. 3,000 permits will be available for a sandhill crane hunting season, comprised of 2,825 resident permits and 175 non-resident permits.
2. Hunter Education: The department assumes 3,000 permit holders will annually take a sandhill crane hunter

education course, as required to participate in a hunt, and it assumes that the course will be offered online. Furthermore, the sandhill crane hunter education course that is required to hunt the species will require development work from the GoWild system vendor in order to tie course completion to an individual's GoWild customer identification number. This will require COS staff time to assist in this development and to test the GoWild system once development is completed.

3. Wildlife Damage Surcharge: The department assumes that the number of hunting licenses sold that will be subject to the increased wildlife damage surcharge will remain the same as License Year (LY) 2024-25, ending March 31, 2025.

4. WDACP Enrollees: The department assumes an increase of 250 WDACP enrollees per year, with an average of 500 acres per enrollee and an average claim of \$5,000.

5. WDACP Administration: The department assumes a 15% increase in WDACP administrative costs for salaries, mileage and travel, and office overhead. Program administration costs totaled approximately \$1,640,000 in calendar year 2024. Administrative work includes enrolling producers, administration of abatement, conducting crop appraisals and processing claims.

6. Staffing Costs: The department assumes a 2% increase in staffing costs above current levels to coincide with anticipated wage growth in the 2025-27 biennium.

7. GoWild: The GoWild system does not currently support a sandhill crane hunt.

III. STATE FISCAL IMPACT-REVENUES

1. Resident Crane Hunting Permits: The department estimates \$56,500/yr. of revenue generated from the sale of resident crane hunting permits (2,825 permits x \$20).

2. Nonresident Crane Hunting Permits: The department estimates \$17,500/yr. of revenue generated from the sale of nonresident crane hunting permits (175 permits x \$100).

3. Permit Application Fees: The department estimates \$127,500/yr. of revenue generated from permit application fees (30,000 permit applications x \$4.25).

4. Permit Issuance Fees: The department estimates \$7,500/yr. of revenue generated from permit issuance fees (30,000 permit applications x \$0.25).

5. Hunter Education Course Fees: The department estimates no change to the amount of hunter education fees that it collects since the bill requires it to provide a sandhill crane hunting education course at no charge.

6. Wildlife Damage Surcharge: The department estimates that the increases to the wildlife damage surcharge would generate \$1,106,000/yr. from surcharges applied to 80 existing hunting license products and \$9,200/yr. from surcharges applied to the new sandhill crane hunting permit, for a total of \$1,115,200/yr. in additional revenue.

5. In total, the department estimates \$1,324,200/yr. of additional revenue ($56,500 + 17,500 + 127,500 + 7,500 + 1,115,200$).

IV. STATE FISCAL IMPACT-COSTS

1. HUNTING SEASON ESTABLISHMENT COSTS

a. One-time Costs for Management Plan Preparation-Bureau of Wildlife Management

In order to provide a sandhill crane hunting season, the department estimates that the Bureau of Wildlife Management will incur \$52,700 of one-time staffing costs to prepare a management program for a new game species. Staff effort will consist of 40 hours/month for the first 12 months (480 hours), 80 hours/month for the last 4 months (320 hours), plus an additional 56 hours of internal and external meetings for a total of 856 hours of staff time for wildlife biologist-advanced positions ($\$40.64/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 856 \text{ hours} = \$52,700$)

b. One-time Costs for Management Plan Preparation-Other DNR Programs:

The department also estimates that it will incur \$170,200 of one-time staffing costs for other positions that would be needed to assist with the preparation of a management plan. These one-time costs consist of the following:

1. 285 hours for conservation biologist-advanced positions in the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC) ($\$37.19/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 285 \text{ hrs} = \$16,100$)
2. 285 hours for a species section supervisor in the Bureau of Wildlife Management ($\$49.06/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 285 \text{ hrs} = \$21,200$)
3. 285 hours for a bureau director in Bureau of Wildlife Management ($\$56.17/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 285 \text{ hrs} = \$24,300$)
4. 285 hours for a deputy division administrator in the Division of Fish, Wildlife & Parks ($\$61.33/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 285 \text{ hrs} = \$26,500$)
5. 1,140 hours for a wildlife biologist-senior in the Bureau of Wildlife Management ($\$44.33/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 1,140 \text{ hours} = \$76,600$)
6. 40 hours for a communication specialist-advanced in the Bureau of Wildlife Management ($\$36.60/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 40 \text{ hrs} = \$2,200$)
7. 40 hours for a communications specialist-senior in the Bureau of Wildlife Management ($\$33.32/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 40 \text{ hrs} = \$2,000$)
8. 20 hours for a publication supervisor in the Office of Communication ($\$41.90/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 20 \text{ hrs} = \$1,300$)

c. Ongoing Costs for Population Survey Training

The department estimates that the Bureau of Wildlife Management will incur 350 hours and an estimated \$17,600/yr. to conduct annual training to coordinate and conduct statewide sandhill crane population surveys. This estimate is based on 100 hours for wildlife biologist-senior positions ($\$44.33/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 100 \text{ hrs.} = \$6,700$) and 250 hours for wildlife biologist LTE positions ($\$34.03/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.2604 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 250 \text{ hrs.} = \$10,900$).

d. Ongoing Costs for Management Plan Implementation

1. The department estimates that one wildlife biologist-advanced position would be needed for ongoing implementation of a sandhill crane management program at an estimated annual cost of \$144,700 ($\$44.33/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 2,080 \text{ hrs} + \$5,000$ for computer, telephone, work space materials and other supplies). Since the bill does not provide additional staffing for the department, it assumes that the wildlife biologist-advanced position would need to be reallocated from within existing staffing levels.
2. The department estimates that 120 hours/yr. of staff time and \$5,600/yr. costs would be needed to develop, coordinate, and distribute communication products, including press releases, social media posts, GovDelivery emails, etc. This consists of \$5,000/yr. for a communications specialist-senior ($\$33.32/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 100 \text{ hrs}$) and \$600/yr. for a communications specialist LTE position ($\$23.25 \times 1.02 \times 1.2604 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 20 \text{ hrs}$).

e. Costs for Developing a Hunter Education Course

The department estimates that 80 hours of staff time for a communications specialist-senior at an estimated one-time cost of \$4,000 would be needed to develop a mandatory sandhill crane identification test and associated products needed to provide information and education about hunting, crop damage and abatement, etc. ($\$33.32/\text{hr.} \times 1.02 \times 1.4858 \text{ fringe benefit add-on} \times 80 \text{ hrs.}$).

As for the hunter education course, the department estimates that it would cost \$10 per person per year to administer the course for a total ongoing cost of \$30,000/yr. (3,000 permit holders \times \$10). This estimate is based on costs that the department incurs for an existing online hunter education course hosted by an external vendor.

2. WILDLIFE DAMAGE ABATEMENT AND CLAIMS PROGRAM (WDACP) COSTS

- a. The department estimates that costs to administer WDCAP would increase by 15%, or \$246,000/yr. (\$1,640,000 x .15).
- b. The department estimates that the cost to use non-lethal pyrotechnics to disburse cranes from landowner properties would increase by \$7,500/yr.
- c. The department estimates that costs to acquire migratory bird depredation permits from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), which would allow the lethal take of cranes when non-lethal methods are ineffective, would increase by \$22,500/yr.
- d. The department estimates an increase of 250 WDCAP enrollees per year, with an average claim of \$5,000. Therefore, total annual claims payments are estimated to increase \$1,250,000 (250 x \$5,000).

3. CUSTOMER & OUTREACH SERVICES (COS) COSTS

a. GoWild Vendor Development

COS will incur an estimated \$20,000 of one-time vendor development costs to create the sandhill crane season structure and make other necessary updates to the Go Wild System, as required by the bill. These costs could not be absorbed within COS' existing operations budget.

b. GoWild Training, Testing & Maintenance

The bill would require the COS Staff Development Specialist position to update program web pages, applications and forms, standard operating procedures and job aids, and create the necessary training and communication plans for the program staff.

COS will incur an estimated \$4,200 of one-time staffing costs for required development and testing of Go Wild changes (business automation-senior position @ \$57.31/hr. salary and fringe x 40 hours = \$2,300), and for web, form and application changes, and development and implementation of staff training and communication plans (staff development specialist position @ \$48.59/hr. salary and fringe x 40 hours = \$1,900). COS could absorb this additional staff time and costs within its existing operations budget.

c. GoWild Ongoing Costs

Ongoing costs to maintain the sandhill crane hunt in the Go Wild system would be minimal and could be absorbed within COS' existing operations budget.

d. Wildlife Damage Surcharge Changes

The proposed changes to the wildlife damage surcharge could be implemented with no fiscal impact.

e. Customer Traffic

The creation of a sandhill crane hunting season would increase customer traffic via in-person, phone and email. COS could absorb the associated workload with current staffing levels.

V. STATE FISCAL IMPACT-SUMMARY

The cost to manage a sandhill crane population and to conduct an annual hunter education program are estimated to exceed the 50% of permit and processing fee revenue that would be deposited into the newly-proposed sandhill crane appropriation. Therefore, costs that are not supported by the new appropriation would be subsidized by the Fish & Wildlife Account, the USFWS Pittman-Robertson grant, or other funding sources.

VI. LOCAL FISCAL IMPACT

The department estimates that staff time and costs incurred by counties to administer WDCAP on behalf of the state, including payments made by counties to contract with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to perform the work, would not be impacted by the bill. Therefore, the bill is estimated to have no local fiscal impact.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications

Fiscal Estimate Worksheet - 2025 Session

Detailed Estimate of Annual Fiscal Effect

☒ Original ☐ Updated ☐ Corrected ☐ Supplemental

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Description hunting of sandhill cranes, programs related to sandhill crane damage, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation			
I. One-time Costs or Revenue Impacts for State and/or Local Government (do not include in annualized fiscal effect): Estimated one-time costs of \$251,100 for the preparation of a management plan, hunter education course, GoWild vendor development and customer service development, testing and training.			
II. Annualized Costs:		Annualized Fiscal Impact on funds from:	
		Increased Costs	Decreased Costs
A. State Costs by Category			
State Operations - Salaries and Fringes	\$408,900		\$
(FTE Position Changes)	(1.0 FTE)		
State Operations - Other Costs	65,000		
Local Assistance			
Aids to Individuals or Organizations	1,250,000		
TOTAL State Costs by Category	\$1,723,900		\$
B. State Costs by Source of Funds			
GPR			
FED			
PRO/PRS			
SEG/SEG-S	1,723,900		
III. State Revenues - Complete this only when proposal will increase or decrease state revenues (e.g., tax increase, decrease in license fee, etc.)			
	Increased Rev	Decreased Rev	
GPR Taxes	\$	\$	
GPR Earned			
FED			
PRO/PRS			
SEG/SEG-S	1,234,200		
TOTAL State Revenues	\$1,234,200	\$	
NET ANNUALIZED FISCAL IMPACT			
	State	Local	
NET CHANGE IN COSTS	\$1,723,900	\$	
NET CHANGE IN REVENUE	\$1,234,200	\$	
Agency/Prepared By		Authorized Signature	Date
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