

December 5th, 2023

Testimony on Assembly Bill 512
Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

Thank you, Chairman Pronschinske and other Assembly committee members, for having a hearing on Assembly Bill 512, relating to hunting wild animals with the aid of a dog, dog training on wild animals, and dog trialing on wild animals in the northern portion of the state.

The bill evolves around Natural Resource Administrative Code 10.07 (1)(i), which states that hunting or pursuing any free-roaming wild animal with the aid of a dog or dogs is prohibited from May 1st to June 30th in that portion of the state north of highways 8, 53, 54, 13, 29, and 22.

Essentially, if your dog is off a leash and barks at or pursues any wildlife, you are in violation of these rules. These rules unfairly discriminate against those north of the arbitrary line compared to Southern Wisconsin.

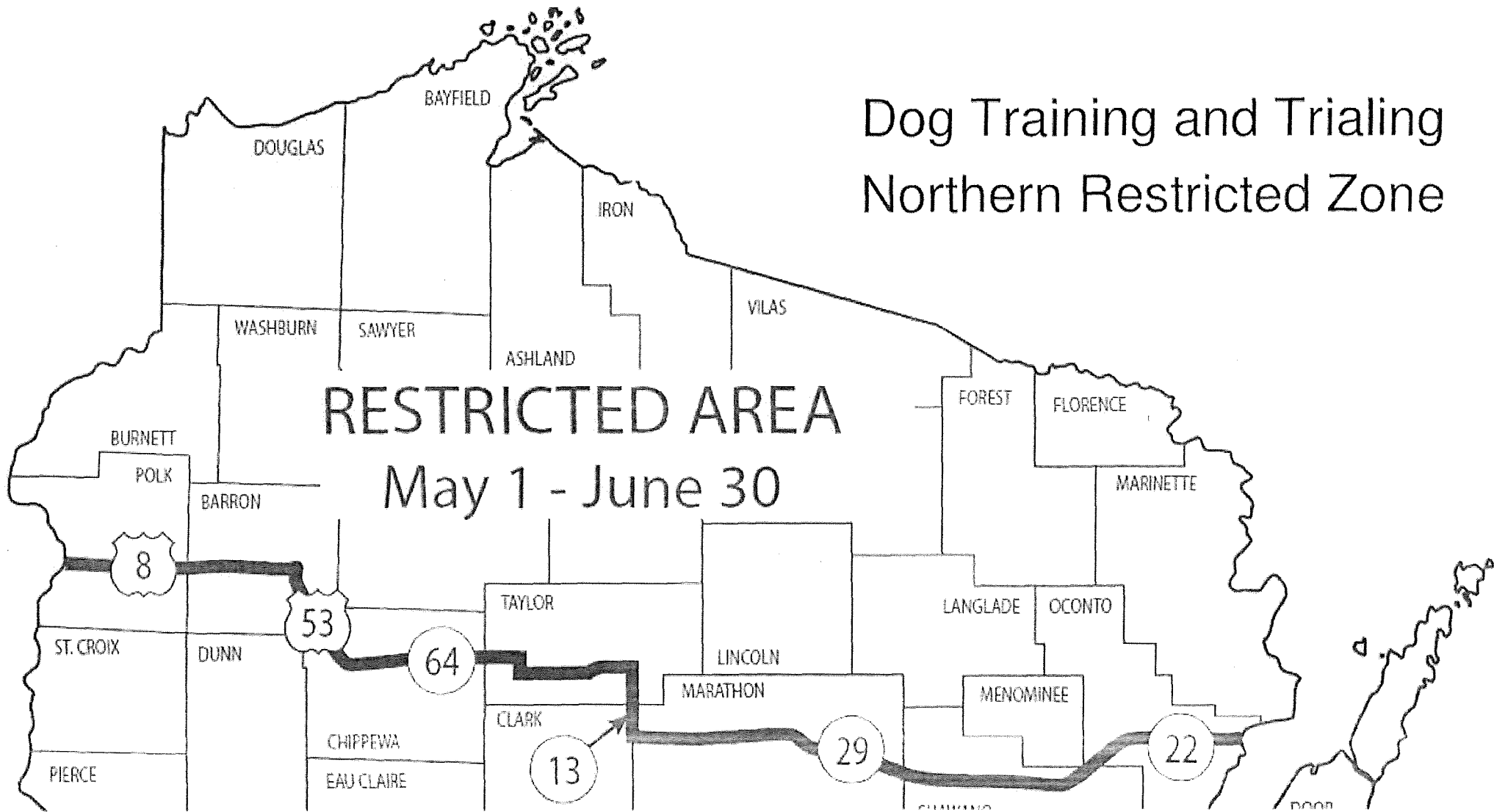
Assembly Bill 512 would delete NR 10.07 (1)(i) from the Department of Natural Resources' administrative code and any other codes related to it.

These rules make no sense if you think about them. If a dog runs off below the Northern Restricted Zone for any free-roaming animal, that isn't an issue, but if it runs off above the Northern Restricted Zone, then it is an issue. It makes no sense.

The intent of the rules was to control the training of dogs used for hunting bears. Wisconsin now has a very sound and restrictive bear dog training season that covers the original concern these rules tried to address. These rules have outlived their time, and it is time to repeal them so that Northern Wisconsin is compatible with Southern Wisconsin.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work on this bill with my colleague from the Senate, Senator Quinn. Thank you for your time today, and thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Dog Training and Trialing Northern Restricted Zone



except that spring season shooting hours shall close at sunset daily.

(8) **EXCEPTIONS.** There are no shooting hour restrictions for pursuing coyote, fox, raccoon and all wild animals for which no closed season is established except that shooting hours established in sub. (5) shall apply to archers and crossbow hunters pursuing any species during the black bear season established in s. NR 10.01 (3) (g), during the archery and crossbow deer seasons established in s. NR 10.01 (3) (em) and (ep), and during the elk season established in s. NR 10.01 (3) (i).

(9) **DAILY MIGRATORY BIRD REST PERIOD.** (a) Shooting hours for certain species shall close at 1:00 p.m. daily within the posted boundaries of the following state wildlife areas on the following dates:

1. George W. Mead Wildlife Area (Wood, Portage, and Marathon Counties) for waterfowl beginning on the third day of the duck hunting season in s. NR 10.01 and continuing for 16 days.

2. Zeloski Unit of the Lake Mills Wildlife Area (Jefferson County) for migratory birds beginning on Sept 1 and continuing through the 16th day after the opening weekend of the duck season established in s. NR 10.01 except that normal statewide shooting hours apply on the opening weekend of the duck season.

(10) **TRAPPING EXEMPTION.** The shooting hour restrictions established in this section do not apply to the dispatch of lawfully trapped animals.

History: 1-2-56; am. (2); cr. (2m), Register, August, 1956, No. 8, eff. 9-1-56; am. (2m), Register, August, 1957, No. 20, eff. 9-1-57; am. (2), (2m) and (3), Register, August, 1958, No. 32, eff. 9-1-58; r. and recr. Register, August, 1959, No. 44, eff. 9-1-59, am. (2), cr. (2m) Register, Sept. 1959, No. 45, eff. 10-1-59; am. (2) and r. (2m), Register, September 1960, No. 57, eff. 10-1-60; am. (2), cr. (2m), Register, September, 1961, No. 69, eff. 10-1-61; r. and recr. (2) and (2m), Register, August, 1962, No. 80, eff. 9-1-62; r. and recr. Register, August, 1965, No. 116, eff. 9-1-65; am. (3), emerg. eff. 9-5-65; am. (2), Register, March, 1966, No. 123, eff. 4-1-66; r. and recr. Register, August, 1966, No. 128, eff. 9-1-66; r. cr. (2); cr. (4) Register, September, 1966, No. 129, eff. 10-1-66; r. and recr. (2) and (3), Register, August, 1967, No. 140, eff. 9-1-67; renum. to be NR 10.06; r. (4), Register, June, 1970, No. 174, eff. 7-1-70; am. (3), Register, August, 1971, No. 188, eff. 9-1-71; am. (3), Register, September, 1972, No. 201, eff. 10-1-72; am. (2), (3), Register, August, 1973, No. 212, eff. 9-1-73; am. (2), Register, September, 1973, No. 213, eff. 10-1-73; am. (3), Register, March, 1975, No. 231, eff. 4-1-75; emerg. am. (2) (d), eff. 9-24-75; am. (3), Register, October, 1975, No. 238, eff. 11-1-75; am. (2) (d) (eff. 6-1-76), am. (2) (c), Register, May, 1975, No. 245, eff. 8-15-76; am. (2) (d) and (3), Register, November, 1976, No. 251, eff. 12-1-76; am. (2) (a), Register, May, 1977, No. 257, eff. 6-1-77; r. and recr. (2) (d), Register, February, 1978, No. 266, eff. 3-1-78; am. (2) (c) and (e), Register, October, 1980, No. 298, eff. 11-1-80; am. (2) (c) and (4) and (5), Register, November, 1982, No. 323, eff. 12-1-82; am. (2) (c) and (6), Register, March, 1984, No. 339, eff. 4-1-84; am. (2) (d), Register, April 1985, No. 352, eff. 5-1-85; cr. (6) (jm), Register, October, 1986, No. 370, eff. 11-1-86; emerg. am. (2) (d), eff. 9-25-97; am. (2) (d), Register, December, 1987, No. 384, eff. 1-1-88; r. and recr. (2) (b), (3) to (5), r. (2), (d), renum. (2) (e) to be (3) (b), cr. (7) and (8), Register, October, 1988, No. 394, eff. 1-1-89; r. and recr. (4), Register, January 1989 No. 397, eff. 2-1-89; r. and recr. (2) (b), (3) (b), (7) and (8) (a) to (c), r. (2) (c) and (5), am. (3) (a), Register, October, 1989, No. 406, eff. 11-1-89; r. and recr. (4), Register, March, 1990, No. 411, eff. 4-1-90; am. (8) (b), Register, September, 1990, No. 417, eff. 10-1-90; am. (2) (b) and (3) (a), Register, August, 1991, No. 428, eff. 9-1-91; r. and recr. (4) (intro.), Register, September, 1991, No. 429, eff. 10-1-91; cr. (5), Register, January, 1992, No. 433, eff. 2-1-92; r. (4) (b), Register, April, 1992, No. 436, eff. 5-1-92; r. (6) (jm), Register, June, 1992, No. 438, eff. 7-1-92; emerg. cr. (4) (b), r. (4) (c), eff. 9-1-92; cr. (4) (b), r. (4) (c), Register, February, 1993, No. 446, eff. 3-1-93; r. and recr. (6), Register, December, 1993, No. 456, eff. 1-1-94; r. and recr. (4) and (6), am. (8) (b), Register, August, 1994, No. 464, eff. 9-1-94; r. and recr. (6), Register, July, 1995, No. 475, eff. 8-1-95; emerg. am. (8) (b), eff. 8-12-96; am. (6), Register, October, 1997, No. 502, eff. 3-1-98; emerg. am. (8) (b), eff. 10-1-98; am. (7), Register, September, 1998, No. 513, eff. 10-1-98; emerg. am. (4), eff. 9-10-99; am. (4), Register, December, 1999, No. 528, eff. 1-1-00; emerg. am. (8) (b), eff. 8-4-00; am. (2) (a), (b), (6), (7), (8) (a) and (b), r. (3) and (4), r. and recr. (5), Register, September, 2000, No. 537, eff. 11-18-00; r. Table in (5), Register August 2001 No. 548; CR 03-016; am. (8) (a) Register August 2003 No. 572, eff. 9-1-03; CR 03-018; am. (5) and (8) (a) Register November 2003 No. 575, eff. 1-1-04; CR 04-020; am. (8) (a) Register August 2004 No. 584, eff. 9-1-04; CR 04-046; am. (8) (b) Register September 2004 No. 585, eff. 10-1-04; CR 06-012; am. (7) Register December 2006 No. 612, eff. 2-1-07; CR 07-015; renum. (6) (m) to (t) to be (6) (n) to (p) and (r) to (v), cr. (6) (m) and (q) Register September 2007 No. 621, eff. 2-1-08; CR 08-021; am. (8) (b) Register November 2008 No. 635, eff. 12-1-08; EmR0824; emerg. am. (5), eff. 8-30-08; CR 08-061; am. (5) Register December 2008 No. 636, eff. 1-1-09; CR 09-015; cr. (9) Register October 2009 No. 646, eff. 2-1-10; CR 10-020; r. (6) (r) Register October 2010 No. 658, eff. 2-1-11; CR 10-051; am. (2) (b) Register December 2010 No. 660, eff. 1-1-11; CR 11-007; am. (6) (intro.) Register October 2011 No. 670, eff. 2-1-12; EmR1313; emerg. r. (9) (b), eff. 9-6-13; CR 13-052; r. (9) (b) Register March 2014 No. 699, eff. 4-1-14; EmR1420; emerg. am. (5), (8) (a), (b), eff. 9-12-14; CR 13-071; am. (5), (8) (a), (b) Register July 2015 No. 715, eff. 8-1-15; CR 15-024; am. (5) Register November 2015 No. 719, eff. 2-1-16; CR 15-052; am. (5) Register January 2016 No. 721, eff. 2-1-16; CR 16-028; am. (title), (1), (2), (5), (6) (intro.), (7), (8), (9) (a) (intro.), 2. Register July 2017 No. 739, eff. 8-1-17; EmR1914; emerg. am. (5), eff. 9-5-19; CR 19-017; am. (6) (intro.) Register

January 2020 No. 769, eff. 2-1-20; CR 19-068; am. (5) Register January 2020 No. 769, eff. 2-1-20; correction in (5) made under s. 35.17, Stats., Register January 2020 No. 769; CR 19-123; r. and recr. (8) Register June 2020 No. 774, eff. 7-1-20; CR 19-146; am. (5), cr. (10) Register June 2020 No. 774, eff. 7-1-20; merger of (5) treatments by CR 19-068 and CR 19-146 made under s. 13.92 (4) (bm), Stats., Register September 2023 No. 813.

NR 10.07 General hunting. (1) PROHIBITED METHODS.

No person shall:

(a) **Aircraft.** Hunt with the aid of an aircraft, including the use of an aircraft to spot, rally or drive wild animals for hunters on the ground.

(b) **Devices.** 1. Place, operate or attend, spread, or set any net, pitfall, snare, spring gun, pivot gun, swivel gun, or other similar contrivance for the purpose of catching or which might catch, take or ensnare wild animals.

2. Use or possess any snare, cable restraint, trap or device designed or used for the purpose of driving rabbits or hares out of their holes or dens and capturing them.

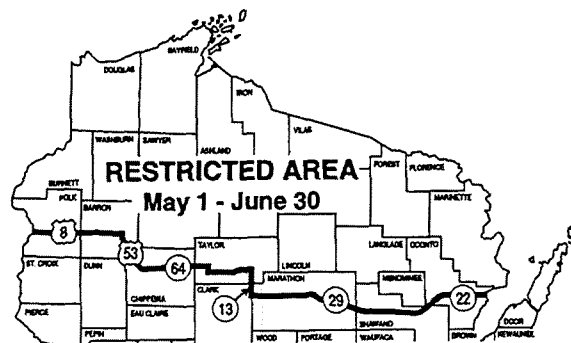
3. While hunting with a firearm, bow, or crossbow, possess or accompany a person possessing any turkey decoy or device which may be used to call or attract wild turkeys during the spring hunting season for wild turkeys described in s. NR 10.01 (2) (f) unless that person possesses a valid turkey hunting license and valid, unused harvest authorization.

(d) **Molesting.** Molest the nest or den of any squirrel.

(e) **Ferret.** Use or possess any ferret while hunting.

(f) **Retrieval.** Fail to make every reasonable effort to retrieve all wild animals killed or crippled; and until such effort is made, such wild animals shall be included in the daily bag.

(i) **Dog use.** Hunt or pursue any free-roaming wild animal with the aid of dog or dogs May 1 to June 30 in that portion of the state north of the highways shown on the following map except for dog trials and training under permit as established by ch. NR 17:



(k) **Marking.** Capture and tag, collar or mark and release any game taken from the wild unless issued a permit by the department pursuant to s. NR 19.11, or as authorized under a federal migratory bird banding permit, or a license issued under s. 169.25, Stats. The normal uses of archery equipment for hunting such as lighted, reflective, or glowing nocks are not a violation of this paragraph.

(2) GENERAL BAITING REGULATIONS. (a) General prohibition.

1. No person may place, use or hunt over bait or feed material for the purpose of hunting wild animals or training dogs, except as provided in par. (b) or sub. (2m), or as authorized by a permit or license issued under s. 29.614 (1) or 169.25 (1) (a), Stats., or s. NR 12.06 (11) or 12.10 (1).

Note: Section 29.614, Stats., states: Scientific collector permit. (1) Application for a scientific collector permit shall be submitted to the department. The department may issue a scientific collector permit if the department determines that the applicant is a natural person and is engaged in a bona fide program leading to increased, useful scientific knowledge.

Note: Section 169.25, Stats., states: Scientific research license. (1) Issuance. (a) The department shall issue a scientific research license to any person who is engaged in a study or in research that the department determines will lead to increased, useful scientific knowledge and who files a proper application and who pays the applicable fee.

2. No person may hunt or train dogs over bait or a feeding site that is in violation of s. 29.336 (4), Stats., this section, or in violation of the feeding prohibitions of s. NR 19.60, unless the feeding



Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

2023 Assembly Bill 512

Hunting Wild Animals with the Aid of a Dog, Dog Training on Wild Animals, and Dog Trialing on Wild Animals in the Northern Portion of the State

December 5, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Pronschinske, and members of the Committee. My name is Scott Loomans, and I am the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Policy Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 512, related to hunting wild animals with the aid of a dog, dog training on wild animals, and dog trialing on wild animals in the northern portion of the state.

Assembly Bill 512 would repeal rules that prohibit dog training from May 1 to June 30 in a portion of the state. The current rule was a part of a rule package in the late 1980s. Looking at historical records associated with the Wisconsin Conservation Congress statewide hearing questions, which informed the rule package, there were public complaints about illegal training of bear hunting dogs and trespass violations during the spring, that were occurring in large numbers in northern Wisconsin, followed by demands that the DNR solve the problem. Furthermore, petitions received from the Douglas County Board and the Town of Wascott required the department to respond to similar concerns.

Because year-round hunting seasons exist for many species, enforcement of the July 10 – August 31 bear-dog training period is extremely difficult. Field wardens and wildlife managers recommended elimination of dog use from hunting wildlife as well as pursuit and training on wild animals during the April 1 to July 9 period north of State Highway 29 to: 1) eliminate the illegal pursuit of bear under the guise of running coyotes and other species, and 2) to provide additional protection to wildlife during the spring breeding period. Dog trials and training on captive wildlife would still be allowed by permit.

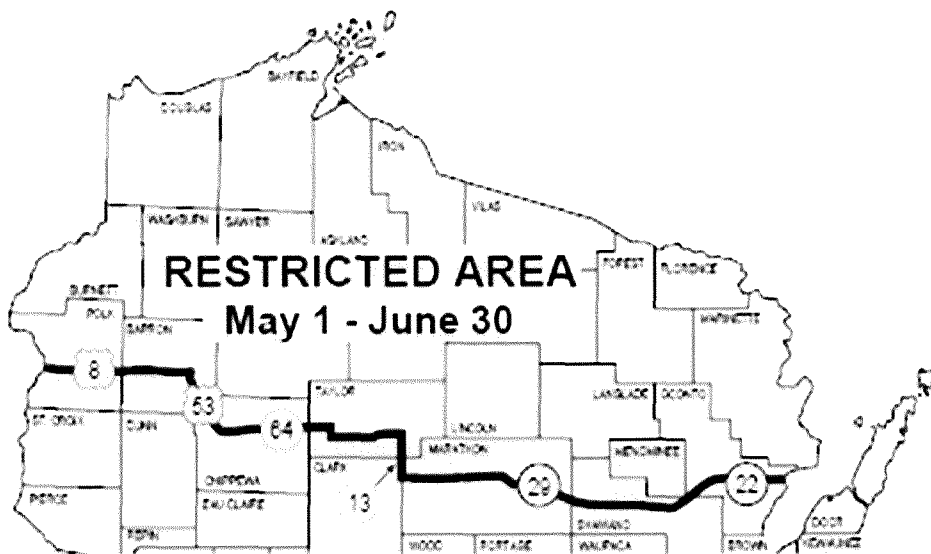
The statewide hearing question/proposal asked: “Do you favor the elimination of hunting with dogs as well as pursuit and training of dogs on free-roaming wildlife during the period April 1 to July 9 North of State Highway 29?”

Spring hearing input did not support the proposal. In recognition of this sentiment, DNR staff met with representatives of the major organizations and developed the following rule modifications which were then approved at the statewide Conservation Congress convention.

1. Modify the season closure dates from April 1 – July 9 as proposed to May 1 – June 30.
2. Expand the legal bear dog training period from July 10 – August 31 to July 1 – August 31.
3. Exempt sanctioned dog trials under DNR permit from the closure.
4. Modify the boundary from north of State Highway 29 to that shown in the attached rule.

This is largely the rule that is in place today, although the period for training dogs that are used to track and trail bears has been extended so that training is now allowed at times when hunting bears with dogs

is also allowed. Shown below is a map of the closed area that currently exists in rule. Training is closed throughout the restricted area in the map including both private and public lands.



Since 1987, we have created an exception in the northern restricted zone to allow hound dog training on raccoon and rabbits. A person may train dogs on captive or free-roaming raccoons and rabbits in the northern restricted zone from May 1 to June 30, provided they get a license and meet certain conditions.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

Testimony in Opposition to Assembly Bill 512
Presented to the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage
Megan Nicholson, Wisconsin State Director
The Humane Society of the United States
December 5, 2023

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States and our supporters in Wisconsin, I am writing in opposition to Assembly Bill 512. I urge you to oppose this dangerous and reckless bill.

Each year, during one of the longest hound-training seasons in the nation, resident and nonresident hunters pursue black bears. Neighboring states' permit hounding for much shorter durations. For example,

- Michigan's restricts hounding from Apr. 16 – Jul. 7.
- Minnesota restricts hounding from Apr. 16 – Jul. 14.
- Iowa restricts training Mar. 15 – Jul. 15, and
- Illinois restricts hounding between Apr. 1 – Aug. 31.

Spring is a precarious time for ground nesting birds and other wildlife. It would be detrimental to allow packs of GPS radio-collared hounds to run the woods and fields when ground-nesting birds, deer fawns, elk calves and bear cubs are extremely vulnerable. The potential for sporting dogs in training to harm, disturb, maul or kill wildlife would undoubtedly increase. This goes against the very principle of ethical wildlife conservation and proper land stewardship.

In pursuit of wildlife and out of sight of the owner, hounds frequently trespass onto private property, including family farms. Packs of marauding hounds cause skittish livestock, like sheep and cattle, to bolt. Allowing hound training during springtime would be an additional risk to the safety of young calves and lambs. Rural landowners often complain about hounds running through their lands and hunters trespassing to retrieve dogs. Expanding the training season will undoubtedly increase landowner complaints.

Hounding is also extremely unpopular. After the February 2021 Wisconsin wolf hunt, where nearly 90% of wolves killed by trophy hunters had been chased down by hounds, Remington Research conducted a poll. It found that 66% of Wisconsin voters oppose the hounding of wolves and most 67% of voters believe hound hunting is nothing more than state-sanctioned dogfighting. Furthermore, citizen resolutions to allow off-leash dog training have failed to garner majority support on the Wisconsin Conservation Congress' [Spring Hearing Questionnaire](#).

This reckless behavior harms taxpayers. The majority of [wolf-hound conflicts](#) occur during the current bear hound-training season. Lengthening the season to allow free-roaming packs of dogs to run through wolf den sites will increase conflicts between wolves and hounds. Since 1985, state taxpayers have funded [\\$1,078,664 \(\\$1.08 million\) in compensation payments to houndsmen](#) (for both hounds' deaths and vet bills), and this money pays houndsmen who knowingly and recklessly put their hounds in harm's way—yet are compensated at up to \$2,500 for each hound killed. Compare that to Wisconsin farmers who only

received \$215,109 for cattle deaths by wolves. While the majority of taxpayers support compensation for livestock and pet depredations, they do not support payments to resident and nonresident hound hunters.

It would also harm the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' wolf research. The DNR captures and collars wolves in May and June when there is no dog training. Expanding training season would make it difficult, if not impossible, for the DNR to capture wolves for research, population, and health monitoring. Also, the proposed, expanded season would put wolves and hounds into conflict at wolves' den sites.

We urge you to stop the practice of hounding in Wisconsin, not expand it.

Sincerely,

Megan Nicholson
Wisconsin State Director
The Humane Society of the United States
mnicholson@humanesociety.org

AB 512 / SB 545 Fact Sheet



The administrative protections that would be eliminated by this bill are very much still needed.

- Hounding with dogs is damaging. Unsupervised GPS-tracked dogs, especially larger packs of dogs, do collateral damage to the landscape of wild and potentially even endangered animals.
- Decreasing requirements for dog trialing is a blow to public safety. There have been numerous instances nationwide of hunting dogs attacking people including one this year in Georgia where a hunter sustained nearly 300 bite wounds from someone else's dogs.
- The time restriction of May-June is the Spring breeding and migration period for animals in this area, this is an especially sensitive time to protect and is a needed intent of the original rule.

FALSE: These regulations are antiquated. They were intended to prevent out of season hunting or running of dogs, and now that we have well-established seasons there is no need.

- We've had established seasons in Wisconsin for a very long time. The first closed hunting season in WI was established in 1851, the first 20-day season was set in 1909, Open season were eliminated in 1933, and the first statewide fixed gun deer season was 1986.
- These regulations were put in place to prevent abuse and protect our state's natural resources as well as livestock farmers and are still necessary.

FALSE: These rules mean pet owners could be fined for just doing what pet owners do. For example, if their dogs go running after wild animals while walking them off leash in the spring.

- This is a misinterpretation of the regulations. These regulations specifically address "dog trialing" and removing these sections would not have any impact on northern dog owners who are covered under 174.02 and 174.042.
- According to the DNR, this has also never happened in at least the last five years as no fines or citations have been issued.

FALSE: These rules unfairly discriminate against those north of an "arbitrary" line in the Northern Restricted Area.

- For decades we've had hunting rules and regulations differ by established zones, of which this regulation fits into DNR Zone 1. There are all kinds of different rules based on the needs of those zones from hunting hours to allowed harvest. This is no different.
- Zone 1 is also markedly different than other areas of Wisconsin with significant natural resources and forested land including the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.
- Because the vast sections of this zone are national forest, the rules created to govern this area when taking resources off the land and protecting species are different including the federal Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act as well as Endangered and Regional Forester Sensitive Species.



Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage
328 NW Main St.
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

December 5, 2023

Subject: Letter of Support for Assembly Bill 512 - Hunting Regulations in Northern Wisconsin

Dear Chairman Pronschinske and Members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage,

The Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association (WBHA) supports Assembly Bill 512, relating to hunting wild animals with the aid of a dog, dog training on wild animals, and dog trialing on wild animals in the northern portion of the state.

WBHA has a long-standing commitment to responsible and sustainable hunting practices, as well as the preservation of Wisconsin's rich hunting traditions. We believe this legislation offers a balanced and science-based approach to hunting regulations in the specified northern portion of our state. There is no scientific reason why the northern portion of our state should be regulated differently than the southern portion.

Assembly Bill 512 proposes the repeal of several Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administrative code provisions that regulate hunting, dog training, and dog trialing on free-roaming wild animals in the northern part of the state during certain periods. WBHA supports an individual's ability to go to these areas with their dogs without restrictions.

On the same note, we want to emphasize our support for the existing Wisconsin laws regarding hound training seasons for bear. These laws have played a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of both hunters and their dogs during hunting activities.

In consideration of the above, we urge you to lend your support to Assembly Bill 512. We believe that the proposed changes align with the goals of the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association and will positively impact the sustainable management of wild animals in the specified region.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the well-being of Wisconsin's natural heritage. We look forward to the continued collaboration between the legislative body and organizations like ours to ensure the responsible enjoyment of our state's rich hunting traditions.

Sincerely,