

Biennial Report on the Status of Hunter, Trapper, and Angler Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3)

The Sporting Heritage Council 2020



Novice adult hunters (left), their mentor, dog handler and hunting dog after success during a DNR Hunt for Food event. The Hunt for Food program saw annual participation increase 75 percent from 2017 to 2019.

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Executive Summary

We are pleased to submit the 2020 Biennial Report on the status of Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) of Wisconsin hunters, trappers and anglers.

2011 Wisconsin Act 11 created the Sporting Heritage Council and directed it to send a report to the Governor, the chairperson of the Natural Resources Board, and the chief clerks of the Legislature every two years to update them on the status of the statewide efforts to recruit new hunters, trappers, and anglers, retain those that are currently hunting, fishing, and trapping, and reactivate those whose participation has lapsed.

In the past two years, the Sporting Heritage Council (Council) has monitored hunting, fishing, and trapping license sales trends and supported the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) R3 team in its continuing efforts to reach out to new audiences. Since its formation in 2017 and hiring to full staffing in 2018, the R3 team has worked to expand effective programming opportunities for novice hunters through the Fishing for Dinner, Hunt for Food, Instructor Training, Mentor Training, and public grant programs. In the last half of FY20, the novel Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) emerged in Wisconsin. By March 13, the DNR decided to cancel in-person R3 events through the remainder of the fiscal year and beyond. While in-person programs remained on hold, public participation in outdoor activities skyrocketed, particularly among first-time fishing license buyers. Retaining these new outdoor participants is a high priority for the department.

Hunting

Overall, gun deer license sales decreased by 7.8 percent from license year 2016 to 2019, with roughly 29,000 fewer residents purchasing a gun deer hunting license in that time frame. Small game hunting license sales decreased at roughly double the rate of gun deer license sales from 133,678 in license year 2016 to 112,751 in 2019. The DNR Hunter Education program certified 20,891 students in 2019, slightly down from 21,976 in 2016 and a roughly 33 percent decline compared to the number of students receiving their hunter safety certification in 2013 (31,103). Participation in the DNR Learn to Hunt for Food program increased by 75 percent from 2017 to 2019, with over 48 percent of participants purchasing a hunting license the license year following the program.

Trapping

The 19,275 resident trapping licenses sold in Wisconsin in 2019 represents a 6 percent decline when compared to the 1999-2019 average. With all resident licenses that include trapping combined, there were 36,767 total licensed trappers in Wisconsin in 2019. Trapper education in Wisconsin is administered by the Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program (WCTEP). In 2019 there were 1,318 WCTEP graduates, which is slightly above the post fur boom average observed from 2015-2019. Prior to 2015, graduate numbers were higher, which likely had to do with a strong fur market and opportunities to trap wolves.

Angling

Fishing license sales in Wisconsin totaled 1,272,457 in 2019, a 9.6 percent decline compared to annual sales from 2006 to 2019. For the biennium, Angler R3 programs served 8,140 people, ranging from youth-centered clinics and programs to classes tailored for adult audiences, plus 14,652 people who took advantage of the tackle loaner program. In 2020, the COVID-19 negatively affected formal programming, but license sales saw a significant spike in spring, particularly among First Time Buyers (FTB) under age 30. Surveys may shed light on why more people took to fishing, and marketing initiatives to retain these new recruits to the fishing community are on the drawing board.

National Hunting and Shooting Sports Action Plan: Strategies for Recruiting, Retaining and Reactivating Hunting and Shooting Sports Participants

The Council for the Advancement of Hunting and the Shooting Sports (CAHSS) approved the National R3 Plan in 2016. Wisconsin DNR staff played an integral role in developing and completing this plan and will continue to integrate it into R3 efforts here. The Sporting Heritage Council received frequent updates and provided review of the plan content and direction, fully supporting the need and implementation.

Partnerships among the stakeholder community, in conjunction with an integrated framework to identify needed strategies and effectiveness measures, are key to stabilizing and increasing hunting and shooting sports participants. This coordination of local and national efforts under a unified plan clarifies where R3 initiatives are needed and what resources are required to support those efforts. Additionally, the national plan provides guidance and structure for partnerships that can effectively meet the needs of new audiences who will ultimately inherit our nation’s hunting and shooting sports heritage. Finally, this coordinated national strategy provides direction on how the conservation community will need to address the challenges of the future—how to build a pathway leading to lifelong participation and how to facilitate institutionalizing the process to becoming a hunter.

The purpose of the National Hunting and Shooting Sports Action Plan is to identify, coordinate, and focus resources available for R3 at local and national levels. Implementing the recommendations contained in this plan will help ensure that the hunting and shooting sports heritage of the United States will persist. If not, the future of these traditions and the natural resources they conserve will fall into uncertainty. In 2017 and 2018, Wisconsin DNR began implementing the National Plan by forming an integrated R3 Team in the Bureau of Law Enforcement (Figure 1).

Bureau of Law Enforcement

Recreation Safety and Outdoor Skills Section

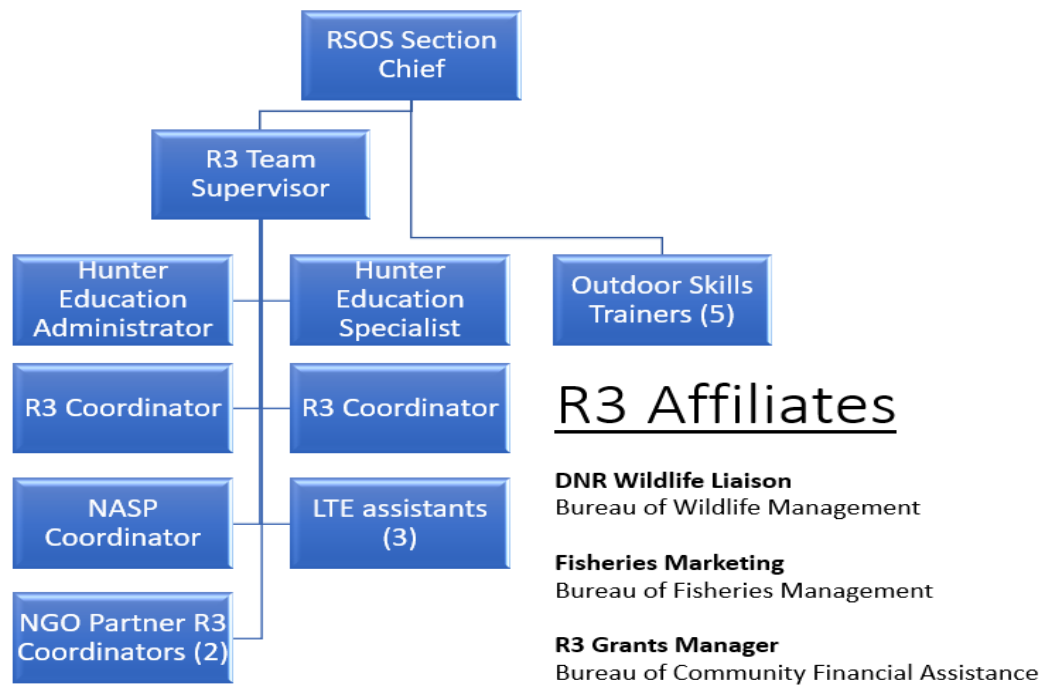


Figure 1. Bureau of Law Enforcement Recreation Safety and Outdoor Skills Section Team Structure and R3 affiliates.

This integration created five outdoor skills trainer (OST) positions located regionally (Waukesha, Madison, Eau Claire, Green Bay and Spooner). OSTs oversee the safety education programs led by volunteer instructors in their region and support DNR outdoor skills programs administered by R3 staff. Outdoor skills trainers recruit, train, and monitor the services of volunteer safety instructors and assist in the development of recreational safety course content (Hunter Education, Snowmobile Safety, Off Highway Vehicle Safety, and Boater Safety).

The angling R3 coordinator, and hunting and shooting sports R3 coordinator positions were created, and the hunter education administrator and hunter education program specialist positions integrated into the R3 team under the new R3 supervisor position. These positions are all within the newly created Recreational Safety and Outdoor Skills Section (RSOS) of the Bureau of Law Enforcement and supervised by the RSOS section chief, who also supervises the recreational safety conservation warden team.

Two external partner R3 coordinator positions were established shortly after the formation of the DNR R3 team, one position with the National Wild Turkey Federation and the other with Pheasants Forever. These partner R3 coordinators instruct and coordinate DNR R3 programs across the state, along with other duties within their respective organizations.

Hunting and Shooting Sports Participation

Background

Hunting provides essential components necessary for long-term and effective natural resource conservation including providing a mechanism to manage wildlife populations, funding for management and a valuable connection to the natural world in an increasingly urbanized society. However, the total number of hunters (residents and non-residents with any hunting license) the Wisconsin DNR reported to the federal government has declined from roughly 770,000 in 2000 to about 692,200 in 2019.

In response to identifying these trends, the department has implemented several actions to build capacity for enhancing participation in hunting through the hunting and shootings sports coordinator and new R3 team. Marketing efforts and programs are being integrated and evaluated to optimize impact and measure results. In response, DNR efforts continue to pivot to focus on programs that are effective at increasing hunter, angler, and trapper participation.

Hunting License Trends

The total number of gun deer hunting licenses purchased in Wisconsin decreased by over 39,000 from license year 2016 to 2019 (Figure 2). Nonresident gun deer license sales have remained relatively constant, while resident gun deer sales decreased by 29,149 from license year 2016 to 2019. The number of junior resident gun deer license sales decreased from 47,285 licenses bought in license year 2016 to 38,787 licenses in license year 2019, almost an 18 percent decline.

Small game hunting license sales decreased by over 15 percent from license year 2016 to 2019, declining sharply from 2016 to 2018 (Figure 3).

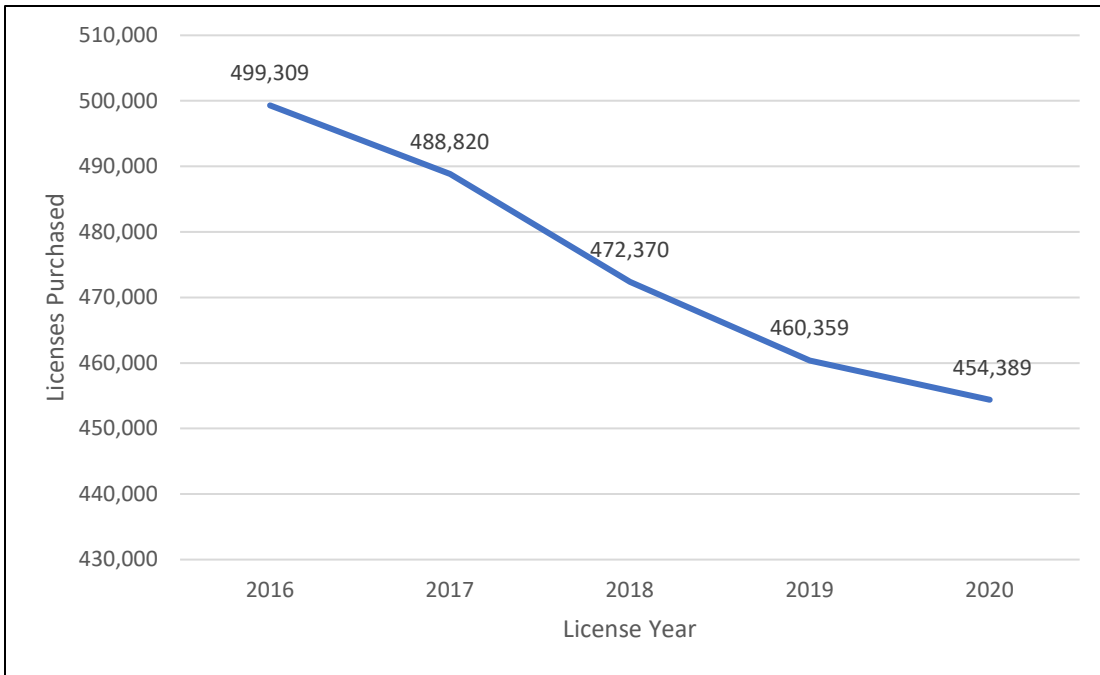


Figure 2. Total gun deer licenses sold from license year 2016-2020.

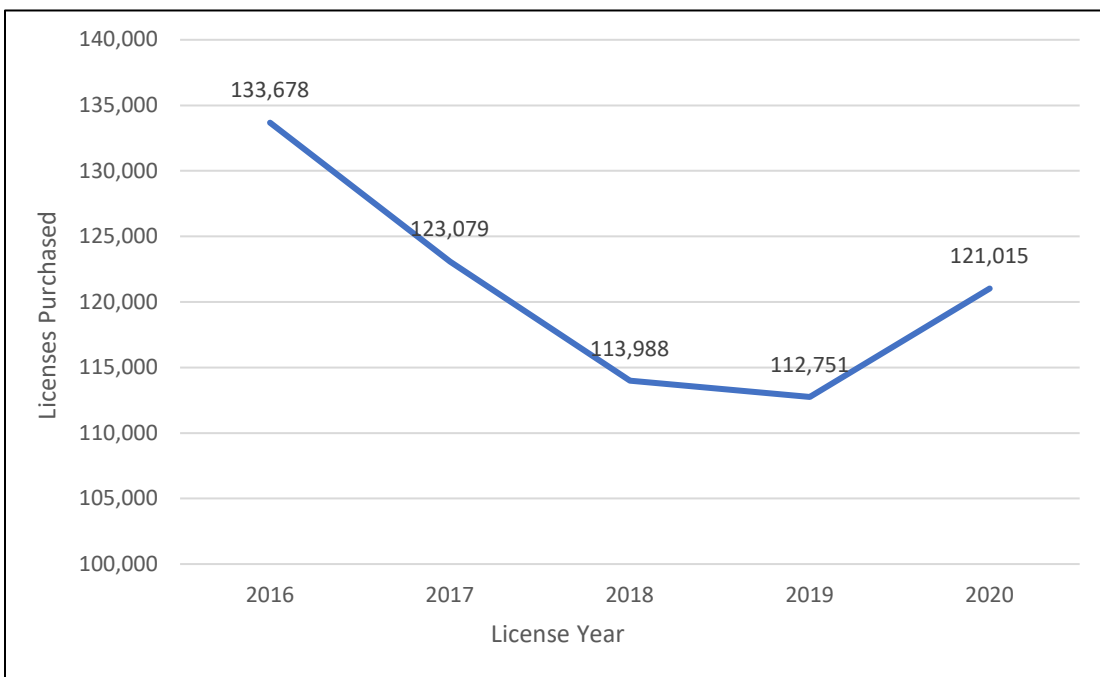


Figure 3. Total small game hunting licenses sold from license year 2016-2020.

Hunter Education

The DNR Hunter Education and Bowhunter Education program’s mission is to promote safety, conservation and Wisconsin’s hunting heritage through a comprehensive educational program. Anyone born on or after January 1, 1973, must have completed a hunter education course to purchase any hunting license in Wisconsin. Wisconsin accepts hunter education certificates from any state, Canadian province and Mexico.

As predicted, the number of students completing hunter education annually in Wisconsin has trended downward over the past 10 years, peaking at 31,103 students in 2013 (Figure 4). In 2018, 21,375 students received hunter education certification and 20,891 students received certification in 2019. The number of students completing bowhunter education certification annually has declined quickly, peaking at 2,461 students in 2014 and continually declining to 1,035 students in 2019 (Figure 5). Bowhunter education courses are typically not taught as stand-alone classes, but in addition to a hunter education course.

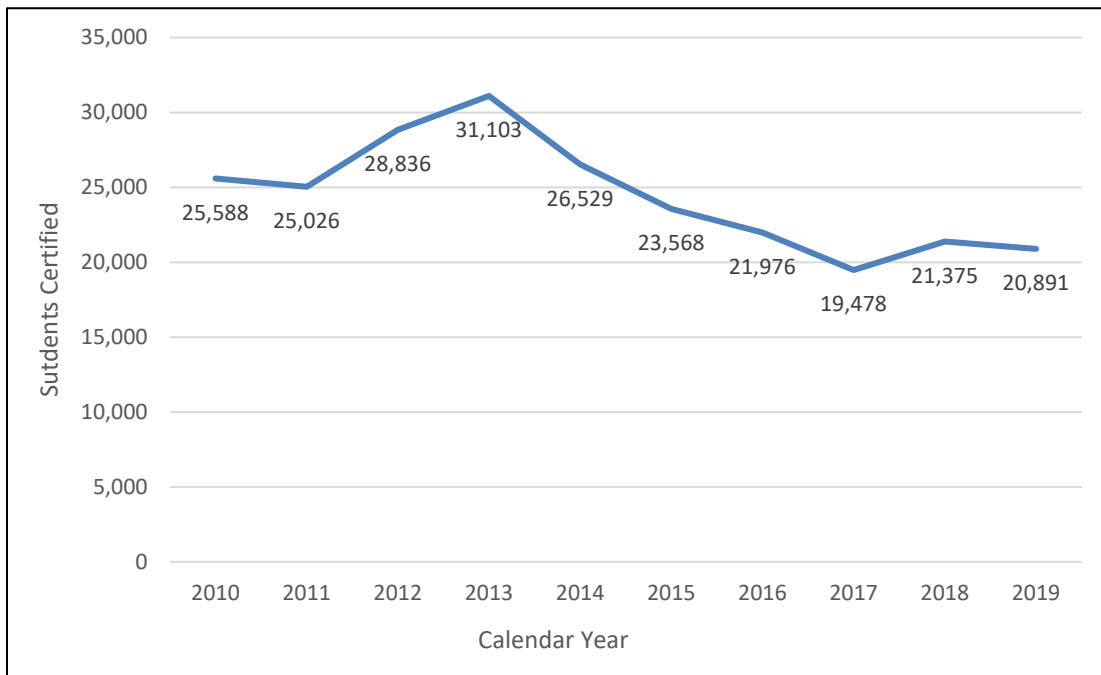


Figure 4. The number of students obtaining hunter education certification each year from calendar year 2010 to 2019.

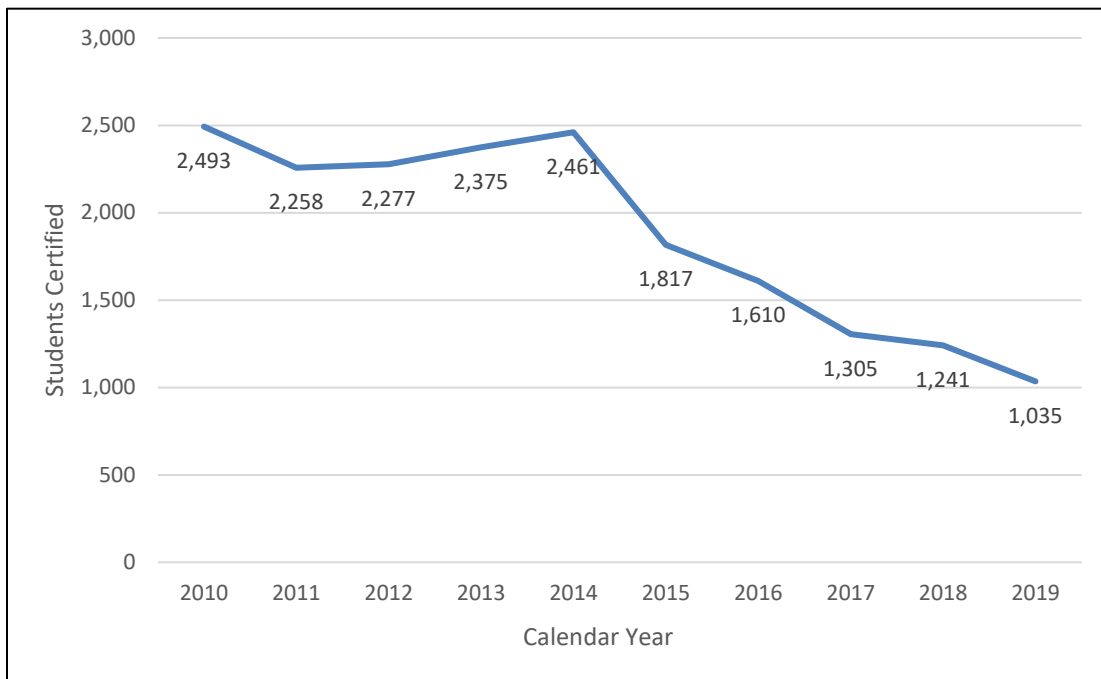


Figure 5. The number of students obtaining bowhunter education certification each year from 2010 to 2019.

Hunter Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation

Department of Natural Resources staff have used a multifaceted approach to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters through the development of marketing strategies and by adopting several programs established by the Wisconsin State Legislature. Wisconsin is among the R3 leaders across state fish and wildlife agencies, largely due to an active legislature that identified decline in hunter participation and responded with legislation that gives DNR tools to address this decline. Efforts to slow the decline of hunting participation in Wisconsin will continue to require a coordinated effort between the State Legislature, Sporting Heritage Council, Natural Resources Board, DNR staff, partner staff, nonprofit clubs and organizations and hunters across the state. See the approaches and programs below for an overview and evaluation of their effectiveness in addressing the decline of hunting participation in Wisconsin.

Learn to Hunt Program

Wisconsin’s Learn to Hunt program, established in 1996, provides novice hunters the opportunity to learn hunting skills and techniques from experienced hunters. Novices are not required to have completed hunter safety prior to attending, and the department may waive season dates and license and stamp fees for participants. Following a minimum of four hours of classroom and field instruction, novice hunters head afield with an experienced volunteer on a mentored hunt. This program is almost entirely supported by volunteer clubs and organizations across the state.

In 2011, Dr. Robert Holsman (University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point) and graduate student Jason Kool released a report titled *An Evaluation of the Learn to Hunt Program*. The major findings of this report included:

- Most participants attending Learn to Hunt programs already come from hunting backgrounds.
- Most participants attending Learn to Hunt programs are being recruited from hunter safety.
- Most programs provide free gear through donations to the participants.

- Many youths are involved in multiple organized sports which may challenge retaining those individuals as their teenage years progress.
- There is a strong need to identify specific program goals and outcomes of the program as it moves forward.
- Learn to Hunt programs and the number of volunteers has continued to increase in the past five years and mentors perceive many positive impacts of the program.

To address the findings of this evaluation, DNR staff created and developed a new program in 2012 titled “Hunting for Sustainability,” now titled the Hunt for Food program. See page 10 for information and evaluation of the Hunt for Food program. Local clubs and volunteers continue to host Learn to Hunt programs across the state annually.

The number of Learn to Hunt participants declined from 2014 to 2018 (Figure 6). Some of this decline can be attributed to the lack of participant reporting by local Learn to Hunt volunteers. The Learn to Hunt program saw the number of participants increase from 793 in 2018 to 966 in 2019.

The median age of all Learn to Hunt participants from 2012-2019 was 13.26. The median age of male participants was 13.06, while the median age of female participants was 14.02. The median age trended slightly upward for both male and female Learn to Hunt participants from 2012-2019 (Figure 7). Participant age is one of the primary differences between the Learn to Hunt and Hunt for Food programs.

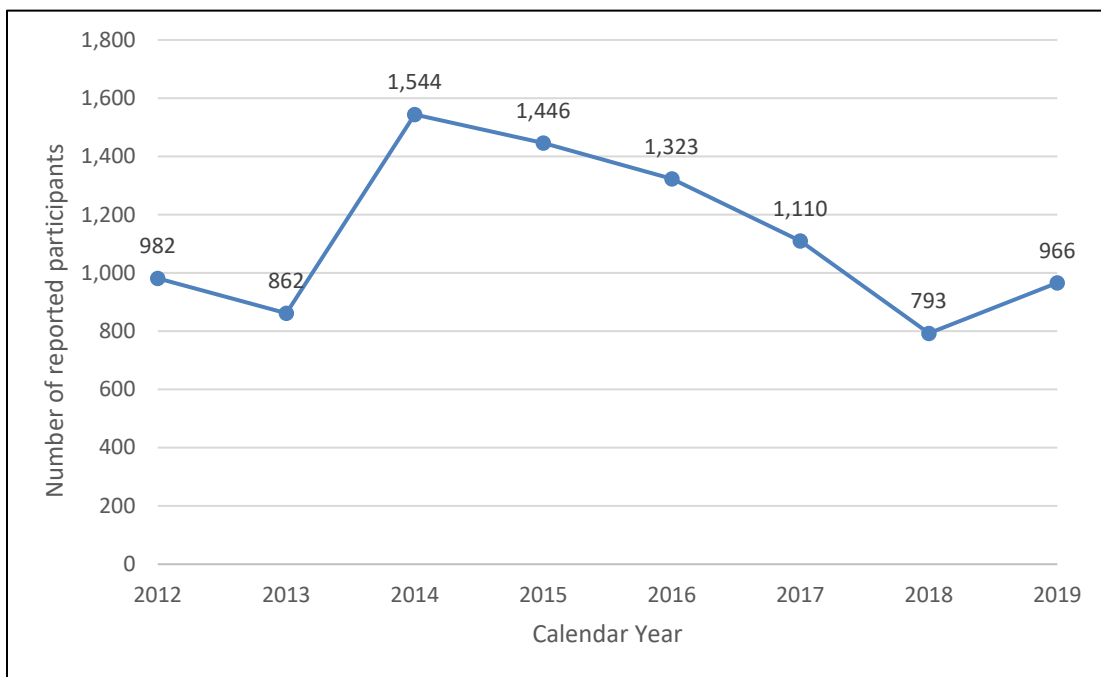


Figure 6. The number participants attending a Learn to Hunt program annually from 2012-2019. The Learn to Hunt program saw a 21 percent increase in participation from 2018 to 2019.

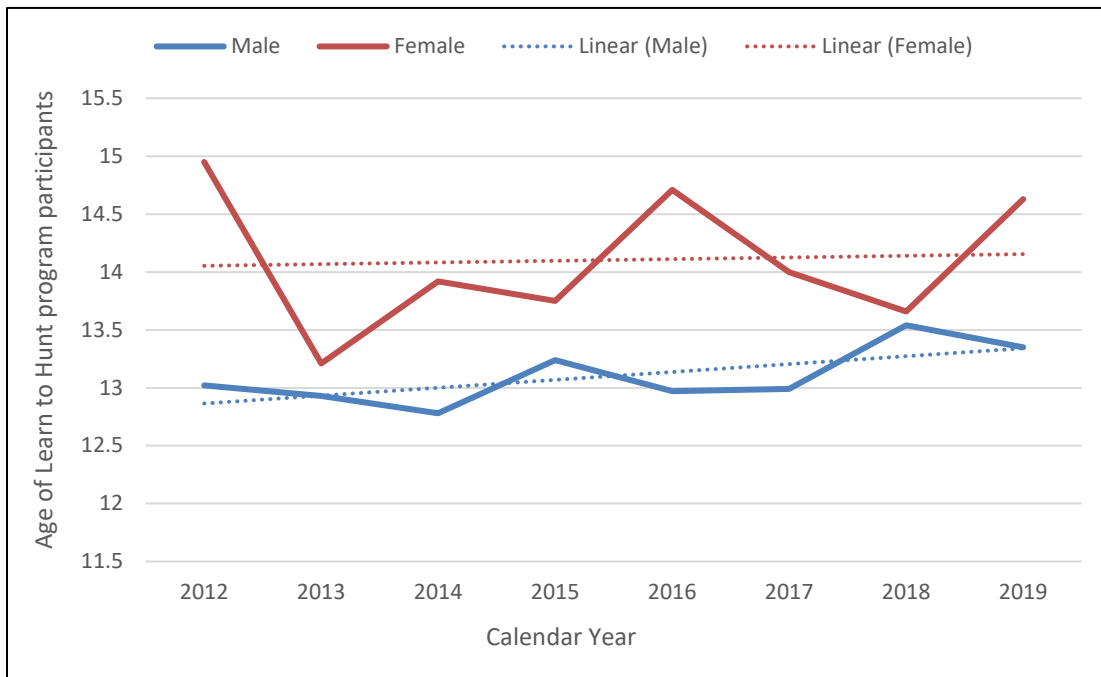


Figure 7. The median age of male and female Learn to Hunt participants from 2012-2019. While the median age is 13.26 years old over this time frame, both male and female participants age has trended upward.

The percentage of female Learn to Hunt participants dropped from 28.9 percent in 2012 to 24.5 percent in 2019. From 2012-2019, the sex ratio of Learn to Hunt participants has remained relatively consistent, at approximately 72 percent male to 28 percent female. For reference, roughly 11 percent of all Wisconsin hunters are female.

R3 program staff are streamlining the Learn to Hunt program record system to the Go Wild licensing system, which will allow staff to analyze hunting license purchase behavior of past Learn to Hunt participants and enable local Learn to Hunt coordinators to upload Learn to Hunt participant rosters and harvest information electronically. Additionally, the Learn to Hunt event approval process will move from wildlife biologist staff in the Bureau of Wildlife Management to the hunter R3 coordinator in the Bureau of Law Enforcement. The intention of these updates is to increase reporting compliance and improve record-keeping capabilities for the program.

Hunt for Food Program

The Hunt for Food program, established in 2012, focuses on recruiting novice adult hunters who may not have an organic social network through which they can learn to hunt. Novice adults are not required to have completed hunter safety prior to attending a Hunt for Food program, and the department may waive season dates and license and stamp fees for Hunt for Food participants through the umbrella Learn to Hunt program/Educational Outdoor Skills Activity administrative code. Most Hunt for Food programs are currently hosted by DNR staff and partner staff, with a handful of volunteer clubs and organizations now hosting programs.

Hunter R3 staff focus remains on recruiting more adult novice hunters and becoming more effective at targeting new hunters from diverse audiences. Recruiting novice adult hunters is critical for several reasons:

- Adults have the skills and maturity to handle equipment safely.
- Adults have transportation.
- Adults have money to spend.
- Adults are strongly motivated to learn and continue after a program.

- Adults have the network to support hunting and even provide more new hunters in the future.
- No one is a better recruiter of children into hunting than a parent.

The Hunt for Food program has expanded rapidly the past two years, with a 43 percent increase in the number of programs held from 2018 to 2019 (Figure 8). The number of Hunt for Food participants increased by 49 percent in that same time frame (Figure 9). Current DNR and partner staff are near capacity in the number of Hunt for Food programs they can host annually and are working to establish additional Hunt for Food programs hosted by volunteer clubs and organizations.

Most Hunt for Food participants have never hunted or purchased a Wisconsin hunting license prior to attending. Of the total Hunt for Food participants, 59.3 percent purchased a Wisconsin hunting license in the same license year in which they attended the class. One year after attending a Hunt for Food program, 48.3 percent of past participants purchased a Wisconsin hunting license. Two years after attending a Hunt for Food program, 41.2 percent of participants purchased a Wisconsin hunting license. Department and partner staff work to provide follow-up opportunities and encourage participants attend more than one Hunt for Food program, as it takes multiple contacts and opportunities to provide novice hunters with the skills they need to hunt on their own.

The main differences between the Hunt for Food program and the Learn to Hunt program are the target audiences and the course content. Hunt for Food participants are much older, more female, diverse, and often have different motivations to hunt compared to Learn to Hunt participants. From 2012 to 2019 the sex ratio of Hunt for Food participants was 57 percent male to 43 percent female (Figure 10). The median age during this same time frame was 31.90 years old for males and 31.63 years old for females.

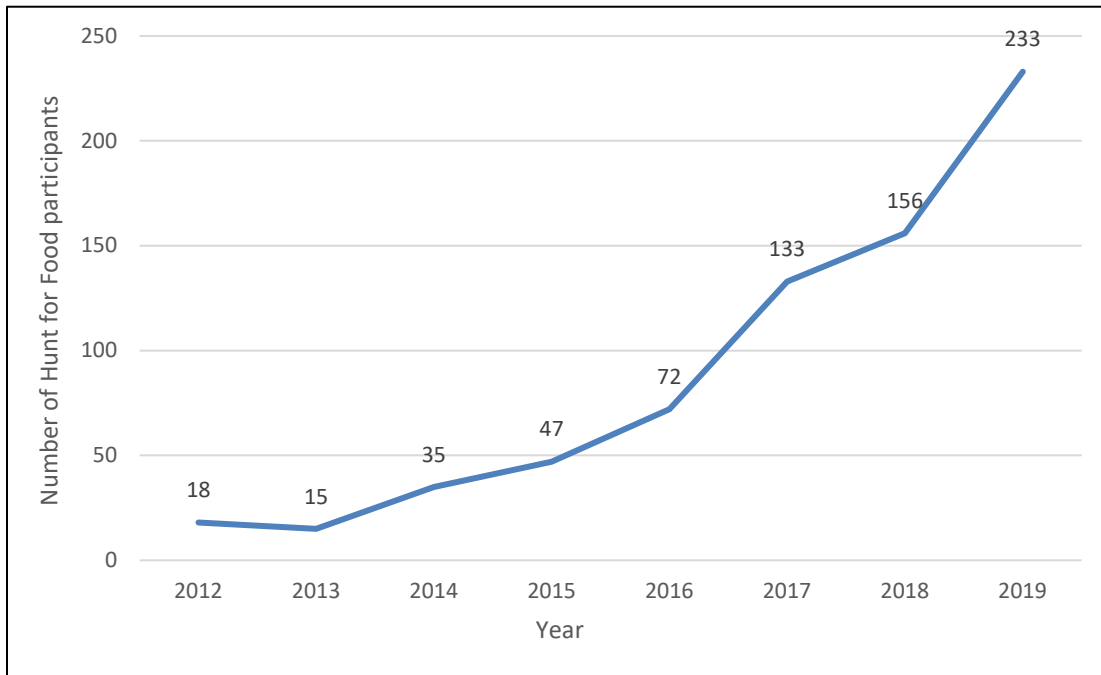


Figure 8. The number of novice adult participants attending a Hunt for Food programs held annually from 2012-2019.

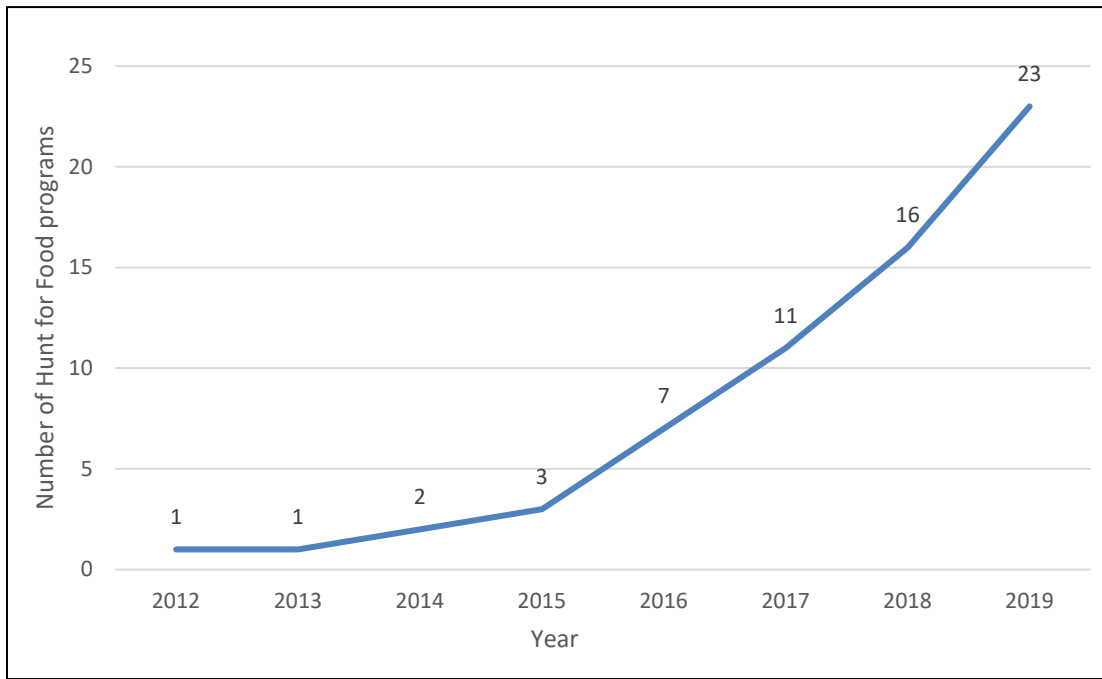


Figure 9. The number of Hunt for Food programs held annually from 2012-2019.

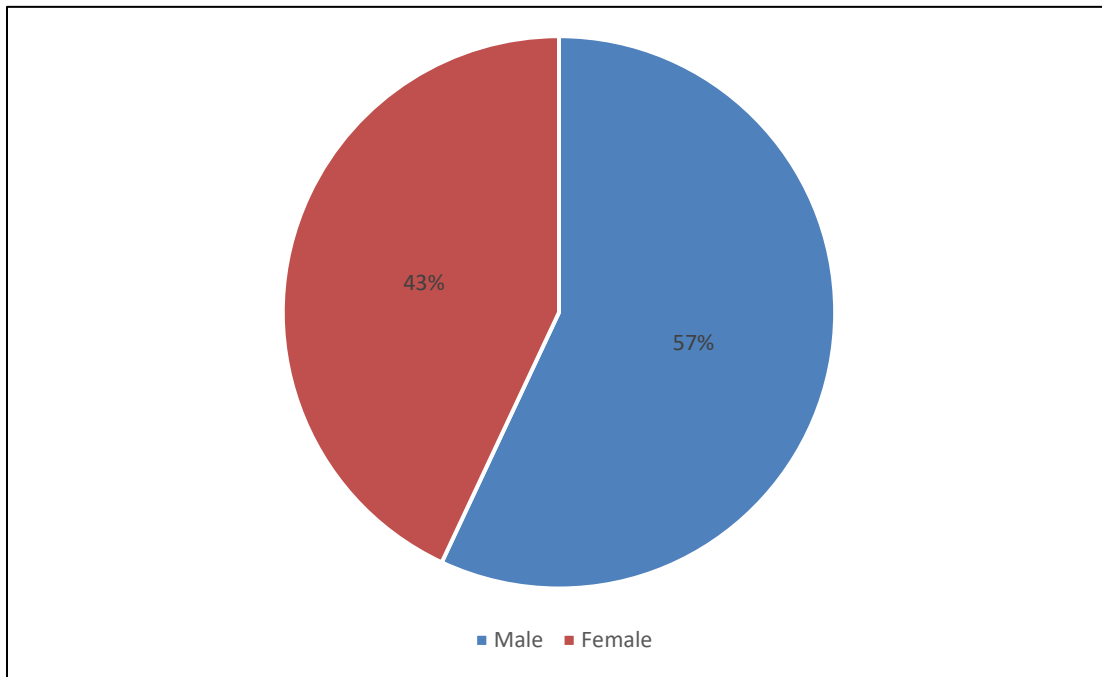


Figure 10. The sex ratio of adult participants attending Hunt for Food programs from 2012 to 2019.

Hunter Mentor Training Program

The Wisconsin Hunter Mentor Training program, established in March of 2018, trains existing and prospective hunting mentors over the course of a several hour workshop. This training program was created in partnership with Pheasants Forever’s hunting heritage coordinator to recruit volunteer mentors for Hunt for Food programs and other adult mentoring opportunities. Hunter Mentor Training workshops are instructed by DNR R3 staff and R3 partners with Pheasants Forever, the National Wild Turkey Federation and Becoming and Outdoors-Woman. The Hunter Mentor Training curriculum includes segments on:

- The Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model
- North American Model of Wildlife Conservation
- Mentoring Strategy
- Adult Learning Principles
- Tips for Mentoring Woman

Upon completion of a Hunter Mentor Training workshop, volunteer mentors are considered agents of the State of Wisconsin and are protected by the State of Wisconsin Self-Funded Liability and Property Programs. Volunteer mentors only receive this protection while following certain mentoring guidelines, including that the mentee must be 18 years or older or, if under 18 years old, a parent or guardian must also be present during the mentored hunt. This protection is not limited to mentoring during Hunt for Food or Learn to Hunt programs.

Since 2018, DNR and partner staff have held 20 Hunter Mentor Training workshops and trained a total of 278 mentors (Figure 11). Department staff can recruit volunteer mentors for Hunt for Food programs by reaching out to trained mentors in the event.

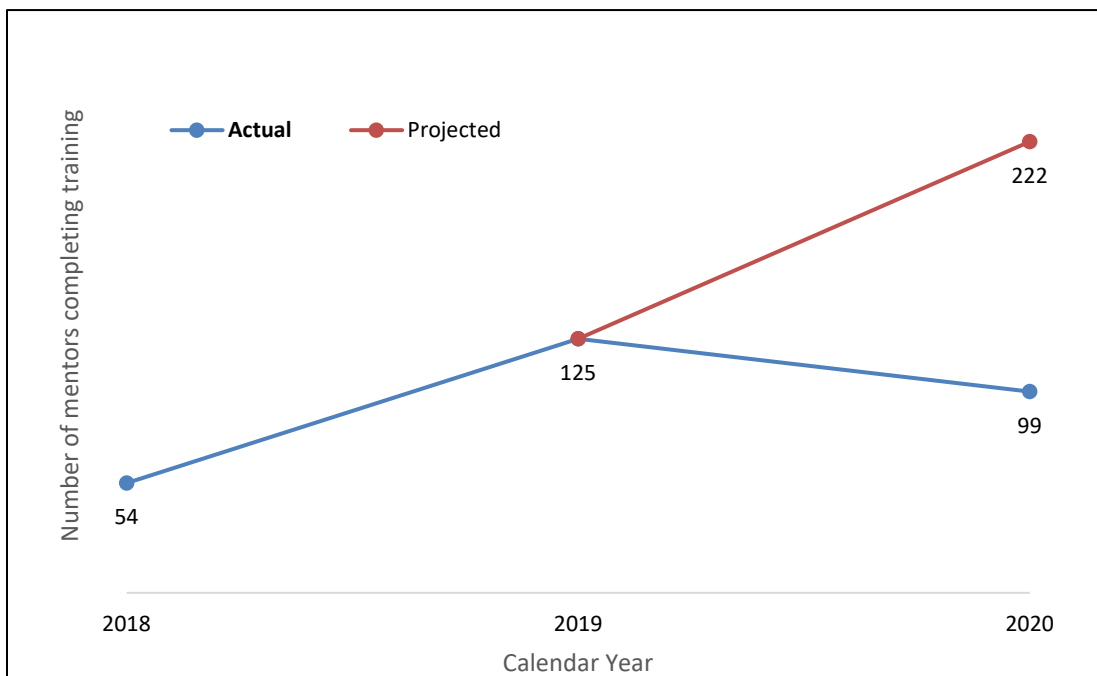


Figure 11. The number of mentors completing the Wisconsin Hunter Mentor Training program since its establishment in March of 2018. 222 mentors were projected to complete the training by the end of 2020, prior to the emergence of COVID-19.

Wisconsin Mentored Hunting Program

The State of Wisconsin eliminated the minimum hunting age in March of 2018. Previously, only individuals ages 10 and older were allowed to purchase a hunting license. The elimination of the minimum hunting age does not change Wisconsin’s mentored hunting law, which has been in place since Sept. 1, 2009. Anyone may hunt in Wisconsin without first completing a hunter education course if he or she is accompanied by a licensed hunter (mentor), hunts within arm’s reach of the mentor, and follows other program rules. This one-on-one opportunity gives first-time hunters a chance to try hunting in a safe situation and enables veteran hunters to pass on their knowledge and passion for the outdoors.

The number of individuals purchasing a mentored hunting license has increased from 12,364 in 2016, to 20,561 in 2020, over a 38.5 percent increase (Figure 12). In license year 2020, 14,869 individuals under the age of 18 purchased a mentored hunting license, while 5,692 adults purchased a mentored hunting license.

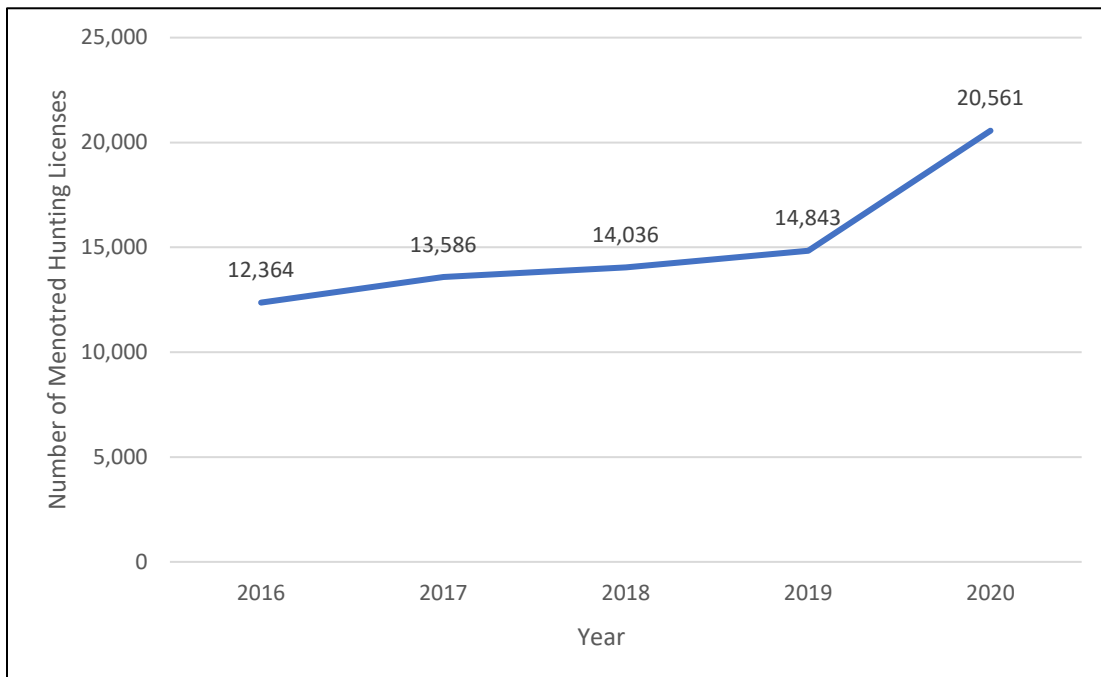


Figure 12. The number of individuals that purchased a mentored hunting license each license year from 2016 to 2020.

(New) First Time License Buyers

Beginning in 2012, the department offered deep discounts in license prices to first time buyers and returning buyers and sought to track participation. Total resident first time license buyers declined approximately 11.4% from FY18 to FY20 (Figure 13). The number of adult and junior resident first time gun deer license sales declined 11.7 percent from FY18 to FY20. Adult resident first time license buyers comprised 89 percent of the total, an increase of about 1 percent from FY2018. First time resident fishing license buyers declined approximately 15 percent from FY18 to FY20.

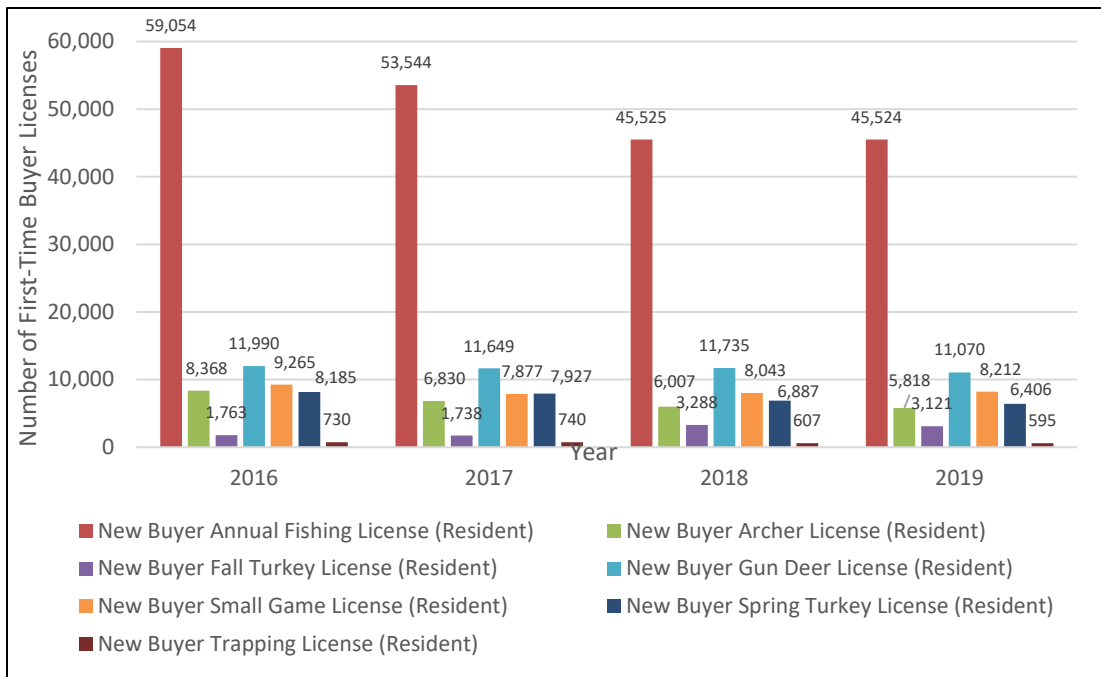


Figure 13. The number of individuals that purchased a first-time buyer license each license year from 2016 to 2019.

Hunter R3 Grant

In 2014, DNR launched the Hunter Recruitment, Development, Training & Education Grant to engage external partners in R3 efforts to recruit and retain diverse new participants to the Wisconsin hunter population or reactivate traditional hunters. There is great need for strategic programs with robust evaluations of results on which to base future program priorities. For this reason, the grant program seeks to test and develop various R3 strategies by funding both pilot programs and proven R3 initiatives, such as Hunt for Food programs conducted by entities outside of the state agency.

In 2019, DNR staff conducted the first major revision of the grant program guidance and renamed it the Hunter R3 Grant to link the funding more clearly to the DNR R3 program. This biennium, the department made \$250,000 available to partners and stakeholders with a maximum award of \$25,000. A total of \$65,970 was awarded to projects submitted in FY2020 (Table 1).

Table 1. 2020 Hunter R3 Grant funding recommendations.

Title	Applicant	Amount Requested	Recommend Funding
Learn to Hunt Program	Wisconsin BHA	\$14,360	\$14,360
Mentor Incentive Pilot	National Wild Turkey Federation	\$7,500	\$7,500
Learn to Hunt for Food Mentor Incentive	Brad Hasheider	\$4,410	\$4,410
Horicon Marsh Learn to Hunt Waterfowl Program	Mark Kakatsch	\$15,210	\$15,210*
University Hunting Program	Delta Waterfowl	\$4,840	\$4,840*
Outdoors Access for All	Access Ability Wisconsin	\$19,650	\$19,650
Totals		\$65,970	\$65,970*

*Up to, but not more than, this amount—contingent on cost-efficacy of proposed budget items.

Communications and Outreach

An R3 communication plan was created and implemented for both FY19 and FY20 to raise customer awareness of angling, hunting and the shooting sports in Wisconsin. Each communication plan encompassed marketing and advertising for all programs housed within the R3 Team (Angler R3, Hunter Education, Hunter R3, Shooting Sports). The main marketing outlets utilized included DNR’s social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), digital mobile ads (paid), Dan Small Outdoors Radio (paid), Wisconsin Radio Network (paid), DNR press releases, web page updates, GovDelivery/Eblasts, and retention emails, among some others.

Wisconsin National Archery in the Schools Program

The Wisconsin National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) continues to grow across Wisconsin. Wisconsin schools offering NASP increased by almost 13 percent from 2017 to 2019, with 845 schools offering the program in 2019 (Figure 14). Public, parochial, private, homeschool and online/virtual schools are using the NASP curriculum and format for physical education, lifetime sports and other classroom programs. Roughly 10 percent of those offering the NASP curriculum have after school or club programs that give archers additional time to hone their skills and grow their experiences, increasing the likelihood they continue. The NASP curriculum is also taught at parks and recreation programs, archery clubs, retail archery shops and at several youth camps across the state. NASP is widely recognized around the world as one of the best beginner archery programs available.

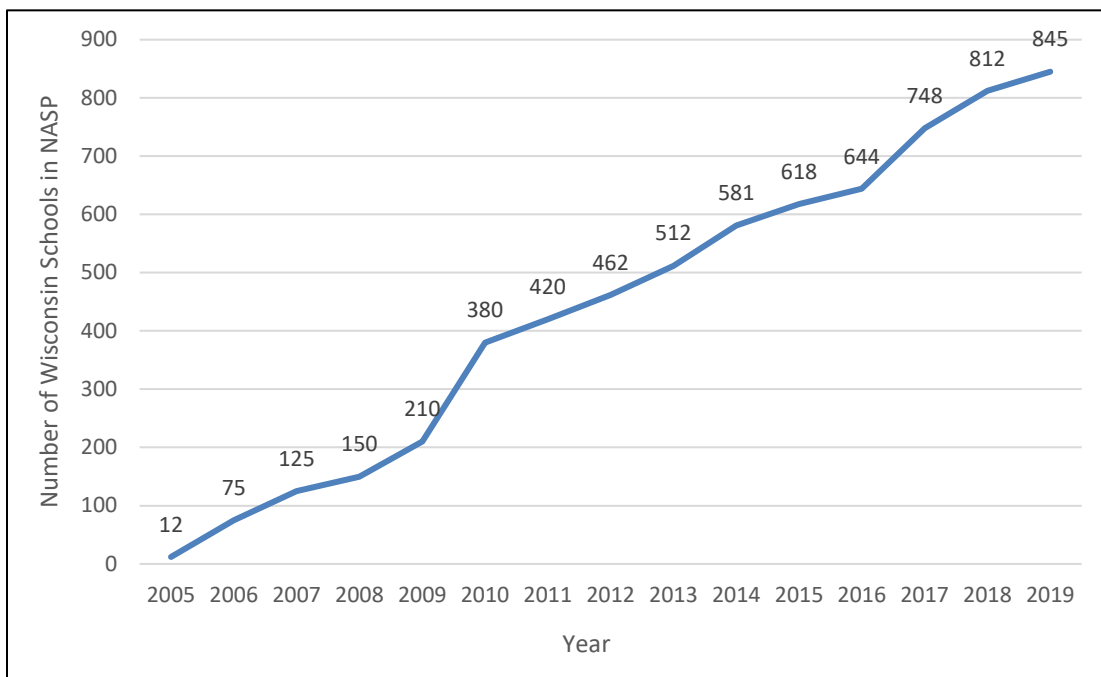


Figure 14. Number of Wisconsin schools offering the National Archery in the Schools Program from 2005-2019.

NASP is implementing a new reporting requirement that will better allow DNR staff to track instructor certification, ensure instructors are following the curriculum, track the number of archers, grade levels and overall number of programs offered. The reporting requirement also provides better data to track program success and a method to hold instructors accountable for the classes they offer.

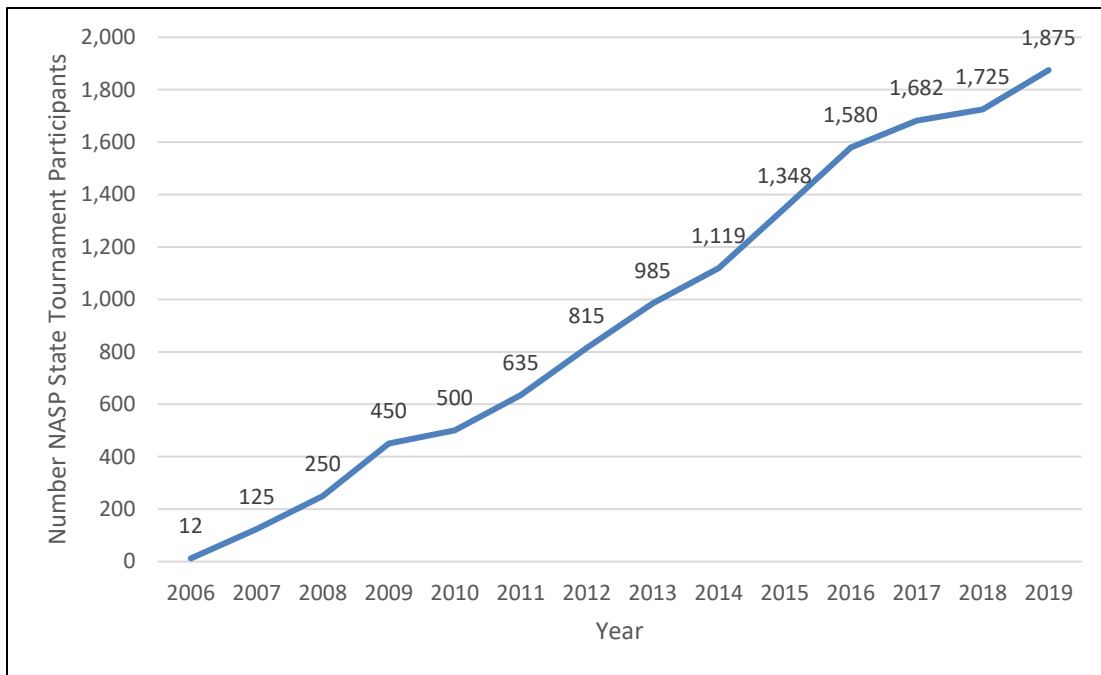


Figure 15. Number of students attending the Wisconsin National Archery in the Schools Program State Tournament from 2006-2019.

The Wisconsin NASP State Tournament saw an 11 percent increase in participation from 2017 to 2019, with 1,875 students participating in 2019 (Figure 15.). The NASP/IBO round, where students shoot life-sized 3D animal targets with the NASP scoring rings on them, saw an incredible jump in participation. Schools across the state were exposed to the NASP/IBO targets through a loaner program offered by the DNR. In exchange, teachers collect the students DNR Customer ID numbers, which enables DNR staff to track NASP participants license purchase behavior (Table 2). The NASP/IBO program allows students and families to learn about arrow placement and increase their interest bowhunting while allowing them to also shoot competitive rounds of archery at life-sized animal targets.

Table 2. A comparison of NASP and S3DA hunting license purchase behavior before and after attending each program.

	NASP	S3DA
Participant Median Age	14.7 years old	17.9 years old
Participants who purchased any Wisconsin hunting license prior to participating in NASP or S3DA	54%	75%
Participants who purchased a Wisconsin bow or crossbow deer hunting license prior to participating in NASP or S3DA	25%	65%
Of participants that never purchased any Wisconsin hunting license prior to participating:		
Purchased any Wisconsin 2019 hunting license after participation in NASP or S3DA	25%	20%
Of participants that never purchased a Wisconsin bow or crossbow deer hunting license prior to participating in NASP or S3DA:		
Purchased a 2019 Wisconsin bow or crossbow deer hunting license after participation in NASP or S3DA	11%	14%

Wisconsin Scholastic 3D Archery Program

The Scholastic 3D Archery (S3DA) program was established in Wisconsin in January 2015. The program has grown to 17 clubs and 5 school teams since. Many students involved with the NASP program have continued their archery interests with the S3DA program. S3DA uses equipment that gets students one step closer to bowhunting and further into the sport of target archery, increasing the likelihood of them purchasing archery equipment. These young archers are connected with college campuses across the state and country—many of which provide scholarship opportunities to grow their interest in bowhunting and competitive archery into college and beyond. S3DA events have been offered across the state and provide nonhunting students and families with information on how to participate in Learn to Hunt and Hunt for Food programs.



While the S3DA program is focused on youth ages 8-18, many of the parents and other family members have either gotten started in archery or have been re-engaged by their kids' interest. S3DA encourages and invites family members to get into, or back into the sport, making S3DA a true family program and pathway to hunting and the outdoors.

Wisconsin Explore Bowhunting Program

The Explore Bowhunting curriculum continues to grow in Wisconsin. Schools, park and recreation programs, youth camps and archery clubs have adopted the Explore Bowhunting and Explore Bowfishing curriculum to teach kids and families skills and techniques. Many of these groups follow the classroom or camp experience up with an actual hunting or bowfishing opportunity. Currently, there are two experienced groups offering Explore Bowfishing camps and programs as part of Wisconsin NASP and S3DA programs. These programs give youths and parents the opportunity to climb onto a raised platform and shoot down into a tank of water at life-sized, moving, rough fish targets.

Explore Bowhunting/Bowfishing programs are also offered through Future Farmers of America (FFA) classes, physical education classes and as part of lifetime skills and other high school classes. FFA teachers and staff are required to hold a beginner level archery instructor certification to ensure the groups are being taught safe and correct archery techniques. This is also a requirement to loan DNR Explore Bowhunting/Bowfishing equipment. Teachers are asked to collect participants DNR Customer ID numbers so DNR staff can track their license purchase behavior and evaluate program success.

Explore Archery Program

Explore Archery provides another pathway to the outdoors and archery using a larger variety of equipment and curriculum materials. Explore Archery programs allow students to use their skills to earn progressive awards as they increase their proficiency using a variety of archery equipment. Department staff are currently working with USA Archery to grow programs across the state. Programs that want to add Explore Archery materials to their curriculum must first register their program with USA Archery. Curriculum materials are then made available at no charge through the DNR. Groups running these programs range from after school programs to municipal park and recreation programs to YMCA camps.

Shooting Ranges

Public Shooting Range Operations and Maintenance

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources owns or operates 11 shooting ranges open to the public for free or for a reasonable fee (Figure 16). DNR has a lease or partner agreement in place with external entities for the maintenance and operation of 4 of the 11 ranges: McMiller Sports Center, C.W. Caywood Memorial Shooting Range, Boulder Junction Shooting Range, and Northwoods Wetlands & Wildlife Club. The remaining ranges are maintained and operated by DNR Shooting Sports program staff and internal partnerships with wildlife and fisheries staff.

Operations and maintenance activities were conducted at all 11 shooting ranges in FY2019 and FY2020, amounting to total expenditures of approximately \$530,400. Recreational shooting, especially with handguns and other modern-type target firearms, is increasing in popularity. The state ranges have required a corresponding increased level of maintenance and monitoring of operations. Most operations and maintenance activities have included the reconstruction of berms and backstops, target board replacement, mowing, porta-john and dumpster maintenance, and staff monitoring of range use.

Two state ranges (Peshtigo and Columbia County) were closed in FY20 for large maintenance projects and safety upgrades.



Figure 16. Shooting ranges owned or operated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

McMiller Sports Center Range Repairs

McMiller Sports Center is the largest shooting range owned by the state. It is operated in partnership with a third party concessionaire through a lease from the DNR. In FY20, the five-year lease with the concessionaire was reawarded through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. McMiller continues to bring in strong revenues through heavy use by the public. A new storage shed was completed early in FY20. Additional projects have been initiated to repair the facility's French drain. Revision of the McMiller Strategic Plan will take place in FY21.

Public Shooting Range Development: Columbia County Public Shooting Range

Construction on the new Columbia County Range was completed in June 2018. The range opened to the public in early FY2019. The total project cost was \$420,000. The opening of the Columbia County Range was highly anticipated by the public and the range has continued to increase in popularity throughout the first two years of operation. Structural problems with the berms during heavy rains have required continued closures while contractors repack the berms. Neighbor contacts regarding noise also prompted staff to investigate and install sound mitigation materials in the shooting sheds.

The R3 program closed the range due to rain damage in FY20 and opted to perform more permanent repairs to the berms, which included research into alternative backstop materials. Additionally, reports of behavioral issues and damage to the shooting sheds and porta-john have required staff to post additional signage, install security cameras on site, and have physical presence to monitor activities at range, which was originally intended to be unsupervised. A bullet catcher will also be installed on the handgun range. A contractor has been hired to perform regular maintenance on the berms and backstops every three months after the range reopens in FY21. The Recreational Safety and Outdoor Skills Section also intends to hire additional staff to help maintain the range.



The Columbia County public shooting range.

Private Range Projects

Since the advent of the department's new private range grant program in 2013, the council has supported the allocation of approximately \$1 million in Pittman-Robertson funds to projects to assist local rod and gun clubs in managing and improving their ranges. The upcoming deadline for private range grant projects is September 15, 2020.

In 2017 (FY18), a total of 17 private ranges applied for \$1 million dollars in grants under the Shooting Range Grant Development program. Of these, 13 ranges were approved to proceed with various projects and upgrades including lighting to allow safe shooting at night, rebuilding compromised skeet houses, construction of shooting sheds, purchasing additional machinery, and rebuilding berms. Grant monies allocated were \$298,100 (Table 3).

Table 3. FY2018 Shooting Range Grant applications and awards.

Applicant	Total Project Cost	Requested Fund	Recommended Fund
<u>Private Ranges</u>			
Boxhorn GC	48,708	24,354	24,354
Boy Scouts 624	3,799	1,899	1,899
Hope R&G	46,084	17,038	17,038
Hudson R&G	470,000	205,000	50,000
North Bristol	215,178	104,500	50,000
Peninsula GC	100,000	50,000	50,000
Peshtigo GC	94,960	47,480	19,775
South Shore Trap Team	7,725	2,455	0
Sauk Prairie	48,500	24,250	10,000
Waunakee GC	12,808	6,404	6,404
Wausau Skeet and Trap	82,800	41,400	20,700
Westby Rod & Gun Club Inc.	17,700	8,850	8,850
Westshore Sports club	60,000	20,000	20,000
Woods and Meadows	76,322	38,161	19,080
Totals Private Ranges	\$1,284,585	\$591,791	\$298,100

Federal Omnibus Legislation

Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act

The Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act was signed into law on 12/20/2019 as a part of [H.R. 1865](#). The provisions within the Act will provide state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies flexibility to adapt and develop techniques to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters, anglers, trappers and shooting sports participants. The bill expands eligible items that states can spend existing PR funds on, including the ability to promote and provide additional outreach to engage novice hunters. The Dingell-Johnson Act already gives agencies the ability to promote angling and boating, and this bill will now give agencies this flexibility to promote hunting. Provisions of this bill additionally permit agencies to form collaborative and scalable efforts over geographic boundaries to increase efficiency of hunter recruitment and retention. This bill will help stabilize funding for state conservation efforts while giving state agencies the ability to more effectively engage constituents and recruit and retain diverse participants into hunting (Source: [Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports](#)).

Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act

The [Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act](#) was enacted on May 10, 2019. The legislation amends the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to support the construction and expansion of public shooting ranges. The Act: (1) authorizes states to pay up to 90 percent of the costs to obtain land, expand or construct a public shooting range; (2) authorizes states to elect to allocate 10 percent of a specified amount apportioned to it from the federal aid to wildlife restoration fund for those costs; (3) limits the federal share of those costs under such Act to 10 percent; (4) requires amounts provided for those costs under the Act to remain

available for expenditure and obligation for five fiscal years. The development of new ranges will help recruit and encourage participation in hunting and the shooting sports and ensure that funding for wildlife conservation will remain stable for future generations (Source: [Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports](#)).

Trapping

Background

Trapping and the use of fur is woven into the history of Wisconsin. Though the fur market is not near as prevalent today as it was when trading posts began springing up here, trapping remains an important wildlife management and research tool steeped in cultural significance.

Trapping has come a long way in the past 30 years. Known as the “BMP era” this period is defined by the best management practices for trapping developed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). Capture devices and methods have improved due to these efforts, along with the ability to communicate the humaneness of trapping with the non-trapping public.

Trapping is an important wildlife management tool that can be used to reduce human-wildlife conflicts, promote biodiversity, and help people to connect with the natural ecosystem. Carefully regulated to ensure healthy populations are sustained, seasons and quotas are set using the best available science.

By partnering with trappers, DNR researchers have been able to learn a lot about some of Wisconsin's most elusive species, like bobcats. To date, over 100 bobcats have been collared with the help of Wisconsin trappers. The collars are providing important home range, habitat use and mortality data on an animal that is difficult to monitor. Dr. Nathan Roberts, from the Office of Applied Science, has estimated that partnering with private trappers has saved the DNR a six-digit sum in this effort. A sample size of 100 collared bobcats is exceptional. Not a single capture related mortality has been observed in doing so, which is equally outstanding.

A survey conducted by Responsive Management for AFWA in 2015 estimated that there were just over 170,000 licensed trappers in the USA with around 95,000 of those residing in the Midwest region*. Wisconsin consistently ranks in the top couple states in terms of licensed trappers. In the 2019 license year, 19,275 people purchased resident trapping licenses in Wisconsin (Figure 17).

Resident trapping licenses are not the only license type that would allow an individual to trap. Those with a Conservation Patrons license can indicate if they intend to trap and are also tracked. Graduates of a Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program (WCTEP) course do not need to purchase a license as their course certificate acts as such for the first season. When combined with WCTEP course graduates and Conservation Patrons license holders who indicated they would trap, there were 36,767 licensed resident trappers in Wisconsin for the 2019-2020 license year. Additionally, the mentored trapping license first became available in 2018 and increased in utilization in 2019 with 581 people purchasing a mentored trapping license. The total number of all licensed Wisconsin resident trappers (36,767) is six percent below the average since 2012. That encompasses both a fur boom from 2011-2015 and a three-year period when Wisconsin had a wolf season. Trappers under the age of 16 may trap without a license if being supervised by a licensed trapper. Landowners may also trap certain nuisance species without purchasing a permit.

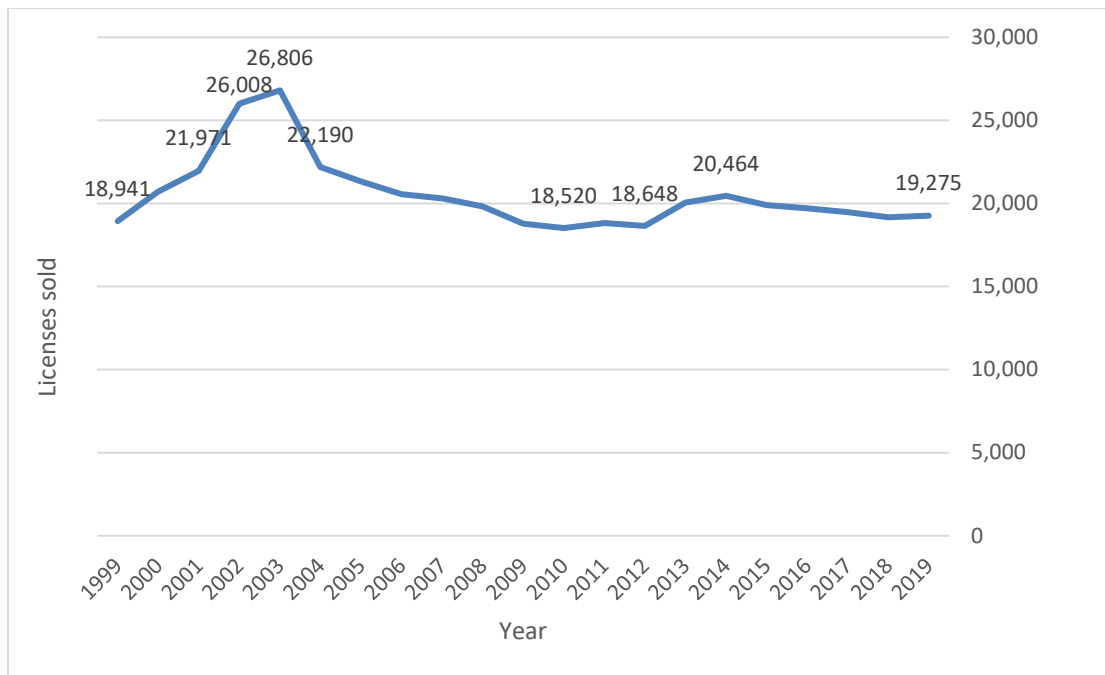


Figure 17. Resident trapping licenses sold in Wisconsin 1999-2019.

Trapper Recruitment and Retention

Trapping is on the high end of the spectrum in terms of both time and equipment needed among the outdoor pursuits. Traditionally, the number of licensed trappers has closely tracked fur market trends. Despite more uncertainty in the markets than ever, the rate of decline seems to be relatively stable. In 2019, there were 19,275 resident trapping licenses purchased, which is 6 percent below the 1999-2019 average. The same trend was observed in total resident trappers.

The WCTEP aims to curb the decline with a hands-on education course designed to give students the skills they need to be successful trapping on their own, while also introducing them to a network of trapping contacts. With trapper education being mandatory for all new trappers, new graduates are used to measure recruitment. In 2019, there were 1,318 students who completed trapper education in Wisconsin (Figure 18). WCTEP graduates account for about 4 percent of the total number of resident trappers in 2019.

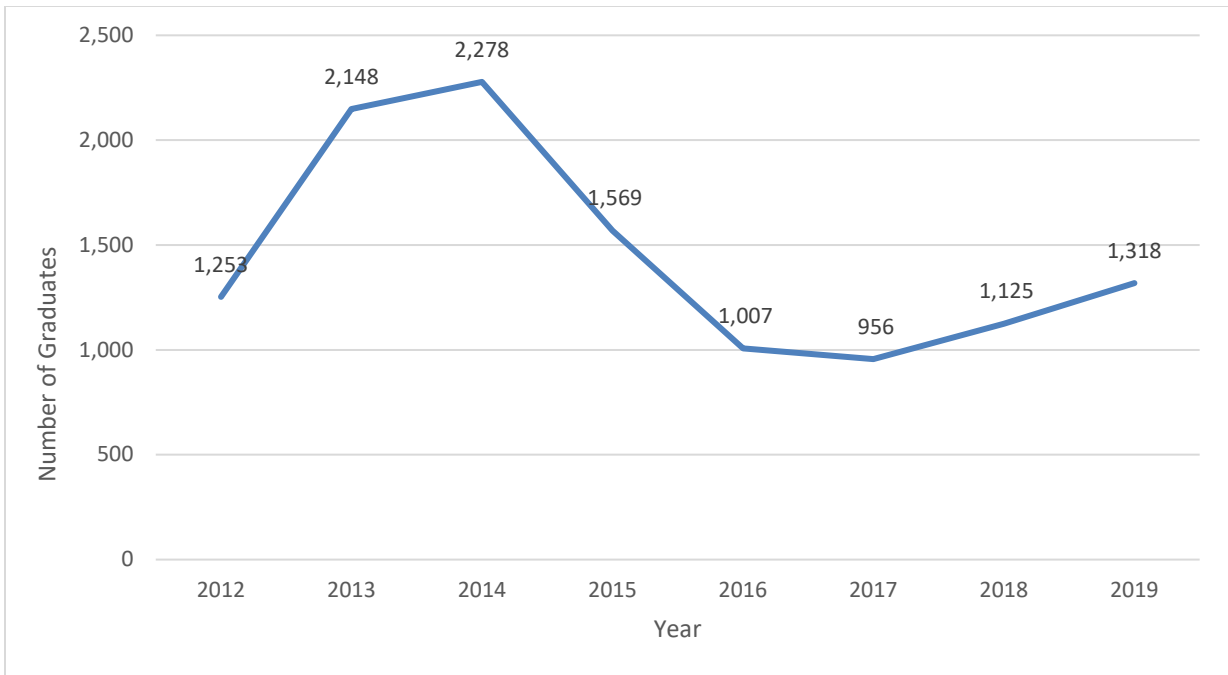


Figure 18. Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Course Graduates 2012-2019.

Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program

Trapper Education in Wisconsin is a cooperative effort between the DNR wildlife management program and the Wisconsin Trappers Association (WTA) that began in 1982. The course has been shaped over the years to help give novice trappers enough skills to be successful on their own while focusing on ethics to help ensure the sustainability of trapping. Becoming mandatory in 1992, Wisconsin routinely graduates more trapper education students than other reporting states.

The Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program now offers three course options to potential students. The traditional in-person course has been by far the most popular and preferred option, but the correspondence course allows students to complete the coursework through the mail, and the internet course can be done online. For the 2020 calendar year, students of the online or correspondence course will become trapper education certified without completing the in-person test. Through all of 2020, students of any age may take the online or correspondence course.

Fur Schools

The DNR Furbearer program and the Trapper Education program hold fur schools for current and future wildlife professionals. Fur Schools offer trapper education certification and cover all aspects of a trapper education class with more hands-on fur handling and focus on furbearer research and management.

There is a Wildlife Fur School for DNR employees and other natural resources professionals held each year. This is a great opportunity for staff to learn about trapping in a way that could help them answer questions they may receive on the job. This program has been well received and usually fills up quickly with around 25 participants. WCTEP assists with similar Wildlife Fur Schools in New York, Idaho and Kentucky and University fur schools in Wisconsin for future natural resources professionals by targeting students in appropriate majors.



Future Trappers of Wisconsin

The Future Trappers of Wisconsin (FTW) is a youth organization hosted by the Wisconsin Trappers Association aimed at teaching kids about trapping and the outdoors. The trapper education department provides educational materials and helps administer the annual youth trapping camp.

Each summer the Future Trappers of Wisconsin hold a youth trapping camp at Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River. Students learn about wildlife, trapping and survival skills. They run a small trapline on a nearby property, put up some fur and even build some sifters and weasel boxes. The campers leave with trapper education certification and trapping equipment to get started. In 2018 there were 10 FTW campers and 14 in 2019.

Youth Supervised and Mentored Trapping

Starting with the 2018 license year, youth supervised, and mentored trapping options are available for folks wanting to give trapping a shot before taking trapper education.

Youth under age 16 may trap before taking trapper education and without a license if trapping under the supervision of a licensed trapper. Youth may trap for the limited draw species of bobcat and fisher under the youth supervised trapping rules if they successfully draw a permit or are transferred one. Without needing a license, it's difficult to track how many folks are using the youth supervised trapping option but increasing the ways youths can get involved is a good thing.



People ages 16 and over who want to try their hand at trapping before becoming certified may purchase a mentored trapping license for \$10. This allows them to trap under the supervision of a licensed trapper before taking trapper education. Individuals can only purchase the mentored trapping license twice in their lifetime and

may not trap the limited draw species (bobcat and fisher) with this license. If someone 16 or over draws a bobcat or fisher permit, they will need to take trapper education and purchase a trapping license to trap for these species. In the first year offered, 39 Wisconsinites purchased the mentored trapping license and in 2019 there were 581 participants.

Prior to 2020, river otters were also a limited draw species. Beginning with the 2020/2021 license year, river otter is a bag limit species, and every trapper (including mentored trappers) will be able to pursue and take the otter bag limit. Harvest authorizations will need to be manually added to WCTEP graduates and Youth Supervised trappers since they aren't purchasing a license.

*US Trapping statistics: <https://www.fishwildlife.org//afwa-inspires/furbearer-management>

Angling Recruitment and Retention

Angler R3 comprises Fishing for Dinner, the Angler R3 Grant, and the Angler Education program. Angler Education, in turn, has several components that support Fishing for Dinner and broader R3 goals.

All programming for the latter half of FY20 was canceled due to COVID-19 which emerged in Wisconsin in mid-March. By March 13, 2020, the DNR had made the decision to cancel R3 events through April, and that order was repeatedly extended.

Angler R3 Grant

Objective: Establish an Angler R3 grant program and encourage potential partner organization to apply and grow the community of anglers. Write guidance and notify public via the web and mailing lists. Inform Fishing in the Neighborhood (FiN) partners that this grant will be replacing the cooperative agreements that were previously in place and encourage them to apply.

Results: 19 grant applications were received and 17 were reviewed for consideration. Two organizations withdrew their applications. Reviewers will be helping applicants to succeed with their programs regarding compliance with the guidance, acceptable protocols, and federal eligibility.

None of the former FiN partners submitted grant applications in the first year of the grant; one applied the second year. The Angler R3 program plans to change the grant calendar to improve the timing for potential applicants who wish to implement spring and summer programs.

Fishing for Dinner

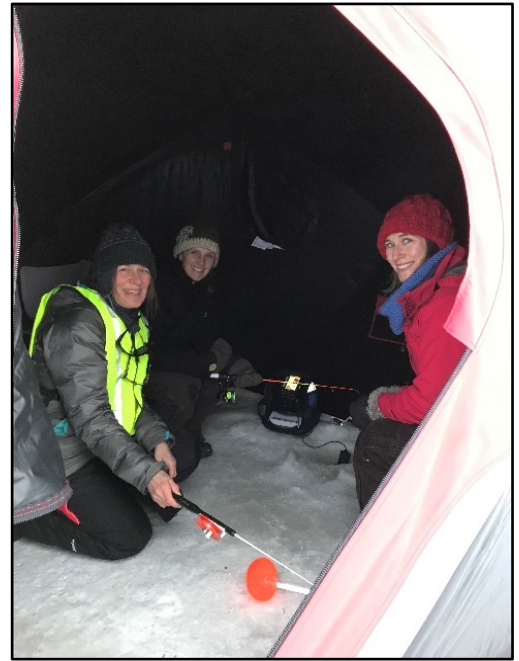
Objective: Engage potential anglers by offering Fishing for Dinner (FFD) classes statewide to reach a diverse group of participants. The goal is for participants to purchase fishing licenses after attending classes and join the community of anglers for the long-term. Outreach will include exhibiting and conducting demonstrations at events, fairs and trade shows where young adults gather to learn about sustainable lifestyle practices, such as eating locally. Angler R3 program staff collect information on potential partners and participants to follow-up with people who express interest.

Results: In collaboration with partners, 17 classes were conducted in Wisconsin, most being multi-session classes, serving 207 people. Classes were held in the following counties: Dane, Dodge, Door, Juneau, La Crosse, Lincoln, Milwaukee, and Vernon. This includes programs with or by our R3 partners from National Wild Turkey Federation and Pheasants Forever. Staff collected DNR customer identification numbers from 119 participants; 58 indicated that they had already purchased licenses in 2018-2020 and 61 benefited from the educational license waiver.

Classes cover basic fishing skills, where to fish, an overview of the Public Trust Doctrine, effective responses to threats to sustainability, safe and ethical harvest practices and cooking the catch. Partners include local chefs, culinary arts instructors, anglers, social service organizations and members of the sustainable and local foods community to encourage young adults to fish.

Angler R3 staff have been tracking license buying habits of participants from previous classes. The results show an uptick in license sales for participants the year they attend a class. Many members of the target audience are in transient life stages due to their education plans and early career moves, which take them out of state. This suggests a need to track license buying habits at a regional or national level.

Next steps will be to continue to: 1) track license purchasing habits of participants using their customer service numbers; 2) engage partners willing to go beyond the one-day event to replicate this model statewide to see an increase in participants each year; and 3) hold training sessions for willing partners, similarly to how angler education instructors were previously trained.



Participant license buying habits and trends are below (Figure 19). Actual numbers and the percentages of participants purchasing fishing licenses are in Table 6. Trends show that there is an 18.5 percent average increase in fishing licenses purchased the year a FFD class occurs compared to the year prior. More data needs to be collected to determine long-term trends and effects of this program.

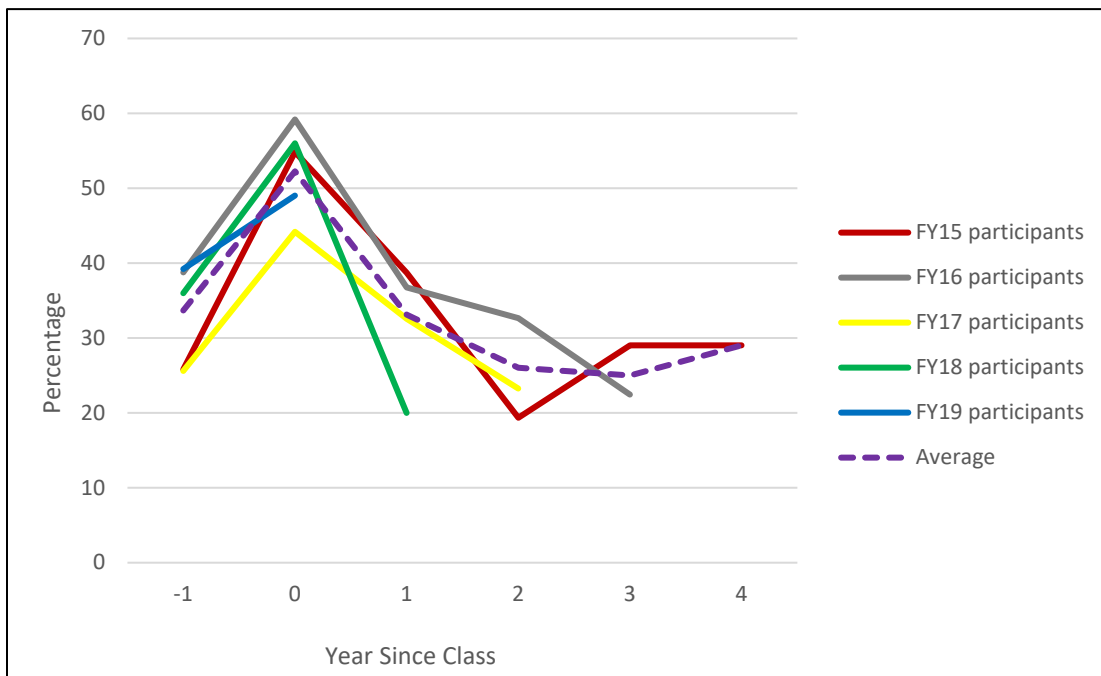


Figure 19. Percentages of Fishing for Dinner participants that bought fishing licenses each year from 2014-2020. Each line represents the fiscal year where participants attended a Fishing for Dinner class. These trends suggest a need to continue individual post-program involvement.

Table 6. Total participants and percentages that purchased fishing licenses based on the fiscal years they attended a Fishing for Dinner class.

Participant License Purchasing Behavior							
Fiscal Year	Total Tracked Participants	Years since attended FFD Class					
		FY-1	FY	FY+1	FY+2	FY+3	FY+4
FY15 participants	31	8	17	12	6	9	9
	FY15 % purchased	25.80%	54.80%	38.70%	19.40%	29%	29%
FY16 participants	49	19	29	18	16	11	
	FY16 % purchased	38.80%	59.20%	36.70%	32.70%	22.40%	
FY17 participants	43	11	19	14	10		
	FY17 % purchased	25.60%	44.20%	32.60%	23.30%		
FY18 participants	25	9	14	5			
	FY18 % purchased	36%	56%	20%			
FY19 participants	51	20	25				
	FY19 % Purchased	39.20%	49%				

Outreach

Angler R3 staff displayed the *Fishing for Dinner* and *Wisconsin Wild Harvest* tradeshow exhibits and presented hands-on demonstrations at 15 different venues over the course of 22 days. The goal is to reach new audiences at venues such as Canoeopia, Wisconsin Local Foods Network Conference, Pulaski Park in Milwaukee with staff from the 16th Street Community Health Center, Midwest Renewable Energy Fair, Harbor Fest in Milwaukee, and the Lt. Gov Fishing Outing at Urban Ecology Center. Staff also met with colleagues from the Bureaus of Fisheries Management and Law Enforcement at their statewide meetings. This included being part of a panel discussion on R3 at Law Enforcement’s statewide meeting.

Angler Education Instructor Training and Activity

Objective: Train a minimum of five facilitators per year to lead and conduct angler education instructor training and certification workshops in their communities. Improve angler education instructor training workshops with an emphasis on increasing instructor networking through local fishing clubs, conservation clubs, and youth organizations to reach new audiences. Evaluate and survey instructors and program participants to determine long-term involvement, effectiveness and needs. Support efforts of certified and non-certified volunteers to deliver angler education programming and fishing clinics. Encourage instructors and others who plan Free Fishing Weekend events to target adults as well as families with young children. Purchase supplies and services for workshops and support volunteer efforts.





Results: For this biennium, the program conducted 10 trainings, which resulted in 120 people certified as Angler R3 Instructors. A draft of the Fishing for Dinner Instructor Manual was debuted at the Wisconsin Association of Environmental Educators’ conference in January of 2018 and made changes to the draft based on the feedback received. The manual was completed in June of 2018 and fine-tuned training delivery practices.

The delivery of the FFD program is challenging, particularly for volunteers who are not accustomed to working with adult audiences in a community education-style setting. They want to see the program done first. In response, the program is combining instructor training with program delivery so that new instructors will have a better understanding of the nuts and bolts of community education.

While adults are the target audience for FFD, many instructors still want to focus on youth programming, so staff encourage family programs as an option. Group dynamics will be different for groups of mixed ages and instructors will have to adjust the program.

Identifying people able to join the next level of instructors and become trainers (coordinators, lead instructors or facilitators) remains a work in process, and there are a handful of volunteers who fit that description.

For program delivery, 33 instructors provided 37 programs that served 2,392 people at 176 sessions. Almost all programs were multiple sessions, which suggests repeat attendance by participants and aligns with the goal to have more long-term involvement in programs for those interested in fishing. Warehouse inventory reports indicate that 13 groups ordered 260 Junior Angler booklets. All programming for the latter half of FY20 was canceled due to COVID-19.

Fishing in the Neighborhood

Objective: Community organizations will be carefully selected to serve as Fishing in the Neighborhood (FiN) host sites and involve interested fisheries biologists. FiN’terns will be hired by the Angler R3 Coordinator, in consultation with partner organizations, and trained and supervised to optimize their success in reaching diverse audiences. They will expand the focus to include people of license-buying age. Emphasize recruitment of bilingual candidates to bridge language barriers and to improve compliance with regulations and adherence to the fish health advisory.



Transition to Angler R3 Grant: The Angler R3 grant program was to fund future FiN efforts, but the format and timing of the grant was not compatible with partners’ budget processes, or their summer programming schedules. The fact that the grant is set up so that partners are reimbursed after the expenditures occur made it difficult for our long-term partners to participate as they had in the past, i.e., via cooperative agreements, which were more like contracts. Partner budget limitations prevented any from applying in the first year of the grant. The program extended the transition period to maintain these important partnerships and two sites, the Urban Ecology Center (UEC) and Madison School Community Recreation (MSCR), were able to continue in a modified fashion for the first half of the biennium. The UEC submitted at grant for the second half of the biennium, with a delayed start time to align with the grant calendar.

Results: A FiN season begins in May of one fiscal year when the interns, or FiN’terns, are trained, and ends in August of the next. For example, the FiN program that began at Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary in May of 2017

and finished in August 2017, straddled the fiscal years of 2017 and 2018. This review reflects the efforts launched in May 2018 and June 2019 and concluded in August 2019 (FY20).

The program maintained two FiN sites with two previous partners, the UEC and MSCR. Because the hiring process was delayed and Free Fishing Weekend (FFW) came early in 2019, FiN'terns got their feet wet helping at a FFD class at Devil's Lake State Park instead of FFW. The FiN'terns reported an approximate total of 2,794 participants at their programs. They held weekly events such as Fishing Club sessions and Saturday family fishing adventures at the Urban Ecology Center. They also assisted at an introductory Fishing for Dinner outreach event hosted by 16th Street Community Health Center, which serves Milwaukee's Latino community. The Madison team plugged into local day camp programming and used MSCR's pontoon boats for family fishing outings.



License Waivers

Objective: Provide educational Learn to Fish license waivers to novice anglers that are part of an organized group participating in an approved program, either the DNR's Angler Education Program, FFD or one of their own design. Audiences are high school physical education and biology class students, and adults.

Results: Provided Learn to Fish educational license waivers to 36 groups, including 13 high schools and 15 FFD classes, statewide. The waiver allowed teachers and group leaders to introduce 589 older teens and 166 adults of all ages to fishing.

Tackle Loaner Program

Objective: Stock loaner sites with basic fishing equipment. Provide specialty items to sites where there is staff interest and expertise to make proper use of it, as budget allows. Supply loaner sites with non-lead sinkers and instruct site managers to purchase non-lead sinkers when they need to make replacements on short notice, outside of the main distribution period. At least one third of the sites that desire help with maintenance will receive it through volunteer recruitment.

Results: The program has 55 tackle loaner sites statewide with all reporting. For this biennium, reports indicate that 14,652 individuals from 235 families and 262 different groups used gear, logging 817 days of fishing. In many cases, the group members shared gear. Parks served mainly family groups and individuals. Department service centers tend to serve larger groups from organizations and schools. The number of families could also be higher than reported since many sites noted only if the borrowers were campers or visitors and didn't distinguish if they were families. Three sites reported no use, which allows for consideration to transfer gear from sites where use is low to more active sites or improve marketing to increase use. There have been many staffing transitions and adjustments to move gear to where staff are able to provide this service.

Free Fishing Weekend

Objective: Provide opportunities for children and families to engage in fishing together, in collaboration with a wide range of Wisconsin communities. With an emphasis on community engagement, Free Fishing Weekend is a catalyst for families and social groups to plan future fishing trips and will encourage people to fish at their local waters or explore other waters of the state. Required by Wis. Stat. 29.197 (3), two Free Fishing Weekends are scheduled every year across the state; a summer event is always the first full weekend in June and a winter event is held the third full weekend in January.

Results: For the summer weekend in June of 2019, the program provided materials and publicity for nine events. This is about a third of the typical number of registered events. Seven event sponsors reported

attendance figures totaling 875 participants. Most reporting sites collect data on age breakdown; they show that of the 875 attendees, 505 were young kids and 370 were of license-buying age: (30) 16-18 and (340) adults. Based on the expected attendance listed on the event proposals from the two non-reporting event sponsors, it is reasonable to estimate that another 250 people (144 youth and 56 adults) participated in summer Free Fishing Weekend events that year. For 2020, formal clinics were canceled due to COVID-19. However, people were encouraged to participate in Free Fishing Weekend as individuals or with members of their household, but there is no data on participation.

The winter Free Fishing Weekend is slow to catch on. This may be due to past years' experience of variable ice conditions and other fundraising events for several partners who host clinics at the summer Free Fishing Weekend. For this biennium, scheduled winter events were held at 14 locations, attracting 1,117 participants with a breakdown of 511 adults and 626 youth.

Angler Recruitment and Retention in Wisconsin

Wisconsin's outstanding lakes, rivers and streams have given rise to a rich fishing tradition. Generations of residents and visitors consistently bought fishing licenses and over time helped build the fishing-related tourism industry that generates billions of dollars and supports thousands of jobs in Wisconsin. Today 1.3 million anglers purchase licenses to fish in Wisconsin each year. Tourism is the third largest industry in the state and fishing is a major part of it.

Social and economic realities drive fishing license sales. In Wisconsin, license sales peaked, then leveled off 30 years ago in the late 1980s, while the population continued to increase. Between 2006 and 2019, overall fishing participation in Wisconsin declined by 9.6 percent, except for anglers ages 55 and older – their numbers increased (Figure 20).

However, the pandemic that locked down the nation spurred a spike in license sales in Wisconsin. There was a 10 percent increase among all age groups in the spring of 2020, but more significantly was the number of First Time Buyers, particularly among those under age 30 (Table 7).

This presents an opportunity for future direct marketing efforts to retain those new anglers. Surveys may show why more young people were attracted to fishing during the lockdown. Are they high schoolers whose sports programs were canceled? Are they college students who were not attending classes? Are they among the newly unemployed? Did people who would have bought fishing licenses anyway, buy them earlier in the season or does this represent recruitment of anglers from a new population segment? Whatever the reason, the hope is people will continue to fish after this health crisis abates.

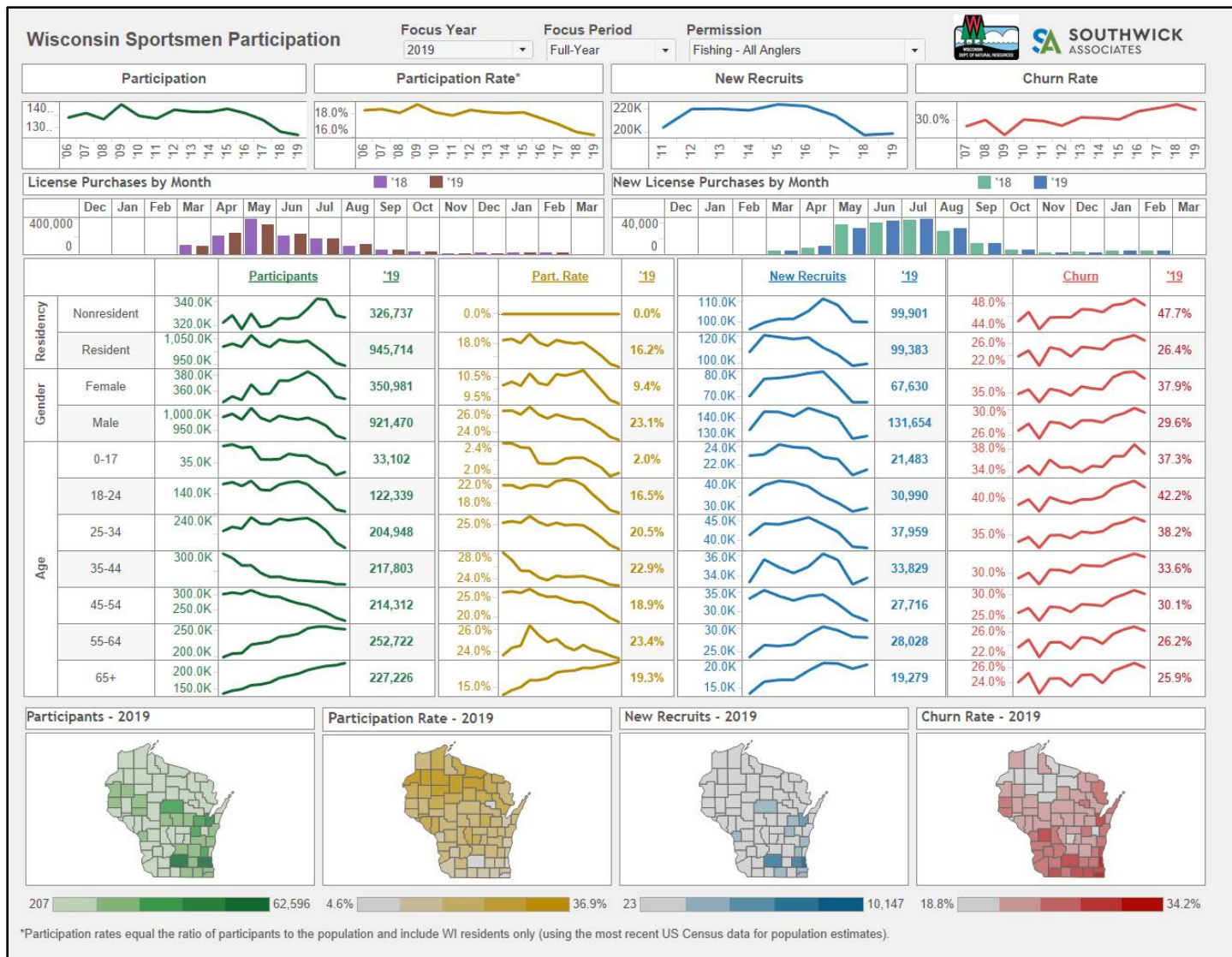


Figure 20. Wisconsin fishing license sales (Southwick Associates 2020).

Table 7. Resident and nonresident fishing license and trout and salmon stamp sales during March, April, and May, 2016-2020. **Identifies highest sales during the 5-year period.** (Ben Beardmore and Lauren Bradshaw 2020, DNR Analysis Services. Unpublished report: 2020 South Central Angler Questionnaire. See appendix for PowerPoint with survey questions and preliminary findings).

License/Stamp	License Year				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Resident fishing license	692,979	649,270	636,990	607,603	734,514
Nonresident fishing license	112,329	110,633	111,542	104,029	105,902
Inland trout stamp	106,216	106,456	106,393	105,454	128,714
Great Lakes salmon and trout stamp	72,575	73,997	72,933	70,018	76,483

Sporting Heritage Council Members FY2018 - FY2020

Chair (DNR Appointee):	Scott Loomans
Governor's Appointee:	Bill Torhorst, succeeded by Reggie Hayes in October 2019.
Conservation Congress Representative:	Larry Bonde
Deer Hunting Representative:	Tony Grabski
Bird Hunting Representative:	Mark LaBarbera
Angling Representative:	Robert Haase
Bear Hunting Representative:	Mike Rogers
Furbearer Hunting/Trapping Representative:	Scott Zimmerman
Senate Representative (Republican):	Sen. Tom Tiffany
Senate Representative (Democrat):	Sen. Bob Wirth
Assembly Representative (Republican):	Rep. Romaine Quinn
Assembly Representative (Democrat):	Rep. Nick Milroy
DNR Staff:	Keith Warnke
DNR Staff:	Emily Iehl
DNR Staff:	Theresa Stabo

Appendix



2020 South Central
Angler Questionnaire