



## **Youth Recruitment and Retention Natural Resources Advisory Board Subcommittee**

**Wednesday August 12, 2009  
Atwood Outdoor Education Center  
Rockford, Illinois  
5:00 PM**

### **MINUTES**

#### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

Michael Howard, Fuller Park Community Development Corp, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:10 PM.

#### **Roll Call**

Kent Adams, National Wild Turkey Federation; Elizabeth Hagen-Moeller, Environmental Education Association of Illinois; and Michael Howard, Fuller Park Community Development Corp.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Hagen-Moeller moved to approve the minutes, Adams seconded. Minutes passed unanimously. Minutes are posted at <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children.htm>.

#### **Remarks from Assistant Director John Rogner**

Growing up not too far from Rockford, Rogner is intimately familiar with the Kishwaukee River. It was easy for him to connect with nature as a child, growing up in a small town along a river, he naturally fell into hunting and fishing and other outdoor sports. However, with the advent of video games and computers, youth today are not as likely to pursue outdoor activities. The subject of tonight's meeting and this series of meetings is to figure out how to get kids engaged in outdoor activities like hunting and fishing, and keep them involved, so as adults they continue in these pursuits. For DNR, this is important because much of the revenue is derived from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. Nationwide, sales of licenses are down as we fail to bring new blood into outdoor recreation. The topics covered in the Youth Recruitment and Retention meetings are interrelated with our other subcommittees for funding and public access that are leading up to the new Conservation Congress on October 24-25. How do we continue funding this agency so that we can provide the experiences and services that you have grown to expect from us and engage the future generations in conservation?

But this meeting goes beyond just the hunting and fishing sphere and is trying to address what one author has coined, "nature deficit disorder." How do we connect kids with the outdoors? We are not born with fishing rods and shotguns in our hands, we are born with a much simpler curiosity about nature, and experiences are increasingly unavailable to kids to foster interest. There is a role for the agency to play in the initiative to get kids outside and we are looking for your guidance at these meetings.

#### **Remarks from Co-Chairman Michael Howard**

Kids these days have many more distractions with multimedia activities. The goals of this meeting are to garner the public's support, ideas, and feedback to see how we can work collectively statewide. We want to encourage youth to participate and become attracted to DNR activities.

### **Member Comment Period**

Hagen- Moeller commented that Environmental Education Association of Illinois has a long standing relationship with DNR, not just for participating in hunting and fishing activities, but also through getting resources and educational materials to teachers. DNR offers many resources that can help get kids interested in the outdoors.

Adams commented that the National Wild Turkey Federation is focused on engaging future hunters and has many programs that focus on involving kids and women in hunting activities to foster the attachment to the land and its resources.

### **Welcome and Statements - Becky Lambert, Atwood Education Center, Rockford Park District**

Lambert welcomed the group. The Atwood Education Center incorporates archery, camping, and other outdoor living skills in their activities and programs. For more information on the activities at the Atwood Education Center visit <http://www.rockfordparkdistrict.org/home/facilitiesandattractions/environmentalcenteriloutdooreduc/atwoodenvironmentalcenter.cmsx>.

### **Youth Hunting Trends – Olivia Dorothy, Youth Program Coordinator, Dept of Natural Resources**

The presentation is posted at [www. http://www.dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children.htm](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/nrab/children.htm).

The report, the Future of Hunting and Shooting Sports, is a project to better understand the factors related to hunting and sport shooting participation, identify strategies to better meet the needs of current and potential participants, and more effectively communicate to the public about these activities.

The report suggests that the future of hunting is precarious. The number of active hunters has decreased in the U.S., and fewer youth are entering these sports. Conversely, an overwhelming majority of Americans support hunting. Support, but not participation, has been increasing during the past decade. Overall, 78% approve of hunting. The American public thinks that it is important that state fish and wildlife agencies provide opportunities for recreational hunting and shooting.

Sportsmen are integral to habitat conservation and species protection. Game management programs, which are funded by sportsmen's dollars, have brought back numerous wildlife species from unhealthy population levels. Wildlife management efforts and advocacy, funded and fueled by sportsmen, have conserved millions of acres of land, thereby providing vital habitat for both game and nongame wildlife. The average hunter donates \$53 per year; by comparison, the average U.S. resident donates \$32 per year to conservation organizations. The most common organizations to which they belonged or donated are the National Rifle Association, the Nature Conservancy, a local hunt or gun club, or a species-specific organization such as Ducks Unlimited, Quail Unlimited, or Pheasants Forever. Sportsmen also create revenue and support jobs. The *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife- Associated Recreation* indicates that hunters spend at least \$22.7 billion on hunting each year. It is estimated that hunters support 593,000 jobs. Annually, expenditures related to hunting produce \$5.0 billion in Federal tax revenue and \$4.2 billion in state and local tax revenue.

Three demographic trends in particular have strong implications for participation in hunting: the trend toward increasing urbanization, the aging of the American population, and the declining proportion of the U.S. population that is white/Caucasian. All three of these trends run counter to an increase in hunting participation. Changing demographic factors in the U.S. are driving the trend of decreasing hunting participation. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1950, 36% of the U.S. population lived in a rural area. This percentage went down to 30% in 1960, to 25% by 1990, and down to 22% in 2000. Hunting participation is positively correlated with living in a rural area. To compound this factor, an analysis of *National Survey* data found that hunter recruitment was down sharply among urban residents, relative to residents of non-urban areas. Therefore, not only is more of the U.S. becoming urban, but the urban demographic group is becoming even less likely to hunt.

Another important demographic trend influencing hunting participation is an aging society. U.S. Census Bureau data indicate that the median age of Americans has increased from 28.0 years of age in 1970 to 36.4 years in 2006. Furthermore, the median age of white Americans, the demographic group most likely to hunt, was even older, at 39.0

years in 2006. The increasing age of the American population is especially detrimental to hunting participation because young adults are more likely to hunt than are older adults. Leonard (2007) examined the continuing decline in hunting participation reported in the *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* in 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006 and found a rapid decrease in hunting through the teenage years, followed by a steady decline after the age of 25.

In general, hunting is a pursuit of rural white males. The large majority of hunters (86%) identify themselves as white/Caucasian. The large majority of hunters (77%) are male. Inactive hunters tend to be older than active hunters. Although only 10% of active hunters are 65 years old or older, 23% of inactive hunters are that age, reinforcing other findings that suggest that many inactive hunters simply dropped out because of age or health.

Most hunters start hunting in childhood, with *younger* initiation correlated with *greater* avidity and retention. A majority (58%) had hunted at least once by the age of 12 years. Initiation needs to occur by the age of 20 to instill a long-term love of the sport. 67% of hunters were initiated at 20 years old or younger, and 18% of first-time hunters in 2006 were 10 years old or younger. Initiation into hunting is most commonly through *male* family members, particularly the father or stepfather, but also including uncles, brothers, and grandfathers.

Other research has examined whether single-parent households have an effect on children's hunting rate. The data does not show that growing up in a single-parent household negatively affects children's rate of hunting. Further, hunting participation by the female parent increased the likelihood of higher participation rates for both sons and daughters, compared to male parental participation. If a male parent hunted 10-19 days, the participation rate for sons (46%) and daughters (13%) was considerably less than if a female parent hunted 10-19 days; in that case, 64% of sons and an estimated 50% of daughters participated.

Hunters initiated this way hunt more frequently and are more likely to be avid hunters throughout their life when compared to hunters initiated in some other way. The presence of other family members who hunt, the exposure to hunting, and the presence of the hunting culture are of utmost importance in hunting initiation (as well as continuation). Rarely does hunting initiation occur outside of these parameters. Hunters come from hunting families, and hunting families produce hunters. Mentoring plays an important role in hunting initiation.

Family introduction is important before young hunters enroll in education classes. Intense education courses are intimidating and time consuming. Being in a hunting culture—such as having friends and family who hunt or at the very least approve of and support hunting—is vital in hunting recruitment, wherein experienced hunters help initiate new people into hunting. It is easier to recruit a person into hunting who is familiar with hunting and is part of a hunting culture than it is to recruit a person from outside of the hunting culture.

Motivations for hunting have shifted significantly from sustenance to recreation. Many of the top factors causing dissatisfaction with hunting are outside of the control of wildlife agencies, including hunters' health and age, time obligations because of family and/or work, and loss of interest. Nonetheless, there are some factors over which agencies have some control, the most important being access, behavior of other hunters, and game populations.

Based on this extensive research, it is clear that there is no "silver bullet" to increase hunting and sport shooting participation. Hunting participation and sport shooting participation are declining as the result of an increasingly urban and aging society, lack of nearby quality hunting or shooting opportunities, lack of awareness and access to those opportunities, and lack of coordination and use of the best available research to guide hunting and sport shooting recruitment and retention programs, as well as a lack of sufficient financial resources for the administration of such programs.

There are numerous fronts on which the profession can move to counteract the impacts that urbanization, age, lack of opportunity, and lack of access are having on participation. These meetings are really about how to better coordinate recruitment and retention programs. Some suggestions given in the report were to increase awareness of recruitment and retention programs, especially among outdoor recreationists who do not already hunt; create standardized teaching methods that maximize hunting participation after the course; foster the natural path to hunting, which begins at a

young age when mentors take kids out hunting; enable the most simple activities for beginning hunters; and do not force intense hunting education courses should before initiation.

For the full report visit

[www.fishwildlife.org/pdfs/JobAnnouncements/Future%20of%20Hunting%20and%20Shooting%20Sports%20Report.pdf](http://www.fishwildlife.org/pdfs/JobAnnouncements/Future%20of%20Hunting%20and%20Shooting%20Sports%20Report.pdf).

Jan Lindenmier, Associate Director of Winnebago Soil and Water Conservation District, commented that they partner with farmers using IDNR funds to take land out of production and use for habitat and hunting. However, funding is limited to fully implement this program. Access in these programs could better target youth, and the areas needed for youth to learn how to hunt.

An individual commented that there should be a landowner sign up to allow youth to hunt on private property.

An individual commented that agency hunting, safety, and other programs that engage youth take away from the important family experience and support, which takes away from the ultimate success of these programs.

Adams reminded everyone of DNR's apprentice hunting program. For one year, an individual can hunt at a reduced cost. The mentor must meet certain standards, but this allows, especially youth, to test the sport. For more information about the apprentice hunting program visit [http://www.dnr.state.il.us/admin/pdf/season\\_dates.pdf](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/admin/pdf/season_dates.pdf).

Jim McFarlane, Illinois Federation for Outdoor Resources, commented that DNR could put in incentives to allow hunters to cull the deer at county forest preserves surrounding urban areas. The public would pay for the opportunity to hunt in forest preserves, and hunting opportunities could be limited to hunters mentoring a youth.

#### **Getting Urban Youth Outdoors – Michael Howard, Fuller Park Community Development Corp**

Howard discussed how road blocks in Chicago stem from negative stereotypes on hunters and fishermen. People are so far removed from farming, gardening, and other survival skills that many urban residents do not even grow vegetables. Chicago teachers do not promote the outdoors because of the lack of resources, they do not have funding to incorporate outdoor activities into lesson plans. Crime in the city has caused people to shun and distrust guns. He suggested that a marketing campaign could recruit new hunters and help dispel gun fears. Showing people how to save money on food through hunting can foster more interest in the sport.

#### **Overview of Rockford Park District Programs – Tim Dimke, Executive Director, Rockford Park District**

Rockford Park District made outdoor recreation sexy in the 1960s when the Atwood Environmental Center was opened and we invited kids to come away from their families and camp at the center. And, just last week, the Park District had a large fishing event at Levings Lake, 250 youth fished and took fishing poles home to their families. Local groups volunteered to staff the event and gave clinics on many outdoor skills.

Every year, the Rockford Park District surveys 500 residents on their interests. 5-6 years ago, environmental and green programs were in the 50-60 percentile ratings, now 90% of the surveyors want the park district to continue offering outdoor environmental education programs for youth. 85% are interested in community beautification and conservation. 85% agreed the park district helps the community reduce crime through outreach and environmental education efforts. 82% feel positive about the park district participating in environmental initiatives through alternative energy use, reducing pesticide use, and recycling. The District is making major headway because the community supports its efforts. For the survey results visit <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/NRAB/children/20090813144002013.pdf>.

#### **Other Business**

The next meeting is at the Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey, IL on August 24 at 5 PM.

#### **Public Comment**

Greg Linscheid commented that access is a major problem for bringing youth out for hunting. Seasons are too long, regular seasons should be shortened, and longer youth seasons should be implemented. Tags for youth should not be restricted. Incentives should be given to landowners who allow youth to hunt on their property.

Kim Woodin, teacher for Rockford 205, commented that teachers are forced to teach only math and reading all day due to the No Child Left Behind initiative. Some teachers don't even touch on science, let alone environmental science or outdoor activities. The outdoors is not stressed in the classroom anymore.

Amelia Howard, a teacher at Chicago Public Schools, commented that there should be an educational program that introduces kids and families to camping in the outdoors. Like green products we have to make the outdoors sexy.

A Pheasants Forever representative commented that their organization has scholarships for teachers to visit Aldo Leopold education center. For more information visit <http://www.pheasantsforever.org/page/1/lep.jsp>.

Adams mentioned the National Wild Turkey Federation has many resources for teachers available on their website [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org).

### **Adjourn**

Howard adjourned the meeting at 7PM.