



## Wisconsin's Green Fire CWD Testimony to the Natural Resources Board

October 24, 2018

Good Morning Chair Hilgenberg, Secretary Meyer and Members of the Board. I'm here on behalf of Wisconsin's Green Fire to:

- thank you for your recent leadership on important Chronic Wasting Disease issues, and
- to urge you to take further action, and
- To offer our assistance going forward.

CWD is the greatest threat to Wisconsin's deer herd, our deer hunting heritage, and annual billion-dollar deer economy. Your actions on the transport of carcasses to reduce possible CWD contamination, as well as, strengthening deer farm fencing standards to prevent deer-to-deer transmission of disease has brought needed attention to these issues.

The final rule resolution on these matters will require more work, but you moved the discussions in the right direction. State and tribal residents within counties where no wild CWD-positive deer have been detected are rightly concerned that transport and improper disposal of a CWD-positive carcass could introduce the disease to their area. Similarly, many northern counties are alarmed at news of recent CWD-positive deer farms and the risk they pose to surrounding wild deer populations. All hunters need a nearby safe disposal option and we need to reduce the likelihood of contact between captive & wild deer.

By contrast, the Agriculture Board's decision not to address the movement of live deer from CWD-infected farms is not helpful. Human-assisted movement of live deer is considered a leading cause for the major geographic spread of CWD in North America. We should

not be putting uninfected areas of Wisconsin at continued risk due to this practice. It should be prohibited.

We appreciate your expanded CWD surveillance efforts this fall. It's needed. In Wisconsin's four most heavily CWD-infected counties (Dane, Iowa, Richland & Sauk), only 15% of the deer harvested in 2017 were tested for CWD. Expanding hunter access to self-sampling kiosks and kits is very helpful. Making testing convenient and providing rapid test results allow us to heed the Wisconsin's Department of Health, the Center for Disease Control and World Health Organization recommendations not to consume CWD-positive deer.

No issue is more important than the increasing CWD prevalence and geographic spread in Wisconsin. Last week's announcement of a CWD-positive deer just across our border with Upper Michigan demonstrates that all areas of Wisconsin are vulnerable to this disease.

More and more CWD-positive deer on the land increases the frequency of contact between healthy and infected deer which drives prevalence rates and spread. In Southeast Richland County, prevalence in yearling bucks has grown from less than 5% in 2010 to about 28% in 2017. This is a worrisome rapid increase and yearlings are the dispersers that introduce the disease to new areas of the state.

Last month, the nation's fish & wildlife agency directors adopted a set of best management practices (BMPs) for CWD. To manage prevalence, they recommend using hunting to control the target portion of the population most likely to have CWD, as well as, known CWD hotspots.

These BMPs are not in place for our 2018 deer seasons. They also won't be in place for the 2019 seasons without your leadership. CWD isn't waiting for us to act. It is increasing and spreading. Your

surveillance has shown us which sex and age groups are most infected and where the heaviest infections are located. As a hunter, the regulations and incentives you establish make it less or more likely that I can play a positive role in reversing the upward growth in prevalence.

Wisconsin's Green Fire would be happy to host stakeholder roundtable discussions on putting CWD best management practices on the ground.

I close by again repeating our appreciation for your recent leadership and urging you to take on CWD prevalence and spread. We're here to help in any way we can. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

*Tom Hauge*

Tom Hauge, Co-chair, Wildlife Work Group

Wisconsin's Green Fire