

Policy and Technical Changes



Summary

The mission of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is to work with Minnesotans to conserve and manage the state’s natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

Each year, the DNR proposes policy-related and technical changes to Minnesota statutes that deal with multiple programs the DNR administers. This year’s proposed changes will help the department manage the state’s natural resources adaptively and respond to public input.

The 2023 policy and technical bill focuses on changes related to sustainable fisheries management, elk and deer management, consistency with federal incidental take permits, improving equitable access to the outdoors, and improving DNR business and policy practices.

Proposal

Sustainable Fisheries Management

This portion of the proposal contains eleven initiatives that allow DNR to more effectively and efficiently manage Minnesota’s fisheries sustainably today and into the future.

Two Line Fishing

This change increases fishing opportunities by allowing the use of two lines when fishing portions of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers.

Felt Soled Waders

This change would prohibit the use of felt soled waders in Minnesota to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.



Cisco Spearing

This change provides clarification that allows cisco to be speared, similar to other gamefish.

Seining for Whitefish and Catfish

This change would simplify statute by removing the DNR’s unused authority to manage whitefish and catfish through seining.

Removal of Dead Fish

This change would remove the DNR’s authority to remove and dispose of dead fish that accumulate in or upon the shores of public waters as the DNR does not have the capacity to do such work and does not use this authority.

Fisheries Harvest Clarification

This change would replace the term “to” with “through” for fishing seasons, clarifying the specific season start and end dates for anglers.

Wanton Waste

This change defines what constitutes wanton waste to provide greater protection to all native fish.

Preserved Fish Verification

This change would clarify that preserved fish, such as pickled or cooked fish, do not count toward a person’s daily or possession limit of fish.



Elk and Deer Management

This portion of the proposal includes six policy changes related to elk and deer management and hunting. The changes below would help to manage elk in Minnesota, provide additional options for deer hunters, promotes a safer hunting environment, and allow farmers to address crop damage when it is happening.

Elk management plan and population goals

This change repeals the current statutory language connecting the size of Minnesota’s elk herd to elk damage payments, thereby giving the DNR greater ability to manage and grow Minnesota’s elk herd.

Preventing agricultural damage by elk and deer

This change gives the DNR more ability to use non-lethal scare tactics (hazing) of deer and elk when they are causing agricultural damage.

Blaze orange on ground blinds

This change would create a requirement for a 144 square inch blaze orange or blaze pink covering on the top of ground blinds when they are used on public land.

Muzzleloader use for all firearm seasons

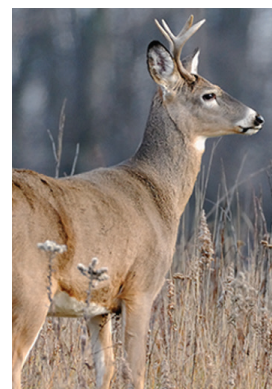
This change would allow the use of muzzleloaders during any deer season that allows regular firearms.

Youth deer tag used by youth only

This change would prohibit the use of youth deer hunting tags by adults for all deer, not just antlerless deer.

One deer harvested per person clarification

This change clarifies that unless otherwise allowed, a person may not harvest more than one deer.



Ensure Consistency with Federal Incidental Take Permits

This proposed change would authorize the DNR to issue permits for incidental take of wild animals when conducting activities covered under a federal incidental take permit, allowing such activities to proceed in compliance with state law. The DNR currently has the authority to issue permits for incidental taking of state endangered or threatened species but does not have the authority to issue permits for incidental taking of “protected wild animals” that are not state-listed species. The proposed language aligns and streamlines regulatory requirements between the state and federal government. The process for obtaining a federal incidental take permit is rigorous and this proposal would allow the DNR to rely on that process in issuing state incidental take permits.



Improve Equitable Access to the Outdoors

This portion of the proposal would help the DNR provide licenses more efficiently, clarify statutory language related to wildlife management area (WMA) accessibility and expand the uses of Walk-In Access (WIA) areas.

Game and Fish Proof of Residency Requirement Updates

This change would amend the resident hunting, fishing and trapping license requirements to

add an identification card application or tribal identification card as valid proof of residency.

WMA Accessibility

This change would make accessibility to WMAs more inclusive by changing the statutory provision allowing power-driven mobility devices to cover “people with disabilities” and not just “disabled hunters”.

Expanded uses for Walk-In Access

This change would expand the compatible uses of WIA areas to include wildlife watching and photography.



Improve DNR Business and Policy Practices

This portion of the proposal would make changes that improve processes and correct legislative inaccuracies or omissions.

Permitting Efficiency Deadline

This change would move the permitting efficiency report deadline from August 1st to October 1st, allowing adequate time following the end of the fiscal year for information gathering, drafting, review, and approval before submitting.

Authority to Set Business Policies

This change would clarify the ability to set state park and trail reservation policies for day-use facilities, tours, educational programs, seminars, events, and rentals in the same way that the DNR already does for campsites and lodging.

Greenleaf Lake State Recreational Area

This change would allow the Luce Line State Trail to be connected to the Greenleaf Lake State Recreation Area (SRA), extending recreational use of the trail and connecting the City of Hutchinson to the Greenleaf SRA.

Snowmobile Registration Display

This change would simplify and streamline the display of snowmobile registration decals by moving to a larger license decal size and removing the need for a separate set of larger registration numbers.

Timber Permit Postmark Deadline

This change would modify timber permit payments to the DNR, changing the requirement to “postmarked” within 30-days instead of “paid” within 30-days to avoid triggering late payment penalties due to mail delivery delays.

Remove Naturalist Corps Hiring Barriers

This change would remove the permanent residency requirement for the Minnesota Naturalist Corps program, broaden the eligible fields of study, and enable students at all stages of their post-secondary study to apply.

State Board of Investment Management of DNR Financial Assurance

This change would allow the State Board of Investment to manage financial assurance funds for mining projects on behalf of the DNR, reducing costs and expediting access to funds when needed.

Include tribal governments in public water work permit review and recommendations

This change would require the DNR to notify and provide information to a Tribal chair when an application for a public water works permit is submitted for activities within the boundaries of a reservation or tribal community of a federally recognized Indian Tribe within Minnesota.



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