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STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

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High Expectations For the Hunt

The 2016 nine-day gun deer season begins on Saturday, November 19th. While there are several other limited deer hunting seasons in Wisconsin, the nine-day gun hunting season remains the most popular and deeply traditional hunting season in our state.

Last year, 309,829 total deer were registered during the 2015 deer season. This includes all deer harvested with guns and bows. Total license sales were 849,778, which was up 14,195 over 2014 license sales. The economic impact of license sales alone is impressive, but when we consider the amount spent on hunt-related expenses such as fuel, food, equipment and other supplies, the overall economic impact of hunting in Wisconsin is nearly \$2.5 billion!

Why do we do it? Why do we spend money to sit in the woods on a cold November morning seeking an allusive whitetail?

For many of us, hunting is a deep, intrinsic family tradition. This will be the 49th consecutive year that I have hunted deer. The hunt is special to me. We have spent years hunting under the tutelage of fathers, grandfathers and uncles. We watched our mothers prepare our families for the hunt and listened as she taught us the importance of safety before she sent us into our tree stands. We told stories around the wood stove, sipped hot coffee from dented thermoses and posed for proud pictures with our first buck.

Most of us will eat the meat we harvest, while some of us donate our harvest to local food banks, family and friends. We learn how to field dress from the seasoned hunters in our family and teach the next generation how to begin the butchering process in our garages.

Through hunting, we teach children the cycle of life and the origin of the food we eat. We pass along the innately human skills that have sustained people for thousands of years while having a lot of fun together. Luckily, many hunting cabins don't have WIFI and cell signals are "spotty" so that our attention is drawn back to the original social media – conversation.

Whether we're in it for the meat, camaraderie, bragging rights or a break from the real world, many of us have high expectations going into the nine-day hunt. As a state, we expect the financial and economic impact to be similar to, if not greater than last year. New electronic registration has allowed us to have tangible data in real-time during the hunt and I am excited to see how the warm weather impacts our harvest.

There have been several changes to laws related to deer hunting over the last several years. The best way to find current information and regulations is to review the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Deer Hunting Forecast and Rule Book: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/hunt/documents/deerfallforecast.pdf>

Highlights include:

- Back tags are no longer printed or required.
- The validated carcass tag no longer needs to be attached to the deer as long as the hunter remains with the carcass, but the hunter must attach the validated paper tag to the deer before leaving it.
- All deer registration will be completed electronically, but some in-person registration stations will be available to assist hunters.
- All deer must be registered by 5 p.m. the day after harvest.
- Florescent Pink is now a legal alternative to Blaze Orange clothing.

If you are planning to hunt this year, please accept my best wishes for a safe and successful hunt! I look forward to learning about your experiences, hearing your stories and sharing my own when we wrap up the gun deer hunt this year.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.

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