

HUNTERS NETWORK OF WISCONSIN

RESEARCH REPORT

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Hunting and Conservation Organization Survey Results

Attitudes of Wisconsin Hunting Organization Leaders
Toward Hunter Recruitment and Retention

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Sample Demographics

- 92% Male
- 97% White
- Average age of 55
- 39% held elected office within their organization
- 10% held paid positions within their organization
- Average education was some college, technical, or trade school
- Average household income of \$60,000 - \$80,000
- Represent 52 Wisconsin counties

METHODOLOGY

The Hunters' Network of Wisconsin Hunting and Conservation Organization Survey was conducted in three waves during the Winter and Spring of 2010. Surveys were administered to leaders from statewide hunting and conservation organizations. 199 out of 341 respondents returned surveys for a response rate of 58%.

MOTIVATIONS

Respondents were asked how important various motivations were when they went hunting. By finding out this information, it is hoped that these motivations can be used to appeal to possible mentors in outreach materials. Results showed that the most important motivations were those related to spending time in nature, sharing and using skills and knowledge, and spending time with others. It is recommended that materials designed to recruit mentors emphasize these motivations.

How important are the following motivations when you go hunting?	Mean
Spending time outdoors	4.76
To be close to nature	4.55
Opportunity to use skills and knowledge	4.37
Spending time with friends	4.31
To share hunting knowledge and skills with someone else	4.19
Spending time with family	4.16
Exercise	3.92
For food / meat	3.75
The opportunity to use specialized hunting equipment	3.36
For the trophy / trophies	2.37
1=Not at all Motivating 5=Very Motivating	

ACTIVITIES

Respondents were asked how likely they were to participate in various hunting-related activities. It was found that of the activities listed, respondents were most likely to read about hunting in a magazine or newspaper or communicate about hunting with friends or relatives. Based on the responses, it is recommended that print media and interpersonal communication may be the most effective ways to reach hunters with outreach information though other channels such as going to an outdoors expo or visiting hunting websites also ranked high. With an average age of 55 in the sample demographic, it is not surprising that visiting websites or social networking sites did not rank higher. It is recommended that information continue to be shared through these mediums in order to reach the desired younger demographic.

How likely are you to participate in the following hunting-related activities?	Mean
Read about hunting in a magazine or newspaper	4.64
Share hunting photos or stories with friends or relatives	4.58
Visit an outdoors expo	4.16
Visit websites related to hunting	3.95
Watching a hunting program on television	3.94
Hunt with a group organized by a hunting organization	3.27
Listen to hunting radio shows	3.00
Post hunting photos or stories on a personal website or social networking website	2.93
Hunt with a group organized by a community or church organization	2.73
1=Very Unlikely 5=Very Likely	

IMPORTANCE OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

When representatives of hunting and conservation organizations were asked how important hunter recruitment and retention were to their organization's mission, respondents ranked both recruitment and retention as "Important." Respondents also felt that their groups were effective in their recruitment and retention efforts, rating their efforts as a 4.17 out of a possible 5.

How important are the following to your organization's mission?	
New hunter recruitment	3.93
Hunter retention	3.93
1=Very Unimportant 5=Very Important	

How effective are your organization's recruitment and retention efforts?	4.17
1=Very Ineffective 5=Very Effective	

However, there was concern about who their recruitment efforts are actually reaching, as can be seen in the following quotes from the surveys.

“[My organization's] only real effort at recruitment of novices usually only attracts children of members, who probably already have a good probability of becoming a hunter ... they really don't put that much emphasis on recruitment, at least Wisconsin. Several other national organizations seem to be putting a lot more emphasis on recruitment.”

“We mostly target children of existing members, no “new” recruits.”

WISCONSIN HUNTING ORGANIZATIONS' NEEDS RELATED TO HUNTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

When asked what ideas would be most helpful in increasing their organization's recruitment and retention programs, the highest ranked items were outreach assistance, financial resources to pay for LTH events, tips on getting media coverage for events and volunteer education and training. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the DNR research previously successful recruitment and retention events to explore what types of strategies worked and share these methods and information with groups. Funds for the sponsorship of Learn to Hunt Events were also mentioned as potentially helpful. The availability of the \$25 per student reimbursement from settlement monies to cover LTH supplies such as ear plugs, targets, ammunition, and food and beverages should be more widely disseminated.

Would any of the following be helpful in increasing your organization's recruitment and retention programs?	Mean
Assistance with reaching potential participants	3.77
Funds to sponsor Learn to Hunt events	3.68
Tips on getting media coverage for events	3.50
Volunteer education and training	3.46
Tips on using social media sites	3.35
More information on how to sponsor events	3.32
Additional DNR contacts for organizing Learn to Hunt events	3.28
Help creating a website to promote programs	3.22
Templates for recruitment flyers	3.15
Locations to sponsor programs	3.09
Equipment loans	3.06
1=Not at All 5=Extremely	

How important are the following to your organization's mission?

New hunter recruitment	3.93
Hunter retention	3.93
1=Very Unimportant 5=Very Important	

“It was only recently that I learned of the vast resources available through the DNR. There has to be a more effective way to make the public & organizations that promote/encourage hunting & fishing more aware. More could be done through the existing network of “Highly Professional and Likable” wardens & field personnel.”

“We need to get the word out and get kids into the field, and out from behind their computers, video games & cell phones. Thanks for helpful ideas!”

“This (social media) is the approach of the future and we could use a lot of help with this media.”

“I completely agree that we must work with media & electronics, not overcome them, in order to retain & recruit.”

“Some hunters may be looking for a hunting buddy that they can hunt with for years to come. Do we need a website where people who want to learn to hunt can connect up with seasoned hunters who would be willing to take someone out?”

EVENT PLANNING

Respondents were asked to indicate what types of events or information they currently offer and, if they did not offer them, if they would be interested in offering the event or information in the future. Results are listed from highest to lowest in terms of events their organization would be interested in offering but not currently providing.

Based on responses, the events that groups would be most interested in presenting are those that could be easily put together with some guidance. For example, 58% of the respondents replied that their group would be interested in offering a game cooking educational event. It is recommended that an outline of a sample demonstration including recipes, nutritional information, and safe food handling techniques be created for distribution. Another popular topic included land access information; fact sheets on land access, using currently available information, could be created for distribution to the organizations.

When offered a list of circumstances that may have negatively affected an organization's event planning abilities, respondents did not feel that any of the circumstances had a major impact on their organization's event planning (see table on next page). Competing obligations and lack of time were among the highest-ranking negative circumstances. Volunteer education and training on how to organize events most efficiently based on previous 'best practices' from other LTH events could help to address these concerns.

Does your organization provide any of the following types of events or information?	Yes (%)	No, but we would be interested (%)	No, we have no interest (%)
Game cooking education	25.0	58.6	16.4
Field dressing education	35.5	47.5	17.0
Land access information	44.6	46.8	8.6
Hunting partner match ups	39.1	45.9	15.1
Equipment loans	36.2	45.7	18.1
Education program for minorities	41.8	44.7	13.5
Mentorship programs	56.4	35.7	7.8
Education programs for women	59.7	34.2	6.0
Family events or workshops	53.1	34.0	12.9
Education programs for adults	64.4	30.9	4.7
Learn to Hunt events	64.4	28.2	7.4
Conservation information	73.4	23.4	3.2
Fundraisers for donation to another group	52.8	22.2	25.0
Hunter safety	71.2	18.3	10.5
Fundraisers for the organization	75.6	17.3	7.1
Education programs for youth	79.2	17.0	3.8

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EVENT PLANNING, CONT.

If your program has sponsored hunter recruitment or retention events, have any of the following circumstances affected your organization's event planning? *

Work obligations	2.73
Family obligations	2.58
Lack of access to hunting land	2.41
Lack of time	2.34
Lack of volunteers	2.35
Cost of planning	2.29
Cost of equipment	2.29
Lack of participants	2.16
Lack of interest	2.15
Lack of planning	2.11
Not enough game	2.04
Having to travel	2.03
Regulation complications	1.91

* 23% do not sponsor events

1=Not at all 5=Extremely

Have you ever tried to register for a hunter's safety course for yourself or your child, but have been unable because it was not offered at a convenient time?

Yes	15.3%
No	84.7%

Have you ever tried to register for a hunter's safety course for yourself or your child, but have been unable to because the class was full?

Yes	8.4%
No	91.6%

Do you know anyone who has ever tried to register for a hunter's safety course, but have been unable to because the class was full?

Yes	60.7%
No	39.3%

Do you know anyone who has ever tried to register for a hunter's safety course, but have been unable because it was not offered at a convenient time?

Yes	56.3%
No	43.7%

What dates and times do you think would be most convenient for hunter safety courses?

March	72.7%
February	66.1%
January	55.2%
August	55.2%
Weekday evenings	84.7%
Weekend mornings	49.7%

HUNTER SAFETY COURSES – CAPACITY AND TIMING CONCERNS

Anecdotal evidence had previously suggested that hunter's education courses may be at or over capacity in some areas or may not be available at convenient times for some participants. Respondents indicated that, though they personally did not experience major difficulties finding an open class at a convenient time, their extended networks did have difficulties finding an open class at a convenient time suggesting the need to potentially modify availability and times in order to enroll more potential recruits into hunter safety courses.

When asked what dates and times would be most convenient for hunter's safety courses, respondents preferred weekday evenings in January, February, March, and August.

KNOWLEDGE OF REGULATIONS

Respondents were asked to answer a series of true/false questions to measure their knowledge of mentored hunting and Learn to Hunt regulations. All questions, with the exception of one, were answered correctly at least 62% of the time.

While all of the questions were answered correctly the majority of the time, the number of incorrect responses is cause for concern. Of particular concern is the understanding of regulations that relate directly to the safety of the hunt. 20% of the respondents did not know that during the youth deer hunt a child between the ages of 12 and 15 must be accompanied by an

adult mentor even if they have completed a hunter safety course. 15% of respondents did not know that the mentor must remain within arm's reach of their mentee, regardless of the mentee's age. Other questions raise concern because a lack of understanding may put the hunter in violation of the law; for example, almost 20% of respondents believed that hunters under the age of 18 could be in possession of a handgun. It is important that potential mentors know the regulations as they are responsible for passing information on to their mentees. It is recommended that the purchase of a mentored hunting license include a booklet of rules and regulations designed for the mentor and mentee to go over together. §

Question	True	False	% Who answered correctly
When participating in a mentored hunting program, the hunter and the mentor may each possess a firearm, bow, or crossbow		X	94.0%
A hunter who is being mentored must be at least 12 years old		X	92.3%
The hunter must remain within arm's reach of the person they are mentoring regardless of the hunter's age	X		85.2%
Handguns may not be possessed or used for hunting by anyone under age 18	X		80.6%
During the youth deer hunt, hunters age 12-15 do not need to be accompanied by a hunter over the age of 18 if they have completed hunter education		X	79.4%
Anyone age 10 or older can obtain a hunting license and hunt, without taking hunter education, provided they and a mentor comply with all requirements of the hunting mentorship program	X		78.7%
Learn to Hunt programs match every participant with a mentor	X		75.3%
All mentors at Learn to Hunt activities need to have at least 5 years hunting experience	X		62.1%
Learn to Hunt programs are open to only to novice hunters (hunters with less than two years hunting experience)	X		64.4%