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2013. At this point, those dates appear to be a fairly good guideline based on harvest numbers. Hounds were effective in Zone 3 last year, accounting for 35 of the 75 registered wolves, once that season opened after the gun deer season. Based on the current harvest numbers, hound hunters may get another opportunity to trail wolves this year.

Tom Hauge, DNR wildlife management director, wasn't surprised by the quick closures.

"Hunters and trappers are gaining experience and sharing their knowledge," Hauge said. "On top of that, we had good weather and after the first two seasons, people realized that if they wanted to get a wolf, they couldn't wait until the leaves are down or the snow comes."

Successful trappers and hunters filled the internet with their pictures, including the Weisner family, which received a message from Ted Nugent congratulating them via Facebook on the "stunning wolf" that they trapped. Other, less-successful trappers and hunters, simply congratulated those who got their wolves, with little indication if they would travel to the open zones to

attempt to fill their tags. Hauge expects some tag holders to move, but suggested the harvest will slow down dramatically as "scouting efforts catch up in the new zones."

According to Dave Zebro, DNR regional warden in Spooner, the season "has been quiet with a lot of harvest and not a lot of issues," despite threats of animal protectionists shadowing hunters and sabotaging trap sites.

The DNR did receive some disturbing information about a group calling itself Hunt Saboteurs NW on Facebook. According to the group's Facebook post, members found two wolves trapped at nearby locations in what is believed to be Zone 1. They reportedly seized the dead wolf and tranquilized the live wolf, which later was released.

Zebro is more than a little skeptical about the accuracy of that Facebook posting, but if group members did take a dead wolf, sedate a live wolf, and molest a trap site, they face legal consequences if caught.

They could be cited for molesting a trap location, and possession of an untagged wolf. Since wolves are now off the endangered species list, they would receive a fine and lose DNR license privileges for illegally possessing a

wolf. If they stole a trap, that could possibly be viewed as theft and lead to criminal charges, he said.

Zebro said the DNR is researching the social media message to see if it was a legitimate posting. The activists threaten to "remain active in the area for as long as it takes."

"The reports have not been confirmed and may be nothing more than just talk," Zebro said.

Trapping appears to be the most successful method of harvesting wolves, with Hauge reporting that preliminary results show 84 percent were taken by trapping, 14 percent by firearm, and one wolf by bow. The trapping success rate is up from 71 percent at this time last year.

It appears that wolf-trapping workshops, taught as a joint effort of the Wisconsin Trapper's Association, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services, and the DNR, have been successful. Led by John Irwin, WTA member and wolf-trapping instructor, the events drew more than 200 prospective trappers to five locations this year.

"The class is packed with more information than we can cover," said Irwin, adding that the goal is to make sure that wolf trappers have an advantage when they hit the woods.

"Hunting and trapping is always under a microscope, but timely calls to report harvests, volunteers that allow us to examine wolf carcasses, and compliance with season guidelines helps us manage a sustainable wolf population," Hauge said.

Some wolf hunters and trappers have suggested the DNR's minimum wolf count is too low, hence the quota is too low for the number of wolves running around and stepping in traps.

Dave MacFarland, the DNR's wolf biologist, doesn't see it that way. He said more trappers are now hitting the ground running Oct. 15 now that they've seen how quickly other trappers and hunters get started. Initially, some trappers may have waited for furs to become more prime before set-

ting traps. No one is waiting now, he said.

He did say the DNR may look at possible changes that would allow the season to run longer.

Irwin said that, in general, wolves are easier to trap than coyotes or foxes, as long as wolves are in an area that trappers are working.

Wolf meeting, hearings

Public hearings on the DNR's proposed wolf-management plan that were supposed to take place in late October – and then November – have been shifted to January, although meeting dates and times have yet to be set.

A stakeholder meeting also will take place in January.

These changes push the NRB decision on the wolf plan to April.

By Jim Servi

Contributing Writer

Madison — Less than 72 hours after the wolf season opened Oct. 15, the DNR closed Zone 2 because the harvest quota of 15 wolves had been surpassed by 14 animals. When the final tally came in, it was almost double the quota for that zone, with 29 wolves harvested, with a quota of 15.

Zones 1 and 4 soon followed, closing Oct. 19, just four days after the opener. Zone 5 closed the following day, leaving only zones 3 and 6 still open for wolf hunting and trapping as of press time for this issue, Oct. 23.

The harvest, as of Oct. 21, stood at 92. The 2014 quota is 150 wolves. The harvest, by zone on Oct. 21, stood at: Zone 1, 36 (quota 32); Zone 2, 29 (quota 15); Zone 3, 4 (quota 40); Zone 4, 5 (quota 8); Zone 5, 17 (quota 20); Zone 6: 1, (quota 35).

Zones 1, 2, 4, and 5 closed even faster than last year, although the quotas this year were about half the number for each zone as last year, with a total statewide quota of 251 wolves last year, compared with 150 this year.

For trappers and hunters who plan to shift zones, Zone 6 closed Nov. 7, 2013, and Zone 3 closed Dec. 23,

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Four of six wolf zones reach goal