

## MINNESOTA DNR NEWS #47 June 29, 2015

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**New law adds width to criteria for where ATVs can ride**

On July 1, the state of Minnesota will begin using the width of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) to determine how ATVs are classified and where they can be ridden. This change will affect ATV owners, but they don’t need to take action until their current registration expires.

ATVs were defined in the past by weight and engine size. As a result of legislation passed in 2015, Minnesota law now defines an ATV as a motorized vehicle with:

* Three to six low-pressure or non-pneumatic tires and;
* A total dry weight of 2,000 pounds or less; and
* A total width (measured from outside of tire rim to outside of tire rim) that is 65 inches or less.

An ATV with a total width of 50 inches or less is considered a Class 1 ATV. A Class 1 ATV is typically designed for a single operator who straddles the machine and uses handlebars to steer, but some Class 1 ATVs are designed by the manufacturer for off-road use with a seat belt, rollover protection and a steering wheel.

An ATV with a total width that is greater than 50 inches but not more than 65 inches wide is considered a Class 2 ATV. Class 2 ATVs typically have a steering wheel and are designed for the operator and passenger to be seated side by side.

ATV owners can continue to display an unexpired registration for their Class 1 or Class 2 ATV until it expires. New registrations and transfers will continue using the present registration system until the DNR upgrades are complete. The ATV registration system will not be programmed with the new definition of an ATV until 2016.

There is no difference in the cost of registering a Class 1 or Class 2 ATV (a three-year registration is $45 for both), but the classification affects where each type of ATV can ride.

“All ATV riders need to observe the signs designating Class 1 and Class 2 trails,” said Mary Straka, OHV program consultant for the DNR’s Parks and Trails Division. “They also need to be aware of the laws about riding ATVs on roads and in ditches. Most ATV riders will not be affected by the new definitions, but others will enjoy expanded riding opportunities. For example, only Class 2 ATVs were previously allowed on road shoulders, but now Class 1 ATVs can ride on the shoulders of some public roads, too, if they have a seat belt, rollover protection and a steering wheel.”

For more information on registering and riding ATVs in Minnesota, visit [www.dnr.state.mn.us/ohv/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ohv/index.html) or call the DNR Information Center, 651-296-6157 or   
888-646-6367 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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NOTE: Image available at <ftp://mediaroom.dnr.state.mn.us> in folder named “news release resources,” then in folder named “06-29-15 ATV.”

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Media contact: Steve Merchant, wildlife populations and regulations manager, 651-259-5220, [steve.merchant@state.mn.us](mailto:steve.merchant@state.mn.us) or Ron Kullmann, fish and wildlife consultant, 651-355-0147, [ron.kullmann@state.mn.us](mailto:ron.kullmann@state.mn.us).

Prairie chicken hunt lottery opens July 1

Starting Wednesday, July 1, hunters can enter a lottery for one of 126 permits available for the 2015 Minnesota prairie chicken season.

Applications are available wherever Minnesota Department of Natural Resources hunting and fishing licenses are sold. The deadline is Friday, Aug. 14. For application procedures and a permit area map, see [www.mndnr.gov/hunting/prairiechicken](http://www.mndnr.gov/hunting/prairiechicken).

“Prairie chickens rely on healthy prairies and grasslands, and having a prairie chicken hunt brings more awareness to this unique species and its habitat needs,” said Steve Merchant, DNR wildlife populations and regulations manager. “Prairie conservation and prairie chickens go hand in hand.”

The nine-day prairie chicken season begins on Saturday, Sept. 26, and is open to Minnesota residents only. Hunters will be charged a $4 application fee and may apply individually or in groups up to four. Prairie chicken licenses cost $23. Apply at any DNR license agent; the DNR License Center, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul; online at [www.mndnr.gov/buyalicense](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTQwNjMwLjMzNTU0ODMxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE0MDYzMC4zMzU1NDgzMSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3MDg5ODk4JmVtYWlsaWQ9ZGF2aWQuc2NodWVsbGVyQHN0YXRlLm1uLnVzJnVzZXJpZD1kYXZpZC5zY2h1ZWxsZXJAc3RhdGUubW4udXMmZmw9JmV4dHJhPU11bHRpdmFyaWF0ZUlkPSYmJg==&&&104&&&http://www.mndnr.gov/buyalicense) or by telephone at 888-665-4236. An additional fee is charged for Internet and phone orders.

The hunt will be conducted in 11 prairie chicken quota areas in west-central Minnesota between St. Hilaire in the north and Breckenridge in the south. Up to 20 percent of the permits in each area will be issued to landowners or tenants of 40 acres or more of prairie or grassland property within the permit area for which they applied.

The season bag limit is two prairie chickens per hunter. Licensed prairie chicken hunters will be allowed to take sharp-tailed grouse while legally hunting prairie chickens.

Sharptails and prairie chickens are similar looking species. Sharp-tailed grouse hunting is normally closed in this area of the state to protect prairie chickens that might be taken accidentally. Licensed prairie chicken hunters who want to take sharptails must meet all regulations and licensing requirements for taking sharp-tailed grouse.

In 2014, an estimated 95 prairie chickens were harvested, with 54 percent of hunters taking at least one bird. Hunter success varies considerably from year-to-year, especially when poor weather prevents hunters from going out in the field.

“Prairie chickens need large tracts of native prairie and grasslands, but we’ve seen how difficult it can be to conserve prairie,” Merchant said. “So the DNR has partnered with groups including the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever and others in developing and applying the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan.”

The plan aims to protect Minnesota’s remaining native prairie, and restore and manage grasslands, which should benefit prairie chickens as a result.

For more information on the prairie chicken, search “prairie chicken” at the DNR’s rare species guide at [www.mndnr.gov/rsg](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTQwNjMwLjMzNTU0ODMxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE0MDYzMC4zMzU1NDgzMSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3MDg5ODk4JmVtYWlsaWQ9ZGF2aWQuc2NodWVsbGVyQHN0YXRlLm1uLnVzJnVzZXJpZD1kYXZpZC5zY2h1ZWxsZXJAc3RhdGUubW4udXMmZmw9JmV4dHJhPU11bHRpdmFyaWF0ZUlkPSYmJg==&&&105&&&http://www.mndnr.gov/rsg). For more information on the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, see [www.mndnr.gov/prairieplan](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTQwNjMwLjMzNTU0ODMxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE0MDYzMC4zMzU1NDgzMSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3MDg5ODk4JmVtYWlsaWQ9ZGF2aWQuc2NodWVsbGVyQHN0YXRlLm1uLnVzJnVzZXJpZD1kYXZpZC5zY2h1ZWxsZXJAc3RhdGUubW4udXMmZmw9JmV4dHJhPU11bHRpdmFyaWF0ZUlkPSYmJg==&&&106&&&http://www.mndnr.gov/prairieplan).

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Media contact: Charlotte Roy, grouse project leader, 218-327-4132 or [charlotte.roy@state.mn.us](mailto:charlotte.roy@state.mn.us).

**Ruffed grouse counts similar to last year**

Minnesota’s ruffed grouse spring drumming counts were unchanged this year compared to last year, according to a survey conducted by the Department of Natural Resources.

This follows a significant increase of 34 percent from 2013 to 2014, said Charlotte Roy, DNR grouse project leader. “While it can be tenuous to compare the results of only one year to the next, we suspect the cold, wet spring of 2014 may have hurt grouse production,” she said. “We also had comparatively little snow last year for roosting, which may have influenced overwinter survival.”

Drumming is a low sound produced by males as they beat their wings rapidly and in increasing frequency to signal the location of their territory. Drumming displays also attract females that are ready to begin nesting.

Compared to last year’s survey, 2015 survey results for ruffed grouse showed no statistical change in all regions of the state. In the northeast survey region, which is the core of grouse range in Minnesota, counts were 1.3 drums per stop; in the northwest there were 1.0 drums per stop; in the central hardwoods, 0.7 drums per stop; and in the southeast, 0.4 drums per stop.

Ruffed grouse populations, which tend to rise and fall on a 10-year cycle, are surveyed by counting the number of male ruffed grouse heard drumming on established routes throughout the state’s forested regions. This year observers recorded 1.1 drums per stop statewide. The averages during 2013 and 2014 were 0.9 and 1.1, respectively. Counts vary from about 0.6 drums per stop during years of low grouse abundance to about 2.0 during years of high abundance.

Drumming counts are an indicator of the ruffed grouse breeding population. The number of birds present during the fall hunting season also depends upon nesting success and chick survival during the spring and summer. For the past 66 years, DNR biologists have monitored ruffed grouse populations. This year, DNR staff and cooperators from 12 organizations surveyed 126 routes across the state.

**Sharp-tailed grouse counts remain steady**   
Statewide sharp-tailed grouse counts were similar in 2015 compared to 2014 on both the regional and statewide levels. Observers look for male sharptails displaying on traditional mating areas, called leks or dancing grounds. This year’s statewide average of 9.8 grouse counted per dancing ground was similar to the long-term average since 1980. The 2009 average of 13.6 was as high as during any year since 1980. During the last 25 years, the sharp-tailed grouse index has been as low as seven birds counted per dancing ground.

The DNR’s 2015 grouse survey report, which contains information on ruffed grouse and sharp-tailed grouse, is available online at [www.mndnr.gov/hunting/grouse](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTQwNjMwLjMzNTU0ODMxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE0MDYzMC4zMzU1NDgzMSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3MDg5ODk4JmVtYWlsaWQ9ZGF2aWQuc2NodWVsbGVyQHN0YXRlLm1uLnVzJnVzZXJpZD1kYXZpZC5zY2h1ZWxsZXJAc3RhdGUubW4udXMmZmw9JmV4dHJhPU11bHRpdmFyaWF0ZUlkPSYmJg==&&&103&&&http://www.mndnr.gov/hunting/grouse).

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NOTE: A chart of annual ruffed grouse drumming counts is available at ftp://mediaroom.dnr.state.mn.us in folder named "news release resources," then in folder named "06-29-15 drumming counts."

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*Media contact: Acting Capt. Jon Paurus, education program coordinator, DNR Enforcement Division, 800-366-8917, ext. 2504;* [*jon.paurus@state.mn.us*](mailto:jon.paurus@state.mn.us)*.*

**Sign up now for a hunter safety course**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reminds hunters that it is never too early to sign up for a hunter safety course. In general, anyone born after Dec. 31, 1979, needs a firearms certificate to hunt game with a firearm in Minnesota.

“Many people fail to consider enrolling in a course until the weather turns cool in late September,” said Acting Capt. Jon Paurus, DNR education program coordinator. “Unfortunately, most courses have either begun or are full by then, and the opportunity to hunt during the fall may be diminished.”

Classes are offered in a traditional classroom setting or online.

**The firearms safety classroom course includes at least 12 hours of classroom instruction and a field day, which teaches the safe handling of firearms and hunter responsibility.** The field day allows students to learn and demonstrate commonly accepted principles of safety in hunting and handling of firearms. It includes live fire on a rifle range.

The online course is not intended to replace traditional classroom instruction, but provide another option for students. It provides the same information as the classroom course for youth and adults interested in learning more about hunting.

“Today’s students are computer savvy, so online training is just part of the DNR’s evolving firearms safety education program,” Paurus said.

Once the online examination is passed, students attend a field day where they apply what they have learned in a series of hunting scenarios testing firearms safety, safe hunting skills and tree stand safety.

“It’s online training, but the course still heavily depends on the human interaction and guidance provided by dedicated, experienced volunteer instructors during the field day,” Paurus said.

Field days are limited and hunter safety classes fill-up fast. Find a class by visiting <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/firearms/index.html>, or by calling 651-296-6157 or   
888-646-6367.

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## DNR NEWS – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_June 29, 2015

## Media contact: Beau Liddell, area wildlife manager, Little Falls, 320-616-2468, ext. 222, [beaulin.liddell@state.mn.us](mailto:beaulin.liddell@state.mn.us).

## **DNR accepting applications for 2015 Camp Ripley archery hunts**

Hunters can apply starting Wednesday, July 1, for the 2015 regular archery deer hunts at Camp Ripley near Little Falls. The application deadline is Friday, Aug. 14.  
  
Hunters may pick from only one of two hunting seasons: Oct. 15-16 (Thursday and Friday, code 668) or Oct. 31 to Nov. 1 (Saturday and Sunday, code 669). A total of 4,000 permits, with 2,000 per two-day hunt, will be made available. Successful applicants must buy a valid archery license before the beginning of shooting hours the day of their hunt to participate. The bag limit for this year’s hunt is one, and bonus permits may be used to take antlerless deer. Additional rules and instructions for will be posted by July 1 on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources deer hunting Web page at [www.mndnr.gov/hunting/deer](http://www.mndnr.gov/hunting/deer).  
  
Hunters may choose from four options to apply for the Camp Ripley archery hunts:

* Through any of 1,500 electronic licensing agents located throughout Minnesota.
* By telephone at 888-665-4236.
* Through the DNR’s online licensing site, [www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses).
* At the DNR license center, 500 Lafayette Road in St. Paul.

The application fee for the hunt is $12 per applicant. Additional transaction and convenience fees may be applied depending on how the application is made.  
  
To apply, resident hunters 21 and older must provide a valid state driver’s license or public safety identification number. Nonresident hunters must apply using a valid driver’s license number, public safety identification number, or MDNR number from a recent Minnesota hunting or fishing license.  Preference will only be given if the same ID is used from previous Camp Ripley applications.

All applicants must be at least 10 years old prior to the hunt. In addition, anyone at least 12 years of age and born on or after Jan. 1, 1980, must have a firearms safety certificate or other evidence of successfully completing a hunter safety course in order to purchase an archery license if successful in the lottery.

Hunters may apply as individuals or as a group of up to four people. Group members may only apply for the same two-day season. The first group applicant must specify “Create New Group” when asked, and will receive a group number. Subsequent group applicants must specify they want to “Join an Existing Group” and must use the same group number supplied to the first group applicant.  
  
The archery hunt at Camp Ripley is an annual event. The DNR coordinates the hunt with the Department of Military Affairs, which manages the 53,000-acre military reservation.

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*Media contact: Rich Sprouse, information officer, DNR Enforcement Division, 800-366-8917, ext. 2511;* [*richard.sprouse@state.mn.us*](mailto:richard.sprouse@state.mn.us)*.*

**DNR Enforcement announces promotion**

Capt. Todd Kanieski will take a new position within the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Enforcement Division as an operations manager and be promoted to the rank of major on July 1.

“Officer Kanieski is an organized and devoted professional,” said Col. Ken Soring, DNR Enforcement Division director. “We look forward to his leadership in this new position.”

Kanieski is currently central region enforcement manager. His promotion is part of the Enforcement Division’s strategic plan aimed at refocusing staff resources to increase service to the public.

Under the new plan, Kanieski will be liaison to the divisions of Forestry, Lands and Minerals, Ecological and Water Resources, and manage Enforcement operations in the northeast and southwest regions. Maj. Greg Salo will be the liaison to the divisions of Fish and Wildlife as well as Parks and Trails, and manage Enforcement operations in the northwest and southeast regions.

Kanieski has over 21 years of progressive law enforcement experience, including 14 years with the DNR where he has served as a field conservation officer, a lieutenant/district supervisor, a captain/administrative manager, and a captain/regional manager. He has also served as a field training officer, background investigator, and firearms/use of force instructor.

Kanieski, with a strong background in hunting, fishing, and camping, was instrumental in revitalizing the DNR K-9 Unit. His specialized law enforcement training includes courses and certifications in leadership, officer training, investigations, employee development, tactical operations and K-9 management.

“I’m extremely honored and excited to serve in this new capacity, and I’m looking forward to the challenges of a new job,” said Kanieski.

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NOTE: Image available at <ftp://mediaroom.dnr.state.mn.us> in folder named “news release resources,” then in folder named “06-29-15 promotion.”

**Question of the week  
  
Q:** What common poisonous plants should I avoid while camping and hiking this summer?

**A:** Poison ivy is a fairly common plant that everyone should learn to recognize. You may have heard the phrase, “Leaves of three – let it be,” referring to poison ivy. The oils on its leaves can cause an itchy rash.

While poison ivy is native to Minnesota, there is a non-native invasive plant called wild parsnip that can cause painful burns. If you get the sap of wild parsnip on your skin, and your skin is then exposed to sunlight, this can cause a chemical burn. Wild parsnip has small yellow flowers that grow in flat-topped clusters. Keep an eye out for wild parsnip along roadsides, trails, and stream banks.

You can take some simple steps to avoid exposure to hazardous plants while camping and hiking:

* Learn to identify plants that are hazardous.
* Don’t eat any wild plants or parts of plants.
* Cover your skin to prevent contact with hazardous plants. Long pants and closed toed shoes are good protection.
* Stay on trails to minimize contact with plants.

*Laura Van Riper, DNR terrestrial invasive species coordinator*