

Hunting Mentorship Bill Becomes Law

By George Meyer, Executive Director

On September 1, 2009 Wisconsin's Hunting Mentorship program became official. Under this new law, any individual 10 or older may hunt without having first taken a hunting safety course but then only under certain tightly prescribed circumstances. The program covers hunting with a firearm, bow or crossbow. The trainee must be within an arm's reach of his or her mentor and only one firearm, bow or crossbow can be possessed by the trainee and the mentor. The trainee and the mentor must possess hunting licenses. The mentor must be 18 years of age and must be either the parent or guardian of the trainee or have been designated by the trainee's parent or guardian. The mentor, if born after January 1, 1973, must have taken a hunter safety class. A mentor may only take one trainee at a time hunting.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation has been working with other conservation groups and state legislators for five years to pass the Hunting Mentorship Bill into law. Lead sponsors on the legislation were Senators Jim Holperin and Neal Kedzie and Representatives Ann Hraychuck and Scott Gunderson. It took several years of working with individuals, groups and legislators to convey the need for the bill and the important safety provisions contained in the legislation. Because of the aging of Wisconsin's hunting population, for every two hunters leaving the sport for various reasons, only one new hunter is recruited. Over thirty other states allow some youth hunting under the age of twelve. No other state has built the safety precautions into their mentor program that Wisconsin has.

This is a great day for hunting in Wisconsin!