

CWD: An Opportunity to Look at New Markets, New Segments, and New Pricing.

In response to the 30% drop in deer hunting licenses, DNR secretary Bazzell is quoted by the *State Journal* as saying “We need hunters out in the woods more than ever...we’d like to do everything we can to get them out there.” Sounds like a marketing opportunity. Well here’s a suggestion to build some good-will with a group of Wisconsin supporters that have been totally overlooked because they are not well defined or understood. There are over 100,000 families who own homes in Wisconsin but call another state their primary residence. These families are *not* nonresidents. They are part-time resident landowners paying full-time property and sales taxes --leaving between two and three billion dollars a year in Wisconsin. Our Association calls them Seasonal Residents – many have been born and raised in Wisconsin. Their property taxes help send Wisconsin children through school and these landowners don’t put a burden on most of the local services they help support. They are not just tourists –they don’t have to be cajoled by Tourism ads to come back to Wisconsin weekend after weekend, year-after-year to keep spending. Tourists don’t invest in Wisconsin as Seasonal Residents have – Tourists come, use and leave. Seasonal Residents have chosen Wisconsin as a place to spend their discretionary dollars for everything from home improvements and repairs to local church contributions. In return for what they bring to our state, the deer hunters in this group are asked to pay \$135 to hunt deer on their own property while their resident neighbor next door pays a mere \$20. Wisconsin would also like them to be good neighbors and open their land up to other hunters when they’re absent and not gripe about paying all the other “nonresident” fees. We lose a lot of good-will from this group by not considering them a separate category entirely. If treated as a separate market segment, they could represent an opportunity to develop new products, new fees and additional revenues. As Geraldo Rivera might say “Give ‘em a break,” --let’s allow **ALL** property owners to hunt in Wisconsin (especially on their own land). If we start building some good-will with Seasonal Residents now, we’ll have something to draw on for the next crisis when we need *every* hunters cooperation. With all that said however, the DNR is pretty much powerless to do much in setting, re-setting, discounting, offering coupons or adjusting hunting fees for promotional or marketing purposes -- because fees are set by the legislature. This means that the DNR cannot respond to market condition and crises (like CWD), or market opportunities (like marketing to Seasonal Residents or discounting to nonresidents) by offering incentives to hunters to offset the current deer license falloff. The DNR is handicapped in its ability to promote their products in a crisis situation –or in a competitive environment. Let’s give the DNR some pricing flexibility so they can respond in a businesslike fashion to existing market conditions --like any other business would under similar conditions. If deer hunting is as significant to our economy as advocates say it is, then our politicians should give the DNR the tools to run this “business” as part of the recreational industry.

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Wisconsin's Out-of-State Land Owners Association (OSLO) is a non-profit association representing over 12,000 members and families owning property in Wisconsin and residing throughout the United States.