

WISCONSIN BOWHUNTERS ASSOCIATION®

President's Message

Fall 2015

Membership. It's no secret that most organizations and associations across the country are struggling to maintain their membership numbers. It's true for national organizations right down to local clubs. In many cases the decline is severe. For the most part, WBH has been able to minimize this trend in our organization, but like almost everyone else, we're feeling the pressure.

There are a lot of reasons given, with "the young people today just aren't joiners" being perhaps the most common explanation. But in the case of bowhunters, our success may be our own worst problem.

I still recall when I joined WBH in the late 1960's. Absolutely every bowhunter I knew was a member of WBH and proud of it. There were a lot fewer of us bowhunters back then, and it was nice to associate with others that shared the same passion, even though most everyone else thought we were a little crazy to be out there with a bent stick and a string. Another reason we belonged was because WBH was almost the only source for information about bowhunting, where to shoot, where to get equipment, or just how to make it. There were very few bowhunting products available in local stores in those days. In a very real sense, we needed to belong in order to be the best bowhunters we could be.

My how things have changed. Every newsstand and grocery store now has more bowhunting magazines than one could ever hope to read. There are countless videos available on every imaginable aspect of bowhunting. And I haven't even mentioned the internet. As for equipment, every sport shop, outdoor catalog and most big box stores has a bigger selection of bowhunting equipment and gadgets than any bowhunter could ever use. And there is no longer much need to adjust and modify our equipment to get it to perform well. These days most everything is computer designed, wind tunnel tested and pre-tuned.

Back then we were just starting to prove the effectiveness of archery equipment and trying to convince the authorities, and the public, that bowhunting provided an enormous potential for effective and humane hunter recreation time, with very little negative impact on the resource and other outdoor activities. The voice that spoke for us was WBH. And we accomplished a lot. But now almost all the time slots are filled and Wisconsin has some of the best bowhunting regulations in the country.

The resource that WBH was..... is not the same for the new bowhunters of today. In many ways they don't "need" WBH in the same way we did back then. However, I believe we all need WBH, and organizations like it, **more than ever.**

Over just the last couple years I've seen changes in our society that a few years ago I wouldn't have believed were even possible; often driven by a small vocal minority, an overreaching government and a sympathetic press. Who would have believed that a single picture on the internet of a homicidal maniac with a flag would lead to banning said flag and even halting its sale on the internet? When Hitler

banned books our parents said something like that could never happen here. Were they wrong? And just when you think that this political correctness has to gone way too far – it goes further. The point I'm making is that small vocal minorities, who often represent fringe ideologies, are now able to change our culture in ways *they* think is "right", regardless of history, heritage or others opinions. Not long ago groups like PETA and other animal rights groups were scoffed at as radical fringe groups. Now they are waging sophisticated court and legislative battles to "protect animals" especially from bowhunting, which they describe as "especially cruel". As individual hunters we have very little leverage to fight them; however, as organizations like WBH and many others, we have the ability to fight back effectively.

All that being considered, we believe it is critical for WBH to buck the trend and expand our membership. As noted, it won't be an easy task in our "what have you done for me lately" world, but with your continued support and some new campaigns, we plan to make it happen.

A look at our records shows we are actually pretty good at signing up new members. When working our booth at shows it's always surprising to me how many bowhunters haven't even heard of WBH; but it's satisfying to note that once we explain what WBH is all about, many are more than happy to join. The problem is that many new members often let their membership lapse, usually out of neglect, while we are signing up new ones to replace them. Considering this, we will be starting a promotion to encourage new members – and existing members – to sign up for extended year memberships. In this way members won't have to worry about their memberships lapsing for at least the first three years, and instead of finding replacements each year, WBH can spend more of our effort adding to our numbers with additional new members, hopefully also for extended years.

So starting September 1st, all new or existing members that sign up or renew with a 3 year, 5 year or Life Membership will receive a free BROWNING WBH engraved knife. See the ad elsewhere in this magazine. Because these memberships simply add on to the end of your existing membership term, you can take advantage of this offer anytime.

Besides the knife, these extended memberships offer considerable savings over joining year to year. You have less hassle keeping track of expiration dates and renewing each year, and with less paperwork, follow-up and mailings, WBH has less expense so we can pass the savings on to you.

We've also developed a full color informational and application brochure that we plan to get out to more bowhunters, and we plan to do a mailing to selected non-member bowhunters across the state. While we are optimistic these measures will boost our numbers, none of it is possible without your ongoing support. Promotions and literature are great, but the best recruiting tool will always be word-of-mouth, and you are our best ambassadors.

OK, enough about membership, it's almost hunt'n season.

Our Annual broadhead shoot falls over Labor Day weekend again this year. This happens occasionally when Labor Day falls late and there's no intervening weekend between then and the opening of deer season. Some folks like the long weekend because they can enjoy the shoot and still have the extra time off. As one of the largest big game broadhead shoots in the country, the WBH broadhead shoot is the

perfect warm-up for the upcoming deer season. There are age classes for kids to seniors and different types of archery equipment. You can come for a day and shoot the course or you can stay for the weekend and enjoy the rendezvous atmosphere with hundreds of other bowhunters. Mark your calendar now and come on out September 4 through the 6th. It's centrally located at Kennedy Park just north of New Lisbon.

In the meantime, plan to get out and enjoy shoots at your local clubs as listed elsewhere in this magazine. With some of the refinements in equipment and bow tuning, shooting year-round isn't something we "need" to do as much as we may have in the past, but that doesn't mean that it still isn't fun. If the National Archery in the Schools Program has shown us anything, it's that shooting archery is just plain fun. Tens of thousands of kids can't be wrong. So have some fun, support our clubs, and come deer season, you will be glad you did.

And once you fill your archery tag, don't forget to apply for our big game awards or honor roll, which are included as part of your membership. However, there is a slight change now that Wisconsin is going to phone or on-line registration. Instead of providing the registration tag number when applying for your award, you will need to include the registration confirmation number that you obtain on-line or over the phone at the time of registration. Make a point to write it down or print it out so you have it when you are completing your big game award application. We are told it can be recovered through the DNR, but it's an extra process that hopefully can be avoided.

Bowhunting is sometimes taken for granted, both in Wisconsin and in our country. But it's a precious opportunity that isn't guaranteed, and isn't available to everyone. Besides doing what I can to insure these opportunities for future generations, I try to savor and enjoy every moment, even if it's just a frosty morning when no game is seen.

Good luck this Fall; enjoy your hunt!

Mike Brust
President

