

Request for Comments

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Division of Fish and Wildlife

Special Provisions for Keystone Woods Wildlife Management Area; Revisor's ID Number R-4996

Subject of the Rule. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is requesting comments on possible rule amendments that extend a longstanding history of nontoxic ammunition use on land acquired for the Keystone Woods Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in northern Washington County. Keystone Woods WMA users would be required to possess only nontoxic ammunition when in the wildlife management area. In one exception, persons who possess a valid permit to carry a pistol could possess ammunition that does not meet nontoxic requirements, but they would not be allowed to use the pistol with lead ammunition to take wild animals on Keystone Woods WMA.

Persons Affected. The Minnesota DNR is seeking input from anyone interested in the proposed permanent nontoxic ammunition requirement at Keystone Woods WMA. Persons potentially affected by this rule include squirrel and rabbit hunters, trappers who use firearms to dispatch their catch, upland bird hunters, big game hunters, muzzleloader hunters and other hunters who might otherwise use lead ammunition and would be required to transition to nontoxic alternatives to hunt at Keystone Woods WMA. Falconers whose birds may be exposed to spent lead ammunition may also be affected.

Non-hunting users—such as wildlife watchers, hikers, and other recreationists—as well as adjacent landowners and residents may also have perspectives on how the requirement influences use of the area. The City of Hugo, May Township, and Washington County may experience administrative impacts associated with changes in recreational use patterns and increased constituent communication needs, particularly where municipal and county park boundaries are adjacent to Keystone Woods WMA. The request for comments is also intended to gather input from organized stakeholders, including conservation groups, hunting and trapping organizations, and other interested parties, as well as tribal governments.

Statutory Authority. The Minnesota DNR's statutory authority to adopt this rule governing wildlife management areas is established in Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.06, which provides that each managing agency shall promulgate rules relating to units of the outdoor recreation

system within its jurisdiction and administer those units in the manner specified in section 86A.05 and applicable laws. Authority to regulate the use of wildlife management areas, including hunting and related activities, is established in Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8(c), which directs that wildlife management areas be administered to perpetuate and, if necessary, reestablish quality habitat for maximum production of a variety of wildlife species, while ensuring public uses such as hunting, fishing, and trapping remain consistent with resource limitations and protection of habitat and wildlife populations.

The DNR's authority to protect species of wild animals is established in Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.045, subdivision 2(a), which authorizes the commissioner to further limit or close seasons or areas, or reduce limits, as necessary to prevent depletion or extinction and to promote propagation. Authority to regulate public access and use of wildlife management areas, including closures, is established in Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.137, subdivisions 1 and 2, which provide that areas are open to hunting and fishing unless closed by rule or posting, and authorize the commissioner to designate and post closed areas to minimize wildlife disturbance, with entry allowed only as authorized by rule or permit.

The DNR's authority to prescribe restrictions on taking deer is established in Minnesota Statutes, section 97B.311(a), which authorizes the commissioner, by rule, to prescribe restrictions for taking deer by firearms, muzzleloading firearms, and archery. Similar authority to prescribe restrictions on taking bear is established in Minnesota Statutes, section 97B.411, and authority to prescribe restrictions on taking small game is established in Minnesota Statutes, section 97B.605.

Agency Contact Person. Written or oral comments, questions, requests to receive a draft of the rule, and requests for more information on this possible rule should be directed to Sarah Middleton at 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, Minnesota 55155, telephone 651-259-5185, or email wildliferules.dnr@state.mn.us.

Public Comment. Interested persons or groups may submit comments or information on this possible rule in writing or orally until 4:30 p.m. on October 8, 2026.

The Minnesota DNR will not publish a notice of intent to adopt the rule until more than 45 days have elapsed from the date of this request for comments.

This public comment opportunity is associated with the development of a possible rule. Comments received in response to this notice will not be included in the formal rulemaking record submitted to the Administrative Law Judge when a proceeding to adopt the rule is started. The Minnesota DNR is required to submit to the judge only those written comments received in response to the rule amendments after they are proposed. If you submit comments

during the development of the rule amendments and you want to ensure that the Administrative Law Judge reviews the comments, you must resubmit the comments after the rule amendments are formally proposed.

Rule Drafts. The Department has drafted the possible rule amendments.

Alternative Format. Upon request, this information can be made available in an alternative format, such as large print, braille, or audio. To make such a request or if you need an accommodation, please contact the agency contact person at the address or telephone number listed above.

August 10, 2026

August 7, 2026



Sarah Strommen

Commissioner