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For immediate release:

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Hunter Nation Calls on Wisconsin DNR to Re-Open Hunter Safety Courses ***Outdoor Group Says DNR Shut Down of Educational Courses Jeopardizes Hunting Heritage***

Madison...After receiving word that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources had officially closed Hunter Safety courses in Oneida County due to restrictions in Governor Evers' Covid-19 advisory plan -- Hunter Nation a non-profit organization that works to protect the rights of hunters in Wisconsin -- blasted the decision today saying that the DNR was barring an entire class of kids from experiencing our state's long standing outdoor traditions.

Hunter Nation President and CEO, Luke Hilgemann said, "After hearing about this decision in Oneida County, we immediately jumped into action and have called on the DNR to reverse course and allow these classes to proceed. This is a baseless decision that threatens to jeopardize outdoor opportunities for thousands of kids and adults who want to carry on our hunting traditions here in Wisconsin. We are calling on Governor Evers' and Secretary Cole to immediately allow all hunter education courses and field trainings to move forward as scheduled."

The group first learned of the DNR's decision to not recognize hunter safety course completion from a press release sent by the Oneida County Sheriff earlier this week. The Oneida County Sheriff's office has been teaching hunter safety in that area for many years but was told by the DNR that anyone who completes courses that had been scheduled later this month would not be recognized by the department due to Governor Evers' Covid-19 restrictions. The Sheriff's office was also informed that if they moved forward with the program that their instructors may also be decertified by the DNR. As a result, students who signed up for the course were turned away.

Oneida County instructors use a curriculum that is taught on a 40-acre parcel outdoors. If the students wanted to practice social distancing, the Sheriff's office said that what better place to do so than in the great outdoors.

"Earlier this week, Governor Evers' said he "encouraged people to get outside and exercise their rights" in regards to protests that have taken place in Madison and Milwaukee," said Tyler Ruhland -- Hunter Nation's Wisconsin State Director. "So, it's ok for protesters to exercise their first amendment rights, but it's not ok for kids to exercise their constitutionally protected right to hunt? This move by the Evers' administration makes no sense and Hunter Nation calls on the Governor, Secretary and the Legislature to immediately re-open these vital courses for the future of hunting in Wisconsin."

The group sent a letter to DNR Secretary Preston Cole asking him to certify all Hunter Education courses and keep Field Days on track so that anyone who's interested in taking up the sport of hunting is allowed to do so as a constitutionally protected right in the state of Wisconsin. Hunter Nation stands ready to work with any hunting or outdoor group and local sporting clubs and gun ranges to make sure these courses are safe, readily available, and fully open for the public.