*Conservation Corner*

*Conservation Corner is a weekly article produced by the Forest County Land &Water Conservation Department. For more information contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*

As you read this week’s submission, we will probably be in the midst of Wisconsin’s Gun Deer Season. Last week the DNR reported that our waterways and landscape may be treacherous because of all the fall rain we received. I reposted some of their safety tips if you didn’t get their newsletter.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Chief Conservation Warden Todd Schaller said hunters are known to like a bit of snowfall to help with seeing and tracking deer. "However, the ground is saturated statewide, leaving wet conditions and ice forming on ponds, lakes, streams," Schaller said.

The result is a possibility of walking into a marsh or a swamp that has an ice cover concealed by the snow. "The hunter will not know until that first step and the ice breaks, possibly causing a fall into the water with the firearm," Schaller said. "The marsh or swamp that the hunter believes is usually a certain depth may be quite a bit deeper due to the saturated conditions. If a hunter falls into deeper water, the next danger is the onset of hypothermia."

Schaller urges hunters to check the hunting area this week before the gun deer starts. "No one needs the surprise of a sudden fall into deep water or a slip on icy mud. What you thought is normal is not normal this year," he said.

Here are more easy-to-follow [ice safety tips](https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/outdoorrecreation/activities/icesafety.html):

* In all likelihood, the ice looks thicker - and safer - than it is.
* The best advice to follow is no matter what the month, consider all ice unpredictable.
* There can be cracks and changes in the thickness you may not be able to see. This is especially true after the first cold nights, and the early ice is spotted.
* Always remember that ice is never completely safe under any conditions.
* Go with a friend. It is safer and more fun.
* Contact local sport shops to ask about ice conditions.
* Carry a cellphone and let people know where you are going and when you will return home.
* Wear proper clothing and equipment, including a life jacket or a float coat to help you stay afloat and to help slow body heat loss.
* Carry a couple of spikes and a length of light rope in an easily accessible pocket to help pull yourself - or others - out of the ice.
* Do not travel in unfamiliar areas - or at night.
* Know if the lake has inlets, outlets or narrows that have currents, which can thin the ice.
* Take extra mittens or gloves, so you always have a dry pair.
* The DNR wants you to be safe enjoying the outdoors. Common sense is the greatest ally in preventing ice-related accidents.