

## Erie County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs Big Game Committee

Dated: December 19, 2025/ Updated April 1, 2026

This program is geared to address:

- Hunting Recruitment – Strengthen outreach to men
- Hunting Retention – Help instill curiosity and love for being outdoors and in nature
- Affordability Program – Help defray costs of youth gear to young families
- Conservation Program – Improve game recovery, field work “after the shot”

### **Program Name: PASS IT ON Program**

#### **Affordability Assistance:**

Summary: Young families, or families with children of Junior Hunter age, face the greatest affordability challenges creating difficulties in maintaining the hunting and conservation interest. This is compounded by growing junior hunters, needing to be re-outfitted prior to each season.

- Clubs are recommended to encourage their membership to donate used youth hunting outerwear as the youth outgrows existing coats, bibs, boots, hats, orange safety vests, gloves, to the club, for a “new life” with a new growing junior hunter.
- Clubs may choose whatever format best suits their needs:
- Clothing exchange, consignment sales, donate to qualifying youth, youth hunter flea market
- If the club is a 501c3 non-profit, donations could be tax deductible.
- Quality youth outerwear can cost in excess of \$300.00. This could be a recurring expense, until the youth stops growing. PASS IT ON, help grow the ranks of new hunters!

#### **Conservation Assistance:**

- Recommended that clubs host, or hold seminars or classes to focus on what to do “After the Shot”. This includes reminders of shot placement, wait time before recovery efforts, blood tracking and tracking skills, field dressing, care of harvest in warm weather, etc.
- Much of this knowledge was taught by parents and grandparents, as they PASS IT ON to the younger generation, and new hunters regardless of age, and regardless of implements they choose to hunt with.
- We have growing calls for tracking assistance, and not every call will be answered. This indicates a potential rise in game unrecovered. To assure more harvests are recovered and put to good use, hunter efforts to educate the new ranks appears the best course of action.

- Recommend classes also include Deer Identification workshops. With the growing need for antlerless deer management, the downside will be the rise in incidental fawn buck harvest. This is avoidable when reinforcing how to identify a fawn antlerless deer from an adult, and recommend the clubs offer this as part of “After the Shot”, as a unit called “Before the Shot”
- Lead ammunition and when to choose the alternative ammunition. Large caliber, low velocity projectiles do not fragment. Hypervelocity, smaller caliber projectiles are prone to fragment. If you use a high velocity or hypervelocity, smaller caliber rifle and are concerned about lead fragments, perhaps more consideration to alternative materials, like copper, would be appropriate to consider.

### **Becoming a Mentor:**

- The best way to introduce new hunters to the sport is through mentoring. But, how does one mentor a hunter?
- Recommend clubs establish seminars or classes and events that focus on experienced hunters becoming mentors. You don’t have to mentor just junior hunters! Many new hunters are over the age of 35.

### **Woodsmanship Workshops**

To help instill the love of the outdoors in all ages, offering some “woodsmanship workshops” as to learn about the habitat and how wildlife uses the lands piques curiosity while developing the skills and knowledge of the natural world. Incorporate basic survival skills, like using a compass, shelter building, etc., all can deliver confidence in themselves that assures them they have what it takes to become a hunter and sportsman.

Truly limited to the clubs with appropriate grounds, but trips to any nearby WMAs can also serve well.

#### **Deer sign**

- Identifying deer runs
- What a buck rub looks like
- Feeding sign identification
- Bedding area identification

#### **Treestand hunting**

- Choosing a treestand
- Benefits of portable treestands vs homemade stands
- Treestand safety for climbers, hang ons and ladder stands
- Treestand positioning
- Tree identification – what type of tree, is it alive or dead?
- Safety Harness selection and use
- What to do if your treestand fails!

### **Game calling classes?**

Learning how to use the various calls is a fun way to learn about the game you're intending to hunt. Not just how to, but when and where:

- Ducks and Geese
- Deer grunts and rattling
- Turkey
- Predator calling

### **Open to Public Outreach**

- Sportsmen's/Hunter's Flea Markets?
- Shotgun sight in days?
- Wildlife Photography/ related art days?
- Cooking wild game – recipes, how to prepare, etc.

Recommend that clubs examine the fund-raising opportunity public outreach may deliver. Space is limited, and therefore valuable. Recommend clubs leverage their websites to collect registration/ reservation information, and seek a nominal donation from attendees (\$5.00 - \$10.00) to help the clubs continue to offer these vital programs to the public.

These events could also be an opportunity to solicit new members.

Draft Program - Do Not Distribute