

March 19, 2024
LCCMR
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Dear Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources Committee,

On January 8, 2025, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced that it would cease culling in three southeastern Minnesota deer permit areas (DPA) because chronic wasting disease (CWD) had surpassed 5% prevalence and was now considered to be endemic ([MN DNR](#)). The DNR attributed the increase, in part, to its inability to access private lands for management action and has predicted that CWD prevalence will further increase as a result. This unfortunate development may trigger population declines among deer, as has been observed in Wisconsin ([WI DNR](#)), threaten hunter participation, and further challenge disease management.

The Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) recently published a [pioneering technical CWD report](#) identifying gaps in hunter interest and participation in disease-control strategies. These gaps highlight the need for more interagency collaboration and tailored messaging for target audiences. More effective public engagement is also urgently needed, specifically around updated regulations encompassing antlerless deer harvest, proper carcass handling, and feeding and attractant bans. Delaying implementation of efforts to bridge such gaps similarly challenges disease management as well as wildlife conservation. Given these urgent cross-cutting needs, the work to reach minority hunting groups in Minnesota is a priority. CIDRAP proposes the following activities to support state agencies that work to preserve Minnesota's deer herds and hunting traditions:

In collaboration with the Minnesota DNR and local community leaders, CIDRAP will plan and host a series of educational sessions in each DPA recently declared CWD-endemic, targeting rural and hard-to-reach communities such as the Amish. CIDRAP is proposing 12 total meetings, four in each new DPA with two of those tailored to the local Amish communities and two open to the general public (one in-person and one virtual meeting). This outreach approach will implement engagement efforts recommended by previously funded LCCMR work titled "Chronic Wasting Disease targeted outreach engaging culturally-diverse hunting communities" managed by Dr. Tiffany Wolf of the University of Minnesota. Not only does this research (publication in-press) conclude that more work is needed to effectively engage minority hunting groups, but also that disseminating updated Minnesota DNR regulatory information will benefit all hunters in the area, which is necessary to manage CWD. Efforts will focus on educating local hunters of their role in management activities and how the endemic status affects their hunting and CWD testing practices. The original research group has not yet had the opportunity to perform this follow-up outreach they deemed necessary, and has encouraged CIDRAP to do so. In addition to the series of meetings with groups in southeastern Minnesota, CIDRAP will work with the DNR to implement other priorities they identify from their ongoing research across the state. Examples of deliverables include facilitating focus groups with key members of targeted communities and hosting informational webinars featuring research professionals in our network. CIDRAP will use funds from the Emerging Issues Account to maintain staff for this activity, travel to areas in southeastern Minnesota to host in-person meetings, and produce culturally appropriate printed information bulletins that take community values and customs into account (in addition to making the resources available electronically for the public). The anticipated duration of this project is 12 months, with meetings targeted to take place during the 2025 hunting season. Should additional DPAs reach endemic status, CIDRAP is prepared to extend efforts beyond the original timeline.

This proposal addresses the urgent need to communicate changing CWD management to all hunters in the affected CWD-endemic areas, including hard-to-reach Minnesotans. CIDRAP has expertise in convening experts, generating authoritative and accurate content, and providing effective education and training to a wide range of audiences. With the support of the LCCMR Emerging Issues Account and the results of previous LCCMR-funded research, CIDRAP will work to support the DNR in its efforts to most effectively prevent the further spread of CWD, thereby protecting Minnesota deer populations.

Attachment A:**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Budget
M.L. 2023 Budget Addendum Spreadsheet****Legal Citation:****M.S. 116P.08, Subd. 4 / M.L. 2024, Chp. 83, Sec. 2, Subd. 10b****Project Manager:****Dr. Michael Osterholm****Project Title:****Targeted outreach for new MN CWD management zones****Organization:****Regents of the University of Minnesota, Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy****Project Budget:****\$186,000****Project Length and Completion Date:****12 mos/June 30, 2026****Current Date:****June 3, 2025**

BUDGET ITEM	Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	Justification for Generally Ineligible Expenses (if applicable)
Personnel (Wages and Benefits)				
	\$158,196	\$0	\$158,196	
Principal Investigator, \$6,964 (73%,27%), 0.015 FTE for entire project (July 2025 to June 2026)				
Scientist, \$32,235 (73%,27%), 0.24 FTE for entire project (July 2025 to June 2026)				
Veterinarian, \$40,455 (73%,27%), 0.24 FTE for entire project (July 2025 to June 2026)				
Researcher, \$22,181 (76%,24%), 0.24 FTE for entire project (July 2025 to June 2026)				
Program Manager, \$25,279 (73%,27%), 0.24 FTE for entire project (July 2025 to June 2026)				
News Editor / Writer, \$31,082 (73%,27%), 0.24 FTE for entire project (July 2025 to June 2026)				
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts & Subawards				
Professional service contract	\$13,800	\$0	\$13,800	Collaborate and provide high level support and guidance to Co-Directors related to chronic wasting disease contingency planning and related issue.
Equipment/Tools/Supplies				
	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Capital Expenditures Over \$5,000				
	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Printing and Publication				
	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Travel Expenses In Minnesota				
Travel to conference, est 18 trips @ \$500 each (hotel, per diem, mileage/parking), cost per UMN Policy	\$9,000	\$0	\$9,000	Funds are requested for in-state travel required to complete project related activities.
Travel Expenses Outside Minnesota				
	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Other				
Conference Room Rental (most likely at hotel)	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	
Provide general descriptions of item(s) or category of item/s and their purpose—one row per item(s)/category of item/s.				Funds are requested for conference room needed to host educational sessions in the different Minnesota deer permit areas.
COLUMN TOTAL	\$185,996	\$0	\$185,996	

A description of the organization describing its capability to carry out the activity proposed:

CIDRAP is an academic center founded in 2001 and currently operates within the University of Minnesota's Research and Innovation Office. CIDRAP works to prevent infectious diseases through research and the translation of scientific information into real-world, practical applications, policies, and solutions. The central pillars of CIDRAP's work include consensus building, research, information synthesis, communication, interdisciplinary partnerships, and education and training. Distinct CIDRAP teams focus on antimicrobial resistance, influenza, COVID-19, and CWD.

CIDRAP's CWD initiative started in 2019 with the formation of the CWD Resource Center. Since then, CIDRAP has received funding from the Minnesota State Legislature to inform contingency planning efforts for potential CWD spillover into non-cervid production animals or humans. The CWD team coordinated more than 25 meetings with the field's leading experts and compiled this information, enriched by literature review, into a one-of-a-kind technical report, published in January 2025. Please follow this link to the full report and citation: [Chronic Wasting Disease Spillover Preparedness and Response: Charting an Uncertain Future](#).

This work has fostered close relationships between CIDRAP and the Minnesota Prion Research and Outreach Center (MNPRO) and the Minnesota DNR. CIDRAP plans to leverage expertise within its own experienced team along with these valuable partnerships to execute other critical projects related to CWD in Minnesota.