



Michigan's Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee

Background

The Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee (CWAC) was born out of the controversy surrounding the 1980 split waterfowl season. The season dates proposed by the DNR were altered by the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) after presentations by a few citizens who traveled from southern Michigan to the NRC meeting in the Upper Peninsula. Afterwards, both citizens and the DNR agreed to set up the CWAC to provide citizens with a formal way to provide input on waterfowl issues before NRC meetings. It was also recognized that more citizens needed to participate in the regulation setting process.

The concept evolved into a 17-20 member Michigan CWAC that has prominent members of organizations directly interested in waterfowling and regional representatives from every part of the state. Distribution of regional members is mostly based on state waterfowl license sales. More recent efforts have been made to include regional members who more closely resemble the average hunter versus the very serious hunters that typically characterize such committees. The DNR has strived to have diverse and adequate representation from all those who waterfowl hunt in Michigan.

The CWAC and DNR share common values, including protection, enhancement, and wise use of waterfowl resources; optimizing long-term waterfowl hunting opportunities; and managing waterfowl populations and habitats for the benefit of people. Achieving these cooperative goals requires effective communication. Around 2005, to improve communication and make the CWAC meetings more productive, the DNR began to have members of the DNR Waterfowl Workgroup more actively participate in discussions and exchange information in advance of meetings with CWAC members. This has resulted in increased transparency of the regulatory process and, coupled with more information exchange outside of meetings, improved trust and built a good foundation for continued cooperation.

The members at-large have served 3-year term appointments. Organizations decide on their own term limits for their representatives. There has been an informal process for taking nominations for the CWAC and the list of potential candidates is kept by the DNR's CWAC Coordinator. The nominations have come from DNR staff, commissioners, legislators, and others. When a member's term expired, the Wildlife Division Chief was given several options for replacement within the region. The Wildlife Division Chief selected the CWAC member typically with consultation of the DNR Director.

The CWAC mission has been to provide feedback to the DNR on existing and proposed waterfowl regulations and waterfowl hunting issues. CWAC members are charged to present views and concerns which represent stakeholders from their areas of the state or organization and disseminate information learned at CWAC meetings back to those stakeholders.

CWAC has had a consistent record through the years, even though term limits result in a high turnover of members. Three general values have guided discussions of the CWAC throughout the years:

- 1) Maximum opportunity for all Michigan waterfowl hunters.
Examples of issues that the CWAC has addressed in the past include:
 - a) Weekend openers
 - b) Waterfowl zones that allow the opening and closing dates of waterfowl seasons to best match local conditions for maximum bird use and hunting opportunity
 - c) Seasons that include the Thanksgiving holiday weekend
 - d) Opening dates that insure the maximum number of hunting days before freeze up
 - e) Seasons that allow for opportunity to hunt early season migrants (e.g., blue-winged teal) as well as later season migrants (e.g., diving ducks)
 - f) Early and late Canada goose seasons
- 2) Conservation and the wise use of natural resources.
Examples of issues that the CWAC has addressed in the past include:
 - a) Support of purchases of priority wetlands
 - b) Support of non-toxic shot for waterfowl hunting
- 3) Understanding Michigan waterfowl hunters to represent them better.
Examples of issues that the CWAC has addressed in the past include:
 - a) Requested DNR to learn about waterfowl hunting recruitment and retention
 - b) Assisted DNR in development of questions for waterfowl harvest and opinion surveys
 - c) Utilizing hunter opinion information from annual waterfowl harvest and opinion surveys

In 2012, the Waterfowl and Wetlands Program Leader, the Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee (CWAC) Coordinator, and members of the DNR Waterfowl Workgroup identified the need to review and evaluate the function and membership of the CWAC. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine opportunities to enhance the function of the CWAC, provide improved representation of waterfowl hunting stakeholders, and provide a clear and transparent direction and process for the future.

The Waterfowl Workgroup met on January 16, 2013 and conducted a thorough evaluation of the CWAC's documented mission and goals, membership, and processes for nomination and appointment. It was determined that there is a need to clearly articulate these important points. The purpose of the remainder of this document is to outline the CWAC's mission, expectations, structure, and processes.

The CWAC Mission and Goals

The CWAC mission is to provide feedback to the DNR-Wildlife Division on existing and proposed waterfowl regulations and wetland issues. CWAC members must present views and concerns which represent stakeholders from their areas of the state and disseminate information learned at CWAC meetings back to those stakeholders. The CWAC mission includes waterfowl and wetland issues beyond hunting regulations. The Waterfowl and Wetland Program will benefit from CWAC input on issues such as wetland conservation, planning and prioritization of waterfowl habitat projects, support for priority wetland acquisitions, waterfowl habitat management, and waterfowl hunter recruitment and retention.

CWAC shares the following goals with the Waterfowl Workgroup for waterfowl hunting season regulations:

1. Maintain Michigan's waterfowl hunting heritage by increasing hunter recruitment and retention,
2. Balance regulations simplicity with maximum hunting opportunity, and
3. Ensure the waterfowl seasons encompass maximum duck numbers and abundant species.

Expectations for CWAC Members

- 1) Clearly understand the migratory bird hunting regulations-setting process and the role of the CWAC in it to provide stakeholder input.
- 2) Solicit the opinions of waterfowl hunters from their area or their organization, synthesize comments, and provide them to the CWAC. CWAC members' input must include more than personal opinions and experiences. Members should contact hunters throughout the region and/or develop a network within their region/organization to get information.
- 3) Understand their geographic representation. Figure 1. is a map of the geographic regions that CWAC members represent.
- 4) Be prepared to respond to questions, comments, and concerns from stakeholders within their region/organization.
- 5) Participate in at least two CWAC meetings annually (typically March and August) and if they can't attend, arrange for a proxy outside of CWAC membership.
- 6) Consider the best social and biological science available to inform decision making at the CWAC meetings.
- 7) Follow Robert's Rules of Order with the exception that decisions are reached only by a 3/4 majority of those present, with 2/3 of the whole membership required to conduct business. This means a high level of agreement on the committee, not a bare majority.
- 8) Meet annually with regional DNR Wildlife Division staff before the August CWAC meeting to promote an open dialogue and build trust through local relationships. Each member will have an assigned DNR staff person for information exchange.
- 9) Act on decisions of the CWAC by supporting them in appropriate forums. Examples include writing to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and legislators as well as posting comments in public forums.
- 10) Communicate back to hunters in their region or organization on what the CWAC has decided by personal contact, presentations at sportsmen's club meetings, social media, contact with local news media, etc.

Expectations for the CWAC Chair

- 1) Represent the views of the CWAC in all forums that set or affect waterfowl regulations or wetland habitat.
- 2) Attend NRC meetings to communicate the CWAC recommendations on waterfowl hunting regulations and other waterfowl/wetland related issues.
- 3) Comment, when appropriate, to the USFWS on proposed regulations published in the Federal Register.
- 4) Maintain a high level of contact with DNR staff, especially the Waterfowl and Wetlands Program Leader, the CWAC Coordinator, and members of the Waterfowl Workgroup.
- 5) Conduct CWAC meetings (minimum of 2 annually), contribute to development of agendas, and assist in the production of the minutes.
- 6) Conduct meetings to ensure civility, up to and including removal of disruptive and/or threatening individuals.

Membership (organizations and members-at-large)

- 1) The membership of the CWAC will not exceed 20 representatives.
- 2) Terms:
 - a) Members at-large will serve for three hunting regulation cycles.
 - b) Terms will begin in March and end in September, for a total of seven meetings.
 - c) The first meeting will be an August meeting to attend with the outgoing representative for orientation and mentoring.
 - d) There will be an overlap at August meetings of outgoing and incoming members.
 - e) Organizations have no term limit, but will be reevaluated as needed by the DNR.
- 3) Organization Representation:

There are eight organizations represented on the CWAC. Four organizations have statewide representation, and six of the organizations represent a region.

 - 1) Ducks Unlimited (DU) (Statewide)
 - 2) Fish Point Wildlife Association (FPWA) (Regional)
 - 3) Harsens Island Waterfowl Hunters Association (HIWHA) (Regional)
 - 4) Michigan Duck Hunters Association (MDHA) (Statewide)
 - 5) Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) (Statewide)
 - 6) Michigan Waterfowl Association (MWA) (Regional)
 - 7) Shiawassee Flats Citizens and Hunters Association (SFCHA) (Regional)
 - 8) Waterfowl USA (WUSA) (Statewide)
- 4) Geographic Regions:

There are ten geographic regions (see Figure 1.) with the number of representatives based on the following decision criteria: adequate geographic coverage of the state, location of the three waterfowl hunting zones, waterfowl hunting license purchases by zone, and waterfowl hunter opinion survey data.

 - 1) North Zone – East: 1 at-large member
 - 2) North Zone – West: 1 at-large member
 - 3) North Zone – Central: 1 organization (MWA)
 - 4) Middle Zone – NE: 1 at-large member
 - 5) Middle Zone – NW: 1 at-large member
 - 6) South Zone – Saginaw Bay: 1 at-large member, 2 organizations (FPWA, SFCHA)
 - 7) South Zone – Southwest: 3 at-large members
 - 8) South Zone – Southeast: 2 at-large members, 1 organization (HIWA)
 - 9) South Zone – South-central: 1 at-large member
 - 10) South Zone – North-central: 1 at-large member
- 5) Criteria for members at-large:
 - a) Michigan resident
 - b) Purchase a Michigan waterfowl hunting license annually
 - c) Waterfowl hunt in the region they are representing
 - d) Pass background check
 - e) Possess an active email address
 - f) Provide a description of how they will gather input from their region
 - g) Provide a list of memberships/affiliations with conservation organizations
 - h) Verify their ability to serve in full capacity for the full term (DNR will provide a list of approximate number of meetings and approximate dates)

- i) Provide a minimum of two references that are related to their waterfowl hunting or conservation efforts
- 6) Criteria for organizations:
- a) Have a conservation mission that includes waterfowl hunting
 - b) Located in Michigan or have Michigan chapter(s)
 - c) Verify that they are an active organization and provide membership numbers
 - d) Representative and alternate will have to meet criteria for members at-large

Process for Nomination and Appointment

- 1) The nomination process for the CWAC is similar to other DNR advisory teams:
 - a) Advertise for applications through press releases, website, DNR email list serve, etc.
 - b) Applications are submitted to the CWAC Coordinator.
 - c) Applications are valid for three years.
- 2) The process for appointment includes:
 - a) Applications are reviewed by the Waterfowl and Wetlands Program Leader, the CWAC Coordinator, and regional Wildlife Division staff and suitable candidates are identified.
 - b) Suitable candidates are forwarded to the Wildlife Division Chief.
 - c) Wildlife Division Chief makes selections with concurrence of DNR Director or Deputy Director.
 - d) DNR Law Enforcement Division conducts a background check of selection.
 - e) CWAC members may apply for a vacated position upon expiration of their term.
- 3) Organizations may make requests for membership to the CWAC. Those requests will be processed as follows:
 - a) The Waterfowl and Wetlands Program Leader, the CWAC Coordinator, and members of the Waterfowl Workgroup will review the request, determine if the organization is appropriate for CWAC membership, and make a recommendation to the Wildlife Division Chief.
 - b) The Wildlife Division Chief will make the final determination with concurrence of DNR Director/Deputy Director.

Figure 1.

