



# Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Jays Sporting Goods – Gaylord, MI

Date: Jan. 8, 2022

### Roll call

CWAC members present for the meeting:

- Stathi Kritselis
- Jeff Godi
- Rick Baker (proxy for Jacob Cook)
- Steve Allaire
- Mike Schutt
- Ed Retherford
- Trent Bellingar
- Nick Laviolette (proxy for Ryan Kuntze)
- Dale Borske
- Dan Villwock
- Dan King
- Mike Dabrowski
- Dan Cleary
- Mike Zoli
- Chris Hillman
- Jeff Frost (proxy for John Huffman)
- Brad Quist
- Ken Martin

### Wildlife Division Workgroup Members

- Barbara Avers
- Brad Johnson
- Nik Kalejs
- Jeremiah Heise

- Don Avers
- Zach Cooley
- Kaitlyn Wilson (for Terry McFadden)

## Other Michigan DNR staff present

- Lt. Todd Szyska
- Bill Scullon
- John Darling
- Lt. Nick Torsky

## Guests present

- Ben Luukkonen, Michigan State University

## Meeting minutes

### CWAC housekeeping:

18 CWAC members present, 14 needed to pass motions.

### Passing of previous minutes:

Dan Villwock, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chris Hillman, Vote: 19 for, 0 against, motion passes.

### DNR Law Enforcement Division updates (Lt. Todd Szyska):

- Retirement impacting numbers of officers, 2021 no officers were able to be hired
- Currently hiring more people, numerous different recruits, and levels of recruits
  - Using social media as an outreach method
- Able to hire former police officers
- Won't be fully certified until around summertime
- Division is working on filling vacancies
- Waterfowl academy will be happening this year
- Currently down about 25 officers, and will lose more to retirement this year
  - Goal is around 1-3 officers per county, all depends on size of county (2 is target in most counties)
- RAP hotline is being worked on consistently, with people home from COVID the hotline has been far busier than normal

## In lieu of Wildlife Division update, Q&A (Barbara Avers):

- Sandhill crane Discussion
  - Presentation at NRC meeting in October 2021
  - NRC or legislators can name cranes as a game species, and then legislation for season dates,
    - Getting approved by USFWS for a season would be relatively easy
    - However, steps have to be followed to get there
  - More cranes are killed under depredation permits in MI, than total cranes shot in other states hunting seasons in Mississippi Flyway
- CWAC interested in developing a letter with MUCC's help to support a hunting season.

## Goose population status and 2022-23 regulation framework (Barbara Avers):

- Temperate breeding Canada goose population is growing in Mississippi flyway, harvest is on a downward trend
- Temperate nesting population is growing steeply, subarctic nesting has been relatively stable since late 80's
- In MI, 2021 Canada goose estimate is around 300,000 (from the spring breeding waterfowl survey)
- Canada Goose Framework
  - 107-day season, Sept. 1 – Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>. 5 bird/ day limit.
- Whitefront and Brant Season Frameworks
  - 107 days, same as C. goose season dates in each zone and GMU
  - Daily limit of 5 dark geese only 1 of which can be a brant
- Light Goose Frameworks
  - 107 days, same as C. goose season dates in each zone and GMU, 20 birds/day

## Duck population status and 2022-23 regulation framework (Barbara Avers):

- No data from 2020 & 2021 - waterfowl breeding population and habitat survey cancelled. State estimates only.
- Drought conditions are getting worse, nesting area quality is down in western prairies
  - However, other breeding areas will sustain waterfowl
- Just over 500,000 estimated wetlands in Michigan
  - Our nesting and wetland quality is doing very well
- MI Breeding Mallard population is just over 300,000
  - Great lakes Mallard populations are looking good
- MI Mallard population estimates are up from 2019, but below long-term average

- MI Wood Duck population estimates relatively stable
- Adaptive Harvest Management process of learning and predicting future population size through models
  - Due to missing data, duck hunting regulations have been adjusted based on model predictions of breeding populations and habitat conditions for 2022
- Duck Packages - Liberal, Moderate, Restrictive
- 2022 Duck Framework
  - Liberal (60 days)
  - Duck bag limit 6 total, 4 mallard, 2 hen mallard, 3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 2/1 scaup (2 for 45 days and 1 for 15 days), 2 black ducks, 2 canvasbacks, 1 pintail
  - 3 zones, 1 split each
  - Saturday closest to Sept. 24 to Jan. 31
- 2022 Early Teal Frameworks
  - 16 days within Sept. 1-30, 6 teal daily bag limit
- 2 days designated as "Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days" and 2 days designated as "Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Days" in addition to regular duck seasons.

## DNR waterfowl workgroup discussion and options for waterfowl seasons (Barbara Avers):

- 2020-21 Estimated Michigan Duck Harvest – 29% Mallard, 15% Wood Ducks, 12% Bufflehead, 7% Long-tailed duck. Total harvest was up, hunters were down.
- In MI, Mallard harvest is on a decline, Wood Duck harvest is slightly increasing
- Statewide Weekly Mallard harvest is highest in week 42 (Oct, usually opener)
- Statewide Weekly Wood Duck harvest is highest in week 42 (Oct. usually opener)
- Sea Duck harvest on the rise. More hunters are targeting them.
- Statewide Weekly BUFF, CANV, COGO, GRSC, LESC, REDH is highest in week 45 (OCT)
- Modeled duck abundance at managed waterfowl hunt areas is an index for migration timing
- ~60% of duck hunters are somewhat or very satisfied with their experience
- ~30% of duck hunters are somewhat or very satisfied with ducks harvested
- ~45% of duck hunters are somewhat or very satisfied with ducks seen
- Satisfaction with 2020 season dates 56% in North Zone, 51% in Middle Zone, 45% in South Zone
- 74% of North Zone hunters, 64% of Middle Zone hunters, and 57% of South Zone hunters agreed that they liked the 2020 season dates
- 43% of North Zone hunters, 52% of Middle Zone hunters, and 57% of South Zone hunters agreed that they preferred a later end to the season.
- 2020 hunters satisfied with goose season dates, overall experience, and geese seen. Satisfaction of geese harvested lower.

## CWAC recommendations for waterfowl seasons:

- Sept. Teal Season:
  - **Motion:** for Option 1, keep season as it was in 2020 (King), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Borske).
  - September 1-16, 2022
  - Some discussion about Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> opener
  - **Vote:** 16 for, 2 against, motion passes
- Youth Hunt and Veterans/ Active Military:
  - **Motion:** for Option 1 (King). 2<sup>nd</sup> (Godi).
  - September 17-18, 2022. 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in Sept.
  - Discussion about need for concurrence of Veterans hunt with Youth hunt, comment about hunting ducks for 18 straight days of September (w/ teal season)
  - **Vote:** 18 for, 0 against, motion passes.
- 3 Year Season Openers
  - **Motion:** to approve revised Option 3 (Allaire), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Villwock)
  - North Zone:
    - 2022 = Sept. 24
    - 2023 = Sept. 30
    - 2024 = Sept. 28
  - Middle Zone:
    - 2022 = Oct. 8
    - 2023 = Oct. 7
    - 2024 = Oct. 5
  - South Zone:
    - 2022 = Oct. 15
    - 2023 = Oct. 14
    - 2024 = Oct. 12
  - Discussion:
    - Sets Middle Zone back to “normal” South Zone opener in 2022 after 1<sup>st</sup> year of zone boundary change. Some concern that Saginaw Bay now dictating the opener for whole Middle Zone.
    - There will be 2 weeks between North and Middle Zone openers in 2022
  - **Vote:** 17 for, 1 against, motion passes.
- Duck North Zone:
  - **Motion** for Sept. 24- Nov. 20; Nov. 26-27 (Kristelis), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Bellingar).
  - **Vote:** 18 for, 0 against, motion passes.
- Duck Middle Zone:
  - **Motion** for Oct. 8 – Dec. 4 and Dec. 17-18 (Godi) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Cleary).
  - Discussion about season opening date being similar to south zone prior to zone boundary change that moved Saginaw Bay into Middle Zone
  - **Vote:** 17 for, 1 against, motion passes

- Duck South Zone:
  - **Motion** for Oct. 15 - Dec. 11 and Dec. 31 - Jan. 1 (Zoli) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Dabrowski).
  - Discussion about dates of split dates. Maybe a longer split, maybe in November to provide more days in December
  - **Vote:** 15 for, 3 against, motion passes
- Duck Bag Limit:
  - **Motion** to have maximum allowed under federal framework (Villwock) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Quist). Daily bag of 6 ducks only 4 mallards (2 can be hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 2/1 scaup, 2 black ducks, 2 canvasbacks, 1 pintail. Scaup Season: 45 days with 2 birds per day first, then 15 days with 1 bird per day in North Zone; 15 days with 1 bird and 45 days with 2 birds in Middle and South Zones.
  - **Vote:** 18 for, 0 against, motion passes.
- Goose North Zone:
  - **Motion** for Sept. 1- Dec. 16 (Bellinger), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Kritselis).
  - **Vote:** 18 for, 0 against, motion passes.
- Goose Middle Zone:
  - **Motion** for Sept. 1 – 30, Oct. 8 - Dec. 23 (Dabrowski) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Retherford).
  - **Vote:** 18 for, 0 against, motion passes
- Goose South Zone:
  - **Motion** for Sept. 1 – 30, Oct. 15 – Dec. 11, Dec. 31 – Jan. 8, and Feb. 4 - 13 (Quist) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Villwock).
  - Discussion about splits and if more days are desired in January or February
  - **Vote:** 17 for, 1 against, motion passes
- Allegan GMU:
  - **Motion** for workgroup Option 1: Sept. 1-30; Nov. 5-13; Nov. 26-Dec. 4; Dec. 17-Jan. 13 (Villwock) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Hillman).
  - **Vote:** 18 for, 0 against, motion passes
- Muskegon GMU:
  - **Motion** for workgroup Option 1: Oct. 15-Dec. 22 (Quist) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Villwock).
  - **Vote:** 18 for, 0 against, motion passes
- Other Geese Bag Limits:
  - **Motion** to adopt the workgroup option below: (Villwock) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Cleary)
    - Snow and Ross (light geese):
      - Same as Canada goose season dates in each zone and GMU
      - 20 daily limit
    - Dark geese (brant, white-fronted, C. geese):
      - Same as Canada goose season dates in each zone and GMU
      - Daily limit for dark geese is 5 with only 1 brant
  - **Vote:** 18 for, 0 against, motion passes
- NRC meeting for information on February 10, 2022, at MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab to represent CWAC: Stathi Kritselis will represent CWAC

- March 10, 2022, for action
- Next CWAC meeting:
  - **Motion** to have next CWAC meeting January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (King) 2<sup>nd</sup> (Kritselis), **Vote:** 17 for, 1 against, motion passes

### Great Lakes mallard research project (Ben Luukkonen, MSU graduate student):

- Several partners involved.
- Partners in WI, IL, IN, and OH
- 194 transmitters deployed in 2021, few in spring, most during summer.
- Most in Michigan and Wisconsin
- Some mortalities already – 33 due to predation, 26 unknown (assumed dead or couldn't find duck or transmitter), 22 from hunting, 1 poaching.
- Over 800,000 data points already.
- Goal to deploy about 200 more transmitters in 2022, and more in 2023, continue data collection, and work on formal analysis
- Only 2 birds have left the flyway and went to Atlantic flyway

### Managed waterfowl area work group update (Jeremiah Heise):

- Working to address and identify issues in hunting operations and habitat management for long- and short-term success year round
- Goal is to create a 10-year plan for both hunting operations and habitat management
- Will be several points for stakeholder input

### Motion to adjourn meeting:

- A 3:54 p.m. by Hillman, 2<sup>nd</sup> by group