

Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee Meeting

Fred's of Roscommon, March 7th, 2015

Meeting called to order at 9:00 a.m. (Bud Dankers chairing for Terry Laymon)

Members: Bud Dankers, Erv DeWeerd, Paul Conners, Steve Wyckoff, Ed Retherford, Dan Cleary, Dan Leidel (proxy for Stathi Kristells), Mike Dabrowski, Mike Zoli, Dan Villwock, Max Lehman, Steve Allaire, Jeff Godi, Trent Bellinger, Eric McGhee, Bruce Bahr, Dale Borski (proxy for Terry Laymon) and Brandon Yuchasz. **Absent:** Matt Lacombe, Terry Laymon, Stathi Kristells, and Marc Curtis.

DNR Waterfowl Workgroup: Barbara Avers, David Luukkonen, Don Avers, Terry McFadden, Nik Kalejs, Joe Robison, Bruce Barlow (for Brian Piccolo), Jeremiah Heise, Mark Mills, and Dave Jentoft (for Dusty Arsnoe).

DNR staff: DNR Wildlife Chief - Russ Mason, DNR Law Enforcement Division - Lt. Dave Shaw, DNR Wildlife Student Assistant - Corey Lucas.

Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee mission: *To provide feedback to the DNR-Wildlife Division on existing and proposed waterfowl regulations and wetland management 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.*

Accept August 2014 meeting minutes:

Motion (Dan Villwock), Second (Steve Wyckoff)

Russ Mason (DNR Wildlife Chief) Introduction:

- Thanked CWAC members for their help with securing the license increase, imperfect package but we will work to improve it.
- \$8 million increase, that's a good thing, and a lot of Pittman Robertson Act funding right now. We can't predict the PR funding amount more than 6 months in advance, mainly because they are driven by catastrophes that are unpredictable, but we can track gun purchases for estimating available funds.
- Because the new license package increased funding to \$8 million instead of \$11 million, we will not be able to do some bang for the buck objectives, which means not as many opening projects or shooting range improvements. Grants to partners will be protected, and many opportunities to get funding to do things on private land.
- Non-resident licenses decreased by 45% for waterfowl hunters, especially from non-residents from Ohio. One strategy to address this was to roll waterfowl and fall turkey into the base license for nonresidents, but decided not address it until end of license agreement due to legislative concerns. Currently a non-resident contributes five times as much money to hunt in Michigan as a resident does (per license).
- The cost of a federal duck stamp increased from \$15 to \$25. Doesn't think it's good, nor does the Mississippi Flyway Council. Missouri and Arkansas predict a 40% decrease in license sales due to the license increase. We will be pushing hard for a graduated duck stamp (5 day duck stamp) and will discuss the option with other Flyways. The \$10 increase in the duck stamp only goes to the Prairie Pothole Region and private land conservation easements.

- Au Train Reservoir – The amount of land we can purchase in the Northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula is limited by legislation. Land acquisition strategy says we should be buying land in the lower 3rd of Michigan. There is currently 40 acres of public land per hunter in the Upper Peninsula, and 0.4 acres per person in southwest Michigan. Our priorities for Trust Fund activity are going to be in southern Michigan to increase opportunity. However, land swaps for deer in the Upper Peninsula will be looked at due to the fact that a 20-30% body mass index reduction occurred for deer in the UP from 2013-14 to 2015.
- We will push for St. John’s Marsh improvements, it’s currently full of phragmites and our goal is to “fix” that place.
- Michigan Waterfowl Legacy will continue to expand. We’ve got to come up with a model, and volunteer hunter program is the direction we have to go (especially important for waterfowlers). Waterfowl hunting is more gear intensive compared to deer hunting (limits recruitment). So, we need your help to recruit and retain waterfowl hunters.

Questions/Discussion:

Dan Villwock: *Non-resident license – Will there be a 5 day or a 7 day license for waterfowl?*

Russ Mason: It’s a legislative defect; you can only hunt small game with base license for 7 days. Right now it’s not likely to be addressed.

Max Lehman: *The number of out of state hunters is down 45%, what are the numbers?*

Russ Mason: Not sure on exact number of hunters, but it’s down significantly and it’s all attributed to the price of the license.

Jeff Godi: *Difference between waterfowl and deer hunters and allocation of funds? Is there an increase or decrease in MWA use and what is the satisfaction?*

Joe Robison: A comprehensive survey will go out this March to measure hunter satisfaction on the managed areas. Non-resident hunters are astonished at the quality of our managed areas. There are positive effects of the managed areas on surrounding landscape, the refuges provided quality hunting for many of the surrounding areas.

Russ: The managed areas provide great waterfowl hunting opportunities and hold endangered species.

Lt. Dave Shaw (DNR Law Enforcement Division) Waterfowl Season Summary:

- Due to the early teal season it was a longer waterfowl season than typical.
- Statewide waterfowl related arrests numbered 300 compared to 323 last year even with additional officers this season.
- Verbal warnings remained stable compared to last year.
- We had 44 new officers in school, 39 recruits in Michigan State Police academy, lots of experience and a good group of recruits.
- Traditional waterfowl districts are the Southeast, Saginaw Bay (District 6), and southern Michigan (District 8), with all districts in those regions being additionally tasked with Belle Isle support.
- Incredible impact that the DNR and the Law Enforcement Division has had on Belle Isle. However, it comes with a big cost on manpower (provided by general fund dollars). They are augmenting the loss of manpower in those districts with the new recruits.

- Law Enforcement Division will run another waterfowl enforcement school this September.
- 4 new recruits that went to the west end of the UP were able to make 16 arrests this year compared to just 1 last year. This is a result of increased manpower and training for new recruits.
- Hunting waterfowl in closed season violations were at 23 compared to 17 last year. Many of those cases involved the early teal season.
- The 19 arrests for the take of protected species, mostly due to the early teal season.
- There was an increase in motorboat related waterfowl hunting violations. With 18 arrests this year compared to 7 last year. Starting to find more violations because of big water hunting.
- Issuing tickets for marine safety issues, more than just verbal warnings as in the past.

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *Got an email about the MWA areas, talked about non-retrieval of birds and other violations. What are MWA related arrests/tickets?*

Lt. Dave Shaw: MWA ticket numbers were due to MWA specific law violations like the number of shot shells, size, etc. The concern of lack of support (Conservation Officers) at managed areas has been forwarded to Saginaw Bay District 6; they are currently spread thin, but hope to add officers for support soon. If there is an expectation that you are being watched then people tend to be safer and follow rules.

Jeremiah Heise: *Any thoughts on E-stamp duck stamp? We struggled with expired e-stamps and hunters that hadn't got their other stamp yet.*

Lt. Dave Shaw: Arkansas had some concerns, we did as well with a delay, but it was a non-issue in the field this fall.

Barbara Avers: *Were there many conflicts with the early goose season and teal season operating simultaneously?*

Lt. Dave Shaw: The opening shooting hours was the number one violation during the teal season. LED took the stance of informing the hunters on the first season.

Lt. Dave Shaw (Other Notes):

- Teal season was refreshing because there was a lot of restraint shown by hunters. The season wasn't doom and gloom as originally thought.
- One enforcement issue that is in discussion is about waterfowl blinds on public land not on the great lakes. There are varied opinions by staff. The concern is over turf, and that "ownership" of area surrounds the blind could occur.

Waterfowl Hunting Season Reports:

CWAC Members Hunting Season Reports:

Bud Dankers (South Zone - SFCHA): Shiawassee's early goose season was typical, the last 10 days it picked up some but overall about average. The September goose hunt was well received. The regular waterfowl season crop conditions were not great and it was a struggle getting crops off. Personally a decent waterfowl season but variable, it was better later just before freeze up. Refuge counts were down and the theory from some is that ducks breeding in the Dakotas aren't coming

east, were only dealing with local birds. Late season was non-existent as the area was froze out.

Trent Bellingar (North Zone - Central UP): Season dates were good, there were high water levels which were good, DNR's season at a glance was spot on. Au Train basin had a lot of water, happy with how high the water was.

Brandon Yuchasz (North Zone - Western UP): DNR's season at a glance was accurate. Not a lot of migrating dabblers, the divers showed up before mallards. No complaints other than freeze up.

Steve Wyckoff (Statewide - MUCC): MUCC members had a good early season, the geese were spotty. Mother Nature didn't cooperate. Migration of puddle ducks was later than divers. Late goose season complaint was that it started too late.

Mike Zoli (South Zone - Southeast): Early goose season was really good, duck season was pretty good. Cold snap pushed ducks out just before deer season. Late season goose was tough. DNR's season at a glance was accurate. Would like to have a sea duck season, otherwise overall a good season.

Dale Borski (Statewide - Ducks Unlimited): Ducks Unlimited members were mixed, most of the membership happy with dates.

Max Lehman (South Zone – North Central): Struggled with crops in the field early in the season, came off late. The split was perfect timing, people did well. Late goose season was not existent.

Steve Allaire (South Zone – South Central): Early goose was decent with some geese, regular duck season was okay. Freeze up early, if you found open water you did really well. Late goose season was a wash, some birds on Grand River around Lansing/Portland.

Dan Villwock (South Zone – Southwest): Water levels were up this year, it was fun to find more open water. Mid-November started freeze up except on the big water. Bags weren't great but not bad, pretty fair season. Guys really liked the early teal season, although not a big harvest. Nobody complained about the split. Overall a decent year, no complaints.

Ed Retherford (Middle Zone – Northeast): Early goose season (most crops off the fields), talked to a lot of kids 17-25 involved more in goose hunting. Didn't see anyone hunting Thunder Bay. Younger hunters liked the teal season although little harvest. Shortened season due to freeze out, and everyone liked the split. The two hen mallard limit went over well and everyone liked it.

Dan Cleary (Middle Zone – Northwest): DNR's season at a glance was accurate. Late crops limited the early goose season harvest. Regular duck season field hunting was good, winds kept them off the big lake. Overall it was a fairly good year. Late goose was too late, due to weather, a lot of frustration with that.

Paul Connors (South Zone – Harsens Island WF): Not many people hunting teal on the area, but more on the Flats. Early goose season was non-existent (typical). Opener was average, and the two hen mallard limit seemed to go over well with less hens floating in the corn. Duck count was down from past years, most birds around from deer opener to thanksgiving. Due to freeze up they lost 3 to 4 days, and shot more ducks last year with two weeks shortened by freeze up. Saturday of the

split was good, Sunday not as good. Spinning wing decoy ban was a non-issue; there weren't any comments.

Mike Dabrowski (South Zone – Fish Point WA): Early teal season was well received. Double the corn made the late season better, but also complaints that other crops (bean and sorghum) hurt the early part of the season, corn got all the ducks. Late season you either loved it or hated it. The last part of the early goose was really good. September days for regular goose very good. Lot of complaints for the number of spots for pre-registration (45 zones), hunters felt that there were way too many zones.

Erv DeWeerd (South Zone – Southwest): Wheat crop came off at a good time, early goose was good. Regular goose was decent, a lot of geese along the lake where there was picked corn, didn't stick around long. Hunting on the farm had high participation (higher than years past). The cold and freeze up moved geese out. Duck hunting in November was great, if you were field hunting. Late goose season was frozen up.

Jeff Godi (South Zone – Saginaw Bay): DNR's season at a glance was accurate. There were a few people out for the teal season. Would love to see two weekends for the early teal season. Complaints about late goose, would like to see season moved up. Shot fewer mallards, didn't see the pintails, a lot of redheads and bufflehead.

Dan Leidel (North Zone – Eastern UP): Froze up before November 10th. A lot of water, a lot of the marshes were flooded but they needed to come back. Redheads were great and a big influx of canvasback. Early goose was good and hunters were happy that they were able to set up for teal too. There was a good push of blue-winged teal the last part of the teal season, but difficult to find them. Puddle ducks didn't stay around long, but diver hunting was good along with early goose.

Eric McGhee (South Zone – Southeast): Not many opportunities in the early teal season. It wasn't well received in their area. Saw very few mallards this year. Mid-November freeze kind of messed things up. Everyone did well and liked the goose seasons, water levels were good. Bag limit of redheads was questioned (why not increase?). A lot of birds on Lake Erie. Warning: The Hevi-Shot problem is real. Fairly good season early and late, not good in the middle (for ducks).

DNR Staff Hunting Season Reports:

Nik Kalejs (Muskegon – Southwest): Muskegon area had much better water levels. Experienced normal October temperatures, with good wood duck hunting early. We had strange November weather with 4 times the snowfall. Duck hunting in general was average, mallards were spotty woodies were average. Long-tailed duck and sea ducks were down a little bit; hunters had to work harder to find rafts. Teal season had a low harvest; hunters were there, but low success. Spy blind observations didn't result in many violations. Goose season at the Muskegon wastewater started good, but didn't last long. Crop harvest was poor, mostly chopped for harvest and crippled food availability later in the season. Overall waterfowl abundance was down but hunter use was slightly up.

Mark Mills (Fennville Farm Unit - Southwest): Fennville Farm Unit had a 92 day goose season, with the average harvest right on yearly average. November was good early, December was terrible. The bad weather was good for hunting in November, and picked up some in January. Mallard numbers kept building later in the season (after November) exceeding 10,000 ducks. Duck hunting was good

for the entire duck season. The Farm was 1 goose short of previous year's goose harvest total (consistency). No complaints about season dates, and participation has been good with hunters visiting from across the state. Overall, a decent year, average geese, average ducks (above average later in the season).

Terry McFadden (Harsens Island - Southeast): Harsens Island crops turned out pretty well, good conditions. Lake levels were high so it was easy to flood the fields. Refuge counts peaked at 15,000, which was down from the usual 25,000 to 30,000 ducks. A lot of ducks coming into the refuge in the evenings, afternoons were better hunts. Many of the ducks stay on the Canadian side. Over 9,000 ducks harvested. Lost some days to freeze up, but thawed and the late split they had pretty good conditions. East marsh did well in the late split. Ducks came down around Halloween, divers and then puddle ducks. Really good hunting conditions until firearm deer and then conditions got tough. Divers were way out in the middle offshore. A few ducks have succumbed to malnutrition this winter. Wet conditions may ultimately help with nesting conditions.

Dave Jentoft (Upper Peninsula): DNR's season at glance is accurate. During early teal season there was light shooting and harvest, caution was observed by hunters. Not a lot of teal were observed, with reports that the later part of the teal season was better. There were improved water levels, some complaints about hunters not being able to get to traditional hunting spot. Access improved for Munuscong Bay because of water levels. November snow and cold hit western UP hard (around November 10th) and cold in the eastern UP, a day or two after that the duck season was shut down.

Bruce Barlow (Northern Lower Peninsula): Early goose seemed slower than previous years. The early teal season spy blind observation showed cautious hunters, and was impressed with the quality of hunters participating. All 8 hunting parties encountered on the teal opener were positive about the season. The regular duck season froze up around mid-November except rivers. Season mirrored the goose season, not as many ducks as previous year, mostly wood ducks.

Jeremiah Heise (Shiawassee River – Southeast): Shiawassee River and Crow Island had a few teal hunters for the opener. Early goose season was down slightly. Duck harvest was up (one of the highest ducks harvested per hunter trip on record), hunter numbers were down. Freeze up in November hurt activity, but the late split warm up was successful. Crop conditions were challenging at Shiawassee this year.

Joe Robison (Southeast): There were a lot of positive comments for the early teal season. More green-winged teal than blue-winged teal early and then the blue-winged picked up late. You have to know the teal habitat and good scouting will help in early teal. The beginning to early goose season was slow, but the last 5 days were really good. Youth hunt seemed like there were less birds around, there were complaints about ducks being spooked from early teal. No complaints about opening day timing. MWAH refuge counts were down at every area. During the regular duck season everyone froze out the 15-20th of November. Two day split was favorable, more hunters at Pointe Mouillee on the Saturday of the split than opening day. Late goose season was good although cold.

Barbara Avers (Statewide): Comments overall were positive, water levels good, and the weather bad in November. Overall very positive comments on the early teal season, some negative comments were about the season dates impacting youth season (not enough time between). No negative comments about the two hen mallard limits. Comments positive about knowing opening dates earlier, for planning hunting trips. License sales; waterfowl hunting license sales were up by

5%, a lot of complaints from out of state hunters and guides because of high non-resident license cost.

Meeting break at 10:40am

Meeting resumed at 10:50am

Dave Luukkonen Mississippi Flyway Update:

Canada goose regulations:

- In 2012 we went to 92 day CAGO (Canada goose) season.
- Peak harvest occurred flyway wide in the mid-2000s, and we are currently on a downward trend. Meanwhile, CAGO populations are stable or increasing.
- Even though there is unprecedented goose abundance, the flyway has seen a reduction of the number of days hunted in the flyway.
- CAGO harvest in Michigan; 45 day seasons (in 2010 & 2011) compared to 92 days (2012 and later) show an increase harvest of approximately 20,000 birds annually.
- The longer goose season allows for a continuous season in the UP.
- Increased season length will have little impact on harvest.
- In 2012 there was an increase in hunter days significantly, and we were happy to see that, because Michigan hunters took advantage of the extra days.
- Flyway is looking at efficiencies with goose monitoring, and developing a communications pamphlet directed towards hunters on why the changes are being made. The changes shouldn't be controversial in Michigan.

Regulatory recommendations to the Mississippi Flyway Council (by technical section):

- Proposing no change to Adaptive Harvest Management package, except limit regulation changes to 1-step per year.
- Geese and Webless birds; no changes to early teal season frameworks or woodcock, snipe, rails, gallinules, and early CAGO season.
- Zones/Splits; proposed that changes should occur for 2016 by December 1, 2015 (selection date); or for 2017 by May 1, 2016 (selection date). Next cycle would be for the 2021-25 seasons.
- Sandhill crane seasons; no changes for Tennessee or Minnesota, and Kentucky's season is proposed for an operational season.
- Eastern Population Tundra Swan: Increase hunting permit levels by 25% (2,400 permits).
- Mississippi Flyway Council meeting will be held on March 10th where recommendations will be acted on.

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *What is the allowable number of teal season days?*

Dave Luukkonen: Harvest strategy says there are three options; 16 days, 9 days, or no days. Based on the status of teal populations, no one is concerned with losing the teal season.

Dave Luukkonen Teal Season Update:

- Happy with teal season results. We had good cooperation with other states (Wisconsin and Iowa), and DNR Law Enforcement Division worked great with us on the teal season, top notch waterfowl ID skills.
- Season report was directed towards USFWS. We met the criteria we were supposed to.
- For review, there were 3 options for teal season; experimental teal season, 2 additional teal in the regular season bag, or not take any option.
- Iowa had a 16-day season (Sept. 6-21), Wisconsin and Michigan had 7 day seasons (Sept. 1-7).
- Non-target attempt rates: All states combined 6.3%, Michigan 3.4%, Wisconsin 10.3%, Iowa 6.5%. All states met the criteria.
- Observed kill non-targets (bag checks not included): Iowa 2.3%, Michigan 6.7%, Wisconsin 14.3%
- Attempts at Targets: Combined states 71.9%, Iowa 73.2%, Michigan 68.3%, and Wisconsin 69.5%
- Iowa bags 98% BWTE, Michigan 54% BWTE, Wisconsin 76% BWTE

Questions/Discussion:

Dan Leidel: *What is a non-target attempt?*

Dave Luukkonen: Firing the gun at a non-target flock.

Steve Wyckoff: *Any guess on why GWTE was higher in Michigan?*

Dave Luukkonen: More GWTE habitat and hunters may not know how to target BWTE. BWTE are the ultimate opportunist, they don't go back to the same area, and they find the habitat they prefer. There may be opportunity for Michigan to manage habitat to attract BWTE.

CWAC Input for today:

- Early teal and youth waterfowl
- Federal youth waterfowl weekend
- Regular goose season dates
- Other early regulation process recommendations

Barbara Avers - Early Waterfowl Seasons (2015):

- 2015 is unique because we are setting the 2015-16 waterfowl season under the old system while also starting the new regulations cycle for next season.
- In 2015 we have an early season and late season process (see 2015 hunting regulations slide).

Early waterfowl seasons:

- Experimental Teal Season
- Youth Waterfowl Season
- Early Canada Goose Season
- Regular Canada Goose Season opening date - North Zone
- Regular Canada Goose Season first segment
- Saginaw County and Tuscola/Huron GMU first segment

Early Teal Season (2015):

Early teal season framework:

- 9 or 16 days
- Start September 1st.
- No splits
- 6 bird limit

Early teal season/youth season options:

- Negative comments that early teal season affected the Youth Waterfowl Season.
- Option #1: Teal Season (Sept. 1-7), Youth (Sept. 12-13) – Same as last year.
- Option #2: Teal Season (Sept. 1-13), Youth (Sept. 19-20) – 2 weekends, and youth seasons overlap (deer/waterfowl), conflicts with UP opener.
- Option #3: Teal Season (Sept. 1-7), Youth (Sept. 19-20) – Biggest split between youth season and teal, and youth seasons overlap (deer/waterfowl).
- There may be some benefit in keeping things consistent.

Questions/Discussion:

Dan Villwock: *Two weeks of Teal Season requires a lot of manpower to run spy blinds and increased effort.*

Barbara Avers: Feasibility of intensive spy blinds is easier with shorter season.

Steve Wyckoff: *Deer hunt and waterfowl youth hunt occurring on the same weekend is bothersome. Not a good situation.*

Dan Villwock: *Youth had good opportunity to get kids out in September 1-7 season.*

Barbara Avers: Some circumstances made hunters feel teal hunting did affect the youth hunt.

Bud Dankers: *Better duck habitat may have spread duck concentrations out (more dispersed), and not an effect of teal season activity. One year is a narrow window to accurately assess season dates.*

Brandon Yuchasz: *We have an established date, and maybe we should stay consistent. Did we consider the 16 day season and overlap with the youth?*

Lt. Dave Shaw: The overlap of seasons may cause issues with spy blind observations, and how we accurately gather data.

Dave Luukkonen: There were comments that the teal season affected the behavior of all ducks

Jeff Godi: *There were families that did both duck hunt and deer hunt. Hate to limit duck hunting opportunities, and would like to extend teal season. Would like to have two weekends to hunt teal. Also, see it as a good opportunity to get youth in the field for those days before regular duck.*

Trent Bellinger: Deer is king in the UP and people will choose deer over ducks. Rather see a split between youth duck and youth deer.

Max Lehman: *Deer hunting is more appealing to youth and many would choose it over waterfowl hunting*

Brandon Yuchasz: *Pushing youth waterfowl closer to regular season opener, it would have an impact on the opener.*

Dan Leidel: *It's better to have the youth hunts split up, maybe not many ducks in earlier youth hunt.*

Mike Zoli: *Can you have different youth dates statewide?*

Barbara Avers: Youth hunt can't be split statewide.

Open teal season Sept. 1-7, and youth waterfowl hunt Sept. 12-13:

Motion (Paul Connors), Second (Dan Villwock)

Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *Let's not limit opportunities for Michigan waterfowl hunters by limiting the teal season to 7 days.* (Mike agreed)

Vote: (18 of 20 members present – 14 votes needed to pass a motion)

15 in favor, 3 oppose (passed)

Early Canada Goose Season:

No changes to early Canada goose season dates of Sept. 1-15 or the daily bag limit of 5 birds:

Motion (Dan Villwock), Second (Steve Allaire)

Vote:

18 in favor, 0 oppose (passed)

Meeting breaks for lunch at 11:54am

Meeting resumed at 12:50 pm

Regular CAGO Season Frameworks:

- Can split goose season into 3 segments.

North Zone CAGO season:

North Zone regular Canada goose season September 11 - December 11:

Motion (Brandon Yuchasz), Second (Dan Villwock)

Vote:

17 in favor, 0 oppose, 1 abstained (passed)

Questions/Discussion:

Steve Allaire: *Is there an option to increase the bag limit to 3?*

Dave Luukkonen: There may be a possibility of a 3 or up to 5 bird bag limit and a continuous 107 day season.

Middle Zone CAGO Season:

Two options discussed:

Sept. 19-27 and Oct. 3-Dec. 24 (similar to last year)

Sept. 19-Dec. 19

Middle Zone regular Canada goose season September 19 – December 19:

Motion (Ed Retherford), Second (Dan Villwock)

Questions/Discussion:

Brandon Yuchasz: *We may give ourselves more flexibility for just setting the first segment now.*

Jeff Godi: *This gives us simpler season dates.*

Dan Villwock: *Running the season straight thru would still catch duck season dates.*

Vote:

18 in favor, 0 oppose (passed)

South Zone CAGO Season:

Option #1: Sept. 19-21st, Oct. 10-Dec.6, Dec.26-27, Jan.16-Feb.13

Option #2: Sept.19-27, Oct. 10-Dec.6, Dec.26-27, Jan.23-Feb.14

Option #3: Sept. 19-27, Oct. 10-Dec.6, Dec.26-27, Jan.16-Feb.7

South Zone regular Canada goose season September 19-27:

Motion (Dan Villwock), Second (Mike Zoli)

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi : *We would like to be able to hunt geese earlier.*

Barbara Avers: *Adding days to goose hunt on the front end (early season) means they have to come off the end of the season.*

Vote:

18 in favor, 0 oppose (passed)

Saginaw GMU 1st Segment:

Two options discussed:

Sept. 19-21 (similar to last year)

Sept. 19-27

Saginaw GMU 1st Segment Canada goose season dates of September 19-27:

Motion (Dale Borski), Second (Max Lehman)

Questions/Discussion:

Bud Dankers: *September 19-27 was recommended from Shiawassee group. More birds and nice weather, more participation.*

Steve Wyckoff: *Consistency is important here.*

Vote:

18 in favor, 0 oppose (passed)

Tuscola/Huron GMU 1st Segment:

Two options discussed:

Sept. 19-21

Sept. 19-27 (similar to last year)

Tuscola/Huron GMU 1st Segment Canada goose season dates of September 19-27:

Motion (Steve Wyckoff), Second (Dan Villwock)

Questions/Discussion:

Mike Dabrowski: *Worked great last year, full support.*

Vote:

18 in favor, 0 oppose (passed)

Other Goose:

Barbara Avers: We will set the other goose seasons and we will try to overlap seasons as close as possible.

Unanimous support for allowing Barbara Avers and Dave Luukkonen to set the season dates.

New Regulations Cycle:

- New for the 2016-17 hunting season.
- Uses prior year's biological data.
- Effort to create a more efficient streamlined process.
- Biggest benefit will be for hunters, allowing for hunters to plan their hunting trips further in advance.
- Developing a communication strategy for hunters (USFWS has already started doing this).

Dave Luukkonen: This could be confusing because we have told hunters for years that we need the duck status info for setting seasons, but we have learned that harvest isn't that important in affecting the abundance of waterfowl. A lot of communication will be required and encouraged people to carry the message.

Jeff Godi: *Two hen mallard - reports were that people shot less mallards. We used a science based decision, and the science stated that the harvest of two hen mallards doesn't have an effect. Is there a better way to answer the questions from hunters?*

Dave Luukkonen: There will be some resources available online and we will add communication material. We have been telling people for years that abundance determines the frameworks, when in reality we aren't regulating the abundance by harvest.

Jeff Godi: *It's a hard sell when Michigan mallards are down, and we are telling hunters they can shoot two hens now.*

Paul Connors: *We get numbers from USFWS, and we listen year after year that mallard numbers are going down, and now we have a second hen. If 70% of the mallards are Great Lakes mallards, then why did we make a decision to increase hen harvest?*

Dan Villwock: *If we have a good nesting season, it's usually not until the following fall that you see the result (ie. great habitat in 2014, you will see birds in fall 2016). The science says that harvest isn't affecting abundance.*

Eric McGhee: *People aren't seeing numbers in the field so they make their own choice to not shoot hens.*

Jeff Godi: *Can you pull hen mallard harvest numbers from MWH? (No)*

Barbara Avers: *With the increased duck banding we should be able to monitor the results better.*

Barbara Avers - New Regulation Cycle Timeline:

- August 15th Waterfowl Status reports ready
- September AHM Report
- December 10th Proposed Season Frameworks
- February 25 Final Season Frameworks
- June 1 All Hunting Season Selections Due
(See frameworks timeline handout)

Outcomes of new regulations cycle timeline:

- The regulation cycle doesn't allow much opportunity for NRC to delay a decision
- Other option would allow more time for NRC to make a decision, but it would make a decision before final frameworks are set.
- We would have 1 CWAC meeting (January)

Dan Villwock: *We would set duck opener dates for 3 years next January? (yes)*

Paul Connors: *We would only have one meeting in January? (yes) Bag Limits and all regulations would happen at the same meeting in January? (yes)*

Barbara Avers: *We will have to adapt and see how we are going to carry out business in one CWAC meeting.*

Paul Connors: *Since we only meet once a year will we get more information throughout the year, or get bombarded with information at the CWAC meeting?*

Barbara Avers: *We want to make sure we get you all of the information you will need throughout the year. We are flexible and maybe we can meet for an informational meeting only CWAC meeting.*

Dave Luukkonen: *We will have status info in August and that will give us a good idea of the frameworks a year in advance. We can split it up as we need to, to get the job done.*

Brian Seiss (guest): *Seasons 2015 and 2016 will be set on the data from this year? (yes)*

Upcoming Issues for 2016:

Zones/Splits:

- Comprehensive evaluation in 2011-12: Go back and talk to hunters and get a consensus.
- 5 year cycle is coming up.
- A lot of detail and discussion was done during the last revision cycle.
- Plan is for a presentation at the August meeting using discussion points from 2011-12.

Paul Connors: Steve Wyckoff: *Get the information in August and decide on it in January?* (yes)

Brandon Yuchasz: *Can you go through the options?*

Barbara Avers: The options are:

- 1 zone with 2 splits
- 3 zones with 1 split
- 4 zones with no splits
- Same options as last cycle

Bud Dankers: *It's not a big deal with 60 day season, but if we go back to 30 day season it is a big deal.*

3 year opening dates:

Barbara Avers: Encourage members to start thinking about duck and goose season dates. Start the conversations at the August CWAC meeting for January decision.

Managed Waterfowl Hunt Areas:

- MWAH survey questionnaire.
- What impacts their satisfaction?
- Information will be available (preliminary results) to prepare at August meeting
- Some questions on waterfowl harvest survey about Managed Areas (if you don't, why not?)

CAGO Relocation Sites – Private Land Criteria:

- We are looking for help to identify any private land sites (98% relocated on state land).
- Needs to be accessible.
- No supplemental feeding.
- No access to other ownership within 3 miles.
- Hunting access is desirable.
- No profit from hunting activities.
- Larger sites if possible.
- Water source and foraging habitat.
- Contaminated sites not allowed.
- No assurances.
- Sites must be open to inspection by DNR.
- No goose complaints in last 5 years.
- No hunter harassment complaints in last 5 years.

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *How to transition on and off CWAC?*

Barbara Avers: CWAC involves an application process. Anyone who wants to be on CWAC can apply anytime. Nothing prohibits current term members from re-applying.

Dave Luukkonen Waterfowl Research Updates:

Ongoing projects:

Lake St. Clair/Lake Erie Diving Duck Project

- Distance sampling worked well for distance sampling of pelagic birds.
- Continued research proposed expansion to Saginaw bay in FY16

Great Lakes Mallard Projects

- Howie Singer completed thesis

New Projects:

Population dynamics and movements of MUSW in Michigan:

- MDNR-WLD, USDA-APHIS, MSU
- Objectives are to estimate survival, seasonal movements, swan site fidelity, improve population modes and simulate effects.

Effects of habitat and hunter management on waterfowl and hunter use of managed waterfowl areas:

- Understand variation of waterfowl use of areas.
- Identify monitoring needs to resolve long term uncertainties.
- Recommend management actions to maintain or increase dabbling duck diurnal use.
- Progress/Timeline: Hoping to start data collection this fall.

Don Avers Waterfowl Banding Update:

- We did go to two hens in the bag, so we put a serious emphasis on banding more ducks.
- We banded more mallards in the pre-season banding than ever, along with record number of wood ducks.
- 3,115 mallards and 1,914 wood ducks.
- UP banded more mallards than they ever have.
- Recommendation was to put together a banding team together, and the banding team banded 800 mallards and over 350 Wood Ducks.
- 2014 Banding report is available via email.
- Southeast region had some issues catching ducks, CAGO interfering with bait sites was a problem.
- Ducks were abundant everywhere, especially in late September.
- Ducks were in big numbers in the suburban areas "refuges".
- 129 sites were scouted and we found ducks at all of them.
- Approximately 3,700 geese were banded.

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *First time he can remember voting to limit opportunity (early teal season) for Michigan waterfowlers. Bothered that we would make a decision to hunt fewer days.*

Dan Villwock: *Give the teal season more years to evaluate (next 2 years), and prove that we can do it and then extend it to include more days.*

Schedule next meeting:

Next CWAC meeting to take place on August 1st, 2015 in a location TBD (Bay City area):

Motion (Steve Wyckoff), Second (Max Lehman)

Vote:

18 in favor, 0 oppose (passed)

Meeting Adjourned:

Motion (Steve Allaire), Second (Dan Villwock)

Meeting adjourned at 2:06pm