

Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee Meeting

1/5/2019

The Doherty Hotel, Clare, MI

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.

Roll call: 9:00am

CWAC members (20):

Present: Jeff Godi, Mike Schutt, Ed Retherford, Paul Connors, Max Mazzura (for Dan Villwock), Dan King, Mike Zoli, Mike Dabrowski, Stathi Kritselis, Dan Cleary, Matt Lacombe, Eric McGhee, Trent Bellinger, Ron Sefcik, Ryan Knutz, Bob Johnson, Steve Allaire, Jason Swinicicki, Dale Borske

Absent (no Proxy): Steve Pascoe

DNR Waterfowl Workgroup members (9):

Present: Barbara Avers, Don Avers, Terry McFadden, Jeremiah Heise, Nik Kalejs, Bruce Barlow, Don Poppe, Brad Johnson, Zach Cooley,

Absent: None

DNR Staff: Dan Eichinger, Russ Mason, Kaitlyn Thrush, Lt. Dave Shaw, Russ Mason, Brandy Berger, Joe Robison, Bill Scullon

CWAC Housekeeping (Don Avers): Recognized Ron Sefcik, SW rep, who's term has expired. Introduced Jacob Cook as Ron's replacement on the CWAC.

19 CWAC members present, 15 needed to pass motions.

Approval of Jan. 6th, 2018 CWAC meeting minutes: Motion to accept minutes (King). **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against. Motion passes.

DNR Wildlife Div. Update (Wildlife Div. Chief Russ Mason):

- Wetland mitigation banking program
 - Many farmers are out of compliance with current wetland regulations
 - Aims to restore wetlands on state land and sell credits to public in need. \$10,000 per credit
 - Plan to create mainly hemi-marshes
- New Voluntary Wetland Restoration Program. It will be a little less difficult in the future to do wetland conservation via permits
- Adopt a game area program
 - Opportunity to improve them
 - Could possibly be open to schools
 - A way to create enthusiasm about conservation
- Deer and CWD has been prominent in the last year
- Next year we predict about a 18% drop in PR funds

- Groups are attempting to widen the scope of PR funds (e.g., shooting sports) though PR funds continue to trend downward
- Status on sandhill cranes
 - We could hunt them from a population standpoint
 - They have become nuisances in locations around the state
 - Community engagement would be vital

DNR Update (Director Dan Eichinger)

- Lifelong hunter and angler, worked in DNR executive office, then in Wildlife Division, CMU, executive director for MUCC, now DNR director
- Fish and wildlife disease are at the top of everyone's list
 - Avian influenza, CWD, Bovine TB, Avian Botulism
- Pay for and maintaining parks is a priority
- Declining numbers of hunters and anglers are a concern
 - R3 (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) is long term plan
 - We need to work short term to create new hunters and anglers by making MI a destination for hunting and fishing
- Conservation is a team effort; a philosophy we manage our resources by

DNR Law Enforcement Div. updates (Lt. Dave Shaw):

- Social Media
 - Position for full time employee dedicated to social media investigating
 - Lots of potential
- Just graduated 24 new recruits
 - Almost historic level of officers
 - Waterfowl enforcement school- week long. Showing great results so far especially in SE
- Invasive species
 - Officers now have ability to do aquatic invasive species checks to prevent spread
- Wildlife Investigators Covert Academy (WICA)- teaches officers how to be undercover
- Memphis in March- Law Flyway members meeting
- Question from guest involving illegal waterfowl guides- is anything going to be done?
 - New bill addressing this (D. Eichinger)
 - Many arrests are made with no publicity (D. Shaw)
- E-stamp and federal stamp- we saw a spike in unsigned stamps
 - If unsigned and unattached, can be ticketed

Mississippi Flyway (MF) update:

General updates (B. Avers):

- Waterfowl status and AHM reports
 - August 15-Sept. 1
- USFWS has not yet published the proposed season frameworks, although we have enough information about what they will likely be to proceed with selecting seasons
- Flyway Council Meeting was held in Winnipeg, August 2018
 - Alabama sandhill crane hunt
 - Woodcock harvest strategy and extending framework
 - 2017 kill rate for adult male wood ducks is 14.3%, which is higher than allowable kill rate
 - MFC Recommendations:

- Waterfowl season recommendations-
 - Follow established harvest strategies for duck and geese bag limits
 - Jan. 31 closing framework
 - 1-step constraint
- Letter to USGS encouraging funding for Bird Banding Lab
- Woodcock harvest management group
- Letter for Farm Bill conservation program support
- Letter to support NAWCA
- Double Looping- Revision of Duck Harvest Frameworks
 - Narrowed down the 72-option consequence table
 - Only 2 MF options were 1-step constraint (from restricted to moderate to liberal regulation packages) and status quo
 - All options with extra days or a flat bag are unacceptable until a new pintail strategy is finalized
 - Modeling showed problems with pintails and canvasbacks
 - Discussed later and earlier frameworks
 - Big difference is dropping NAWMP constraint from models (creates more liberal seasons)
 - MF recommendation will include +7 days and flat bag to be considered as other species (pintail, cans) are re-evaluated
 - Decisions on final options in March 2019 with implementation for 2020 season
- S. 2942 and H.R. 6013- Migratory Bird Framework and Hunting Opportunities for Veterans Acts
 - Went outside the established process; politicizing the scientific process
 - Now has been revised and improved. Actual language has changed.
 - Lots of questions surrounding this. Especially regarding geese.

Goose population status and 2019-20 season frameworks (B. Avers):

- No longer managing at the sub-population scale of Mississippi Valley Population (MVP), Southern James Bay Population (SJB), etc.
 - Now the populations managed are Temperate Breeding, Subarctic, and Midcontinent cackling geese. More holistic strategy.
- Temperate breeding goose population has increased in the Mississippi Flyway
 - ~1.5 million
- Subarctic Geese
 - Pretty stable population
- Canada goose frameworks are 107 days between Sept. 1 and February 15
 - 5-bird daily limit Sept. 1-30; 3-bird daily limit remainder of the season
- White-Fronted and Brant Framework
 - 107 days between Sept. 1 and Feb. 15; same as Canada geese
 - White-Fronted: 5-bird daily limit, in aggregate with dark geese
 - Brant: 1-bird daily limit
 - Seasons can be split into 4 segments
- Light Goose
 - No change to framework
 - 107 days from Sept. 1- Feb. 15
 - 20-bird daily limit
- CWAC: Some confusion on changing Canada goose bag limits. Want a 5-bird limit throughout. Are there other options for reducing Michigan's temperate breeding geese?

- Urban goose zones in August
- Barb Avers continues to propose expansion of Canada goose frameworks at the MF (for a 5-bird bag limit throughout the entire season)

Duck population status and 2019-20 season frameworks (B. Barlow):

- Northeast habitat conditions have worsened slightly since 2017
- Habitat conditions in the great lakes were better in 2017 than 2018, although conditions were not better in the prairie regions
- Total ducks were 13% below 2017 and 17% above the long-term average.
- All species are either similar or below their 2017 estimates.
 - Continental mallards 17% above LTA
 - Gadwall 43% above LTA
 - Am. Wigeon similar to LTA
 - GWTE 42% above LTA
 - BWTE 27 % above LTA
 - Northern Shoveler 62% above LTA
 - Canvasback Similar to LTA
 - Redhead 38% above LTA
 - Pintails were 40% below the long-term average
 - 18% lower than 2017
 - Pintail harvest strategy is very complex
 - Population model considers productivity based on latitude and may recommend higher bag limits when the overall population is declining
 - Scaup were 20% below the long-term average
- MI Mallard population estimate was 16% below 2017 and 27% below the LTA

Adaptive Harvest Management and 2019-20 Waterfowl Season Considerations (B. Avers):

- Two variables are the number of Canadian ponds and the mid-continent mallard population estimate
- Have remained in the liberal package since the adoption of AHM in 1995
- Comfortably within the liberal framework range given the number of ponds and mallard population
- Duck bag limits remain the same except that the bag limit for pintails is now 1
- Early teal framework
 - Sept. 1-30, 16 consecutive days, 6 teal daily bag limit
- Waterfowl Workgroup Duck Season Goals:
 - Maintain waterfowl hunter heritage
 - Balance regulations simplicity with maximum hunting opportunity
 - Ensure season encompasses maximum duck numbers and abundant species
- MI total duck harvest slightly decreased from 2017-2018
 - Total active duck hunters also declined slightly
 - Mallards were 39% of harvest and wood ducks 15%
- Michigan sea duck hunter estimate is approximately 2,174 with harvest estimate of 16,280 (7.5 ducks/hunter)
- Majority of ducks harvested in South zone during early October
- Duck counts at SE MWA's indicate that duck abundance is greatest in late October and early November
 - Mallards peaking slightly later in the season in the southwest
- Long-tailed duck distribution has shifted, likely due to the introduced food source of zebra/ quagga mussels

- More green-wing teal are being harvested than blue-wings
- Diving duck numbers peak slightly later than dabblers
- 2016 hunter satisfaction:
 - Significant decline in satisfaction of ducks seen, harvested and hunting experience
 - Significant decrease in satisfaction of geese seen; satisfaction of goose harvest and hunting experience both up
 - Most support for 2018 teal and youth season dates of: teal Sept. 1-16/youth Sept. 8-9 and teal Sept. 1-16/youth Sept. 15-16
 - Next survey after 2018 season

Waterfowl Workgroup Discussion of Waterfowl Season Options:

3-Year Stable Opening Date Options

- **Option 1** (consistent with last 3 years)
 - North Zone (last Sat. in Sept.)
 - 2019 = Sept. 28
 - 2020 = Sept. 26
 - 2021 = Sept. 25
 - Middle Zone (1st Sat. in Oct.)
 - 2019 = Oct. 5
 - 2020 = Oct. 3
 - 2021 = Oct. 2
 - South Zone (2nd Sat. in Oct.)
 - 2019 = Oct. 12
 - 2020 = Oct. 10
 - 2021 = Oct. 9
- **Option 2** (North zone open as early as possible, with consecutive openers)
 - North Zone
 - 2019 = Sept. 21 (also Youth/ Liberty hunt)
 - 2020 = Sept. 26
 - 2021 = Sept. 25
 - Middle Zone
 - 2019 = Sept. 28
 - 2020 = Oct. 3
 - 2021 = Oct. 2
 - South Zone
 - 2019 = Oct. 5
 - 2020 = Oct. 10
 - 2021 = Oct. 9
- **Option 3** (Middle and South Zones same)
 - North Zone
 - 2019 = Sept. 21
 - 2020 = Sept. 26
 - 2021 = Sept. 25
 - Middle Zone
 - 2019 = Oct. 5
 - 2020 = Oct. 3
 - 2021 = Oct. 2
 - South Zone

- 2019 = Oct. 5
 - 2020 = Oct. 3
 - 2021 = Oct.2
- **Option 4** (North and Middle Zones same)
 - North Zone
 - 2019 = Sept. 28
 - 2020 = Sept. 26
 - 2021 = Sept. 25
 - Middle Zone
 - 2019 = Sept. 28
 - 2020 = Sept. 26
 - 2021 = Sept. 25
 - South Zone
 - 2019 = Oct. 5
 - 2020 = Oct. 3
 - 2021 = Oct. 2
- **Option 5** – Proposed by CWAC
 - North Zone (early as possible)
 - 2019 = Sept. 21
 - 2020 = Sept. 26
 - 2021 = Sept. 25
 - Middle Zone (1st Sat. in Oct.)
 - 2019 = Oct. 5
 - 2020 = Oct. 3
 - 2021 = Oct. 2
 - South Zone (2nd Sat. in Oct.)
 - 2019 = Oct. 12
 - 2020 = Oct. 10
 - 2021 = Oct. 9

Waterfowl Workgroup 2019 Duck Season Options

- **Early Teal**
 - Sept. 1-16 (Sun-Mon)
 - Maximizes days
 - Encompasses migration
 - Will overlap with Youth season
 - Maximizes pressure on public areas
 - Sept. 1-8 (Sun-Sun)
 - Reduces pressure on public areas
- **Youth Season**
 - Sept. 14-15 (2nd weekend in Sept)
 - Consistent with previous years
 - Avoids youth deer season (3rd weekend in Sept.)
 - Potential overlap with early teal
 - Sept. 7-8 (1st weekend in Sept.)
 - Provides more time between youth and duck opener
 - Overlap with teal
- **Duck North Zone:**
 - Sept. 28 (Sat.)-Nov.24 (Sun.) & Nov. 30 (Sat.) -Dec. 1 (Sun.)

- Includes Thanksgiving Weekend
 - Consistent with 2018
 - Sept. 21-Nov. 17 & Nov. 30- Dec. 1
 - Includes Thanksgiving weekend in split
- **Duck Middle Zone:**
 - Oct. 5 (Sat.) -Dec. 1 (Sun.) & Dec. 14 (Sat.) – Dec.15 (Sun.)
 - Consistent with 2018
 - Sept. 28 (Sat.)- Nov. 24 (Sun) & Nov. 30- Dec. 1
 - Includes Thanksgiving weekend in split
- **Duck South Zone:**
 - Oct. 12 (Sat.) -Dec. 8 (Sun.) & Dec. 28 (Sat.) – Dec. 29 (Sun.)
 - Consistent with 2018
 - Oct. 5 (Sat.) – Dec. 1 (Sun.) & Dec. 28 (Sat.) – Dec. 29 (Sun.)

Waterfowl Workgroup 2019 Goose Season Options

- **Canada Goose North Zone:**
 - Sept. 1-30 (30 days) (5 daily limit); Oct. 1-Dec. 16 (77 days) (3 daily limit)
 - Consistency
- **Canada Goose Middle Zone:**
 - Sept. 1 – 30 (30 days) (5 daily limit); Oct. 5-Dec. 20 (77 days) (3 daily limit)
 - Consistency
 - Sept. 1-30 (30 days); Oct. 1-Dec. 16 (77 days)
- **Canada Goose South Zone:**
 - Sept. 1-30 (30 days) (5 daily limit); Oct. 12-Dec.8 (58 days) (3 daily limit); Dec. 28-29 (2 days) (3 daily limit); Jan. 25 (Sat.) -Feb. 10 (Mon.) (17 days) (3 daily limit)
 - Consistency
 - Sept. 1-30 (30 days); Oct. 5-Dec. 1 (58 days); Dec. 28-29 (2 days); and Jan. 25-Feb. 10 (17 days)

Waterfowl Workgroup 2019 GMU Options

- **Allegan:**
 - Sept. 1-16 (16 days), Nov. 2-12 (11 days), Nov. 21-Dec.8 (18 days), Dec. 14-Feb.13 (62 days)
 - Sept. 1-30 (30 days); Nov. 2-12 (11 days); Nov. 21- Dec. 8 (18 days); Dec. 14-Jan. 30 (48 days)
- **Muskegon:**
 - Oct. 19- Dec. 21 (allows hunting through all of Nov.)
 - Open on Tuesdays and Saturdays; morning and afternoon hunts on both days
- **Other geese:**
 - Snow and Ross (Light Geese)
 - Same as Canada Goose season dates in each zone and GMU
 - 20 daily bag limit
 - Dark Geese (Brant, white-fronted, and Canada)
 - Same as Canada Goose season dates in each zone and GMU
 - Sept. 1- 30: the daily limit for dark geese is 5, only 1 of which can be Brant
 - Oct. 1- Feb. 15: the daily limit for dark geese is 5, of which only 3 can be Canada geese and 1 can be Brant

CWAC Recommendations for 3- Year Stable Opening Dates

- **Motion:** for Option 1, consistent with last 3 years: (King), 2nd (McGee) **Vote:** motion withdrawn
 - North Zone (last Sat. in Sept.)
 - 2019 = Sept. 28
 - 2020 = Sept. 26
 - 2021 = Sept. 25
 - Middle Zone (1st Sat. in Oct.)
 - 2019 = Oct. 5
 - 2020 = Oct. 3
 - 2021 = Oct. 2
 - South Zone (2nd Sat. in Oct.)
 - 2019 = Oct. 12
 - 2020 = Oct. 10
 - 2021 = Oct. 9

- **Motion:** for Option 1, consistent with last 3 years: (Sefcik), 2nd (Johnson) **Vote:** 17 for, 2 against, motion passes
 - North Zone (last Sat. in Sept.)
 - 2019 = Sept. 28
 - 2020 = Sept. 26
 - 2021 = Sept. 25
 - Middle Zone (1st Sat. in Oct.)
 - 2019 = Oct. 5
 - 2020 = Oct. 3
 - 2021 = Oct. 2
 - South Zone (2nd Sat. in Oct.)
 - 2019 = Oct. 12
 - 2020 = Oct. 10
 - 2021 = Oct. 9

Early Teal Season 2019

Discussion centered around maximizing days (1-16) and potential issues with overlapping with the youth hunt.

Motion: for teal season Sept. 1-16 (Sun.- Mon) (Godi), 2nd (Allaire) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Youth Hunt Waterfowl Season 2019

Discussion centered around maximizing duck hunting opportunity for youth. Questions around whether hunters will focus on deer if both on same weekend. Barb Avers cautioned that the Liberty Hunt might be shifting one week earlier and could overlap with Sept. 14-15. Desire for a later hunt when duck numbers are increasing.

Motion: for youth hunt weekend Sept. 14-15 (2nd weekend in Sept.) (Sefcik), 2nd (Borske) **Vote:** 18 for, 0 no, 1 abstain, motion passes

Duck Splits 2019:

North Zone:

Motion: Sept. 28 (Sat.)- Nov. 24 (Sun.) & Nov. 30 (Sat.)- Dec 1 (Sun.). (Bellingar) 2nd (Kristselis) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Middle Zone:

Motion: Oct 5 (Sat.) -Dec 1 (Sun.) & Dec. 14 (Sat.) -15 (Sun.). (Cleary) 2nd (Retherford) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

South Zone:

Motion: Oct. 12 (Sat.)- Dec. 8 (Sun.) & Dec. 28 (Sat.) – Dec. 29 (Sun.). (Allaire) 2nd (Sefcik)
Vote: 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Canada Goose 2019-20 season dates – 107 days:

North Zone:

Motion: for Sept. 1-30 and Oct. 1-Dec. 16 (Sefcik), 2nd (Bellingar) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Middle Zone:

Motion: for Sept. 1-30 and Oct. 5-Dec. 20 (Sefcik), 2nd (Retherford) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

South Zone:

Motion: for Sept. 1-30, Oct. 12-Dec. 8, Dec. 28-29, and Jan. 25-Feb. 10 (Schutt), 2nd (Johnson)
Vote: 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Goose Management Units (GMU's)

Alleghen GMU:

Don Poppe provided discussion regarding date options.

Motion: for Sept. 1-30, Nov. 2-12, Nov. 21-Dec. 8, and Dec.14-Jan. 30 (Sefcik), 2nd (Mazzura)

Vote: 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Muskegon GMU:

Motion: for Oct. 19- Dec. 21 (Schutt), 2nd (King) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Other Geese Bag Limits:

Motion: to accept the waterfowl workgroup's recommendation on goose bag limits (same as seasons in all zones) (Zoli), 2nd (King). **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Duck Bag Limits:

Motion: to accept the waterfowl workgroup's recommendation on duck bag limits (maximum allowed under federal frameworks) (Zoli), 2nd (Allaire) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Next CWAC Meetings:

- Saturday, August 3rd, 2019
 - Saginaw Bay Area?
- Saturday, January 11th, 2020
 - Centrally located (Clare/ Gaylord)

NRC Meetings

- February 14th, Lansing Center, Lansing
 - Eric McGhee will attend to present CWAC recommendations
- March 14, 2019 for action
 - Shanty Creek Resort, Bellaire

Zones and Splits (5-year changes):

- Process for zone/ split proposals:
 - Jan.- June 2019 submit proposals using template and guidance
 - Include proposals for no change
 - Feb. 2019 Waterfowl Harvest Survey mailed
 - June 2019 zone/ split options published in Federal register
 - July 1, 2019 Proposals due
 - July 2019 Waterfowl Workgroup meeting to review proposals
 - Initial results from hunter survey
 - Aug. 2019 CWAC meeting to discuss proposals
 - Initial results from hunter survey
 - Aug.- Dec. 2019 solicit input on submitted proposals
 - Jan. 2020 CWAC meeting for recommended zone/ split
- Options to Consider:
 - 3 zones, 1 Split
 - 4 zones, no splits
 - 3 zones, 2 splits (may not be an option)
 - 4 zones, 1 split (may not be an option)
- Discussion among CWAC regarding the importance of splits.
- Is change necessary? What is the problem? What are the issues? Same as last time?
 - Answers from CWAC: Zone changes being considered regarding Eastern UP, Northwestern lower, Saginaw bay, Southwest lower, Drummond island.
 - (Sefcik) One zone that is a great lake and connecting waters and another that is non-great lake zone? Difficult legal considerations.
- Considerations: 60+, 45, and 30-day seasons
- Hunter Survey results
- What did we learn last time?
 - Review of Waterfowl Hunter Opinion Survey of zones:
 - Included status quo, split Saginaw Bay, Saginaw Bay in Middle Zone, and 4 zones with a new southwest zone
 - Most support for 3-zones with splits, many not sure
 - Most support maintaining existing zone boundaries (59% of respondents overall)
 - Very little support for splitting Saginaw Bay between zones (16% support)
 - Little support for putting Saginaw bay in the Middle Zone (21% support)
 - Many not sure if there should be a Southwest zone, more opposition than support
- (Borske) Any interest in DU sending out an online hunter survey? Would be larger scale (DU members). Would give more hunter input, however this would be a non-statistical survey and application of results would be limited.
- CWAC asked for map template including major islands, counties and major roads for zone proposals.
- CWAC asked for number of license sales from 2018
- CWAC wanted it noted that if there are any changes to the Zone boundaries in this process, they reserve the right to revisit the Zone opening days.
- Motion to Adjourn: (Retherford)