

# Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee Meeting

8/10/2019

Jay's Sporting Goods, Gaylord, 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 Shutt, Paul Conners, Dan King, Mike Dabrowski, Stathi Kritselis, Dan Cleary, Matt Lacombe, Dale Borske, Eric McGhee, Trent Bellinger, Steve Allaire, Jason Swincicki, Bob Johnson (arrived at 10:30)

**Absent (no Proxy):** Ed Retherford, Steve Pascoe, Ryan Kuntz, Mike Zoli, Jacob Cook, Dan Villwock

## **DNR Waterfowl Workgroup members (10):**

**Present:** Barbara Avers, Don Avers, Terry McFadden, Jeremiah Heise, Nik Kalejs, Bruce Barlow, Don Poppe, Brad Johnson, Mike Richardson

**Absent:** Zach Cooley

**DNR Staff:** Kaitlyn Thrush, (Nick Torsky— proxy for Lt. Dave Shaw), Commissioner John Walters

**CWAC Housekeeping** (Don Avers): 13 CWAC members present (*until 10:30am*), 11 needed to pass motions.

Approval of Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 CWAC meeting minutes: Motion to accept minutes (Paul Conners). **Vote:** 13 For, 0 Against. Motion passes.

## **Issues with Current Zones** (B. Avers):

- Anonymous pre-meeting questionnaire: Individual responses:
  - Do zones need to change?
    - 8 yes, 2 no, 3 indifferent
  - Do hunters think zones need to change?
    - 8 yes, 4 no, 1 indifferent
  - Do you think Saginaw Bay should be moved? What zone?
    - 0 for South, 8 for middle, 5 don't care
  - Should East UP be moved? What zone?
    - 5 North, 4 Middle, 4 indifferent
  - What zone do coastal lake MI areas need to be in?

- 5 Middle, 5 South, 3 indifferent
- Review of zone regulation change processes
  - Jan.- June 2019 CWAC 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 CWAC 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
- Review of 4 options considered at January 5 meeting
- Review of Waterfowl Hunter Opinion Survey of zones:
  - Most support for 3-zones with splits, many not sure
  - Most support maintaining existing duck zone boundaries (~59% of respondent overall)
  - Very little support for splitting Saginaw Bay between zones
  - Little support for putting Saginaw bay in the Middle
  - Many not sure if there should be a Southwest zone
- 2018 preliminary results from waterfowl hunter survey (Agree/ Disagree)
  - A/D: For the zones you hunt, do you like the hunting zones?
    - Pretty high agreement that they liked dates
  - A/D: I would like the duck season to begin earlier.
    - Some agreement in the North zone. Some disagreement in SW
  - A/D: I would prefer the duck season to go later.
    - Pretty high agreement across regions
  - A/D: Different opening dates among zones created crowding in the area I hunt.
    - Many not sure
  - A/D: Have 3 zones with 1 split
    - Pretty good support
  - A/D: 4 zones with no split
    - More disagreement than agreement
  - Have 1 zone with 1 split
    - Not very much support

### **CWAC Zone Proposal Changes and Discussion** (B. Avers)

- We received 6 CWAC proposals, 2 were for no change.
  - 1 for moving coastal UP to Middle
    - Season would be open later to take advantage of open water coastal hunting and St. Mary's river
    - Support varies. Casual hunters do not support as much as serious hunters do.
  - 2 for moving NW LP to South Zone

- Season would be open later to take advantage of open water coastal hunting
    - One used US-131
    - One used US-127/ I-75
  - 1 for moving Saginaw Bay to Middle Zone with 2 options for new boundary
    - Season would open earlier to avoid lost days to ice conditions
    - M-25 to Grindstone City
    - M-46 West
- Waterfowl Workgroup Discussion of 6 CWAC proposals
  - Current zones boundaries acceptable
  - Eastern UP coastal areas and St. Mary's River
    - Big concerns enforcement-wise. (Nick Torsky for Lt. Dave Shaw)  
We want consistent and simple boundaries as possible; the shoreline is not clear and can cause a lot of confusion.
    - CWAC- How does this impact crowding?
      - It would likely help.
    - CWAC- Did workgroup like this?
      - Found it acceptable
    - CWAC- How does NE Lower Peninsula feel about the East UP joining Middle Zone?
      - Have no problem with it
    - Workgroup talked about crowding; it was not a huge concern as we are not gaining waterfowl hunters
    - UP reps are accepting of this option, but overall earlier the opener, the better. Ryan is not here (West UP rep); his preference was for no change to north zone.
    - Support not clear
  - NW Lower Peninsula coastal areas
    - I-75 and US-131 too far east and encompass too many inland lakes and wetlands
    - US-31 better option to encompass coastal areas
    - Support not clear
  - Saginaw Bay
    - M-46 takes away too much late goose hunting opportunity
    - M-25 along shoreline is a better option
    - Would put all of Saginaw Bay into Middle Zone
    - Support not clear
    - Nayanquing Point hunters support
    - Is Fish Point group happy with being moved to Middle?
      - Majority yes

### **Plan for Public Input** (B. Avers)

- Online survey during Oct.-Nov. with maps of the proposals we discussed today
  - CWAC- Statewide map including potential justifications for boundaries.
  - Current Vs. proposed maps.
- CWAC and Waterfowl Workgroup will continue to solicit input

## 10:30 am— 15-minute Break

### Discuss Zone Change Proposals:

- CWAC-
  - Do we want to leave zones as is for an option for the survey?
    - Yes
  - What about taking US-2 all the way east to Wisconsin for Middle Zone?
    - Too complicated for this cycle. May come back to the future.
  - US-131 is preferred option for South/ Middle boundary and I-75 in East UP is boundary between North/ Middle zone.
  - Secondary option would be workgroup proposal using US-31 as South/ Middle boundary.
  - Keep highway 20 boundary (current boundary between south and middle zones)
  - Move M-25 straight across eastward Huron county at Bay Forestville road?
    - Concern with M-25 being too close to the shoreline— people want to be in middle zone. Would impact goose hunters greatly.
  - Instead of I-75 for Middle/ North boundary; use I-75 East to M-134 to M-129 North (Paul Conners).
    - Is it worth the change? I-75 is cleanest and clearest option.

### Zone change proposals to move forward for public input – CWAC and Waterfowl Workgroup

- Vote for: Workgroup proposal only using US-131 instead of US-31. (Paul Conners); 14 For, 0 Against
- Vote for: using workgroup proposal of US-31 as an option (Paul Conners): 0 For, 14 Against
- CWAC- Add R3 to agenda for future meetings (Eric McGhee)

## 11:45 am— Break for Lunch

### Updates and Miscellaneous— (B. Avers)

- Instead of state maps- split by region so that people can agree with parts of the proposal
  - Would allow for a better understanding of what hunters want
  - Would be shown to CWAC before being sent out in the survey
- Breeding Waterfowl Survey results
  - Were emailed out prior to meeting
  - Duck estimates lower, likely due largely to high water levels
  - Apparent long-term decline in mallards
  - Decline in birds sighted on transects - not accounting for urban-dwelling birds. Leading to potential mallard movement research project
  - Canada geese 18% below last year; 5% above LTA

- Mute swans down. 48% below last 5-year average. 34% below last year.
- CWAC— Discussion around Sandhill crane hunting
- Voluntary Wetland Restoration Program
  - Bill that passed last year
  - EGLE has hired person to lead their portion of this program
  - Co-led by DNR and EGLE
  - DNR will be hiring this position - Wetland Habitat Biologist
  - Meant to streamline permitting process
  - Co-funded by DU for first year
- Veterans Hunting Days
  - Mentioned in January
  - Legislation passed late last year
  - Days can be in addition to what we have, or can be combined into one
  - Not in regular season
  - Not more than 14 days before or after hunting season for duck, mergansers and coot
  - Discussion for January meeting

**Action Items:**

- Email 2018 waterfowl hunter opinion survey to CWAC
- Email Slides presented to CWAC
- Bring info to January meeting to re-run harvest and survival rates for hen mallards

**Motion to Adjourn:** (Paul Connors) 14 For, 0 Against. Motion passes.

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