

**POINTE MOUILLEE MANAGED WATERFOWL AREA
2020 ANNUAL REPORT**



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A. INTRODUCTION

The Pointe Mouillee State Game Area (PMSGGA hereafter) is a managed waterfowl unit consisting of 5,195 acres of hemi-marsh, shallow open water, diked cropland, lake plain prairie, island, and lowland hardwood communities. The project is located about 30 miles southwest of Detroit at the confluence of the Detroit River, Huron River, and Western Lake Erie. The state game area has three permanent full-time employees (one biologist, one technician and one wildlife assistant) along with summer, fall, and winter seasonal staff. These staff are also responsible for management of Erie State Game Area, Petersburg State Game Area, Pointe Aux Peaux State Wildlife Area, and Brownstown Prairie State Wildlife Area.

2020 brought unprecedented challenges to management of the area with the COVID-19 pandemic. As staff were gearing up for the 2020 field season, on-location duties were halted in mid-March and staff were ordered to work from home for an unspecified amount of time. After two and a half months of working from home, full-time staff could return to the field at the beginning of June. Even after returning, all full-time staff were limited to 32 hours of work per week for most of the summer to aid in budget cut efforts. In addition, hiring of seasonal employees at Pointe Mouillee was prohibited. Also, at the time of this report's publishing, the main office of Pointe Mouillee is still closed to the public and only open to staff for retrieving necessary materials to perform work. The late start to field work and limited staffing made 2020 very difficult to accomplish all management goals, however the staff put in maximum effort to keep Pointe Mouillee and surrounding game areas prime destinations for wildlife recreation.

Every five years, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division outlines its [Guiding Principles and Strategies \(GPS\)](#). This strategic plan gives direction to the division to best plan for the future of wildlife conservation. It keeps the division on track to complete the current and potential priorities and issues that are faced in the ever-changing landscape of wildlife management. The goals are outlined below:

1. Manage for healthy and sustainable populations of wildlife
2. Manage habitat for sustainable wildlife populations and wildlife-based recreation
3. Administer and promote effective stewardship of lands for wildlife habitats and wildlife-based recreation
4. Enhance sustainable wildlife-based recreation use and enjoyment
5. Improve and maintain public communication, strong relationships, and partnerships
6. Foster and adopt effective business practices
7. Develop and implement systems that lead to continuous improvement in how we work

Throughout this report, most titles will be labeled with a *GPS Goal* notation. This notation helps to distinguish where and why goals and priorities are set in relation to wildlife and habitat management at PMSGGA.

B. AREA GOALS AND MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS *GPS Goal 2*

The management goal for PMSGGA is to restore and maintain biotic communities and public use opportunities through practices and improvements that do not disturb existing unique features. These practices also complement natural processes and local area ecology by applying featured species management. Management of this area focuses on restoring sustainable, naturally functioning systems, where possible, and actively manage those systems that cannot be restored to function naturally. Hunting, trapping, fishing, viewing and other wildlife recreational opportunities are available in a diversity of settings as a result of area management.

Ecosystem Management

Ecological management is an ever-changing practice. From a time where ecosystems were self-sustaining, to a time where overconsumption ran rampant, humans have learned that there is a balance required to sustain wildlife populations and overall ecosystem health. Humans are now aware that ecosystems are there to serve them, however, they must also serve the ecosystems to satisfy the balance. This is known as the land ethic, first authored by the father of wildlife ecology, Aldo Leopold.

Great Lakes coastal wetlands are a hotspot for Midwest biodiversity, home to multiple native species of plants and wildlife. Over time, these ecosystems have deteriorated, losing acres of precious land that is crucial to survival of waterfowl, fish, amphibians, and mammals as well as plants like cattails. However, important initiatives in recent decades have placed importance on restoring these fragile ecosystems; this case being the Pointe Mouillee State Game Area on the northwestern shores of Lake Erie. A dedication of Leopold's land ethic has helped restore habitat and species traditionally found in this location. Humans, knowing only they had the power to quickly restore this natural feature, implemented extensive practices and projects to do so. The ethic now continues, with the Michigan DNR actively managing this wetland complex to provide quality habitat for the wildlife species that use it.

Prior to the construction of the barrier dike system that now makes up the game area, native wetlands were washing away into Lake Erie, decreasing essential habitat for wildlife species. Now, intensive land management practices are used by area staff to restore native and agricultural vegetation that provide cover and food for the local and migrating species. Cattail marshes and wild food have regrown, and nearly a hundred acres of agriculture are planted each year as supplemental food for various wildlife species. Also, portions of terrestrial areas are managed for certain mammal and avian species. PMSGGA has greatly benefitted ecologically through the intensive management practices required to sustain a wetland complex of its magnitude.

Aldo Leopold's land ethic has helped restore an area so important to Michigan's wildlife. Now providing a home for mammalian, avian, amphibian, and reptilian species, PMSGGA is a true success story of humans instilling conservation.

Land Management Strategies

The PMSGGA Master Plan promotes the management and values of wetlands to hunters and other recreational users (i.e., trappers, birdwatchers, etc.). Implementing this plan aligns with the strategies and goals identified by the DNR's Evergreen Goals, the Wildlife Division's GPS goals, and the Southeast Region Operational Plan.

The Master Plan sets the direction for management within the game area. Through successful implementation of these strategies there will be an increase in the diversity, quantity, and quality of the habitats that will produce a greater variety of wildlife species. PMSGGA is intensely used by waterfowl during all times of the year. The Master Plan incorporates this phenomenon by prioritizing habitat optimization for waterfowl, which in turn benefits other species. Nesting habitat is increased for waterfowl by restoring and maintaining open areas adjacent to brood rearing habitat and restoring some of the historical wet prairie that once existed. The wildlife and fish produced and maintained on the game area are the basis for increasing recreation by hunters and non-hunters.

C. WILDLIFE PRODUCTION AND USE ESTIMATES *GPS Goal 1*

1. 130 pairs breeding ducks of various species including mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*)
450 ducklings produced
2. 110 pairs breeding Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*)
400 goslings produced
3. 50 White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)
4. 20 Ring-necked pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*)
5. Other game:
 - a. 300 Fox Squirrels (*Sciurus niger*)
 - b. 200 Eastern Cottontail Rabbits (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)
 - c. 350 Woodchucks (*Marmota monax*)
 - d. 11,000 Muskrats (*Ondatra zibethica*)
6. Unique wildlife species:
 - a. 16 Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) 4 pair nesting on the game area and multiple pairs nesting within 20 miles
 - b. 12 nesting pairs of Great Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*)
 - c. 35 Black-Crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)
 - d. 45 nesting pairs of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*)
 - e. 18 American White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)
 - f. 2 pair of nesting Osprey (*Pandion Haliaeetus*)
 - g. 2 cattle egrets
 - h. 1 little blue heron
7. Invasive Species of Concern
 - a. 8 nesting pairs of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*), 100 non-breeding individuals, and 15 cygnets produced

D. SIGNIFICANT HABITAT MANAGEMENT *GPS Goal 2*

In previous years, through participation in a Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lake Erie Metro Park and The Nature Conservancy (among others), 200 acres of phragmites (*Phragmites sp.*) were sprayed via aerial spraying in the Humphries Unit, Cripple Point Unit area, along the diversion dike (southwest area of game area), and in the portion of the game area north of the Huron River. Up to 2020, phragmites were sprayed at the PMSGGA for sixteen consecutive years. Unfortunately, 2020 placed Covid-19-related restrictions on spending that prohibited a seventeenth consecutive year of spraying for the invasive species. Our partners in CWMA were able to continue some efforts in controlling phragmites, and we are hopeful to rejoin the effort in 2021.

The Bad Creek Unit, a public-use unit of PMSGGA, had water added to it from the newly constructed Cripple Point Unit just to the south of Bad Creek. Cattail growth has boomed in the unit since the last management practices of crop planting, reed-canary grass and phragmites mowing and spraying, and removal of woody vegetation occurred in 2017. The long-term plan is to encourage marsh vegetation such as cattails and wild food to establish in this area as part of a moist soil management program. With the addition of water, potholes in the cattails should

naturally form. The unit will also be treated with mechanical and chemical control of open-water potholes in cattails for waterfowl and shorebird habitat as needed.

The Vermet Unit is a public-use portion of PMSGGA. The heavy use of the unit by waterfowl takes place after early goose season and prior to regular waterfowl season. Water levels were dropped when water was moved from this large unit to fill agriculture refuge and managed zones for hunting season. The unit is now near desirable depth and cattail patches should start to reform in the coming summer.

Humphries Unit, the largest of the public-use units, remained largely unchanged from the previous year. In recent years, Humphries was impacted severely by rising Lake Erie water levels and an unusable large pump. Humphries is bordered by the diversion dike to the West. A portion of this dike (called the "spillway") is structured to be lower than the rest of the dike to allow for spillover from Mouillee Creek so properties upstream are not flooded. In 2019, the spillway let a seemingly uncontrollable amount of water over, which raised Humphries water levels to depths not seen in decades. Since it is such a large unit, it is difficult to manipulate water levels without the use of a large pump station, which has been out of commission since 2018. The plan for 2021 is to gravity feed water out of the unit when Lake Erie recedes from its western shore and water levels in Humphries are higher than the Lake; water from Humphries will also be used to fill agriculture zones prior to hunting season. This will decrease the depth until the large pump is renovated.

Long Pond Unit, one of the three managed hunting units, is a cattail marsh. The unit sat about 6-8 inches higher than usual hunting levels in 2019. The high levels helped with purple loosestrife and other unwanted aquatic vegetation control, preserving the health of cattail that mostly inhabits the marsh unit. Water levels were dropped to normal depth in 2020 since the unwanted vegetation was largely controlled and good potholes were restored. Mechanically and chemically controlling potholes and unwanted vegetation species in the marsh are in the future plans for the unit.

Nelson Unit and Bloody Run Refuge (agriculture) were mostly on par with typical management aside from a late start to planting. Crops (corn, buckwheat, and millet) were still planted in time to allow for full maturity before flooding for hunting season.

Walpatich Unit (65% marsh, 35% agriculture) experienced mixed results. With limited time to plant crops in time for full maturity, corn was planted after July 4th and had to be flooded for hunting season prior to full maturity, but buckwheat was still planted in time. Zones 17 and 18 were managed via water level manipulation. Zone 20 and 22 were managed mechanically and chemically to increase pothole presence as these zones had become very overgrown with cattails.

Nearly 20 acres of beans were planted and harvested in the west end of Nelson Unit.

Staff planted 95 acres of corn, 70 acres of buckwheat, and 30 acres of millet for managed waterfowl hunting. They also maintained small clover plots for public hunting.

E. LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE *GPS Goal 3*

No land was acquired or divested in 2020.

F. AREA MAINTENANCE *GPS Goal 2*

2020 was a difficult year for maintenance at the area. Staff was mostly focused on performing essential habitat work for a successful year for wildlife. Also, without any seasonal workers, typical maintenance was delayed and extra maintenance was minimal. However, necessary tasks were completed to keep Pointe Mouillee a desirable destination for wildlife recreation visitors.

Maintenance to a failing “spillway” just south of the large pumphouse was completed to prevent major washout of the dike from high Mouillee Creek waters.

Staff maintained equipment, parking lots, signs, dikes, pumps, barriers, and buildings.

All the rollers at PMSGGA were repaired before the waterfowl season.

United States Army Corps of Engineers repaired the Vermet/Banana Dike where leaks were present.

G. EQUIPMENT *GPS Goal 6*

No new equipment was purchased for PMSGGA this year.

H. SPECIAL PROJECTS *GPS Goal 5*

Another difficulty 2020 provided was limitations to certain projects. For the most part, projects were able to be continued but required special precautions for safety of those involved. This included wearing masks, riding in separate vehicles, proper distancing, and sanitization of surfaces.

Area personnel conducted Canada goose (224) and wood duck banding (20).

Deer Check was open at the Pointe Mouillee equipment barn using a drive through set-up where customers did not have to exit their vehicle. A similar set up was done at Cabela’s. The operation was significantly scaled down this year, with both locations being open for only four days (November 15-18).

- 100 deer were checked at Pointe Mouillee
- Over 150 deer were checked at Cabela’s

The Pheasant Hunting Initiative (appropriated by Public Act 618 of 2018), provided the release of pheasants at PMSGGA and ESGA through the 2019 pheasant season. Unfortunately, it was cancelled for 2020 due to Covid-19 budget spending restrictions but we hope it will return for 2021.

Ohio State University continued their telemetry work on shorebirds at PMSGGA, and repaired their telemetry towers with help from Winous Point Marsh Conservancy.

Michigan State University continued research on waterfowl presence throughout the waterfowl hunting season at PMSGGA.

PMSGGA personnel continued their affiliation with the Western Lake Erie Cooperative Weed Management Association (CWMA) steering committee with the US Fish and Wildlife, The Nature

Conservancy, DTE, Huron Clinton Metro Park Authority, Eastern Michigan University, and SEMCOG.

The partnership with The Nature Conservancy helped to maintain habitat for Karner Blue Butterfly and other species reliant on the oak openings ecosystem at Petersburg State Game Area.

I. RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL EVENTS *GPS*

Goal 4,5

Bird watching, fishing, trapping and hunting are the major recreational activities at PMSGGA. Thousands of people from all over the United States and Canada visit the game area throughout the year to view a diverse group of bird species. Fishermen make thousands of trips to PMSGGA and to the headquarters to launch their boat for lake and river fishing or fish from the sea wall. Wildlife watching, hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, dog training, and boating are recreational activities enjoyed by the public at PMSGGA (Table 1).

With the pandemic driving more people to spend time outdoors to safely distance from others but still enjoy recreation, PMSGGA saw a rise in the typical recreation numbers. Parking lots were consistently full, much more than previous years. Even without the nearly 10,000 visitors for the Waterfowl Festival, it is still estimated that user trips rivaled or exceeded a normal year with the Festival and tours of the game area.

Table 1. Estimated User Trips and Harvest at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area 2020

Activity	User Trips	Harvest
Waterfowl hunting	8,000	10,640
Deer hunting	350	12
Small game hunting	1,000	200
Trapping	NA	NA
Fishing	35,000	NA
Wildlife viewing	7,000	NA
Tournament/Festival	NA	NA
Educational tours	NA	NA
Other (boating, etc.)	4,000	NA
TOTALS	55,350	NA

Unfortunately, many special events at the game area had to be cancelled in 2020. We hope that 2021 will be a welcome back to many of our partners and attendees of these events that are typically hosted at PMSGGA.

The following events still occurred in 2020:

Youth duck hunt, lunch, and workshop put on by Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association, Waterfowl USA Southwestern Lake Erie Chapter, and the DNR Wildlife Division. 50+ youths participate and receive raffle gifts, t-shirt, waterfowl hunting instruction, calls, and lunch. Special thank you to Big Al's Sports Grill for hosting the event in 2020.

Christmas bird count – Yearly bird count performed by members of our local Audubon chapters.

These events were cancelled for 2020, but we hope to have them back in 2021:

Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival hosted by the Waterfowl Festival Committee and DNR staff. Between 7 and 8 thousand people come to Pointe Mouillee over a weekend in September to participate in the festivities surrounding the Waterfowl Festival; the events include the duck hunters' shooting tournament, duck and goose calling contests, dog jumping contest, trading post, auction, and concessions among others. 2019 was the 72nd annual Waterfowl Festival at Pointe Mouillee, and 2020 was the first year ever that it had to be cancelled.

The **Youth Fishing Derby** put on by Brownstown Township where 25-30 youths participate in the event.

Spring birding tour hosted by Pointe Mouillee staff. 30 attendees during early April to do a driving tour of the game area searching for waterfowl and shorebirds.

Fall open house hosted by Pointe Mouillee staff. 100+ hunters and non-hunters attend. Light refreshments provided and projects accomplished over the past year and current marsh conditions leading up to waterfowl season are discussed. A driving tour of the game area is also provided.

Audubon driving tours – Chapters from Detroit, Macomb, Washtenaw, and Jackson organize driving tours for their members.

Greatest Week in Birding event – Driving tour/count organized by the Black Swamp Observatory out of Ohio.

J. TRAPPING *GPS Goal 4*

There were a total of 5 registered trappers for the 2020-2021 trapping season. These trappers register for a permit and must report their total harvest of each species at the end of the season.

For the season, the following furbearers were harvested:

1,318 muskrat

11 mink

2 beaver

Permits for each season become available in November. For interested trappers, please inquire at that time for next trapping season.

K. WATERFOWL BANDING *GPS Goal 1*

Goose banding operations were significantly scaled down for 2020. Public volunteers were not allowed to participate for health and safety precaution, therefore, only full-time staff participated. Goose banding was also limited to 1 day as opposed to 3. In essence, 224 geese were banded, down from 444 in 2019. Duck banding was also limited for time and available effort, so 20 wood ducks were banded.

Table 2. Waterfowl Banding Results for Pointe Mouillee State Game Area 2003-2019

Year	C. Geese	Mallards	Wood ducks	Blue-winged Teal	Other Ducks	Common Tern	Totals
2020	224	0	20	0	0	0	244
2019	444	4	26	0	0	0	474
2018	541	0	22	0	0	0	563
2017	438	1	47	0	0	0	486
2016	609	2	96	0	0	0	707
2015	538	250	127	0	1	0	916
2014	705	125	70	0	0	0	900
2013	699	0	31	0	0	0	730
2012	781	32	1	0	0	0	814
2011	529	34	0	0	2	15	580
2010	768	205	6	0	0	0	979
2009	741	0	0	0	0	56	797
2008	588	171	3	0	0	0	762
2007	778	0	0	0	0	0	778
2006	480	0	0	0	1	0	481
2005	507	0	0	0	0	0	507
2004	805	0	0	0	0	0	805
2003	450	0	0	0	0	0	450
Totals	10,625	824	449	0	4	71	11,973

L. MANAGEMENT AT OTHER GAME AREAS *GPS Goal 1, 2, 3, 4, 5*

The staff at PMSGA manage four other state game/wildlife areas in Monroe and Wayne Counties. The Erie State Game Area, Petersburg State Game Area, Pointe Aux Peaux State Game Area, and Brownstown Prairie State Wildlife Area all undergo habitat management in addition to Pointe Mouillee. These areas offer waterfowl, deer, small game, upland bird hunting, as well as hiking and wildlife viewing. PMSGA staff manages these areas by planting food plots, maintaining openings, water control, and controlled burns.

Unfortunately, in 2020, it was very difficult for staff to maintain these areas to the desired levels because of limited staffing. Established food plots were maintained and basic maintenance of parking lots and trails were completed. Re-establishing unplanted food plots and trail maintenance are top priorities for 2021 to return these areas to the highest quality possible.

Prior to the pandemic, Petersburg did receive extensive work in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy. With their partnership, over 50 acres of openings were maintained with a forestry machine to enhance habitat for Karner blue butterfly. This type of management also benefits other species such as upland birds and white-tailed deer. Their partnership in this project is immensely helpful and appreciated.

M. WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON

Introduction GPS Goal 4

In normal years, managed hunting at PMSGA is done three days a week (Sunday AM/PM, Tuesday AM and Thursday AM/PM) in the Walpatich, Long Pond and Nelson Units (21 zones totaling approximately 450 acres). Through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a draw also occurs for three AM zones owned by the USFWS at the Brancheau Unit in Estral Beach. Each of the managed hunting zones has specific rules

regarding shot size, shell limit, and hunting party limit to optimize the experience for those utilizing the managed zones.

2020, however, brought required changes to managed hunting and draw operations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Precautions for hunter and staff health and safety was of utmost concern for all managed areas, so each had to manufacture their own new operations to adhere to strict safety protocol. At PMSGGA the following actions (not a conclusive list) were taken:

- Drive-through service system at the equipment barns to obtain registration permits where staff were always separated from hunters
- Limit of 1 staff member working
- Announcements over an FM transmitter
- Hunters were asked to remain in vehicles at all times during the draw
- 1 draw per day; shop was closed at the conclusion of the draw
- Masks worn by staff at all times; hunters wore masks when interacting with staff
- Sanitization of all equipment/surfaces before & after each draw
- Elimination of bag checks after AM hunts
- Elimination of stand-by/leftover draw permits

Draws were still limited to the normal 3 days (Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday), for a total of 3 draws each week. Sunday and Tuesday draws were AM for all-day permits, and Thursday draw was PM for a rest-of day permit. The exception was for opening day, Saturday, October 10, which was an AM draw for an all-day permit.

Another change made was the removal of the Brancheau Unit at the request of USFWS. The unit was not ready for hunting season.

The Vermet, Humphries and Bad Creek Units consist of 1,820 acres of high quality, easily accessible emergent/cattail marsh. These areas are open to public hunting 7 days a week during waterfowl season, offering opportunity for those unsuccessful in the draw.

There are also three refuge units (Bloody Run, Banana Dike and Lautenschlager Units) that are closed to all use and occupancy September 1st through December 15th.

The following information only contains data on waterfowl taken and hunter trips for the 21 zones in the managed waterfowl hunt area.

The 2020 managed waterfowl season saw a total of 1,019 hunter trips. Hunter trips decreased from 2019 (1,329 hunters), which was due to 2 less draws per week. Even with less hunters able to use the managed zones, it was apparent that more hunters showed up for the draw than previous years. Between 20-40 parties typically showed up for registration for 21 available zones, and 16 zones per draw were taken on average.

For harvest data collection, Wildlife Division staff typically inspects hunter harvested species after each morning hunt, while a self-reporting data card is left in designated permit tubes by hunters after evening hunts. Harvest checks were not completed this year, however. All harvest reporting was completed by hunters using the registration permit cards.

**Weather and Habitat Conditions (Waterfowl Season October, November, early December)
GPS Goal 2**

The 2020 water levels in western Lake Erie were again above average. However, water levels were not an issue this year for flooding managed units.

Even with the late start to planting, corn grew tall enough for good cover and produced food in agriculture units (Nelson and Walpatich). Long Pond had great marsh conditions as well, with water levels back to normal and potholes widely available for waterfowl usage. Nelson and Long Pond produced 82% of the season’s harvest.

Weather for the entire season was mostly mild. Ice did not form until the last week of the season, offering plenty of opportunity for easy access and hunting. There were also few major weather events until the last week, when a snowstorm blanketed the area.

Migration and Waterfowl Numbers GPS Goal 1

Weekly population estimates (Table 1 below) are done just prior to through just after duck hunting season at Pointe Mouillee. The count is done in the Bloody Run and Banana Dike Refuge and the Vernet Unit. Counts are done from the ground in a vehicle.

Table 1. 2020 Waterfowl Population Estimates Pointe Mouillee State Game Area

Date	Ducks	Geese	Swans
Sept. 26	3467	720	20
Oct. 3	3905	820	20
Oct. 10	6120	880	70
Oct. 17	4190	300	30
Oct. 24	5230	130	40
Oct. 31	6580	130	30
Nov. 7	5620	100	35
Nov. 14	4445	10	10
Nov. 21	5815	20	20
Nov. 28	7775	130	20
Dec. 5	5390	40	15
Dec. 12	5220	20	75
Dec. 19	5680	10	50

**Estimated numbers are for the week prior to the date listed*

Season Dates and Area Regulations GPS Goal 4

Managed hunting was offered three days a week on a regular Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday schedule from October 11-December 6. Sunday and Tuesday hunts were AM draws for an all-day permit, while Thursday hunts were PM draws for a remainder-of-day permit. An opening day hunt (Saturday, Oct. 10) was offered for an AM draw and all-day permit.

Hunting Season Results GPS Goal 4

A. Pre-registration and Preferred Hunts

2020 was the 19th year without a pre-registered hunt for the opening weekend. A youth only hunt was held on November 8, and a veteran's only hunt was held on November 10. Parties had to have at least one youth or veteran to participate. There is usually a youth preferred hunt on opening day (PM), however, that hunt was removed for 2020. Also, these hunts are usually youth or veteran preferred, meaning non-youth and non-veteran parties can enter for a second draw for leftover zones.

B. Harvest and Hunter Use

See Appendix A and B for specific data on species and zone harvest.

Daily bag limits for 2020 were 6 ducks, the same as 2019. 2020 harvest was similar to 2019 totals of 1,309 ducks, with 1,354 ducks taken in 2020. Goose harvest jumped from 39 in 2019 to 61 in 2020. 18 different species of waterfowl were harvested in the managed zones. Hunter trips decreased from 1,329 in 2019 to 1,019 in 2020 due to limits on hunting opportunity. Hunter success was up significantly, with 1.39 birds per hunter trip in 2020 compared to 1.01 in 2019. 2020 was an above average year in the managed zones, as far as ducks per hunter trip and total harvest, yielding the second highest harvest and highest ducks per hunter trip since the expansion of managed zones at PMSGGA in 2014.

Early Teal and Goose Seasons: The managed waterfowl hunting area is not open for these seasons. Early teal and goose hunting are allowed in the public hunting areas throughout PMSGGA. Hunters are not required to report their harvest in the open hunting areas. Our observation is that over the weekend there was good participation in the hunt but during the week participation was very limited on the game area.

Youth Hunts: There is not an early season youth hunt in the managed waterfowl hunting area however all the public hunting areas are open. We partner with Waterfowl U.S.A. Southwest Lake Erie Chapter and Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association to put on a youth hunt/workshop/luncheon. This youth event brings in 45-55 youth hunters every year. Each youth receives a dozen decoys, duck and goose calls, and a goody bag.

During the regular waterfowl season, we hosted one youth only draw in our managed waterfowl area on November 8. There were 12 parties for this hunt and 32 ducks were harvested.

A veteran's only hunt occurred on November 10. This hunt produced 11 parties, 25 ducks, and 3 geese.

Table 2. Harvest Data at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area 2014 - 2020

Species	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	319	224	227	386	164	446	378
Female Mallard	251	256	180	341	180	352	294
Am. Black Duck (<i>Anas rubripes</i>)	29	12	25	32	17	36	46
Northern Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)	26	49	41	69	9	14	58
Gadwall (<i>Anas strepera</i>)	235	60	69	177	25	41	63
Am. Wigeon (<i>Anas Americana</i>)	4	6	0	20	8	8	4
Greenwing Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)	71	92	65	141	63	108	94
Bluewing Teal (<i>Anas discors</i>)	47	24	67	28	15	57	43
N. Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)	44	3	20	76	13	55	77
Wood Duck (<i>Aix sponsa</i>)	250	64	181	234	166	123	191
Redhead (<i>Aythya Americana</i>)	15	8	1	1	5	7	16
Scaup (<i>Aythya sp.</i>)	7	6	2	7	8	8	6
Ring-necked (<i>Aythya collaris</i>)	4	9	5	5	5	4	25
C. Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Bufflehead (<i>Bucephala albeola</i>)	1	10	0	12	0	2	3
Ruddy Duck (<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>)	4	1	8	1	0	13	4
Merganser Sp. (<i>Mergus sp.</i>)	5	2	1	0	4	15	3
Canvasback (<i>Aythya valisineria</i>)	0	1	2	2	1	1	6
Unknown	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
American Coot (<i>Fulica americana</i>)	10	7	4	8	4	19	43
Canada geese (<i>Branta Canadensis</i>)	38	30	35	25	30	39	61
Snow geese (<i>Anser caerulescens</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Species Totals	1360	865	936	1565	718	1348	1415
Hunter Trip Totals	1125	1053	1239	1407	1075	1329	1019
Duck Totals	1325	827	901	1534	688	1309	1354
Geese Totals	38	30	35	25	30	39	61
Total Birds Per Hunter	1.21	0.82	0.75	1.11	.67	1.01	1.39
Total Ducks Per Hunter	1.18	0.77	0.73	1.09	0.64	0.98	1.33

C. Hunter Days and Individual Hunter Numbers

Zones taken in the drawings was up from an average of 12.3 zones taken in 2019 for 24 available zones to an average of 16.3 zones taken in the drawings for the 21 available zones in 2020. The highest attendance for a drawing was 58 parties while the lowest was 18. All zones were taken 3 times; the lowest number of zones taken was 7. Drawings were held through December 6th.

The number of hunter days for the managed hunt areas at PMSGGA was 26 days and the total number of individual hunters using the managed area were 1,019 hunter trips. In 2019, there were 26 hunter days and a total of 1,329 hunter trips using the managed area.

Cropland, Marshland and Water Level Management GPS Goal 2, 4

A late start to farming and limited staff due to COVID-19 gave a gloomy outlook to 2020 from the start. Corn was planted on time in Nelson and Bloody Run, but was about a week late in Walpatich. Buckwheat and millet were planted on time. Luckily, weather cooperated and did not ruin any of the planted crops.

Farming direction in zones 13, 14, and 21 were continued in a north/south direction, while 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, and the Bloody Run were planted in an east/west direction. Corn and buckwheat strip rotation was done in all agriculture zones. Millet strips were also planted in Nelson and Bloody Run.

Long Pond, an all-cattail marsh unit, was at normal hunting depth. Deeper water was used in 2019 to control unwanted vegetation and open more potholes in the marsh. This helped with creating better habitat for ducks and increased harvest in the unit from 2019 to 2020.

Lautenschlauger and Walpatich have good cattail growth. Lautenschalger was not drained. Walpatich was drained for agriculture planting then flooded for normal hunting levels. Zones 17 and 18 were flooded for moist soil habitat, while zones 20 and 22 were managed mechanically and chemically to increase openings in the cattails.

Significant Projects GPS Goal 2

Mowed and sprayed large phragmites patches in zone 20 and 22.

Cripple Point construction began and will conclude in early 2021.

Recommendations GPS Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Continue to pursue funding for wetland restoration projects at Pointe Mouillee.

- Lezotes Landing
- Pointe Sec Unit
- Smith Creek restoration
- Large pump replacement for water control

Continue experimental methods to control Phragmites. Without intensive management practices, Phragmites will out-compete native vegetation in the wetland ecosystem, resulting in a monoculture of Phragmites.

Continue row crop planting on drier sites behind zones 13 and 14 to help control brush invasion and prepare site for conversion to a native plant community.

Maintain existing program of flooding cropland in the Bloody Run and Lautenschlager Unit Refuge to attract, feed, and hold migrating waterfowl during fall and spring migrating seasons.

Develop new nesting meadow and prairie grassland sites along the Long Pond Unit, particularly in zones 4 and 6 and extend the prairie grassland in the back of Zones 11 and 12.

Develop the Mouillee Upland into a strip-cropped unit for pheasant and white-tailed deer habitat by removing brush and weeds and planting corn and grass.

Continue prescribed burn rotations on prairie grass fields at PMSGGA. This management strategy will maintain our warm season grasses while setting back cool season grasses, broadleaf weeds, and brush.

Work with Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association, Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival, and Waterfowl USA Southwest Lake Erie Chapter to create more opportunities for hunters through projects like a new boat launch dock and handicap accessible blind.

Continue with no pre-registered hunts at PMSGGA during opening weekend.

Return to two youth hunts and two veteran's hunts conducted in the managed areas.

Continue experimenting with a self-registration system that allows hunters to register themselves late in the season when the marsh is frozen or there is a lack of participation.

Prominent Partners and Volunteers GPS Goal 5

Michigan Duck Hunters' Tournament & Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival:

Holds annual festival to draw visitors and spark interest in the game area. Donates money to the game area for seed, fertilizer, and equipment.

Waterfowl USA Southwestern Lake Erie Chapter: Donate money to PMSGGA for equipment/repairs and aids with the cost of the regional and flyway meetings that the DNR hosts. Co-sponsors annual youth waterfowl hunt at PMSGGA.

Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association: Purchases equipment, donates to habitat and other special projects, wood duck boxes, and co-sponsors the youth waterfowl hunt at PMSGGA.

Ducks Unlimited: Wetland restoration projects, grants, phragmites control, and advice on pumps and water control structures. Donates seed and nest boxes.

Pheasants Forever: Advice, seed, and help with planting fields designated for grass planting. Also plays major role in the Pheasant Hunting Initiative project.

Michigan United Conservation Clubs: Pheasant Hunting Initiative, invasive species control, volunteer in On-the-Ground projects, provide copies of Michigan Out-of-Doors magazine.

Detroit, Jackson, Macomb, Washtenaw, and Oakland Audubon Societies: Volunteers hours for bird counts and tours.

Detroit International Wildlife Refuge: Apply for grants. Help with management on federal lands. Common Tern banding, duck and goose banding, hunting regulations on federal land, and managed draw for the Brancheau Unit.

Cooperative Weed Management Association (CWMA): Phragmites strike team TNC, DTE, Consumers Energy, Huron Clinton Metro Park Authority, Eastern Michigan – apply for grants, and a group attack on phragmites.

Wayne County Road Commission: Grades drive/parking lot and the section of Mouillee Road that is state-owned. Cuts back vegetation growing along Mouillee Rd and plants trees at headquarters and along Mouillee Rd.

Monroe County Conservation District: Houses and maintains no-till drill for the No-Till Drill program. Conducts for the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program.

Law Enforcement Division: Cooperatively work in enforcing violations, game area and hunting rules, etc.

Fisheries Division: Tags walleye in Huron River and fish research in Lake Erie.

Parks and Recreation Division: Various wetland projects and the osprey platforms at Sterling State Park.

Osprey Watch of Southeast Michigan: Monitors all osprey nests in Southeast Michigan and helps band the osprey chicks.

Economic Benefits GPS Goal 3

There are a number of local businesses that benefit from having the PMSGGA nearby. Because we offer so many recreational activities at the PMSGGA, our users purchase from local retailers regularly. The local marina and the local bait and tackle store depend on our patrons for a good portion of their business. There are three public boat launches with access to Lake Erie and the Detroit and Huron Rivers in the immediate vicinity of the PMSGGA, but only the launch at Pointe Mouillee is free of charge. In addition, the gas stations in nearby Rockwood and South Rockwood also benefit. These gas stations are near I-75 and are the two main exits people use to get to the PMSGGA. Hunters, bird watchers, and fishermen frequent these establishments purchasing gas, coffee, water, energy drinks, and snacks. There are also a few restaurants and bars in Rockwood, South Rockwood, and Brownstown Township that benefit from hunters, fishermen and bird watchers stopping to get something to eat. During the Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival, upwards of 8,000 people descend on the PMSGGA over a two-day period spending their money in the surrounding area.

Opportunities

Phragmites require constant and intensive management.

Continue positive relationships with local wildlife conservation organizations and non-profit organizations, as well as developing new relationships to help achieve goals, and increase donations and volunteerism.

Big pump upgrade to meet demands for water level management.

Work with The US Army Corps of Engineers on projects involving the Banana Dike and South Causeway water control structure.

Increase open field hunting opportunities at PMSGGA.

Work with GDHA to upgrade docks at HQ and Roberts Rd. boat launches for safety and longevity.

Work with PMWF to install an ADA compliant permanent duck blind in two easily accessible zones to increase opportunity for hunters with disabilities.

Install mobile, floating duck blinds in managed zones to encourage usage of zones that are a long walk.

CONCLUSION

The Pointe Mouillee State Game Area (PMSGGA) is one of seven managed waterfowl hunt areas provided by the Wildlife Division of the Michigan DNR. Following the direction of the Guiding Principles and Strategies (GPS), intensive management is done each year to provide a quality experience not only for waterfowl hunters, but all who visit the game area. The preceding report outlines how the PMSGGA has been managed over the previous year and provides data for future management implications that will continue to provide habitat for numerous wildlife species and enjoyment of all who visit.

PMSGGA is home to a variety of wildlife species, each benefitting from the habitat management done by staff and the hunting and observation practices of all patrons. Waterfowl, white-tailed deer, pheasant, squirrels, rabbits, and non-game species all draw a variety of visitors to the game area each year. It is because of these species and enjoyment by visitors that the staff at PMSGGA works so hard to preserve the 5,195 acres and ensure that “everything is connected to everything else.” From the physical work in the field by staff doing habitat management and facilities maintenance, to providing a managed hunting units lottery draw for waterfowl hunters, giving birders the opportunity to observe numerous species, and working with partners for the future of wetland conservation, PMSGGA is a true gem for the State of Michigan.

Appendix A. Daily Harvest by Managed Unit Zone October 2020

ZONE	10-OCT AM	11-OCT AM	13-OCT AM	15-OCT PM	18-OCT AM	20-OCT AM	22-OCT PM	25-OCT AM	27-OCT AM	29-OCT PM
2	7	11	2	4	5	0	2	0	2	1
3	9	7	12	6	15	NA	0	0	5	2
4	7	2	0	9	NA	NA	1	3	3	0
5	16	13	3	4	5	4	0	5	11	12
6	3	3	1	0	2	NA	NA	5	NA	NA
7	19	10	12	5	6	3	10	5	10	9
8	8	10	NA	NA	1	0	NA	0	5	NA
9	0	1	8	1	0	6	7	1	6	0
10	7	3	0	0	0	4	NA	2	NA	NA
11	3	4	19	6	12	0	5	2	5	4
12	3	10	2	12	9	13	9	3	6	2
13	16	6	7	18	2	5	18	9	18	9
14	7	2	11	12	2	5	6	8	12	8
15	1	1	4	0	2	0	0	2	8	0
16	0	0	7	0	3	2	9	5	5	1
17	6	1	0	0	1	0	NA	0	2	0
18	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	4	1	1
19	2	7	7	0	2	1	0	6	1	4
20	4	0	0	NA	0	0	4	0	3	4
21	0	7	1	1	5	3	8	4	6	1
22	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	NA
TOTAL DUCK ALL ZONES	118	98	97	78	75	46	80	65	109	58

Appendix B. Daily Harvest by Managed Unit Zone November 2020

ZONE	01-NOV AM	03-NOV AM	05-NOV PM	08-NOV AM YOUTH	10-NOV AM VETERANS	12-NOV PM	15-NOV AM	17-NOV AM	19-NOV PM	22-NOV AM	24-NOV AM	26-NOV PM	29-NOV AM
2	15	3	2	2	NA	NA	NA	4	0	0	NA	1	1
3	9	0	0	2	3	2	2	0	NA	0	NA	0	2
4	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0	NA	0	NA	NA	0
5	11	0	0	0	1	0	10	2	4	3	0	NA	NA
6	3	NA	12	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	NA	1	NA	NA	1
7	24	5	2	8	1	1	1	6	0	1	0	1	1
8	0	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0
9	4	0	NA	NA	NA	0	2	3	NA	1	NA	NA	4
10	1	NA	NA	NA	0	NA	NA	0	NA	0	NA	NA	0
11	6	2	0	7	0	NA	8	0	NA	1	5	1	2
12	4	0	3	5	0	0	7	6	2	0	2	2	1
13	22	0	2	6	12	1	4	5	2	13	9	8	4
14	11	NA	6	0	4	3	5	1	11	6	10	9	9
15	1	0	NA	0	NA	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	NA
16	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	0
17	5	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0	1	2	0	NA	NA
18	0	0	2	NA	NA	0	0	1	NA	0	0	0	0
19	1	3	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
20	0	0	4	0	NA	2	1	0	1	NA	1	3	0
21	8	4	0	0	3	0	1	4	0	0	NA	0	0
22	0	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	0	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	0
TOTAL DUCK ALL ZONES	130	22	37	32	25	9	43	33	21	32	28	28	25

Appendix C. Daily Harvest by Managed Unit Zone December 2020

ZONE	01-DEC AM	03-DEC PM	06-DEC AM
2	2	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	NA	0	0
5	1	12	0
6	NA	0	0
7	6	0	1
8	NA	0	0
9	11	0	0
10	NA	0	0
11	1	0	0
12	3	4	0
13	0	2	1
14	2	5	2
15	2	0	0
16	1	0	0
17	NA	0	0
18	1	0	0
19	0	1	0
20	0	0	1
21	6	0	0
22	NA	0	0
TOTAL DUCK ALL ZONES	36	24	5

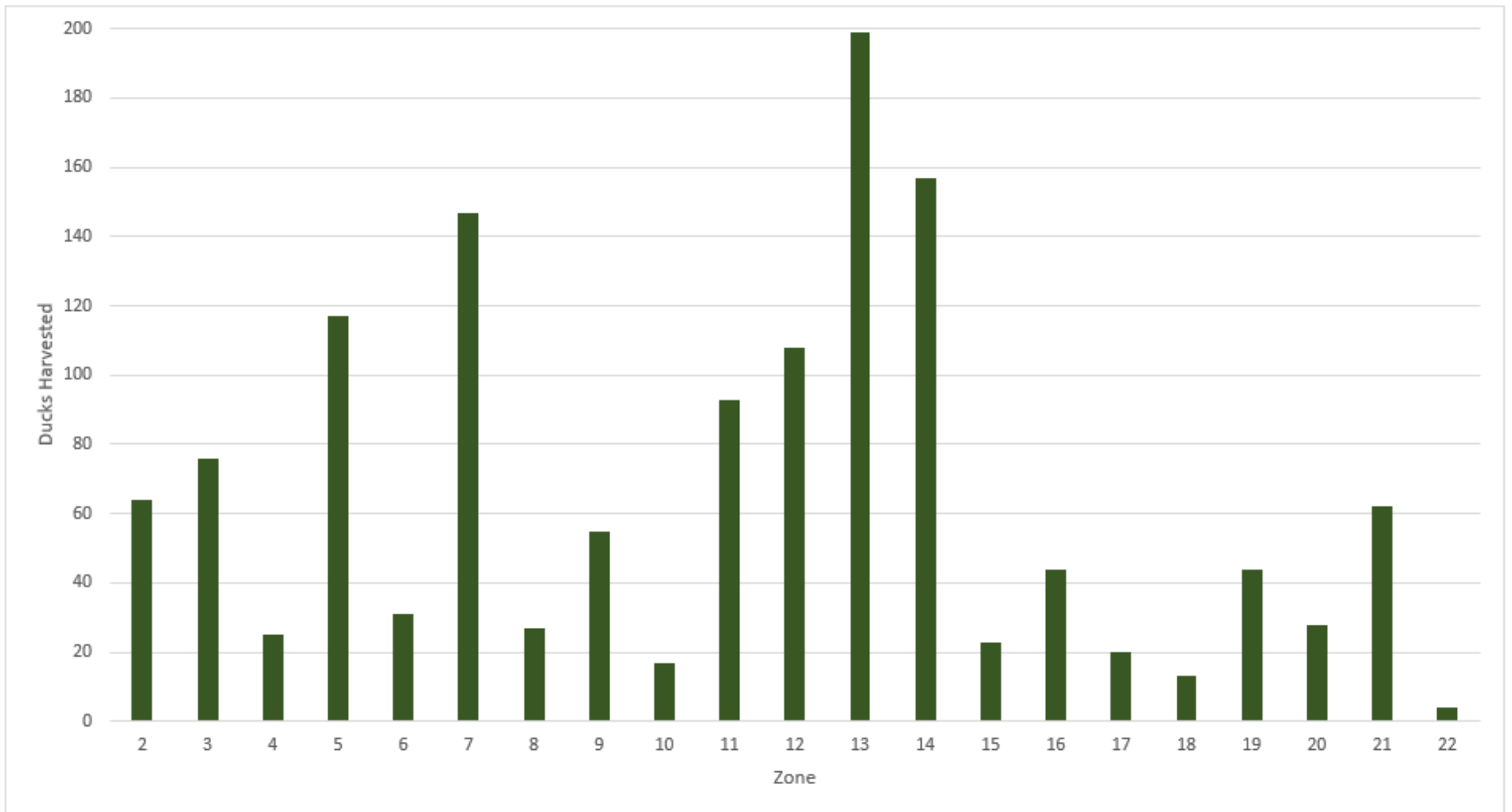
Appendix D. Managed Unit Daily Harvest by Species October 2020

SPECIES	10-OCT AM	11-OCT AM	13-OCT AM	15-OCT PM	18-OCT AM	20-OCT AM	22-OCT PM	25-OCT AM	27-OCT AM	29-OCT PM
RUDDY	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
MALLARD (M)	18	13	20	17	15	10	25	13	30	13
MALLARD (F)	16	14	18	19	18	7	21	17	22	19
WOOD DUCK	34	28	27	20	18	15	10	6	11	7
BWT	10	9	3	5	4	1	0	3	1	1
GWT	11	15	4	0	2	1	7	8	25	2
BLACK DUCK	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	6	3
SHOVELER	5	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	2
GADWALL	5	5	3	0	5	5	4	8	0	6
PINTAIL	8	4	13	10	4	4	2	1	2	1
WIGEON	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
CANVASBACK	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
REDHEAD	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	0
MERGANSE	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
RINGNECK	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	3
BUFFLEHEAD	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
SCAUP	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
COOT	1	5	6	1	1	0	8	5	0	0
TOTAL DUCKS	118	98	97	78	75	46	80	65	109	58
TOTAL GEESE	3	9	3	5	9	4	0	6	0	3

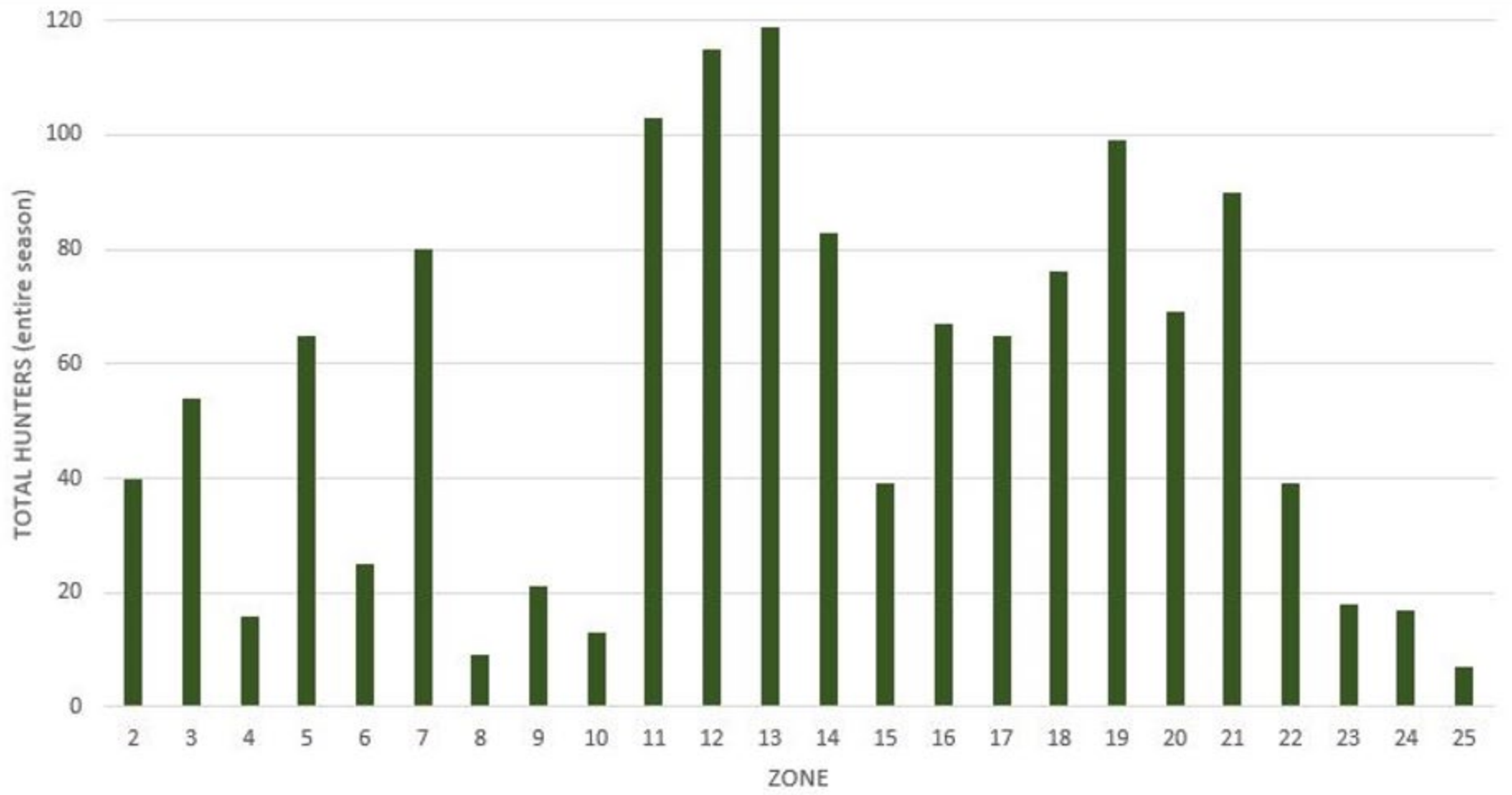
Appendix F. Managed Unit Daily Harvest by Species December 2020

SPECIES	01-DEC AM	03-DEC PM	06-DEC AM
RUDDY	0	0	0
MALLARD (M)	13	9	2
MALLARD (F)	7	7	0
WOOD DUCK	1	0	1
BWT	0	0	0
GWT	0	0	0
BLACK DUCK	4	1	0
SHOVELER	4	6	2
GADWALL	4	1	0
PINTAIL	0	0	0
WIGEON	0	0	0
CANVASBACK	0	0	0
REDHEAD	0	0	0
MERGANSE	0	0	0
RINGNECK	2	0	0
BUFFLEHEAD	1	0	0
SCAUP	0	0	0
COOT	0	0	0
TOTAL DUCKS	36	24	5
TOTAL GEESE	3	0	0

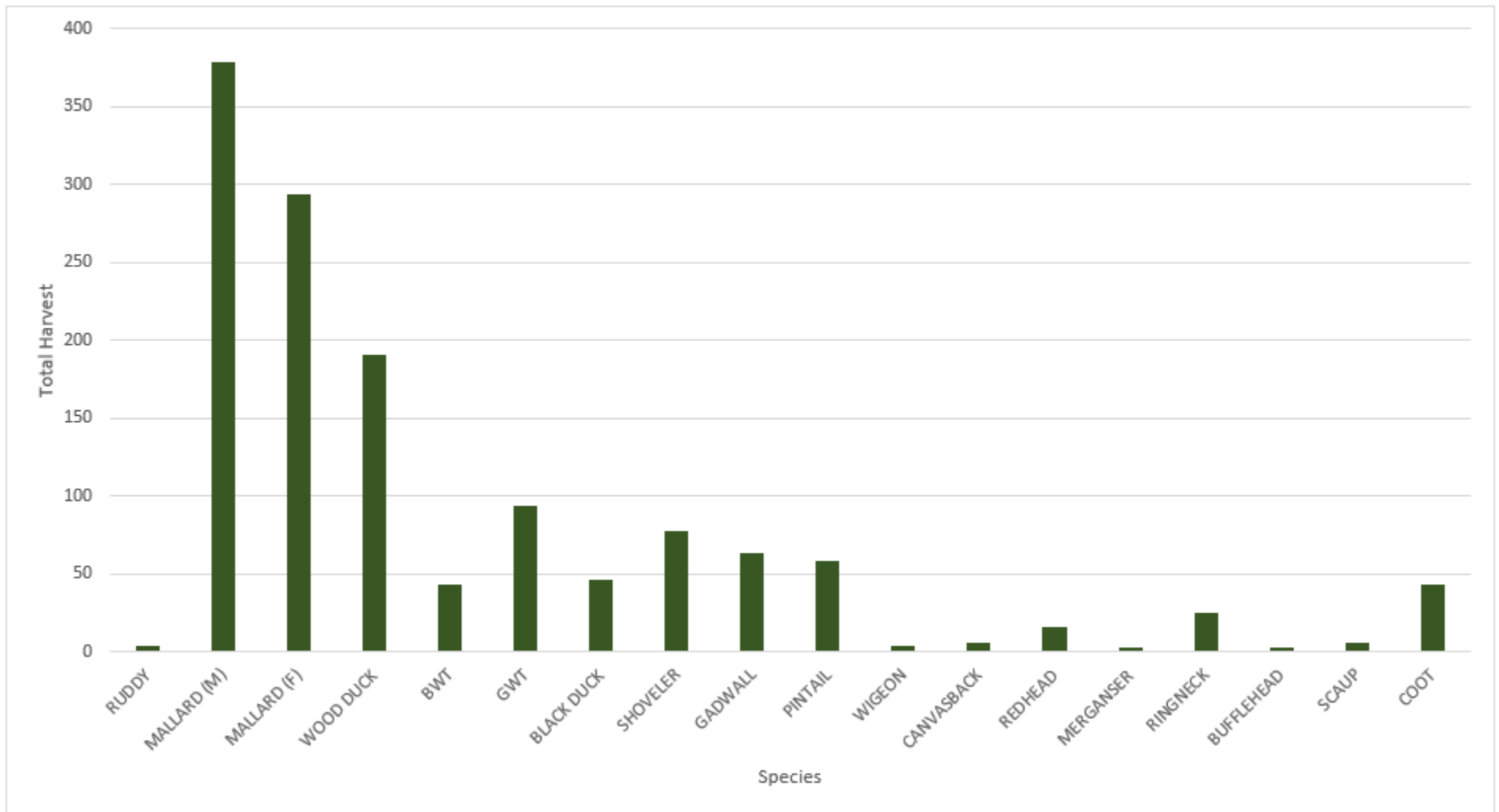
Appendix G. Ducks Harvested by Managed Unit Zone 2020



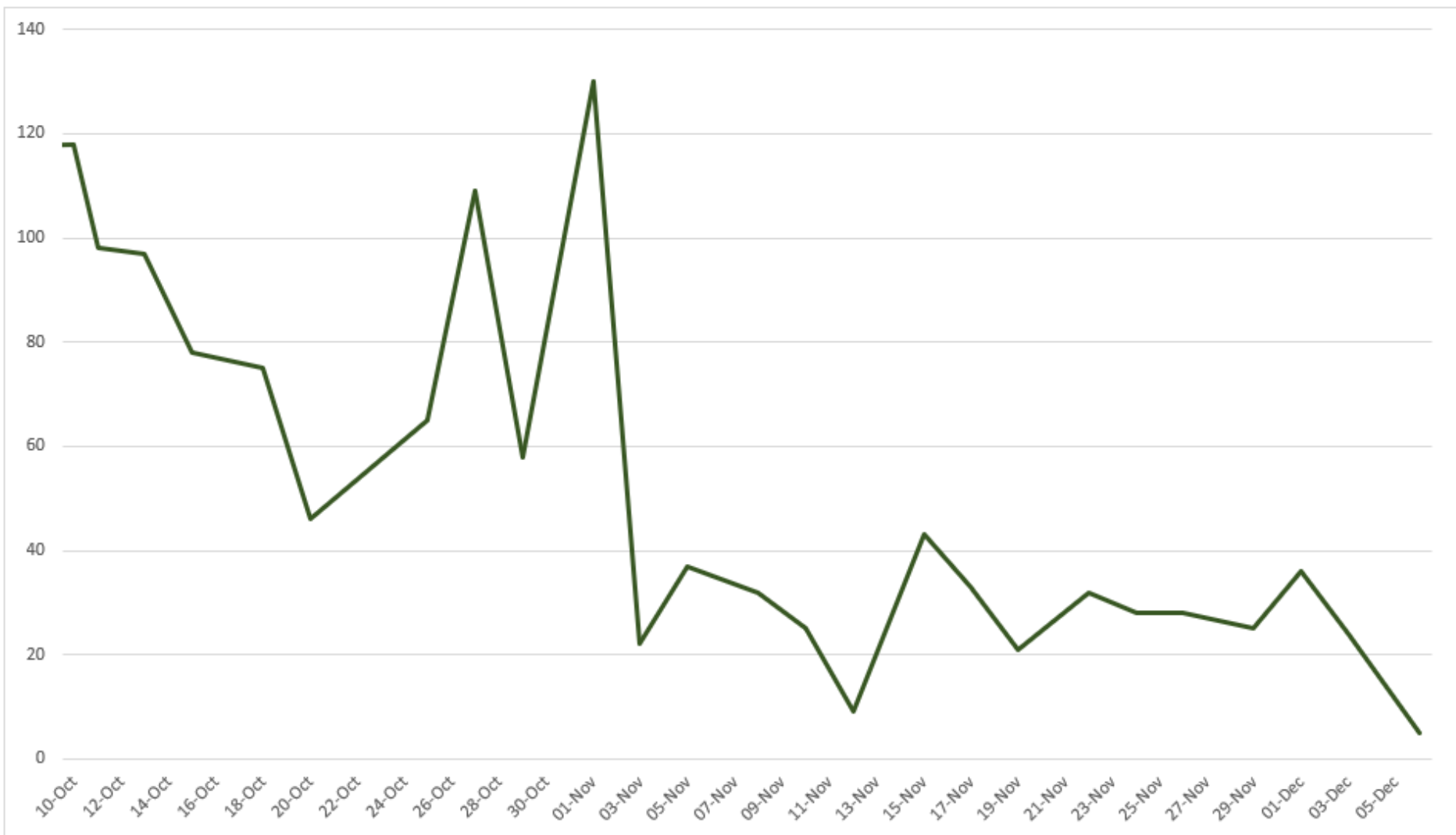
Appendix H. Total Hunters per Managed Unit Zone (entire season) 2020



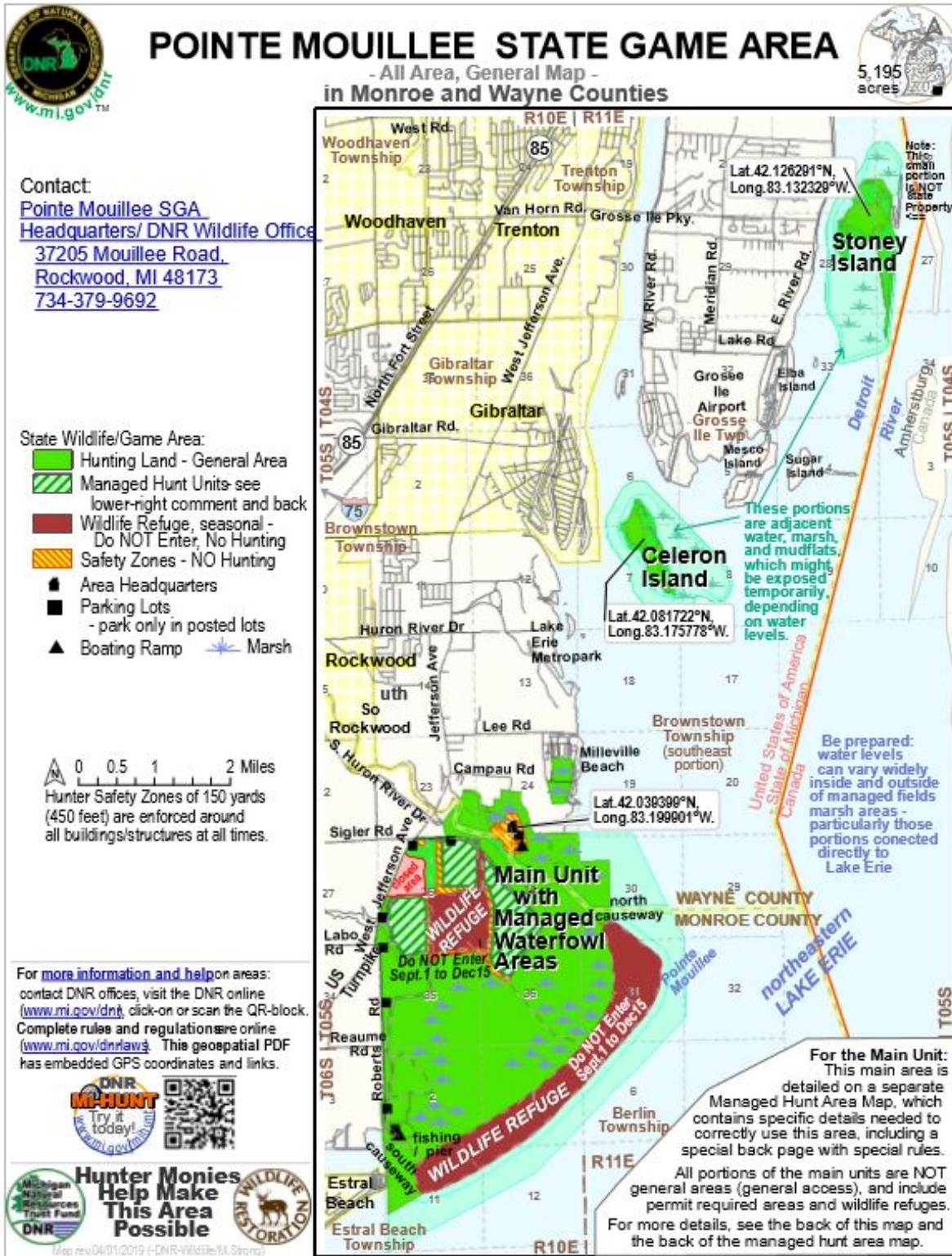
Appendix I. Managed Units Species Harvest 2020



Appendix J. Managed Unit Duck Harvest by Date 2020



Appendix K. PMSGA Map (entire game area)



Appendix L. PMSGA Map (main portion)

