

Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee Meeting
Alice & Jack Wirt Public Library, Bay City, August 1st, 2015

Meeting called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Members: Terry Laymon, Paul Conners, Steve Wyckoff, Bruce Bahr, Matt Lacombe, Mike Dabrowski, Bryan Schutt, Stathi Kristells, Dan Cleary, Jeff Godi, Brandon Yuchasz, Steve Allaire, Max Lehman, Dan Villwock, Eric McGhee, Trent Bellingar.

Absent: Ed Retherford, Marc Curtis, and Mike Zoli.

DNR Waterfowl Workgroup: Barbara Avers, Don Avers, David Luukkonen, Terry McFadden, Nik Kalejs, Joe Robison, Brian Piccolo, Jeremiah Heise, and Mark Mills.

DNR Staff & Guests: DNR Wildlife Chief – Russ Mason, DNR Wildlife Policy & Management Supervisor - Shannon Hanna, DNR Law Enforcement Division – Lt. Dave Shaw, DNR Wildlife Policy & Management 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.*

Don Avers – CWAC Housekeeping:

- Members need to send Don Avers any updates to their contact info.
- Steve Pasko will be replacing Erv DeWeerd as the South Zone, Southwest Representative.
- Erv DeWeerd was acknowledged for his commitment to CWAC as his term is up.
- Bryan Schutt is the new representative for Shiawassee Flats Citizens & Hunters Association.
- Marc Curtis (South Zone, Southwest Representative) term is up, and there is not a replacement yet.

Accept March 2015 meeting minutes:

Motion (Max Lehman), Second (Steve Wyckoff)

Russ Mason (DNR Wildlife Chief) - Introduction:

- CWD in free ranging deer and it will most likely be declared an established problem. We will see how widespread the disease is this fall.
- Highly-Pathogenic Avian Influenza has also been found here this year, the disease was most likely brought into the Mississippi flyway by pintail or swans. Movement of HPAI (Highly-Pathogenic Avian Influenza) inside the flyways is primarily by humans (fomites). HPAI was located in the Detroit metro area at a shopping center. Other states have issues with the movement of wild birds and game birds (pheasant, geese, etc.) and have restricted their transport. HPAI is not likely to affect humans. The HPAI virus doesn't like light or heat, so we

don't expect to see many cases this summer.

- Duck stamp sales will be monitored closely to see how it plays out with the increase.
- Land acquisition strategy is currently focused on waterfowl areas in the southern part of the Lower Peninsula.
- A Blue Ribbon Advisory Group for State Game Areas has been formed. They are asking questions and reviewing state game areas, starting in the southwest region and moving to the southeast next. Examples of questions being asked; *Are game areas being utilized fully?* (most likely yes), *Is it the right acquisition?* (ie. Genesee County no public hunting land). Managed Waterfowl Hunt Areas will be held as good examples. The advisory group will be looking at a possibility of restricting hunting on some game areas that are being over-hunted.
- The division is currently updating our strategic plan (GPS). *More Bang for the Buck* (describes what we will do with license increase funds). The updated plan will also focus on how to reach out to non-consumptive users (ie. birders), as there are many more of these people than hunters, but don't currently contribute funds to conservation/management of these areas. How do we engage people in metro areas such as Flint, and Detroit?
- The current license package has a "sunset" on it of 2018.
- The federal frameworks remain similar except for a bag limit increase for canvasback from 1 to 2 this year. We currently have 10's of thousands of geese above the resident goose goal. Goose Round-Up and relocation was cancelled this year due to HPAI.
- Advises not to eat CWD deer.

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *No one (hunters) he has talked to has brought up HPAI.*

Russ Mason: That's good, there have been some articles written (west coast) in fear of HPAI, but luckily we haven't had that kind of publicity here yet.

Eric McGhee: *CWD found in just two deer still?*

Russ Mason: The 2nd positive deer was the son of the 1st CWD positive deer found. There will very likely be more CWD positives coming. We have an established hotspot in the area. 1% to 2% infection rate right now, so there is a very low likelihood of coming across CWD deer in the field.

Lt. Dave Shaw (DNR Law Enforcement Division) - Update:

- Busy time for law division right now. HPAI is generally misunderstood and hunters don't seem concerned.
- Law division is growing with 44 new recruits at the academy this spring, graduated 37 probationary conservation officers (outstanding number). It is a great group of recruits. All have

been assigned to permanent assignments across the state.

- Currently there are at least two officers in every county and the division is looking to put three in a few counties.
- Hiring 20 new officers that will start the academy in January. Over a third of the law division staff has less than three years of experience, lots of new law officers.
- Looking forward to the early teal season and running spy blinds.
- Waterfowl school will be held in Bay City for 37 officers (5 days). The officers will be taught waterfowl identification and regulations, and how to use good discretion.
- Toxic shot violations throughout the flyway are continuously going down, due to alternative shot selections and price drop. Waterfowl hunting over bait has increased, primarily due to failure of crops in the southern region of the flyway. Mississippi and Missouri had a lot of crop failure again this year; so the focus will be on baiting enforcement.
- Invasive species enforcement has required a lot of hours, and Law Enforcement Division recently got a grant to fund enforce invasive species violations. They are a real threat to habitat.

Dave Luukkonen - Mississippi Flyway Update:

- Regulations process should be getting simpler by setting regulations a year ahead of time (prepare for 2016-17 regulations next year).
- Today we will be determining regulation recommendations for NRC (August 13th).
- The flyway meeting was held July 19-24 in New Orleans, LA.
- Only change to the duck season frameworks was an increase in the Canvasback limit from 1 to 2.

Goose Season Frameworks Update:

- The Ohio late season goose proposal was not supported by the SRC.
- Allowing states with low-harvest of white-fronted geese a 107 day season.
- An aggregate “dark goose” daily limit for Canada, white-fronted, and brant.
- There will be the potential for liberalization in 2016-17 season for Canada Geese (107 day season, with 5 bird limit for northern states).

Youth Waterfowl Seasons:

- Use established state age requirements to define youth age for Youth waterfowl hunt seasons, not including anyone over 17 years of age.

Other Topics from Flyway Meeting:

- Flyway technical section will meet via conference call Sept. 16th and 30th to finalize the 2016-17 regulation changes.
- Recommended funding for spring banding of lesser Scaup at pool 19 during March 2016-2020. We may look at some preliminary work for banding in Michigan.
- Mississippi Flyway Council formally requested publication of AHM report by mid-August for preferred meeting starting dates of August 22, 2016 and August 21, 2017 – Not supported by SRC.

Dave Luukkonen - Teal Season Update:

Outcomes of early teal season harvest evaluation:

Iowa was 3rd in teal harvest for all states, Michigan was 12th and Ohio was 13th. There was a higher component of green-winged teal in Michigan's harvest than most states. Estimates based on hunter reports and parts survey (wingbee). Hunters are still learning how to target teal (habitat), so we should/could see increase in harvest over the next few seasons. There was an estimated 9,000 - 9,500 teal harvested during the 2014 early season. Some states had a longer season, we opted for shorter season.

Dave Luukkonen - Canada Goose Season Regulations:

- Management populations would be reduced to just 3 regions (currently 5 regions).
- Canada geese are probably more abundant now than in the history of the world.
- Temperate nesters are driving the abundance.
- We are currently above our goal for local breeding Canada geese (upper goal 225,000), 2015 estimate is around 300,000 geese.
- It is a good time to promote more liberal frameworks for geese. Provide broad frameworks that also allow us to control local population.
- Historically we have had some restrictive seasons, but we currently have a 92 day season.
- This year has been a mixed bag for production with some nest flooding, but other areas produced a lot of geese, should be a good fall overall.
- Increase in hunter days and harvest in 2012 when days went from 45 to 92 days.

2015 Regular Season CAGO Frameworks:

- Maximum length 92 days.
- Bag limit of 2 birds.

Barbara Avers - 2015-16 Waterfowl Hunting Regulations:

- Experimental Early Teal Season (Sept. 1st -7th). (already set)
- Youth Hunt (Sept. 12th -13th). (already set)
- Early Canada Goose Seasons. (already set)
- Regular Canada Goose first segment dates. (already set)

Duck Status: (see packet sent from Don Avers, or online at www.flyways.us)

- 2013-14 total duck harvest = 296,200.
- 2014-15 total duck harvest = 341,400.
- 2014-15 Mallard and Wood Duck harvest was up from previous year.
- Michigan is still 1st in Bufflehead harvest.

2015 Continental Duck Population Status (prairies, Canada, Alaska) - Ponds:

- Habitat Conditions in survey area had declined from 2014, but still had some good conditions in prairie. North and South Dakota had poor conditions.
- Number of May ponds; 6.3 million in 2015, 12% down from 2014, 21% above LTA (Long Term Average).
- Michigan Wetlands Estimates; 522,500 in 2015, similar to 2014, 11% above LTA.

2015 Continental Duck Population Status (prairies, Canada, Alaska):

- Total ducks (49.5 million in 2015, similar to 2014, 43% above LTA).
- Mallard (11.6 Million, similar to 2014, 51% above LTA)* record high.
- Gadwall (3.8 million, similar to 2014, 100% above LTA).
- Wigeon (3 million, similar to 2014, 17% above LTA).
- Green-winged Teal (4.1 million, 19% above 2014, 98% above LTA).
- Blue-winged Teal (8.5 million, similar to 2014, 73% above LTA).
- Northern Shoveler (4.4 million, 17% below 2014, 75% above LTA).
- Pintails (3.0 million, similar to 2014, 24% below LTA).
- Redhead (1.2 million, similar to 2014, 71 % above LTA).
- Canvasback (800,000, similar to 2014, 30% above LTA).
- Scaup (4.4 million, similar to 2014, 13% below LTA).

Questions/Discussion:

Paul Conners: *Why aren't black ducks included?*

Barb Avers: Black ducks are in the eastern region so they don't get included in this flyway report; they are included in the status report.

Dave Luukkonen: Black duck estimate was 500,000 11% below 2014, 13% below LTA.

Michigan and Great Lakes Mallards:

- Michigan Mallard estimate; 237,750 in 2015, similar to 2014, 33% below LTA (since 1991).
- Minnesota estimate was down, Wisconsin was similar to 2014, Michigan was similar to 2014, overall population down slightly.

Questions/Discussion:

Barb Avers: *We don't harvest many Ohio mallards, so we aren't including them in the Great Lakes Region.*

Jeff Godi : *Why not allow to hunt another drake, instead of 2 hens? Is there a reward option for more drakes with no hens?*

Dave Luukkonen: That option does not exist for the states (federal frameworks).

Paul Conners: *Spring Surveys, are they actually locating and counting birds in Hudson Bay/Ontario?*

Dave: Yes, they do fly those areas in the spring. The estimates are quite variable because the density is low in those areas, not a lot of weight put on those estimates in that region. Banding in northern Ontario is limited due to difficulty to getting to the habitat.

Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM):

- Adopted by US Fish & Wildlife Service in 1995.
- Process of learning and predicting for future management.
- Based on size of mid-continent mallard population and may ponds.
- Used to determine duck hunting framework.

3 Packages Available:

- Liberal – 60 days, 6 duck bag limit.
- Moderate – 45 days, 6 duck bag limit.
- Restrictive – 30 days, 3 duck bag limit.

2015 Duck Federal Frameworks:

- Liberal package - 60 day season.
- Saturday nearest September 24th (earliest), to last Sunday in January (latest).
- Only change for 2015 is 2 canvasback bag limit.
- Seasons may be set by zone and 1 split per zone.

Duck Regulations Considerations:

- Maintain Michigan waterfowl hunting heritage by increasing hunter recruitment/retention.
- Balance regulation simplicity and hunting opportunity.
- Ensure season encompasses duck abundance.

Questions/Discussion:

Dan Villwock: *Is it correct that hunters hunting earlier in the season than when peak abundance occurs?*

Barb Avers: Yes, according to weekly abundance and managed waterfowl hunt area hunter trips.

Brandon Yuchasz: *Is the argument that some hunters present for December divers correct (later migration), is there a species breakout of weekly abundance?*

Dave Luukkonen: Most diving duck species are paralleling dabblers, just slightly later.

Dave Hess: *Are they counting Canada side in diving duck estimates?*

Dave Luukkonen: Yes, they are included in the estimate.

Waterfowl Hunter Opinion Surveys:

- Hunter preference for Duck & Goose Overlap 2014 – 68% agreed
- Hunter preference for continuous season - 47% preferred continuous segment, a lot of unsure.
- Preference for split season - 25% preferred, a lot of unsure (35%)
- Satisfaction of 2014 dates - 64% agreed to 2014 dates

2014 Duck Season – North Zone (survey preferences):

- 68% liked 2014 season dates.
- 35% wanted to begin late segment earlier.
- 43% curtailed hunting late.
- 67% hunt duck and geese together.
- Response rate was slightly over 50%.

2014 Duck Season – Middle Zone (survey preferences):

- 67% liked 2014 season dates.
- 30% begin early segment earlier.
- 39% weather curtailed hunting late.
- 65% hunt duck and geese together.
- 50% continuous season.

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *Had a hunter contact him to pursue continuous season in middle zone.*

Dan Villwock: That part of the state has many spots frozen but there were opportunities on other areas (larger water).

Brandon Yuchasz: Hunters may not realize they are losing 2 weekdays, not adding a weekend with the split.

Lt. Dave Shaw: Some hunters think it's easier to understand one continuous season, the split may confuse them.

2014 Duck Season – South Zone (survey preferences):

- 63% like 2014 season dates.

- 34% begin early segment earlier.
- 44% continuous season.
- 45% weather curtailed hunting late.
- 70% hunt ducks and geese together.

Questions/Discussion:

Paul Conners: *If it was up to his club they would want to run 60 days continuous.*

Steve Wyckoff: *Representing MUCC members across the state, the 2-day hunt is specialized. Duck season dates are strongly favorable.*

Eric McGhee: *He would like to the survey results without the unsure(s).*

Dan Villwock: *The committee has been good lately of agreeing on dates and allowing the group to work on things that may be more important (recruitment of hunters).*

Bud Dankers: *This format that we currently have has been pretty good, keeps the most people happy.*

Max Lehman: *We have to focus on creating more opportunity for more people. Late split are the best days if you're willing to work for it.*

Barbara Avers - Discussion of Waterfowl Season Options:

Opening dates are already set for 2015; North Zone - Sept. 26th, Middle Zone – Oct. 3rd, South Zone – Oct. 10th.

North Zone:

Sept. 26th (Sat.) - Nov. 20th (Fri.) (56 days) and

Nov. 26th (Thurs.) - Nov. 29th (Sun.) (4 days)

Sept. 26th (Sat.) – Nov. 22nd (Sun.) (58 days) and Nov. 28th (Sat.) – Nov. 29th (Sun.) (2 days) (waterfowl workgroup preferred option)

Sept. 26th (Sat.) - Nov. 24th (Tues.) (60 days)

Middle Zone:

Oct. 3rd (Sat.) – Dec. 1st (Tues.) (60 days) or;

Oct. 3rd (Sat.) – Nov. 29th (Sun.) (58 days) and

Dec. 12th (Sat.) – Dec. 13th (Sun.) (2 days)

South Zone:

Oct. 10th (Sat.) – Dec. 8th (Tues.) (60 days)

Oct. 10th (Sat.) – Dec. 6th (Sun.) (58 days) and Dec. 26th (Sat.) – Dec. 27th (Sun.) (2 days) (waterfowl workgroup preferred option)

Goose Season Dates Summary:

North Zone:

Sept. 11th (Fri.) to Dec. 11th (Fri.) (92 days) (dates already set)

Middle Zone:

Sept. 19th (Sat.) to Dec. 19th (Sat.) (92 days) (dates already set)

South Zone:

Sept. 19th (Sat.) – Sept. 27th (Sun.) (9 days) (dates already set), Oct. 10th (Sat.) - Dec. 6th (Sun.) (58 days), and Dec. 26 (Sat.) – 27 (Sun.) (2 days)

Late season options:

Jan. 16th (Sat.) – Feb. 7th (Sun.) (23 days) or;

Jan. 23rd (Sat.) – Feb. 14th (Sun.) (23 days)

GMUs:

Allegan (Mark Mills): Try to open close to the 1st of November (whichever Saturday falls closest), this year it is October 31st.

Oct. 31st (Sat.) - Jan. 30th (Sat.) (92 days)

Muskegon (Nik Kalejs): Wednesday & Sunday hunt days format will change to Tuesday & Saturday hunting. Hunter numbers have been on the downside recently, so there shouldn't be an issue with not having enough available hunting zones.

Oct. 17th (Sat.) - Nov. 14th (Sat.) (29 days), and Dec. 1st (Tues.) – Dec. 22nd (Tues.) (22 days)

Tuscola/Huron:

Sept. 19 (Sat.) – 27 (Sun.) (9 days)(dates already set),

Oct. 10th (Sat.) – Dec. 6th (Sun.) (58 days) and Dec. 26th (Sat.) -Jan. 19th (Tues.) (25 days)

Saginaw County:

Sept. 19th (Sat.) – Sept. 27th (Sun.) (9 days) (dates already set),

Oct. 10th (Sat.) - Dec. 6th (Sun.) (58 days) and Dec. 26th (Sat.) - Jan. 19th (Tues.) (25 days)

Other Geese Summary:**Snow and Ross:**

- Same as regular and late Canada goose season dates in each zone
- 20-bird daily limit

Brant:

- Same as regular and late Canada goose season dates in each zone
- 1-bird daily limit

White-fronted:

- Same format as 2014
- 1-bird daily limit

CWAC Duck Season Recommendations:

North Zone Duck Season Dates:

Sept. 26th (Sat.) - Nov. 22nd (Fri.) (58 days) and Nov. 28th (Thurs.) - Nov. 29th (Sun.) (2 days)

Motion (Max Lehman), Second (Trent Bellinger)

Vote:

17 in favor, 0 opposed (passed)

Questions/Discussion:

Brandon Yuchasz: *Only thing he has heard from hunters is to have a 4 day thanksgiving hunt. People like the traditional thanksgiving hunt.*

Stathi Kristells: *We would lose a weekend, and the last couple years have been froze out.*

Steve Allaire: *Weather trends are pointing to very few duck hunting opportunities in late November. What about the 50% of the people who wanted a continuous season?*

Dan Villwock: *I see the 70% that were happy with last season dates.*

Middle Zone Duck Season Dates:

Oct. 3rd (Sat.) – Nov. 29th (Sun.) (58 days) and Dec. 12th (Sat.) – Dec. 13th (Sun.) (2 days)

Motion (Dan Cleary), Second (Dan Villwock)

Vote:

17 in favor, 0 opposed (passed)

Questions/Discussion:

Dan Villwock: *If we keep the dates we have recommended we could hunt ducks in Michigan every weekend for 90 days.*

Brian Piccolo: *The continuous season should at least be discussed.*

Dan Cleary: *A lot of hunters like the 2 day because they can target new ducks, and if they work for it can be really good (rivers, big water). Weak argument that everything is froze up.*

Paul Conners: *Freeze up occurs earlier in the middle of the northern lower, but the shoreline does freeze up later.*

South Zone Duck Season Dates:

Oct. 10th (Sat.) – Dec. 6th (Sun.) (58 days) and Dec. 26th – Dec. 27th (2 days)

Motion (Dan Villwock), Second (Jeff Godi)

Vote:

17 in favor, 0 opposed (passed)

Questions/Discussion:

Steve Wyckoff: *There was a MUCC resolution passed to consider more duck hunting days in the South zone in December.*

South Zone Regular Canada Goose Season Dates:

Sept. 19th – Sept. 27th (already set); Oct. 10th – Dec. 6th and Dec. 26th – Dec. 27th

Motion (Dan Villwock), Second (Eric McGhee)

Vote:

17 in favor, 0 opposed (passed)

South Zone Late Canada Goose Season Dates:

Jan. 9th – Jan. 31st

Motion (Max Lehman), Second (Steve Allaire)

Vote:

8 in favor, 8 opposed (failed)

Questions/Discussion:

Max Lehman: *Earlier would be better in the south, earlier in January than the 16th.*

Jeff Godi: *Also heard from hunters on a push for running it earlier. Weather is usually better earlier in January.*

Joe Robison: *A lot of work put into getting later date from USFWS.*

Paul Conners: *Migrating birds are coming back up when you get the early warm up?*

Brandon Yuchasz: *May be opportunity to get better weather by pushing the date later into January.*

Jan. 16th – Feb. 7th

Motion (Dan Villwock), Second (Max Lehman)

Vote:

1 in favor, 9 opposed (failed)

Questions/Discussion:

Matt Lacombe: *Most hunters wanted it later in February.*

Bud Dankers: *His experience is that you will see more geese February 14th than January 14th. On average you will get more opportunity.*

Jan. 23rd – Feb. 14th

Motion (Steve Wyckoff), Second (Eric Mcghee)

Vote:

13 in favor (passed)

Allegan GMU Canada Goose Season Dates:

Oct. 31st - Jan. 30th

Motion (Steve Wyckoff), Second (Erv DeWeerd)

Vote:

15 in favor, 0 opposed (passed)

Muskegon GMU Canada Goose Season Dates:

Oct. 17th - Nov. 14th and Dec. 1st – 22nd

Motion (Max Lehman), Second (Steve Wyckoff)

Vote:

15 in favor, 0 opposed (passed)

Huron/Tuscola GMU Canada Goose Season Dates:

Sept. 19th – Sept. 27th; Oct. 10th – Dec. 6th; and Dec. 26th – Jan. 19th

Motion (Mike Dabrowski), Second (Max Lehman)

Vote:

16 in favor, 0 opposed (passed)

Saginaw County GMU Canada Goose Season Dates:

Sept. 19th - 27th ; Oct. 10th – Dec. 6th; and Dec. 26th – Jan. 19th

Motion (Max Lehman), Second (Steve Wyckoff)

Vote:

16 in favor, 0 opposed (passed)

2015 Duck Season Bag Limits:

Questions/Discussion:

Mike Dabrowski: *With two hen mallard limit, was there less tickets issued?*

Lt. Dave Shaw: *They did issue less tickets on mallards this past season; several officers sent comments in that they saw less violations and dead hens floating.*

Paul Conners: *75% of the mallards we harvest are great lakes mallards. Harsens Island had another vote and still vote for one hen.*

Jeff Godi: *Two hen limit just doesn't make sense when we are also telling hunters that the Great Lakes mallard population is down, it's a difficult decision to make.*

Eric McGhee: *One hen is fine, but many hunters argue that the other hen will just get shot down in Ohio.*

Steve Wyckoff: *If we are supporting the scientific fish and wildlife act then we should vote for 2 hen mallards, due to its sound science backing it up.*

Jeff Godi: *What is the benefit of adding the hen? Increased opportunity?*

Russ Mason: *Michigan mallard Numbers are down relative to 20 years ago, but not down from the last 10 years.*

Stathi Kristells: *Snow geese are a good example of how hunting isn't limiting population.*

Barbara Avers: *We made a decision to stick with the 2-hen mallard limit for at last 3 years to monitor the results/trend and then re-evaluate it.*

Lt. Dave Shaw: *One hen mallard doesn't limit the take, two hen mallard is actually more social responsible, because it allows for "oops" duck.*

Dave Luukkonen: *Additional banding in Ontario would allow for a better estimate of harvest of GL mallards.*

Accept 2015 Federal Frameworks for Duck Bag Limits:

Motion (Dan Villwock), Second (Stathi Kristells)

Vote:

15 in favor, 2 opposed (passed)

Break for Lunch (12:00-12:30)

Dave Luukkonen - Duck Zones/Splits Review:

- The 2012 meeting we went through an extensive discussion about splits/zones.
- Final selections, due May 1, 2016 for 2017-18 seasons.
 - Alternatives:
 - 1 zone, season can be split in 3 segments.
 - Up to 3 zones, seasons split in 2 segments.
 - 4 zones, no split seasons.

2011 Duck Zone and Split Survey:

- Survey sent to random sample of 2011 waterfowl license buyers (60% response rate).
- Majority supported existing configuration, 1 zone with splits was not supported at all.
- Southwest supported 3 zones and the split.
- A lot of support for maintaining existing zone boundaries.
- 60% support in Saginaw Bay hunters.
- 57% support in the Southwest.
- 59% support from all respondents.
- 47% opposed splitting Saginaw Bay into Middle & South zones, 26% supported it.
- 30% supported placing Saginaw Bay in the Middle zone (Saginaw Bay hunters only).
- Saginaw Bay had the highest concern for crowding (29% of hunters hunted Saginaw bay).

2014 Duck Hunter Survey:

- Split season into early and late segments (21%).
- Different zone opening dates led to crowding (22%).

Discussion:

Barbara Avers: *Waterfowl Workgroup hasn't discussed any changes to the zones/splits. The vote will happen at the January meeting for CWAC.*

Stathi Kristells: *Leaving the splits allows for future considerations if the season gets restrictive.*

Jeff Godi: *The southwest was pushing for a later opening, and Saginaw Bay was pushing for earlier, so combining zones made it more difficult to make everyone happy for the opener. Nobody wants Saginaw Bay split down the middle.*

Bruce Bahr: *Most of his group would support putting it in the middle.*

Paul Conners: *Does Fish Point wants to be in middle zone?*

Jeremiah Heise and Brian Piccolo: No.

Paul Conners: *Decide what everyone is going to do, so that they can share their decision at the January meeting. Discuss with their constituents.*

Barbara Avers: *Changes are made every 5 years. We need to know prior to the January meeting what proposals are? **December 1st, 2015 deadline to send any proposals to Don Avers.***

Jeff Godi: *Saginaw Bay has two different scenarios (ie. Nayanquing and Fish Point). Nayanquing and Fish Point hunters may want 2 different things.*

Lt. Dave Shaw: *The boundaries need to be enforceable.*

Barbara Avers - Waterfowl Harvest Survey and MWA Survey (Preliminary Results):

2014-15 Waterfowl Harvest Survey:

- “Overall duck hunting experience” satisfaction was high 55%.
- “Overall goose hunting experience” satisfaction was similar to duck hunting experience (high).
- Top reasons hunters didn’t hunt MWHAs.
 - Satisfied with hunt area (67%)
 - Don’t like the drawing process (49%)
 - Want guaranteed hunt (47%)
 - Hunter behavior at MWHAs (46%)
 - Too many hunters at MWHAs (44%)
 - MWHAs too far away (39%)
 - Lacking info about MWHAs (29%)
 - Too many rules at MWHAs (23%)
 - Too few waterfowl at MWHAs (16%)
 - Don’t prefer to hunt flooded crops (12%)

2014 Managed Waterfowl Hunt Area Survey:

- Number of waterfowl seen (96%)
- Habitat Conditions suitable for attracting & holding waterfowl (95%)
- Good hunter behavior (95%)
- Assigning hunt using random drawing process (90%)
- Limited number of hunters on area (85%)

Satisfaction on Preferred Hunt Area:

- Amount of Information Available (89%)
- Service provided from DNR staff (87%)
- Ease of finding hunting zone (79%)
- Effectiveness of refuge conditions (75%)
- Effectiveness of crop conditions (71%)
- Effectiveness of water levels (71%)

Changes to conditions (increase):

- Amount of crops (46%)
 - Amount of marsh 34%
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- Overall most people don't want much change or are satisfied with the area.
 - Very high likelihood of hunting an area in the future (95%).

Joe Robison - Managed Waterfowl Hunt Areas Update:

- Southeast Michigan now has the same form for all managed waterfowl areas.
- MDNR Wildlife Division has a new supervisor for the bay region Nate Levitt, worked for Jerry Martz and has worked in Indiana for the past 20 years. He starts August 10th.
- Provided information on conditions at managed areas.

Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *Are any other areas looking at using refuge days for hunting like Pointe Mouillee.*

Joe Robison: We are asking people thru surveys what they prefer, and we will meet with areas to look at any changes if necessary.

Paul Conners: *Every area is unique so to have consistent regulations across managed areas doesn't always make sense.*

Barbara Avers - New Regulations Schedule:

- Beginning with 2016-17 hunting season.
- Uses previous year's biological and habitat info.
- Goal is to be more simplified in the regulations process.

CWAC meeting options are (Jan. 9, 16, 23, or 30) - January 9th, 2016 would be the preferred meeting date.

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *Could we push the deadline back a week or so, to allow more time to gather opinions/discussion on splits/zones.*

Barbara Avers: We really need the time to be able to review the proposals and discuss with the waterfowl workgroup and then put them into the presentation for CWAC.

Paul Conners: *Where did regulations schedule reform/change come from?*

Barbara Avers: The feds wanted to combine everything into one process, streamlined.

Paul Conners: *A lot has to be decided in the next meeting. The next meeting will discuss splits/zones, and set 3 year opening dates for seasons.*

Barbara Avers: We have handouts for information today, so that you have the information well before the January meeting, so that you are prepared.

Next CWAC Meeting Date January 16th, 2016:

Motion (Max Lehman), Second (Steve Wyckoff)

5 in favor, 12 opposed/abstention (failed)

Next CWAC Meeting Date January 9th, 2016 in the Roscommon area (location TBD):

Motion (Terry Laymon), Second (Dan Cleary)

14 in favor, 3 opposed/abstention (passed)

Barbara Avers - Strategic Plan (GPS) Update:

- It's what we use to guide our work.
- 2011 we started reporting our division's accomplishment.
- We use it to link priorities (ie. more bang for your buck).
- Trying to make the plan more useful for work planning and communicating with stakeholders.
- Updates to make it more explicit on how the strategic plan connects with our priorities.
- Using information from internal evaluation to update the GPS.
- Draft plan updated in the middle of August and then make it available for stakeholders (public review).
- Updated final version available in December 2015.

Final Questions/Discussion:

Jeff Godi: *Could there be an email group for discussion on boundary (zones/splits)?*

Don Avers: Yes, we could set one up.

Meeting Adjourned:

Motion (Dan Villwock), Second (Eric McGhee)

Meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.