

Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee Meeting

1/6/2018

The Hal and Jean Glassen Shooting Education Center, East Lansing, 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: 9:04am

CWAC members (20):

Present: Steve Pascoe, Max Lehman, Jeff Godi, Mike Shutt (for David Roberts), Phil Retherford (for Ed Retherford), Terry Laymon, Paul Conners, Dan Villwock, Dan King, Mike Zoli, Mike Dabrowski, Stathi Kristells, Dan Cleary, Matt Lacombe, Jeff Godi

Participating via GoTo Meeting: Eric McGhee, Trent Bellinger, Dan Plescher, Ron Sefcik

Absent (no Proxy): Steve Allaire

DNR Waterfowl Workgroup members (10):

Present: Barbara Avers, Don Avers, Dave Luukkonen, Terry McFadden, Jeremiah Heise, Nik Kalejs, Bruce Barlow, Mark Mills, Joe Robison

Absent: Brad Johnson

DNR Staff: Ben Luukkonen, Don Poppe, Coree Brooks, Lt. Dave Shaw, Russ Mason

CWAC Housekeeping (Don Avers): 19 CWAC members present, 15 needed to pass motions.

Approval of Jan. 7th, 2017 CWAC meeting minutes: Motion to accept minutes (Lehman), 2nd (King). **Vote:** 19 for, motion passed.

DNR Wildlife Div. Update (Russ Mason):

- Increase in the number of CWD positive and suspect deer
 - Has the potential to affect all wildlife management in MI as deer license sales make up 60% of license revenue
- Ongoing studies suggest that CWD may be transmissible to primates, which potentially could implicate CWD can be transmitted to humans through consumption of CWD infected meat
- UP specific plans for CWD should CWD be discovered in the UP
- Data suggest CWD is established in Montcalm county
- Changing regulations may not be the most effective means to manage CWD as hunters tend to harvest 2 deer regardless of bag limit
- USDA designation in NE 12 counties may negatively affect cattle business
- Overall there is a large amount of department money being devoted to managing disease
 - Loss of resources affects not only deer and deer hunters, but will affect waterfowl management and duck hunters as well
- New commissioner on the NRC, involved with Trout Unlimited and timber business
- Chris Tracy is a relatively new commissioner who is interested and involved with waterfowl

- Vicky Pontz is the new commission chair
- Good idea to get to know the commissioners, don't have to attend NRC meetings to affect policy
- Funding has been provided to repair the siphon tube at Shiawassee River SGA
- Wildlife Division continues to pursue permits to complete St. Johns Marsh restoration
- MUCC has adopted a position in favor of a Sandhill crane hunting season
 - Sandhill crane numbers are increasing as are depredation permits issued for Sandhill crane agricultural damage
- Securing wildlife health funding to manage disease issues is the highest priority and will benefit all DNR activities
- Proposal to change the name of Bay City State Recreation Area to Bay City State Park
 - Rec. areas are co-managed between PRD and WLD
 - State parks are under the sole jurisdiction of PRD
 - North half of Tobico marsh is now open to waterfowl hunting
 - Few waterfowl hunters showed up to meetings to fight for waterfowl hunting
- Likely that out of state 3 and 7 day licenses are going to stay
- West Nile Virus has been discovered in ruffed grouse, approximately 65% lethal
 - Not clear why the disease is present
 - WNV killed by cooking meat

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

- Checks of deer hunters transporting deer along the WI-MI border in the UP suggests that it is much more likely that hunters would transmit CWD from WI than from the LP of MI
 - Increased inspections of deer processors and increased border checks
- 22 new CO recruits recently graduated
- High numbers of enforcement activities on waterfowl hunters in SE right up to the end of the season
- Adding 6 new detectives to the special investigations unit
 - Will increase the ability to work covert cases
- Recent ruling that Migratory Bird Treaty Act does not cover incidental take of waterfowl from commercial or industrial activity
- New non-toxic shot was approved last year, none of Law Enforcement Division's (LED) traditional methods of detecting shot material will work, so LED will need new methods for testing these shot shells
- Secretary of the Interior has encouraged National Wildlife Refuges to increase accessibility for hunting on areas where hunting is allowed

Mississippi Flyway update:

General updates (D. Luukkonen and B. Avers):

- Mississippi Flyway consists of 14 states and 3 Canadian provinces
- Migratory bird regulations setting process has changed in the past year
- New process uses population status from the previous year to set regulations
- 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 Traverse City in August 2017
 - Approval of Canada goose management plan
 - Experimental Sandhill crane season was approved for Alabama

- Approval of operation early teal season for MI
- Only likely bag-limit change will be for Pintails
- Still much uncertainty about future changes to duck season packages under Double Looping process
 - Goal of process to see if frameworks for ducks in Miss. and Central flyways can be improved
 - Currently no timeframe for changes to season frameworks
- Final report for experimental teal season available online
 - Less than 5% of total take is estimated to be non-target species

Goose population status and 2018-19 season frameworks (D. Luukkonen):

- No longer managing at the sub-population scale of MVP, SJBP, etc.
 - Now the populations managed are Temperate Breeding, Subarctic, and Midcontinent cackling geese
- Monitoring efficiency has increased
- Temperate breeding goose population has increased to high numbers
- Use spring waterfowl survey as the monitoring tool for geese in MI
 - Last 3 years have been well in excess of the upper goal range
 - Potential to have a 5-bird daily bag limit for the entire 107 days
- CWAC: some confusion on the aggregate bag limit wording in rules
 - Could use “in combination of” rather than aggregate
 - Show combinations of potential bag limits visually in the guide, similar to the CWD regulations and antler point restrictions
- Canada goose frameworks are 107 days between Sept. 1 and February 15
- Expansion of frameworks could include goose hunting in August
 - These could be focused in areas where there are goose conflicts
- S. Kristells: few geese after November 1 in the UP

Duck population status and 2018-19 season frameworks (B. Avers):

- CWAC recommendations will be submitted to the NRC on January 15th
- Habitat conditions in the great lakes and eastern US were better in 2016 than 2017, although conditions were not better in the prairie regions
 - Habitat conditions are more variable in the prairie regions compared to eastern regions
- Wetland abundance was up double digits in MI from 2016 as measured by the MI breeding waterfowl survey
- Number of ponds in prairie Canada was good
- Total ducks were 34% above the long term average, and most species are above their long term average
- Pintails were 27% below the long term average
 - Pintail harvest strategy is very complex
 - Population model takes into account productivity based on latitude and may recommend higher bag limits when the overall population is declining
 - Pintail population dynamics for pintails harvested in MI are not as connected to the continental population as many pintails harvested in MI are produced in areas where pintails nest in low density
- Scaup were 13% below the long term average
- MI Mallard population estimate was 14% below the LTA as measured by MI’s breeding waterfowl survey

Adaptive Harvest Management and 2018-19 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 inception 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 increased from 1 to 2 birds
- Early Teal
 - Sept. 1-30, 16 days, 6 teal
- Duck Season Goals
 - Maintain waterfowl hunter heritage
 - Balance regulations simplicity
 - Maximize opportunity
- MI total duck harvest increased from 2016-2017
 - Mallards are approximately 40% of harvest
 - Waterfowl license sales decreased slightly from 2016 to 2017
 - Distribution of sea ducks, and long-tailed ducks specifically has changed, partially due to the increase of zebra and quagga mussels on the great lakes
- Duck counts at SE MWA's indicate that duck abundance is greatest in late October and early November
- Diving duck abundance greatest in the second week of November on Lake St. Clair, Detroit River, and Western Lake Erie
- 2021 season will be the next time the zones are reevaluated and changes would be implemented
 - 5-year cycle
 - Should discuss potential zone changes in 2020 at the latest
- From 2014 to 2016, there was a decrease in the satisfaction with ducks seen, ducks harvested, and duck hunting experience
 - Satisfaction with number of geese seen decreased, although other metrics had increased satisfaction or remained nearly the same
- Surveys on timing of teal season did not show definitive results for any option, although support was greatest for the teal season running Sept. 1-16th and the youth season being either 8-9 or 15-16, both of which overlap
 - CWAC: higher duck number later in September

Discussion and Recommendations for 2018-19 Waterfowl Seasons

- 3 year stable opening dates: North Zone, Sept. 29, Middle Zone, Oct. 6, South Zone, Oct. 13. Last year for this 3 year period.
- Early teal:
 - Sept. 1-10, consistency
 - Sept. 1-16 (Sat.-Sun.), max days, migration timing, time between teal and duck opener, low participation later in season
- Youth hunt:
 - Sept. 8-9, 2nd week, consistency, avoid youth deer, overlap with teal
- Duck North Zone:
 - Sept. 29-Nov.25 & Dec. 1-2
 - Sept. 29-Nov. 27 & Dec. 1
- Duck Middle Zone:
 - Oct. 6-Dec. 2 & Dec. 15-16

- Duck South Zone:
 - Oct. 13-Dec. 9 & Dec. 29-30
- Canada goose North Zone:
 - Sept. 1-30 (30 days) (5 daily limit); Oct. 1-Dec. 16 (77 days) (3 daily limit)
- Canada goose Middle Zone:
 - Sept. 1 – 30 (30 days) (5 daily limit); Oct 6-Dec. 21 (77 days) (3 daily limit)
- Canada goose South Zone:
 - Sept. 1-30 (30 days) (5 daily limit); Oct. 13-Dec.9 (58 days) (3 daily limit); Dec. 29-30 (2 days) (3 daily limit); Jan. 26-Feb. 11 (17 days) (3 daily limit)
- Allegan:
 - Sept. 1-16, Nov. 3-13, Nov. 22-Dec.9, Dec. 15-Feb.14
- Muskegon:
 - Oct. 16-Nov.13 (29 days)
- Other geese:

Teal Season 2018

Discussion centered around maximizing days and potential issues with overlapping with the youth hunt. Questions asked about non-target species being taken during this hunt.

Motion: for teal season Sept. 1-16 (Villwock), 2nd (Lehman) **Vote:** 19 for, passes

Youth Waterfowl Season 2018

Discussion centered around the Liberty deer hunt (also includes youth deer hunt) and the youth waterfowl hunt on the same weekend. Questions around whether hunters will focus on deer if both on same weekend. Desire for a later hunt when duck numbers are increasing.

Motion: for youth hunt weekend Sept. 15-16 (Shutt), 2nd (Villwock) **Vote:** 5 for, 13 no, 1 abstain, motion fails

Motion: for youth hunt weekend Sept. 8-9 (Kristells), 2nd (King) **Vote:** 16 for, 2 no, 1 abstain, motion passes

Duck Season 2018 dates and splits by Zone – 60 days:

Opening date is already set:

North Zone:

Motion: for Sept. 29-Nov. 25 and Dec. 1-2 (Kristells), 2nd (Lehman) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Middle Zone:

Motion: for Oct. 6-Dec. 2 and Dec. 15-16 (Cleary), 2nd (King) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

South Zone:

Motion: for Oct. 13-Dec. 9 and Dec. 29-30 (Lehman), 2nd (Laymon) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Canada Goose 2018-19 season dates – 107 days:

North Zone:

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

Middle Zone:

Motion: for Sept. 1-30 and Oct. 6-Dec. 21 (Cleary), 2nd (King) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

South Zone:

Motion: for Sept. 1-30, Oct. 13-Dec. 9, Dec. 29-30, and Jan. 26-Feb. 11 (Pascoe), 2nd (Laymon)
Vote: 18 for, 1 against, motion passes

Goose Management Units (GMU's)

Alleghan GMU:

Mark Mills provided discussion about dates that differ from Waterfowl Workgroup recommendations.

Motion: for Sept. 1-16, Nov. 3-13, Nov. 22-Dec. 9, and Dec. 15-Feb. 14 (Sefcik), 2nd (Villwock)
Vote: 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Muskegon GMU:

Motion: for Oct. 16-Nov. 13 and Dec. 1-22 (Villwock), 2nd (Lehman) **Vote:** 19 for, 0 against, motion passes

Goose Bag Limits:

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

Waterfowl Season Update

- Please provide season updates for your area of representation to Don by the end of January. Don will compile and distribute.
- Discussion if this should be the future direction for season updates or should time be dedicated in the agenda each meeting.
- Decided that in the future season updates will be sent to Don Avers prior to the CWAC meeting and he will compile and provide copies to the group before the meeting. Don will send reminder to group prior to meeting.

Next CWAC Meeting:

- Saturday, January 5th, 2019
- Jay's in Clare, or another location in the area if needed.

NRC Meetings

- February 8th, Lansing Community College (for information)
 - 5708 Cornerstone Drive Lansing, MI 48917
 - Paul Connors or Mike Zoli will attend to present CWAC recommendations
- March 15th, West Walker Sportsman's Club (for action)
 - 0-599 Leonard Street NW Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Action Items:

- DNR-LED (Lt. Shaw via Don) – Provide report of tickets and violations related to waterfowl hunting and numbers from previous years for trend comparison.

- DNR-WLD (Don) – Email out presentations after the meeting.
- CWAC – start thinking about three year opening dates which will be decided at the 2019 meeting. Make any requests for data and analysis for setting these dates early.
- DNR-WLD (Barbara & Dave) – Notify CWAC if/when liberal package change is known
- DNR-WLD (Don & Barbara)
 - Provide estimate of the number of duck hunters using MWA's
 - Waterfowl Hunter Survey was conducted in 2014 of hunters using MWA's
 - Provide number of hunters/license purchases each year
 - Provide hunter recruitment and retention activities
 - Send out license sales graph
- DNR-LED (Lt. Shaw) – Option to talk about invasive species related to waterfowl at next meeting
- DNR-WLD (Waterfowl workgroup) – Provide information on wetland projects
- DNR-WLD (Waterfowl workgroup) – Provide dates for MWA open houses