

Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee Meeting

2/01/2020

Jays 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: Paul Conners, Stathi Kritselis, Jeff Godi, Brad Quist (for Jacob Cook), Steve Allaire, Mike Schutt, Ed Retherford, Trent Bellingar, Matt French (for Eric McGhee), Steve Wycoff (for Dale Borske), Dan Villwock, Dan King, Mike Dabrowski, Dan Cleary, Matt Lacombe, Jason Swincicki

Absent (no Proxy): Ryan Kuntze, Mike Zoli, Bob Johnson

DNR Waterfowl Workgroup members (9): Barbara Avers, Brad Johnson, Tim Riley (for Bruce Barlow), Nik Kalejs, Don Poppe, Nate Levitte (for Jeremiah Heise), Terry McFadden, Don Avers, Zach Cooley, Randy Knapik

DNR Staff: Sara Thompson, Jacob Trowbridge, Lt. Dave Shaw, Mike Richardson, Jake Crawford, Cpl. Nick Torsky, Commissioner John Walters

CWAC Housekeeping:

Recognition that this is Chairman Paul Conners last meeting.

16 CWAC members present, 12 needed to pass motions.

Approval of August 10th, 2019 CWAC meeting minutes: **Motion** to accept minutes (Villwock), 2nd (Kritselis). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against. Motion passes.

Selection of a new Chair:

Motion for Stathi Kritselis (Vice-Chair) to be the new Chairman (Villwock), 2nd (King). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against. Motion passes.

Selection of a new Vice-Chair:

Motion to make Steve Allaire the new Vice-Chair (Villwock), 2nd (Cleary). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against. Motion passes.

DNR Wildlife Div. Update: (Sara Thompson)

- Wildlife Div. Chief position vacant, using actors, but will be filled soon
- Deer regulations
 - The division is working on simplifying the deer regulations.
- Furbearer regulations

- This year the furbearer regulations are being looked at
- Attend the NRC meeting for information to have a voice in those
- Wolves
 - Wolves are in the in the process of being delisted at the federal level
 - That decision is expected to come out in March or April
- DNR GPS
 - The DNR is revising the GPS (Guiding Principle Strategies) for the division
 - This process will act as a guide for what the DNR will focus on in the next years to come
- Budget
 - The budget has become smaller
 - License sales are down, again. PR funds are down
 - New act in congress, Restoring America's Wildlife Act, could bring forth millions of dollars to help manage wildlife.
 - As a result of smaller budget, cutbacks are going to be made. Deer check may be one of them.
- New license system
 - Goes live Feb. 18, 2020.
 - Has more capabilities
 - Harvest registrations are going to be worked into system in 2021
 - Will have kinks for sure, bear with us

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

- Waterfowl training
 - 2 new instructors are attending the training to instruct officers
- New academy
 - In July with 25 officers (Did not happen, Covid-19 work restrictions)
- Sandhill crane – lots of cases, outright poaching more than mistakes
- Overall a slow year for cases and little activity
- District 6 Saginaw Bay
 - Put together a task force work group
 - Targets high activity and low compliance area
 - Gives a presence in areas with activity and helps educate officers
- Eagle case in NLP – quickly resolved

2020-21 Regulation Update: (Barbara Avers)

- Recommendation memo to NRC in couple of weeks
- NRC meeting for info in March, action in April
- Canada goose framework
 - Just one Canada goose management plan in Mississippi Flyway
 - Holistic approach to Canada goose management
 - Temperate breeding geese in flyway are above goal
 - Sub-arctic population is more variable and temperate increasing
 - 2019, 240K Canada geese. Currently above goal.
 - Canada geese framework
 - 107 days which is max allowed

- 5 bird limit in Sept., then down to 3
 - Season can be 4 segments
- Other dark geese framework:
 - 107 days which is max allowed Sept. 1-Feb. 15
 - 5 bird limit in Sept., then down to 3
 - Season can be 4 segments
 - Whitefront: 5 daily in aggregate with dark geese
 - Brant: 1 daily, or included in aggregate goose bag
- Lt. Shaw: still confusion in dark geese bag limit in digest
- Light geese framework
 - 107 days; Sept. 1-Feb. 15
 - Season can be split into 4 segments
 - 20 bird daily

Duck Population Status: (Barbara Avers)

- Great Lakes conditions improved in 2019 due to increased precipitation
- Total mid-continent duck: 28.9M, 6% below 2018
- Mid-continent mallards: Still above LTA
- Scaup: lesser are more abundant, but greater and lesser combined in estimate
 - Have species specific harvest strategy
 - Flyway will be asking for the feds to redo the scaup harvest management strategy – harvest isn't affecting population as much
 - Scaup have responded to zebra mussels and is a concern from pollutants in mussels
 - Spring body condition is one hypothesis for long term decline
- Great lake states mallards
 - Whole region fairly stable
- Michigan mallards
 - Slightly down from 2018
 - Not statistically significant
 - Stable for the most part over the last several years
 - Urban mallards may help account for long term decline
 - We don't survey urban areas
 - Distribution may have changed
 - Request to graph mallard harvest with population estimates to see relationship
 - Request for more information on how much eastern mallards mix with Michigan mallards.
 - Does 2nd mallard hen in bag limit correlate with population decline?
 - Doesn't appear to based on Singer's research
 - CWAC requests an updated analysis of the impacts of the 2-hen limit
 - Look at late season (2 day) implementation and see if it correlates with mallard decline
- Adaptive Harvest Management
 - Determines framework for duck hunting
 - Liberal season based on AHM
 - 60 days

- Only change from 2019 is Scaup (2 bird limit for 45 days and 1 bird limit for 15 days)
- Michigan Harvest
 - Total duck harvest down about 60K
 - Active hunters the same
- Michigan Hunter Opinion
 - Good satisfaction for duck hunting
 - Lower satisfaction for goose hunting

DNR Waterfowl Workgroup Discussion and Options for Waterfowl Seasons: (Barbara Avers)

- 2020 Duck Framework
 - Liberal season – 60 days
 - Sat. nearest Sep. 24 to Jan. 31
 - Duck bag: 6 total; 4 mallards, 2 hen mallard, 3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 2/1 scaup (2 for 45 days and 1 for 15 days), 2 black ducks, 2 canvasback, 1 pintail
- Early teal:
 - Option 1: Status quo. Sept 1-16
 - Max days
 - Captures migration
 - Max pressure on public area
 - Option 2: Sept. 1-7 (Tues – Labor Day)
 - Reduced pressure on public areas
 - Participation lower later in season
 - Encompasses long holiday weekend
- Youth:
 - Sept. 19-20 (3rd weekend)
- Veterans and Active military
 - Option 1: Postpone for another year to explore interest and timing
 - Option 2: Coincide with youth season (3rd weekend in Sept.)
 - Offers more opportunity statewide than Dec. days
 - Possibly high participation and pressure on ducks
 - Discussion:
 - Does not replace managed areas' veterans draw on veteran's day
 - Shared event may bring more attention to underutilized hunt areas participation in some areas
 - Very small percentage is active and veterans
- North Zone:
 - Option 1: Opening Sept. 26-Nov 22, then Nov. 28-29
- Middle Zone:
 - Option 1: Opening Oct. 3-Nov. 29, then Dec. 12-13
- South Zone:
 - Option 1: Opening Oct. 10-Dec. 6, then Dec. 26-27
- Scaup:
 - 1st 15 days – 1 bird
 - Last 45 days – 2 bird

- LED: consistency throughout zones we be preferred
- Duck daily bag:
 - Max allowed under federal framework
- Goose Season North zone:
 - Option 1: Sept. 1-30 (5), then Oct. 1-Dec. 16 (3 bird)
- Goose season middle:
 - Option 1: Sept. 1-30 (5), then Oct. 3-Dec. 18 (3 bird)
 - Consistency
 - Option 2: Sept. 1-30 (5), then Oct. 1-Dec. 16 (3 bird)
 - Continuous season and captures all duck days
- Goose season south:
 - Option 1: Sept. 1-30(5); Oct. 10-Dec. 6; Dec. 26-27; Jan. 23-Feb. 8
 - Consistency
 - Option 2: Sept. 1-30(5); Oct. 10-Dec. 6; Dec. 26-27; Jan. 30-Feb.15
 - Maximizes Feb. days
- Allegan:
 - Option 1: Sept. 1-30; Nov. 7-14; Nov. 26-Dec. 6; Dec. 19-Feb. 14
 - More Feb. desired
 - Sept. days received comments
 - Takes out most of firearm deer
- Muskegon: Oct. 17-Dec. 22
 - Option 1: Oct. 17-Dec. 22
 - Consistent with 2019
 - Open on Tuesdays and Saturdays; morning afternoon hunts on both
- Other geese:
 - Snow and Ross (light geese):
 - Same as Canada goose season dates in each zone and GMU
 - 20 daily limit
 - Dark geese (brant, white-fronted, and Canada):
 - Dark goose season dates that include Canada, Brant, White-fronted
 - Same as Canada goose season dates in each zone and GMU
 - Sept.1-30: Daily limit for dark geese is 5 with only 1 brant
 - Oct. 1-Feb. 15: daily for dark geese is 5 with only 3 can be Canada and 1 brant

CWAC Recommendations for Waterfowl Seasons:

- Early Teal:
 - **Motion:** for Option 1, keep season as it is (Godi). 2nd (Villwock). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes
 - September 1-16, 2020
 - No Discussion
- Youth Hunt:
 - **Motion:** for Option 1 (Villwock). 2nd (Schutt). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes.
 - September 19-20, 2020. 3rd weekend.
 - No Discussion

- Veterans and active military:
 - **Motion** to have the veterans and active military hunt coincide with the youth hunt (King), 2nd (Godi). **Vote:** 14 for, 2 against, motion passes.
 - Veterans and active military hunt September 19-20, 2020.
 - Discussion:
 - Not that many people, low numbers
 - Limited availability for parties may take away from youth and it may reduce quality of hunt
 - More opportunity to hunt earlier in year, other places they will hunt besides managed areas. Could hunt with their own children as well
 - Youth hunts at Harsens and Mouillee are a big deal. People are reasonable at the managed areas in draws
 - Don't want 2 separate weekends.
 - Might do it for the first year then evaluate
- Duck North Zone:
 - **Motion** to accept workgroup's option (Kritselis) 2nd (Bellingar). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes.
 - Sept. 26-Nov. 22 then Nov. 28-29
 - No Discussion
- Duck Middle Zone:
 - **Motion** to accept workgroup option (Schutt) 2nd (Quist). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes
 - Oct. 3-Nov. 29 then Dec. 12-13
 - No Discussion
- Duck South Zone:
 - **Motion** to accept workgroup option (Allaire) 2nd (King). **Vote:** 15 for, 1 against, motion passes.
 - Oct. 10-Dec. 6 then Dec. 26-27
 - No Discussion
- Scaup Season:
 - **Motion** to have 45 days with 2 birds per day first, then 15 days with 1 bird per day second (King) 2nd (Kritselis). **Vote:** 12 for, 4 against, motion passes.
 - North Zone:
 - Sept. 26 – Nov. 9 (45-day, 2 bird bag)
 - Nov. 10 – Nov. 22, Nov. 28-29 (15-day, 1 bird bag)
 - Middle Zone
 - Oct. 3 – Nov. 16 (45-day, 2 bird bag)
 - Nov. 17-29, Dec. 12-13 (15-day, 1 bird bag)
 - South Zone:
 - Oct. 10 – Nov. 23 (45-day, 2 bird bag)
 - Nov. 24 – Dec. 6, Dec. 26-27 (15-day, 1 bird bag)
 - Discussion:
 - All 3 zones can be different
 - 1 bird 15 days can go 1st or 2nd
 - Not many scaup after 1st of Nov. in North Zone
 - Could go 1 scaup daily for whole season; would be overly restrictive

- LED prefers same for all 3 zones for simplicity and consistency
 - Lots of harvest occurs in big bays
 - Zones will have overlap regardless due to differing opening days.
 - Front loaded be better for North Zone and maybe Middle Zone, but not South Zone
 - Department likely to have a different recommendation
- Goose North Zone:
 - **Motion** for Sept. 1-30; Oct. 1-Dec. 16 (Bellingar), 2nd (Kritselis). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes.
 - No Discussion
- Goose Middle Zone:
 - **Motion** for workgroup Option 2: Sept. 1-30; Oct. 1-Dec. 16 (Cleary) 2nd (Quist). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes
 - Continuous
 - No Discussion
- Goose South Zone:
 - **Motion** for workgroup Option 1: Sept. 1-30; Oct. 10-Dec. 6; Dec. 26-27; Jan. 23-Feb. 8 (Godi) 2nd (French). **Vote:** 15 for, 1 against, motion passes
 - No Discussion
- Allegan GMU:
 - **Motion** for workgroup Option 1: Sept. 1-30; Nov. 7-14; Nov. 26-Dec. 6; Dec. 19-Feb. 14 (Schutt) 2nd (Quist). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes
 - No discussion
- Muskegon GMU:
 - **Motion** for workgroup Option 1: Oct. 17-Dec. 22 (Quist) 2nd (Villwock). **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes
 - Discussion:
 - New group at Muskegon has implemented a “buddy” hunt to increase recruitment
 - Group polled hunters and found that there is a lack of equipment and knowledge
 - Very well received November hunt days
 - New group is working with Nik Kalejs
- Other Geese:
 - **Motion** to adopt the workgroup option below: (Villwock) 2nd (Schutt) **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes
 - Snow and Ross (light geese):
 - Same as Canada goose season dates in each zone and GMU
 - 20 daily limit
 - Dark geese (brant, white-fronted):
 - Dark goose season dates that include brant and white-fronted
 - Same as Canada goose season dates in each zone and GMU
 - Sept.1-30: Daily limit for dark geese is 5 with only 1 brant
 - Oct. 1-Feb. 15: daily for dark geese is 5 with only 3 can be Canada and 1 brant
 - Continue to clarify the dark goose aggregate bag limit. Still confusion.

- Duck Bag Limit:
 - **Motion** to have maximum allowed under federal framework (Villwock) 2nd (Schutt). **Vote:** 13 for, 0 against, 3 abstain, motion passes.
 - Discussion:
 - Two hen mallards in bag discussion
 - Less dead hens left in field
 - Check station numbers at Harsens Island show more hens being harvested, but are they just being brought into check station and not left in field?
 - A hunter can opt to not take a hen mallard and it doesn't take away from the hunter
 - Should we revisit the 2-hen mallard bag limit? Department will analyze hen harvest and bring information to CWAC.
 - Caution on our Michigan population estimates. Allow for analysis of harvest rates, sex ratio harvest rates. Don't restrict hunters until the science is available
- Next CWAC meeting:
 - **Motion** to have next CWAC meeting January 9th, 2021 (Villwock) 2nd (Retherford), **Vote:** 16 for, 0 against, motion passes
- NRC meeting for information on March 19 at Lansing Community College to represent CWAC: Dan Villwock will represent CWAC

Waterfowl Workgroup Hunting Zones and Splits 2021-25 Seasons: (B. Avers)

- General information:
 - Deadline for submission to FWS extended to July 1, 2020
 - Survey results:
 - "Not sure" respondents may be satisfied as long as there is a season
 - Overall satisfaction of season dates is pretty high
 - East UP is getting exploited-Stathi
 - Bring refuge back to Munuscong?
 - More attention needs to be paid to East UP
 - Lots of pressure
 - Is there a way to split up the hunters for the season in order to reduce the hunting pressure?
 - Department will work with Stathi to explore options
 - Zone Proposals:
 - Eastern UP:
 - Option 1: Current boundaries
 - Option 2: Move east of I-75 to Middle zone
 - Saginaw Bay:
 - Option 1: Current boundaries
 - Option 2: Move bay to Middle zone with M-25 as boundary
 - NW LP:
 - Option 1: Current boundaries
 - Option 2: Move land west of US-31 to South zone
 - Option 3: Move land west of US-131 to South zone

- Workgroup Zone Discussion:
 - Saginaw Bay:
 - Option 2: move bay to middle is preferred
 - Support from surveys
 - FPWA, SFCHA, and MDHA-Saginaw Bay support
 - Support from managed waterfowl hunting area staff and SE Regional staff
 - Nayanquing Pt. and Fish Pt. lose days at end of season due to ice
 - Will include pre-registration at Nayanquing Pt. for opening weekend
 - East UP:
 - Option 1: Keep as is preferred.
 - Little support in survey for changing boundaries
 - Little support from UP Regional staff for changing boundaries
 - Northwest Lower:
 - Option 1: no change is preferred.
 - Little support from survey for changing boundaries
 - No support from Northern Lower Regional staff
 - Change would benefit few people
 - Loss of hunting opportunity late in season at inland small water areas
 - Moving area to South Zone could result in season dates that miss early migrants (wood ducks)

CWAC Hunting Zones and Splits 2021-25 Seasons Recommendations:

- East UP Boundary:
 - **Motion** to adopt Option 1: Keep the East UP in the North Zone (Bellinger) 2nd (Villwock). **Vote:** 12 for, 4 against, motion passes
 - Discussion:
 - May have less hunters if in Middle Zone as hunters spread out more. That could impact local small businesses.
 - But if Saginaw Bay stays in South Zone may have overcrowding. Maybe not an issue if Saginaw Bay also in Middle Zone.
 - Maybe have areas of overcrowding heading west in UP if hunters really want to hunt 3 openers.
 - Discussed survey results
- Saginaw Bay:
 - **Motion** to adopt Option 2: Move Saginaw Bay into the Middle Zone with M-25 as the boundary (Villwock) 2nd (King). **Vote:** 15 for, 1 against, motion passes
 - Discussion:
 - Losing too many days to ice conditions and have more years than not
 - Nayanquing Point and Fish Point will be busy first week – staff will handle
 - Not just managed areas, Bay hunters too, diver duck hunters
 - Discussed survey results
 - Discussed boundary options across the Thumb
- Northwest Lower Peninsula:
 - **Motion** to adopt Option 1: Keep the Northwest Lower Peninsula boundaries as they are (King) 2nd (Schutt). **Vote:** 15 for, 1 against, motion passes.
 - Discussion:
 - Survey results were clear

Mississippi Flyway Update: (B. Avers)

- Revisions to mid-continent mallard AHM
 - Continuing the use of annual mallard breeding population estimates and spring pond counts to annually determine the optimal duck hunting framework
 - Removal of the NAWMP mallard population goal from the AHM objective function
 - Replacement of the discrete model set with a parameterization based on the estimation results from an annually updated integrated population model (IPM)
 - No change in duck hunting season framework dates for all AHM packages
 - No other changes from current AHM packages until other species analyses completed
 - No changes to current bag limits or harvest strategies for duck species other than mallards until other species analyses completed
- Discussions ongoing to modify Canada goose plan to include 5-bird limit for 107-day season
- Revisit scaup strategy to address split bag-limit in restrictive package
- Continuing flyway discussions on mallard migration and distribution following poor hunting seasons for southern states
- Recommendation to change woodcock harvest strategy so that opening framework would be as early as Sept. 13
- Central Flyway 2-tier license
 - A license that allows for 3 of any species harvested
 - And a normal license
 - SD and NE pilot study (4 years)

Great Lakes Mallard research project (B. Avers)

- Objectives:
 - Document post-breeding movements and habitat use of mallards marked during spring (breeding birds) and another sample marked during pre-hunting season banding operations (August).
 - Estimate philopatry rates of adult and hatch-year female mallards to Michigan and the Great Lakes.
 - Estimate survival and productivity rates of breeding female mallards in relation to body condition, age, habitat use (including urban vs rural breeding birds) and genotype.
 - Make recommendations regarding habitat and harvest management to recover mallards in the Great Lakes Region and benefit other wetland-related wildlife species.
- Currently seeking funding
- Methods and timelines:
 - Mark females with GPS-GSM transmitters during pre-season banding and pre-breeding:
 - Pre-season: 50 AHY; 50 HY females
 - Pre-breeding: 50 females
 - Genetics (assignment of individuals to wild, farmed, and admixed groups)
 - Timeline: Begin marking birds pre-breeding banding summer 2020. PhD student begins Fall 2020. Complete final report summer 2024.

- Lots of interest in project. Collaborating with WI, MN, OH, IN, and IL as well as FWS JV.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 3:07 by Kritselis, 2nd by group