

Waterfowl Advisory Group
Meeting Notes
North Bend USFS Ranger Station
March 28, 2009

1. Chris Dorow (chair) called meeting to order. Members and attendees introduced themselves.
 - List of attendees: Dick Jacobs, Jason Gupton, Dick Price, Fred Slyfield, Michael Crowder, Chris Dorow, Dan Howell, John Arrabito, Scott Fink, Ralph Engle, Dave Sievers, Doug Hargin, Rodney Vandersypen, John Tierney, Roy Christopherson
 - Guests: Steve Pozzanghera (WDFW), Don Kraege (WDFW), Mikal Moore (WDFW), Chuck Perry (Fish and Wildlife Commission)
2. Don Kraege requested members update contact information.
3. Chair requested suggestions to update agenda. Michael Crowder requested agenda item to discuss revisions to crow season.
4. Dick Price moved to accept minutes of previous meeting. Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
5. **Legislative update** provided by Steve Pozzanghera. Discussed senate bills to suspend numerous committees, including Migratory Waterfowl Art Committee (MWAC). Bills could be added to budget. Steve expressed appreciation for WAG member support of the MWAC. Don Kraege highlighted distinctions between MWAC and WAG functions. Annual expenses are \$1,000 per year for MWAC, stamps generate \$400,000, plus \$15,000 for artwork. Removal of committee could cost an estimated \$9,000 per year.
 - Members discussed whether dedicated funds (waterfowl and pheasant) would be lost to the general fund.
 - Chris Dorow emphasized the need for the WAG members to be informed of any potential of duck stamp funds being “grabbed” at legislative level.
 - Chris Dorow requested advice on how to proceed with increase of state duck stamp cost to match federal level.

Additional bill of interest. SSB-5127 would change Fish and Wildlife Commission structure and duties. Will likely not make it out of committee by cutoff date.

Budget status of WDFW. Department was asked to cut approximately \$30 million in the Governor’s budget, including over 150 FTEs. Executive Management Team (EMT) provided 134 “at risk” letters to department staff, plus eliminating existing vacant positions, 170 positions will be impacted. Wildlife Program had 18 “at risk” positions, plus 8 existing vacancies.

 - Discussed Governor’s request to consider moving Enforcement to WSP. At this time, proposal does not seem to have enough support. Potential exists to merge

natural resource enforcement agency. Discussed differences between WDFW and DNR.

- Discussed pheasant program, western Washington game farm could be included in budget reductions. One option is to privatize game farm instead of state-operated. Another proposal to make western pheasant program monetarily self-sufficient.
- New director will likely be appointed after biennium (July 1).
- No proposals to eliminate Master Hunter Program.
- Discussed how the Pittman-Robertson funds are distributed nationwide.

Revenue generation proposals: WDFW has some strategic license increases proposed, particularly fishing licenses. Analysis suggests that hunting license costs are paying for opportunities, but fishing is not covering cost of opportunity provided. Fee increases must go through legislature, with exception of application fees (e.g. special permit). 2-year across-the-board surcharge (would likely include duck stamps) proposed on all fishing and hunting licenses and permits (approximately 10%) in House of Representatives. Would be included in budget proposal/bill.

6. Don Kraege and Mikal Moore gave overview of department-ranked capital and operating budget duck stamp proposals.
 - Change in Skagit snow goose access proposal generated some discussion. Regulation change would be part of the package in August. **ACTION ITEM: Motion to review Skagit Snow Goose hunt regulations at August meeting, seconded, passed. Invite Doug Huddle (WDFW) to participate in next WAG meeting.**
 - Discussion to include permeability study for bottom of Artesian and Black Lakes. Also check permanence of water supplies.
 - Concern that Corn Stubble Retention Program would be double-paying farmers for fields that are grazed.
 - **Motion to recommend removal from state stamp and print funds CBNWR project. Seconded. Discussion. 5 supported, 6 opposed. Motion failed.**
 - Concern voiced regarding Samish Farming project that birds are being short-stopped in the Skagit before reaching Region 6. Discussion that weather is important in bird distribution as well. Question whether too much funding is being spent on food plots than guidelines suggest.
 - **Motion to accept proposals as recommended. Seconded. 9 supported, 2 opposed. Motion passed.**
7. Don Kraege discussed eastern Washington Canada goose nest survey and distributed mid-winter waterfowl survey results to WAG members. Early Canada goose season is below trigger level and will be canceled this year. **Action item requested for WDFW: information campaign needed to inform hunters of canceled eastside early goose season.**
 - Question on whether duck season would coincide with deer opener (which has been delayed a week). Information will be forthcoming.
 - Question on water conditions in the north. USFWS May pond count report is best source.

- Don Kraege provided a brief overview of the western mallard model and pintail harvest strategy.

8. Other topics

- Non-toxic shot update provided by Don Kraege. Item in 3-year hunting package regulations. Proposal to require non-toxic shot for bird hunting on all pheasant release areas.
 - Waterfowl guide license topic was deferred.
 - Two topics requested to add to July/August meeting: sea duck review, Bayview Reserve boundaries. **Action item requested for WDFW: review brant use on Bayview Reserve**
 - Michael Crowder discussed efforts to change crow hunting season. Federal rules require no season during peak breeding. Propose going from 1 Sept to 31 Dec instead of 1 Oct through Jan. Noted that main crow migration is during September. **Michael Crowder made motion to promote crows as a hunting opportunity by moving the season dates from Sept 1 to Dec 31. Motion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**
 - Discussion that electronic spinning wing decoy ban in Arkansas revoked. WDFW Commission upheld ban when last approached in 2008.
9. Commissioner Perry commented on electronic spinning wing stance of WDFW Commission, resistance is related to ethics and tradition. He thanked the group for stance against Senate Bill 5127. Asked a question of whether anyone was aware of private citizens using satellite transmitters used for tracking game birds. Some cases of private citizens using transmitters on big game have emerged in other states. Commissioner Perry commented on current status of the Fish and Wildlife Commission.
10. Don Kraege recommended the next WAG meeting will take place August 1 in Moses Lake. **Moved and seconded. Motion passed.**