

**MINUTES**  
**Waterfowl Advisory Group Meeting**  
**June 16, 2012**  
**USFS North Bend Ranger Station**

**1. Welcome and Introductions – Rodney Vandersypen (Chair)**

**WAG Members Present:** John Arrabito, Michael Crowder, Roy Christopherson, Ralph Engle, Scott Fink, Doug Hargin, Dick Jacobs, Mike Meseberg, Dick Price, Patrick Shearer, Dave Sievers, Rodney Vandersypen, Ben Welton

**Guests:** David Drewry, Doug Graef

**WDFW:** Don Kraege, Joe Evenson, Brandon Roozen

**2. Approval of Minutes (Vandersypen)**

- a. Correction to item 7 regarding closure of early September Canada goose season in 2011

**b. Meeting minutes: Unanimous approval with correction**

**3. North Puget Sound Waterfowl Quality Hunt Areas (Brandon Roozen, WDFW)**

(All presentations available upon request)

a. Discussion

- i. Area 1 snow goose season – status of conflicts?
  - Conflicts among hunters, non-hunters, landowners have been addressed by enforcement, penalties have increased, violations reduced
  - Overall most constituents (landowners, hunters) are happy with success of snow goose quality hunt program
- ii. Are blinds placed correctly in the waterfowl quality hunt program?
  - WDFW manages that to ensure the blind is well placed for harvest
  - Spots can be moved mid-season if necessary
- iii. Some folks are unhappy with one-vehicle limitations and would like a two-vehicle accommodation
  - Simple answer is to plan ahead for parking.
  - Two spots can also create conflicts between hunter groups.
  - Some folks see the sign and will park as they think it is WDFW land.
- iv. Program has increased hunter safety.
- v. Vast majority do not think about this program before the season begins...other than web site is it publicized?

- WDFW informs local related businesses, is in the regs, and WDFW has had write ups in the papers.
- vi. Put an email address on signs for comments.
  - Current plans are to keep the email address on the website only.
- vii. Is guiding allowed?
  - No
- viii. WDFW have insurance to cover liability?
  - There is a hold-harmless clause in state regulations that states that the landowner and WDFW are not held liable for any damages when providing public hunting
- ix. There is a concern that the program has increased fees for private hunting leases, but also a lot of praise for the program.

#### **4. Washington Migratory Bird Stamp And Print Program (Doug Graef, WWA)**

- a. Doug has been running the program independently since September 2011, after the legislature eliminated collector stamps and the Migratory Waterfowl Art Committee.
- b. Steiner Prints also ended their WDFW contract after the 2011 print.
- c. WWA has taken in ~\$2800 in orders, pays WDFW 15%
- d. This year did not go through competition to select artwork
  - Instead went the Refuge Forums for input
  - Decided on Fred Thomas for this year's artwork
  - Stamp is going to go out of state for printing this year
  - Will have marketing assistance from contact in California
  - Artwork will be printed in WA - have bids but need to decide
  - Is reinstating waterfowl art committee
  - Doug has been handling the program single-handedly
- e. Discussion
  - i. How does the public know how to get their complimentary stamp?
    - Is printed in the regs and website
  - ii. Doug would like WAG to assist in promotion of stamps
    - Image will still be on waterfowl pamphlet cover
  - iii. What do prints sell for?
    - Steiner sells for \$200 and up
  - iv. How much overhead does WDFW charge on sales?
    - Since program began in 1986 no overhead could charged for sale of stamps or permits, just artwork, as per agreement with Art committee and WDFW Director
    - There is a proposal to charge a 10-15% administrative fee on sale of permits

- Many members commented on their disapproval of this administrative fee
- Money could fund 160 acres of habitat or other projects that directly benefit waterfowl

f. Motion:

**WAG strongly recommends to the WDFW that the prior agreement regarding no administrative fees that was in place with the Art Committee be transferred to the WAG, and that the 25 year history of not charging administrative fees on the migratory bird permit be continued.**

**Seconded, passed unanimously.**

#### **5. Duck Stamp Project Update (Don Kraege, WDFW)**

- a. No proposals this year because all funds were allocated last year (except for non-waterfowl projects).
- b. Sandygren/Swanson Lakes project
  - i. Sandygren completed in 2009
  - ii. Swanson ditch plugging to begin October 2012
- c. Wilson Creek Wetlands
  - i. Conceptual design phase
- d. Mansfield Pond
  - i. Will be opening up vegetation to promote smartweed production
- e. Bailie Water Control
  - i. Additional waterfowl control work completed to improve water delivery
- f. Samish Unit Restoration
  - i. In design and permitting phase
  - ii. Continued grain farming this year
  - iii. Construction of 2-5 wetland cells planned
- g. Chehalis Unit of Olympic Willapa Hills Wildlife Area
  - i. Vegetation control on 115 acres
  - ii. Osgood acquisition of 119 acres
- h. Ephrata Lake
  - i. Acquired one 40 acre parcel
  - ii. Pursuing other parcels
- i. Smith Creek / North River Wildlife Area Unit
  - i. Acquisition of 435 ac with other partners
- j. Naselle River Wildlife Area Unit
  - i. Acquisition of several parcels located at the mouth of the Naselle River with other partners

- k. Shillapoo North Basin Fence
  - i. 50 acres of pasture fenced to enhance forage quality for winter waterfowl by using cattle grazing to manage vegetation
- l. E. WA Wetland Reserve Program
  - i. GIS project to identify priority restoration parcels
  - ii. Partnership with Pheasants Forever to initiate landowner contacts
- m. Chinook Wildlife Area
  - i. ~170 acres mowed to enhance habitat
  - ii. Planting forage
  - iii. Potential new acquisition adjacent to unit
- n. Potter Slough Unit (Willapa)
  - i. 3 cells constructed in 2008
  - ii. Established three hunting blinds
  - iii. Vegetation control to improve open water and forage
- o. Columbia Basin Moist Soil Mgmt
  - i. Aerial herbicide treatments to remove *Phragmites*
  - ii. 20 ac planted
  - iii. Additional planting improvements planned in 2012
- p. Small Canada Goose Telemetry Project
  - i. Geese captured in SW WA breeding on Yukon-Kuskowim Delta, AK
- q. Johns River Wildlife Area Unit
  - i. Areas mowed to control reed canary grass and improve smartweed production
- r. Website is being updated regarding Duck Stamp Projects
- s. Discussion
  - i. Shillapoo Wildlife Area
    - Doug Hargin would like the WAG to state dissatisfaction with a proposed project to breach dikes and impact past duck stamp and NAWCA projects
    - NAWCA funds / habitat function would need to be replaced if converted to tidal influence

**Motion: WAG recommends that breaching of dikes that will flood Shillapoo Wildlife Area not be pursued.**

**Seconded, passed unanimously**

## 6. UW Swan Project (Kraege)

- a. Mike Smith, School of Environmental and Forest Sciences College of the Environment (UW), provided information to Kraege to present regarding his graduate project.
- b. Objectives
  - i. Minimize lead shot related mortality
  - ii. Estimate carrying capacity (habitat and social i.e., how many swans that landowners would be willing to accommodate)
- c. Obj 1 (Judson Lake)
  - i. Mortalities dropped by  $<\sim 65\%$  W WA since 2006 when swans excluded from areas of high lead shot density
  - ii. Shot is held up in sediments by lily root masses. Test plots sprayed to reduce lilies, re-sampling pellet density in 2012 to look at reduction in pellet density
  - iii. Sampling of other roosts on other lakes
- d. Obj 2 (social carrying capacity)
  - i. Swans are impacting winter wheat and other crops
  - ii. Discussing with farmers tolerance is for loss
  - iii. Will have management recommendations and complete work in Fall 2014
- e. Discussion:
  - i. What are reasons for increase in swan population?
    - Good breeding conditions, available winter habitat
  - ii. Discussion
    - Potential hunting season was main topic
    - Trumpeter are not in danger any longer and the breeding population is at management objective (25,000)
    - There are tundra swan hunts in other states (MT, NV, UT)
    - Season could shut down if certain # of trumpeters harvested (e.g. 10)
    - WA had 77% trumpeters and 23% tundras in 2012
    - Pacific Flyway had 177K tundra swans in 2012
    - Some members would like to look into a swan season at some point in WA, possibly as a trophy hunt
    - The data from the UW project may assist in justification of a trophy hunt
    - Concern for loss of swan habitat, and management efforts from application and/or permit sale revenues could assist in maintaining habitat
    - If landowners brought up the damage factor it could increase public support, but without that it would be more controversial

- No biological reason to prohibit hunt, public perception is key

**Motion: Don Kraege to discuss at the flyway meeting what it would take to have a swan season in Washington State.**

**Seconded, passed with one no vote.**

**Motion: Create a swan subcommittee consisting of Rodney Vandersypen, John Arrabito, Michael Crowder, Doug Hargin, Ben Welton, and Don Kraege to explore a swan harvest season in Washington State.**

**Seconded, passed unanimously**

#### **7. Waterfowl Guides On WDFW Lands (Kraege)**

- a. Issue has been discussed several times by WAG over the years
- b. Regulations have been created recently that control public use on WDFW lands and restrict waterfowl guides to three areas on WDFW lands in Region 2
  - i. Potholes Reservoir (walk-in areas in N and NW areas are closed to guiding)
  - ii. Winchester Lake
  - iii. Banks Lake
- c. Guides are required to obtain a commercial use permit for lands owned or controlled by WDFW
- d. Discussion
  - Several members were concerned that unlicensed guides present problems for safety and disreputable guides may cheat hunters

**Motion: All waterfowl guides in the state of Washington should be licensed, pay a fee, be insured, have proof of citizenship, and have no criminal history.**

**Seconded, passed 8-3**

#### **8. 2012 waterfowl status and regulations update (Don Kraege, Joe Evenson WDFW)**

- a. Brant management (Kraege)
  - i. Management follows Pacific Flyway and WDFW plan objectives
  - ii. Discussion
    - Why no season in Whatcom county?
      - a. Are below 8K population objective

- b. Is a reserve for Skagit County hunt
  - c. Based on past experience, hunt will cause brant to leave the county
  - d. Dungeness hunt needs >1000 brant
  - e. March 1-10 season in Boundary Bay, harvest ~200-300 birds
- b. Sea ducks (Kraege, Evenson)
  - i. Update on population and harvest trends
  - ii. Concern about process for establishing regs in 2010
  - iii. WDFW plans to evaluate changes after winter 2013 (3-year period) for potential changes in 2013-14
- c. Status of other waterfowl and proposed 2012-13 regulations (Evenson)
  - i. Most duck breeding habitat is still in good condition in Canada
  - ii. Anticipating another liberal season in Pacific Flyway
  - iii. Proposing same dates and limits as last year
  - iv. Pintail, Canvasback, Scaup
    - USFWS harvest strategy information available in late July
    - If restricted season for pintail and canvasback (unlikely) would recommend for one week early then rest late season
    - CAGO E WA season reopened September 14-15
    - Dusky trends, counts went up, but not likely enough to increase quotas
    - Continue earlier Willapa brant season based on 2011 WAG recommendation
  - v. Migratory bird hunting authorizations would have \$10 non-reporting penalty
  - vi. Crow opener shifted to September 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - vii. Toppenish Creek Game Reserve (WAC 232-16-440)
    - Most is already in Yakima Nation Boundary
    - Will allow upland bird hunting in Toppenish Refuge
  - viii. Discussion
    - Can brant season dates be increased?
      - a. Harvested 10% of Skagit brant in 2012, within WDFW guidelines

**Motion: Increase brant hunting days in Skagit County from 8 to 10 and Willapa Bay (Pacific County) from 10 to 12.**

**Seconded, defeated 3-6**

- Is there a way to get an extension on the goose season in Region 6 (Grays Harbor County)
  - a. Season was set in April
  - b. Currently season is September 10-15
  - c. If days added would have to shift them from later in the season
- Goose management area 4 – can snow geese be taken?
  - a. Snow geese are part of the 4 goose limit
- Can WA have agricultural damage hunts as is done in Canada?
  - a. If this were to occur, days would have to be taken from the general season days
  - b. Latest date in federal framework is March 10
  - c. A late season occurs in SW WA through March 10<sup>th</sup>
- Changing season limits on sea ducks
  - a. WDFW is not comfortable with changing sea duck limits this year, but this will be evaluated as part of a three-year plan ending in 2013
- Request to start the band-tailed pigeon season one week earlier
  - a. Season was set in April.
  - b. Season date is as early as possible under federal frameworks, due to nesting birds occurring in WA/OR during early September
- Suggestion to do away with Fir Island and DeBays reserves
  - a. These reserves were purchased with NAWCA funds and there are restrictions on use and disposal
  - b. Hunting Fir Island reserve would impact surrounding agricultural landowners
  - c. Hunting DeBays would require approval of NAWCA if swans impacted

## 9. Other Topics

- a. Suggestion to make WAG minutes available to the public on the WDFW web site
  - i. Chair wants minutes to be requested, not to be made public w/o request.
  - ii. **The group would like to show on the WDFW web site that minutes are available upon request.**

## 10. Election of vice-chair for 2013 and housekeeping items –All



- a. In 2011 Mike Meseberg was elected as vice-chair for 2012 and will be the new chair for 2013.
- b. Nomination for vice-chair for 2013  
**Scott Fink was nominated and unanimously approved as the vice-chair for 2013 (and will become chair in 2014).**