

**MINUTES**  
**Waterfowl Advisory Group Meeting**  
**June 29, 2013**  
**USFS North Bend Ranger Station**

1. Welcome and introductions – Scott Fink (Vice-chair)

Chairman Mike Meseberg was not in attendance, so Vice-chair Scott Fink ran the meeting. Attendees included WAG members John Arrabito, Michael Crowder, Roy Christopherson, Chris Dorow, Ralph Engle, Scott Fink, Dave Sievers, Fred Slyfield, Rodney Vandersypen, Ben Welton; guest Mike Nilsen (DU State Chair – elect); and WDFW staff Daren Hauswald, Rich Finger, Don Kraege, and Erin Wehland.

2. Approval of minutes – Fink

**2012 Minutes were approved unanimously**

3. Update on 2012 WAG recommendations

- a. Shillapoo dike removal - Daren Hauswald, WDFW

In 2012, the WAG voted to oppose a potential project on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area near Vancouver, which would remove dikes along the Columbia River to improve fish habitat. Daren Hauswald, WDFW manager of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area, provided an update on the proposed project, which would convert 900 acres of upland / palustrine wetlands to intertidal habitat resulting from a restored connection of Shillapoo lakebed to the Columbia River. Shillapoo is a mitigation site for wildlife. This is a Bonneville Power Administration proposal with a total project cost estimated at \$13-20 million. Existing pumps and wetland habitat enhancements would be removed, including some DU / NAWCA / duck stamp enhancement work. Relocation of a pipeline under the lakebed is estimated at \$6.5 million to \$10 million. It is unknown how waterfowl populations would change (20-40,000 geese using it now and probably as many ducks). Hunter success is currently about 1 duck/hunter on Shillapoo WA. The project is still in the feasibility stages and will require an EIS, allowing for additional public input.

**Motion: Oppose project**

Discussion: Concerns about loss of pasture lands and wetlands, and that the values would need to be replaced. Some members thought that it may be best to stand up for adequate mitigation of lost investments in wildlife resources, rather than fighting the project. Need to make sure that waterfowl groups are involved in feasibility stages.

**Vote was 3 in favor, 4 opposed; motion defeated**

b. Other recommendations – Don Kraege, WDFW

- WAG requested that past meeting minutes be available upon request. The 2012-13 waterfowl pamphlet was edited to provide notice that minutes are available upon request, and this notice will be continued in the future.
- WAG requested that WDFW explore the option for a swan season. Kraege noted that the Pacific Flyway tundra swan management plan has criteria for establishing a season but there is currently no option for a trumpeter swan season. The issue is how to minimize impacts to trumpeter swans and enumerate take during a season, and deal with mixed flocks. It may be possible to define areas that have predominately tundras and structure a hunt around those areas. The current Pacific Flyway trumpeter swan plan needs updating, and may provide an opportunity to allow for additional take. MT has a trumpeter quota during their tundra swan hunt, similar to dusks. The group discussed the idea of setting up the season as a trophy hunt that would generate funds that could be directed to habitat enhancement specifically for swans. Auction money could go into a special fund.

**Motion to continue exploring swan season - passed unanimously.**

- WAG requested continuation of the policy for no WDFW administrative costs for most duck stamp projects. Rodney Vandersypen sent a letter from the WAG in opposition to the WDFW director, but the administrative fees were applied to the fund. The rationale was that all dedicated funds needed to be treated equally. The fee for FY 2012 was about 2%.
4. Migratory bird stamp and print program update - Kraege and Erin Wehland (WDFW)
- a. Stamp / print distribution program

John Arrabito provided an update on the duck stamp and print program, managed by volunteers of Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA) since September 2011. Doug Graef initially coordinated the program but Jim Cortines will be taking over in the future. Net Proceeds for the program from September 2011 takeover of the program through 6/10/2013 were \$5,573. Washington artist Bart Rulon is painting a shoveler pair for the 2013-14 program.

b. 2011-13 and 2013-15 project highlights

Erin Wehland provided an update on the status of 2011-13 projects and 2013-15 projects distributed to WAG in early June. Approximately \$600K is available for capital projects in the 2013-15 biennium.

Discussion:

- Kindred Island: Question relayed from Dick Price about long range management and money source. No long range plan has been developed – this phase is for acquisition only. Dike on property – may have pressure to remove. Want to maintain pasture for dusky. Capital enhancements would be in next grant proposal round for National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants.
- Seal Slough and Leque Island: Are below capital funding cut off line. John Arrabito reported that the Leque Island lawsuits are ongoing involving WWA, Juniper Beach Water District, Camano Water Systems and Snohomish County Farm Bureau as Plaintiffs and WDFW and WADOT as Defendants, regarding groundwater risks due to saltwater intrusion. The issue is maintenance of dikes to protect uplands and freshwater wetlands as proposed when the properties were purchased.
- Dungeness 3 Crabs: Surrounding residents may be opposed to increased hunting.
- Wrangel Island Snow Goose: Question about if the project qualifies for funding. It is linked to habitat use, and research tied to habitat is allowed and has been funded in the past.
- Reser Creek and Fishing Net Removal: Are below the operating funding cut off line.

**Motion to accept recommendations as presented, passed unanimously**

5. Columbia Basin waterfowl quality hunt areas - Rich Finger (WDFW)

- New route into Winchester Regulated Access Area (WRAA): Current route goes through private land, and often people are camping on private land to gain access to the area early. The new route is off of Road 4 on east side of project. WDFW will post and advertise changes.

- Online reservation system for Winchester and Frenchman RAAs: In planning stages, hope to implement for 2014. Intent is to distribute hunting opportunities more widely, and increase youth and disabled opportunities. Only would be required opening day thru November. Group leader applies for permit, up to 3 guests allowed. Successful applicant wins a.m. parking spot. After 9am, drop-in's allowed. No requirement to hunt blinds or specific ponds. Reserved spot for disabled and youths. Will be a lottery drawing. Rich will confer with private land folks to determine how far in advance the application period should be. Concern about allowing applications from people without Internet access.
- Frenchmen Ponds tern feeding project: All basins except cell 6 will be annually flooded for 2013-14. Short-term, will not affect moist-soil management in the future. Advantages include: set back sod forming vegetation, banding opportunities, and brood production.

**Motion: Approve registration system as presented and address concern about applications for people without computers. Approved unanimously.**

6. Waterfowl status and regulations update - Kraege and Wehland

a. 2013 breeding conditions

Alberta habitat is in better condition than in 2012, which was a record breeding year. Breeding survey results are not available yet due to weather, mechanical problems with aircraft. No info from CA or AK yet for 2012.

b. 2013-14 season proposals and potential 2014 changes

Expect another liberal season similar to last year. Potential for 3X daily bag possession limit. Pintail, canvasback, scaup: good conditions in 2012 and 2013. Survey and season proposals not available till mid-July. Will have early goose season in eastern WA in 2013. Dusky: no survey done this year due to aircraft problems, will need to forego increased quota levels for 2013. No data yet for cacklers. No breeding census for Wrangel Island snow geese since 2011.

**Motion to accept hunting regulation proposals based on information available. Passed unanimously**

c. Sea duck management

Kraege provided an update on Puget Sound sea duck surveys and harvest for the 2010-12 period. Winter trends for scoters and goldeneyes have been

increasing during the past 3 years and no changes were proposed to seasons for these species.

**Motion to increase W. WA goldeneye limit from 2 to 3.**

Discussion: Concern with hunters correctly identifying Barrow's and common goldeneye and potential impact on Barrow's goldeneye populations. Need more samples for sea duck wing survey and overall better information on sea duck harvest.

**Vote was 2 in favor and 5 opposed. Motion failed.**

**Motion that WDFW develop better information on species specific population status and harvest rates of goldeneyes (Barrow's and common). Passed unanimously.**

7. Other topics

- Eurasian collared dove: Will information be in pamphlet? Yes - was in last year's and will be in this year. No limit, year round season.
- Brant: Could we set up a hunting season outside of Skagit and Pacific counties (e.g. Snohomish) or a trophy hunt for artic black brant in Clallam and Jefferson counties? Can consider it, but need 1,000 birds to set up hunt in an area.
- Scoter: Possible to increase limit of scoters from 2 to 3? Making progress with scoters, but still have to meet criteria levels. Current scoter populations are not at population level at which harvest limit can be increased to 4, as outlined in harvest strategy.

**Motion: set up interim level in scoter harvest strategy to increase bag to 3. Not seconded. Motion died.**

- WAG membership: Need to bring in new people to WAG. Director's Office is looking to get all advisory councils on same appointment cycle (3 years), and recently advertised for new Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) and Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) members. Ideal size for WAG ~ 15 people. As with GMAC and DAC, those on WAG will need to reapply and new members can also apply. Wildlife Program makes recommendations to Director for committee selections and would like to retain existing members for continuity.

- Duck Stamp and Print Program: Ask hunters to buy two stamps, similar to what DU proposed for the federal duck stamp (“double down for the ducks”). WDFW will pursue for 2013 pamphlet. How to convey to public where DS money is going? Need to improve website. Link to final project list, clickable map to show areas and pictures of projects. Recommendation to put map in the pamphlet showing projects and examples.
- License costs: Senior citizens need lower costs. The Legislature sets fees and recently passed a fee package, so it will probably not be possible until the next round in a few years.

8. Election of vice-chair for 2014 and housekeeping items – All

**Ben Welton was unanimously elected as vice-chair for 2014, to become chair in 2015.**