

Waterfowl Advisory Group Meeting
July 22, 2006
Moses Lake

Attendees: Members Larry Boose, Michael Crowder, Chris Dorrow, Ralph Engle, Scott Fink, Oscar Graham, Doug Hargin, Dan Howell, Chris Hyland, Fred LeVering, Mike Meseberg, Dick Price, Pat Shearer, Dave Sievers, Fred Slyfield; WDFW Staff Steve Pozzanghera, Don Kraege, Matt Monda, Jim Tabor, Mikal Moore; USFWS Representative Bob Trost.

Introductions

Review of agenda – include discussion of merganser bag limit

Review and approval of minutes from previous meeting – minutes approved

Duck stamp and print project funding – Leque Island selected for capital budget projects
-operating budget projects: North Potholes Carp Control, Gloyd Seeps dove food plot, Col. Basin moist soil seed, Lake Terrell blinds, snow goose cover crop, winter habitat evaluation

Preview of recommendations for upcoming waterfowl season

- reviewed federal frameworks, provides maximum season length and bag limit, states may select to be more restrictive
- N. American pond counts: good year for survey area, carried over from previous year, though dry summer may affect brood survival
- Total ducks increased, including mallards, pintails, canvasbacks
- Scaup total numbers continue to decline, record low in 2006
- Local mallards in E. WA up
- Reviewed status of western mallard model
- Liberal duck season prescribed this year: 107 day, 7 duck daily bag with some species restrictions
- Oct. 14-18, Oct 21-Jan 28
- Pintail and Canvasback will have full season, 1 bird daily bag ea
- Scaup – recommended no change in scaup regulations but scaup limits under discussion
- Goose population trends
 - o Wrangel Island #s up
 - o Changes proposed in Mgt Area 1 due to hunter ethics problems on Fir Island
 - Restriction on firearms discharge with 100 feet of paved road on Fir Island
 - Revoke authorization if hunter convicted on trespass, shooting w/i 100 ft of public highway, breaking firearms discharge rule, exceeding daily bag limit
 - February hunt is an option through the Flyway system
 - o Quality hunt area proposed in Management Area 1
 - Random drawing
 - Assigned to private farms randomly
 - Must hunt over decoys

- Hunt coordinator will be responsible for informing hunters and working with landowners
 - Discussion of hunter access program, will take legislative action
- SW Washington Goose Season
 - Move Gray's Harbor out of special permit zone, will become part of goose zone 3
 - Low use by dusks recently
 - Future of funding for check stations discussed
 - Proposal for earlier shooting hours (sunrise) for consistent light conditions rather than static 8am. Recommending maintenance of current regulations, but commission might be receptive. Want to remain consistent with Oregon
 - Check stations open at 9am, may need to open earlier (more \$) or hunters would have to wait
- Merganser limits
 - Bonus merganser limit of 5 with 1 hooded merganser only in other flyways
 - Will wait 1 year to evaluate
 - Hunter opportunity issue, not fish depredation issue
 - **Recommendation passed to ask state to pursue separate merganser limit for next year's regulations**
- Question regarding extending dove season
 - Not recommended until call count index goes up, has declined steadily
 - Reward band study may provide insight into harvest rates
 - Long term habitat change is a concern
 - 30-day framework for northern flyway, Washington takes 15 days
 - Don will provide information to group regarding dove regulations
- **Recommendation on duck and goose seasons**
 - **Price moved to accept, Sievers seconded, recommendations passed**

Waterfowl guiding on WDFW lands

- Matt Monda provided information on history and status of issue
- Land use permit, not a license to guide
- Region 2 manages 200,000 acres, much prime waterfowl hunting
- Commercial use permit needed – includes guiding
- Examples of guide permits distributed
- Includes BR lands
- Purpose of bringing to committee – new complications – quality hunt areas use duck stamp funds, guides using these areas and excluding other hunters
- Should we be allowing commercial use on these properties where we are enhancing habitat?
- Steve P. - commercial use fee schedule would be established across regions
- Money would go back to WL fund, but not dedicated
- Not applicable to private lands – only WDFW
- Not a license
- Competency of guides an issue & guides have ability to scout QHA & pay to occupy spaces
- Can condition use permit to prevent conflicts
- One solution would be to restrict amount of access

- Condition quality hunt area not allowed
- Why aren't guides licensed? Once you license a group, lobbying by group for specific allocation of resources
- QHA – buying a spot using public funds – need to disperse opportunity
- Includes corn stubble and access projects
- Need statewide approach
- Need enforcement of permit requirements
- Strike language that R2 is the only region that allows guides
- Could QHA be permit draw?
- How do you know if someone is guiding or hunting with a friend?
- Local guides should be able to find areas other than QHAs
- Need identification on vehicles – disagreement because of retribution
- Need lottery or reservation system – e.g. 10 blinds for 450 ac
- Hunters will pay \$\$ for quality areas
- Ask enforcement to attend next meeting to see how group could help increase effort
- What do other states do? Check with OR, ID.
- Small business license would be handled thru DOL
- Haven't scratched tip of iceberg on number of guides using public lands – many more than WDFW is aware of – need to determine scope of problem
- Need to approach cautiously – need to define QHAs – d.s. projects (e.g. excavation) or limited access
- Need to promote quality on all areas – Skagit, Samish, etc.
- QHAs = low density hunting opportunities
- List of QHAs needed
- Comment on current permit: covers many of the group's concerns, but only 5 guides permitted. What is responsibility of hunter to insure guide is permitted?
 - o Could advertise more in pamphlet
 - o Guides may not realize it is required
 - o Report card required yearly
- Statewide accounting for waterfowl guiding should require harvest reporting
 - o Commercial guiding should be allowed on Potholes, Banks, Winchester
 - o Identification on vehicle should be required
 - o Game bird regulations should emphasize requirements of waterfowl guiding
- **Motions to recommend to WDFW (Chris H.):**
 - 1) **Make permit statewide: seconded, motion passed**
 - 2) **No guiding on QHA or WDFW private leased ground (corn stubble):**
 - a) **Motion rephrased: at a minimum, commercial guided hunting not be allowed on QHA or WDFW private leased ground; Seconded.**
 - b) **At a minimum, no commercial guiding on QHA or other private lands where WDFW pays for access. WDFW will respond to group at next meeting after considering lands where WDFW pays for habitat improvements or other management. Seconded, passed.**
- Next meeting ask enforcement to speak on guide issue
- WDFW has existing authority to charge for official use permit and standardize across all regions.

- Timeline: less than 1 year, looking at land use WACs already
- Notification of possible changes to guides possible for upcoming season through letter accompanying approval of use permit.
- Private property where WDFW is paying for access is a separate issue. Can specify limitations on guiding in contracts with private landowners.
- Fee schedule discussion
 - o \$200 per occurrence for per event use permit is standard
 - o Discussion
 - Fee would be per guide, not per outfitter
 - Fee should be seasonal
 - Suggested seasonal fees
 - \$50 - \$500
 - 5% of gross revenue, may not work if dishonest reporting
 - Standard seasonal fee is more enforceable
 - Permitted guides could appear in game pamphlet
 - Raise fine for guiding without a permit? Currently permit would be revoked, but not a substantial monetary fine.
 - Penalty for clients hiring a non-permitted guide? Hire guides from list in pamphlet. Notification that hunter is responsible for hiring permitted guide.
 - Make sure “guide” is clearly defined
 - \$200 per guide suggested, poll taken
 - 50-100 (0)
 - 100-200 (majority)
 - 200-300 (1)
 - 400-500 (0)
 - 500-1000 (1)
 - Suggested to make fee per outfitter since easier to list in pamphlet, eliminates need for guide definition
 - Or could do it both ways, e.g. \$200 per guide or \$1500 per outfitter. Each guide wouldn’t have to be listed, just permitted under the outfitter.
 - Motion (Chris H.): when fee is enacted the guides or outfitters be listed in the pamphlet and website. Motion withdrawn.

Quality Hunt Areas

- Flooded corn fields
 - o Quincy Irrigation District needs water turnout for at least 48 hours
 - o Some geographical restrictions: close to canals, near where water is treated (magnicide, kills aquatic vegetation, algae)
 - o Could impound water to irrigate corn
 - o Opportunity to have access to more water, one possibility is flooded corn, but not only possibility
 - o Health effects of toxins: only affects aquatic plants, gone in 48 hrs
 - o Easier to flood barley with little water, moist soil management another possibility
 - o Flooded corn is expensive

- Quality Hunt Areas, in general new opportunities are approached from a quality standpoint
 - o NW Washington experiencing serious overcrowding
 - o Local management plans for Skagit, limited hunting access has been recommended (Sammish Unit). Emphasize quality hunting experience for new hunters will benefit hunter recruitment. Shootings vs. hunting... successful hunt important to new hunters
 - o Emphasize quality at the expense of limiting access
 - o Lottery system on WDFW managed land on overcrowded areas to enhance quality hunting experience
 - o Lottery system: conversion of existing areas to limited access is more difficult through public process. New areas are easier.
 - o Working on reservation system via online license mechanism. Still need to decide which areas. Public review is necessary.
 - o Skagit: limited to number of shells; good hunters will have quality experience; 15 shot shell restriction on Sammish Unit. Initially no shell limit, instituted under protest, but has resulted in improved hunting
 - o Start working on a list of areas to start public process. Open dialogue, get input from hunters.
 - o Recommendation: start process to open dialogue to restrict access on certain public hunt areas?
 - o Quality Hunt Area designation can draw a lot of attention from hunters who have never hunted there before. Locals will protest, rest will be supportive.
 - o Group will come up with list, Don et al. will come up with criteria for QHA.
 - o **Recommendation (Oscar): WDFW promote quality hunting by assessing and documenting overhunted areas and exploring options for improving the quality of waterfowl hunting. Seconded. Motion passed.**

Role of WAG, Mission statement

- Chris Dorrow: Mission statement, 3 questionnaires were received, still need more input
- Attempt to be apolitical in approach, leave biases behind when representing waterfowlers
- End of August, meeting for those interested
- Chris Hyland: Post names and phone numbers on website, receiving resistance from Department. Personal information on website a concern
- Effectiveness compromised by low profile, most hunters not aware of WAG
- List of duck stamp purchasers could be used to establish constituency list
- Each WAG member represents a constituency, it is their responsibility to contact and communicate with people
- Take opportunity to promote yourself at banquets, meetings, etc.
- Emphasize role of WAG: setting seasons, spending duck stamp \$
- Advertised prominently in game pamphlet
- **Recommendation: Provide notice of WAG in prominent location in game pamphlet**
- **Recommendation: Provide prominent box on webpage that describes WAG**
- **Recommendation: Additional informational box on WAG in game pamphlet on page with info on duck stamp and print.**

- Passed by consensus
- **Recommendation: WDFW sort duck stamp file by zip code, gets routed to correct WAG member's email address.**
 - Don will get back to group regarding feasibility

Spinning Wing Decoys: tabled until next year, proposals due December/January. Group of hunters asked for reconsideration. WDFW needs recommendation from WAG. Would like to get additional input from public before recommendation is made. Think outside the hunting community and how hunting will be represented.

Vote for 2007 Vice-Chair took place. Michael Crowder elected.