

Minutes
Waterfowl Advisory Group Meeting
July 28, 2007
Moses Lake Fire Station

1. Welcome and Introductions – Ralph Engle
 - a. WAG members (11): Chris Dorow, Doug Hargin, Larry Boose, Davie Sievers, Ralph Engle, Fred Slyfield, Scott Fink, Dick Price, Mike Meseberg, Dan Howell, Michael Crowder
 - b. Guests (9): Don Kraege (WDFW), Bob Trost (USFWS), Dave Ware (WDFW), Dennis Beich (WDFW), Greg Fitzgerald (WDFW), Doug Huddle (WDFW), Mikal Moore (WDFW), Roger Reynolds, Jerry Gutzwiler (Commission Chair)
2. Review of agenda
3. Approval of March minutes – Ralph Engle
 - a. **Motion: approve minutes, seconded, approved**
4. Update on Fir Island snow goose quality hunt project – Doug Huddle (WDFW)
 - a. Progress report provided for meeting participants
 - b. Recommendations
 - i. Program elements to retain
 1. Requirements to hunt over decoys
 2. Pre-season allocation system (limited early hunt drawing)
 3. Overall unit design, signage, layout
 - ii. Changes Proposed by WDFW District Staff
 1. Devise long-term legal solution for the west-bank Brown's Slough shooting line problem
 2. Provide a 5 a.m. day-of-hunt drawing to allocate unclaimed/unused hunt units
 3. Increase daily harvest monitoring
 4. Provide wireless laptop to coordinator
 5. Move up check-in deadline for pre-season allocation
 6. Allow hunting up to 5 days per week
 7. Maintain same acreage or expand on Fir Island
 8. Open controlled hunting on Fir Island/Hayton reserve
 9. Expand range of program
 10. Establish mentoring and decoy loan assistance
 11. Specify winter wheat for early planting and winter rye after October
 12. Ditch crossing planks at key points
 13. Lengthen season to current allowed within framework
 14. Management more intensively for cover crop development
 15. Coordinate with growers in late summer to determine desirable cover crop or winter wheat planting dates
 16. Spring hunting season using AHE
 - iii. Changes proposed by participating landowners
 1. Increase bag and possession limit

2. Implement other strategies that harvest more birds
3. Haze birds (use hunt parties)
- iv. Changes proposed by hunters
 1. Reduce number of units (increase individual unit size)
 2. Portable toilets
 3. Parking closer to hunt fields
 4. Provide emphasis education for sky-busting
 5. Provide pre-set blinds
- c. Discussion from WAG
 - i. Skybusting: don't shoot until you can see the feet; consider a shell limit (1 box)
 - ii. Positive response to program from represented hunters
5. Highlights from July Pacific Flyway Meetings – Don Kraege (WDFW) and Bob Trost (USFWS)
 - a. Bob Trost provided presentation on recommended seasons
 - i. Liberal season recommended
 - ii. Detailed technical reports are available at www.pacificflyway.gov and www.fws.gov
 - iii. Duck habitat and population status and trends
 1. Habitat conditions are improved over 2006 in prairie Canada, drier in prairie U.S. and southern Alberta
 2. May Pond count index is up (around 7 million)
 3. Mallard: 9.05 million, up over last year
 4. Wigeon: recovered from last year
 5. AGWT: near record high, second highest count
 6. NOPI: did not show a recovery despite high midwinter counts, declined slightly over 2006
 7. CANV: reached a record high this year, over 865,000 indexed
 - a. Canvasback harvest strategy does not allow for liberal harvest.
 - b. Spring population objective $\geq 500,000$
 - c. Predicted harvest in 118,904
 - d. Pacific Flyway has recommended increasing bag limit to 2, not allowed in strategy
 8. Greater White-fronted Goose: at record levels (>600,000), recommend removing restrictions
 9. Cackling Goose: Insignificant increase over 2006, below objective, will maintain restrictions
 10. White geese: about 800,000, at record levels, look to liberalize white geese regulations in Pacific Flyway
 11. Lesser/taverner's Canada geese: struggling to inventory geese; genetically sampling geese to help divide survey strata
 - a. First cut suggests both groups are somewhat declining
 12. Dusky Canada goose index: switched to breeding survey this year, total number around 11,000 (similar to winter survey).
 - iv. Scaup – harvest strategy finalized next year

1. Insignificant increase over last year (3rd lowest on record)
 2. Current harvest exceeds sustainable level
 3. USFWS recommends reduction in scaup bag from 3 to 2 in Pacific Flyway; Pacific Flyway Council has recommended maintaining 3 bird daily bag limit
 - v. Pintails – fully adaptive harvest strategy in 2008
 1. Recommend one bird bag for entire season
 - vi. Western Mallards – Implement in 2008
 1. Independent system for managing mallards in the west
 2. Does not affect bag limits on specific species
 3. Can affect recommended season length
 - vii. Merganser limit: no separate season recommended to Pacific Flyway Council
 1. Added complexity, states saw little advantage
 2. Would have included additional restriction of 2 hooded mergansers
 3. Recent population trends were not supportive of expanding seasons
6. 2007-08 Waterfowl Season proposals – Don Kraege (WDFW)
- a. June Commission Meeting – took public comment on:
 - i. Motorized decoys – no major changes proposed, reworded to match wildlife area regulations
 - ii. Potholes Game Reserve
 - iii. Fir Island Game Reserve
 - b. August 4 Commission Meeting – Waterfowl Season Proposals
 - i. Can make changes that are more restrictive than Federal frameworks
 - ii. Liberal package: mid-October to late January
 - iii. General season proposed similar to last year (date adjustments)
 - iv. Pintail: no change
 - v. Canvasback: could increase from 1 to 2
 - vi. Scaup: could be reduced from 3 to 2
 - vii. Status of sea ducks in Puget Sound
 1. Recommendations
 - a. Continue reduced daily bag limits: 4 scoter, 4 long-tailed duck, 1 harlequin
 - b. Continue one season limit for harlequin
 - c. Continue mandatory harvest report for sea duck hunters
 2. Concerns from PSAMP monitoring
 - a. Scoters due to past population and density declines
 - b. Sustainable harvest: 3%, average Puget Sound 3%
 - c. Adult scoters are site specific
 3. Emphasize monitoring
 - a. 300 scoters to be banded over 3 years
 - b. Productivity
 - c. Population and harvest modeling
 - viii. Canada goose nest trends declining, could lead to loss of September season
 - ix. Wrangel Island Snow Goose: increased breeding population this year

1. Goals for snow goose harvest management
 - a. Improve hunter ethics
 - b. Increase opportunity
 - c. Deal with crop damage
 - d. Recommend extension of snow goose season: Oct. 20, 2007 – Jan 27, 2008 (100 days recommended in federal frameworks)
 - x. Snow goose quality hunting area
 1. Applicants must apply 1 week before hunting
 2. Increase number of season days, propose 5 days per week (M,T,W,F,S) during Nov 3 – Jan 27
 - c. Discussion
 - i. September goose season depends on next year's counts
 - ii. Scaup options: shorter season but maintain higher bag limit
 1. All states in Flyway would need consensus
 2. Not too late to make recommendation from WAG
 3. **Motion: WAG recommends 3 scaup bag for season-within-season if USFWS recommends 2 scaup bag. Seconded. Favor: 8, Not in favor: 3**
 - a. Discussion: season-within-season results in decreased harvest, but identification is a problem among inexperienced duck hunters
 - b. Dedicated scaup hunters may elect not to hunt under 2 scaup limit
 - iii. **Motion: Recommend WDFW's proposed regulations incorporating previous motion and 2 canvasback limit. Seconded. Passed.**
7. Proposed Wildlife Area regulations – Don Kraege (WDFW)
- a. Mike Meseberg provided comments on commercial guiding on public lands, emphasized that blinds associated with his business are never locked
 - b. Recommendation to address floating blinds on Potholes is included in proposed wildlife area WACs. Discussed how to avoid exclusive use of floating blinds. Floating blinds generally violate section (c) with regard to building materials. Intent of WAC is to address littering
 - c. **ACTION: WDFW requests proposals for alternative language**
 - i. **Proposed language change: temporary blinds may be constructed from "non-natural" materials as long as they are not left on-site.**
 1. Discussion: intereferes with management, particularly fenceposts and wire.
 2. WDFW will make note that temporary structures made of non-natural materials are allowed as long as they are removed. Wording is confusing on WAC 232-13-120 sections (b) and (c)
 - ii. **Motion: WAG recommends approval of new wildlife area WACs. Seconded. Favor (7) Opposed (2)**
 1. Discussion: there is still need for some clarification. It is difficult to change things post hoc

2. Still better to have something on the books to support enforcement efforts
8. Update on DU eastern Washington duck stamp enhancement projects – Ivan Lines (DU)
 - a. Telford Restoration
 - b. Packer Creek
 - c. Frenchman Ponds
 - d. Lake Creek
 - e. Sandygren / Swanson Lake
9. Update on DU habitat research projects – Mark Petrie (DU)
 - a. Puget Sound
 - b. Lower Columbia River
 - c. Eastern Washington
 - d. Breeding mallards
10. Update on eastern Washington quality hunt projects – Mikal Moore (WDFW)
 - a. Frenchman Ponds will be open this season
 - b. Descriptions will be published in regs
 - c. No major rules changes this year
 - d. Wildlife Area rules include provision to limit access to public areas, including quality hunt programs
11. Potential migratory bird stamp legislation, Game Management Plan issues – Dave Ware (WDFW)
 - a. State duck stamp revenues are falling behind expenditures
 - b. WAG has previously supported indexing state duck stamp to federal duck stamp
 - i. Straw poll: WAG remains committed to raising duck stamp
 - ii. Suggestion: contact legislators
 - iii. ACTION: WDFW will provide list of legislative contacts**
 - c. Funding for access legislations
 - i. Tribal concerns regarding use of funds
 - ii. Revamp to include \$5 surcharge on small game license in next session
 - iii. Focus on waterfowl and upland hunter retention
 - iv. Duck stamp funds currently cannot be used to pay for access
 - d. Starting to revise game management plan
 - i. Look at waterfowl section of game management plan
 - ii. ACTION: Department requests comments for next 6-year plan**
 - iii. Notice will come out in about 1 month requesting public comment
 - iv. Suggested topics to consider
 1. How to manage hunting in expanding urban areas
 2. Regulated access programs
12. Election of vice-chair for 2008
 - a. Nominations: Chris Dorow, seconded, unanimously approved.**
13. WAG member replacement
 - a. Look at geographic distribution
 - b. 20 is the target
 - c. Request nominations
14. Dick Price gave a PowerPoint presentation on the dove plot project instead of a field trip.

Adjourn 3:30 p.m.