

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association



INAUGURAL CLASS INDUCTION CEREMONY
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The History of WWA

By Jerry Solsrud, Founder of WWA, and reprinted from *Wisconsin Waterfowl* magazine.

I think it all pretty much began with an Aug. 21, 1983 article by the late Jay Reed in the then *Milwaukee Journal*, titled "State Regulations Are Gunning Down Waterfowl Hunting", wherein Jay lamented on the fact that Wisconsin was losing waterfowl hunter numbers due in part, he believed, to excessive regulations of the waterfowl hunter. This article drew a response from the late John Keener, published on Sept. 25, 1983, titled "Duck Call gets Recall". Keener, then the director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management, stated that the Wisconsin waterfowler basically never had it so good.

All this business got me going and I wrote to Jay Reed, suggesting that maybe it was high time for the waterfowl hunters of this state to get organized and present themselves as a unified voice to the DNR with the proper amount of political clout and lobbying efforts, as some research I conducted proved some other states, such as Minnesota and California, had done with good success. Jay published the third article in this miniseries on Oct. 23, 1983, putting forth my idea to his readership and saying that maybe it was a good idea and that, "The Wisconsin Conservation Congress already speaks on behalf of waterfowl hunters. But the voice is not the same as that which would come from a group of people interested only in waterfowl hunting..."

"Ducks Unlimited is the best known organization of people interested in waterfowl, but it is not designed to lobby for specific hunting causes..."

"So, it's true. The Wisconsin duck and goose hunter never has had a full-time organization behind him, to go to bat for him, to fight for his best interests..."

"...it is through organization that a lot of things get done..."

Jay then asked that if anyone was interested in forming such an association, they should contact me. And contact me they did. People like Rob Kieckhefer (V.P.) who was in on the idea even before I wrote to Jay Reed; and Jim Weix (newsletter), Randy Krenn, Jim Bolton (Treasurer), Dennis Fruehauf and so forth. To begin with we were called the Wisconsin Waterfowlers Association and Jay Reed, bless his soul, continued to refer to us that way until the day he died. We were officially incorporated in the state of Wisconsin as a non-profit corporation under our original name at the end of 1983. However, the Association really started to get organized in 1984 with all the proper non-profit filings with the IRS, US Postal Service and so on. Later on the board of directors felt that a name change to the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, Inc., would better reflect the habitat arm of our Association to include the non-hunter in these efforts.

There's been many, many people and many, many changes which have occurred with and within WWA over the past two-plus decades. In the beginning, I personally devoted over 10 years of my life to WWA as its first president and then first chairman of the board when Rob Kieckhefer took over as president. It turned out to be a second full-time job.

We were an entirely unpaid volunteer bunch of devotees in the beginning. In addition to the above men, other early-on volunteers that come to mind, and to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude, would include Dave Cornwell, Bob and Penny Kuehl, Les Didier, Bill Koelpin and Bill Maund.

When we first started out I told Rob that I would help get WWA started, but then I wanted out – say, in one year max, to get back to my own life, as I knew in advance that it was going to be one heck of a lot of work.

So how come he got me to stick around for 10 long years? Some kind of salesman that Kieckhefer is!

Jerry Solsrud is the founder of WWA and is honored as one of our inaugural Hall of Fame class. Please read his full biography on page 3.

WWA Hall of Fame

The History...

In 2016, WWA's Board of Directors wished to honor those that have gone above and beyond to create, enhance and/or further the mission of our Association. Later that year a motion was made, and unanimously passed, by the Board to create the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame is dedicated to the recognition of the outstanding WWA Members, Sponsors, Board of Directors and/or Staff who, through their exceptional service, educational and legislative input, high personal standards, dedicated principles and contributions, have thereby enriched the general welfare of WWA.

Please join us in welcoming the Inaugural Class of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Hall of Fame.

Jerry Solsrud - Founder

Jerry founded the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association in 1983, getting the organization established and off the ground later that year, and by 1984 had the organization fully registered as a non-profit corporation in the State of Wisconsin. Jerry served as WWA's first President and then Chairman of the Board of Directors for the first ten years of WWA's existence. Jerry is still an avid waterfowler, often profiled in local newspapers and television shows, and continues to stay involved in the not so day-to-day happenings at WWA. You can read the full history of Jerry and his founding of the Association starting on page 1.

Rob Kieckhefer – President & Chairman

Born and raised in Milwaukee, WI, Rob received his undergraduate BS in Chemical Engineering and BA in History at the University of Pennsylvania. He then went on to receive his MS in Environmental Engineering at the University of Wisconsin Madison and worked as a contractor from 1976-1998 for Price Erecting. In 1999, Rob started the Kieckhefer Group, a financial service company focused on both qualified and nonqualified deferred compensation plans. Additionally Rob has served on Wisconsin's 529 College Saving (EdVest and Tomorrow's Scholars) Board as Chairman of the Investment Committee. In 1983, when Jerry Solsrud founded WWA, Rob joined as WWA's first member and then followed in Jerry's footsteps, becoming President and then Chairman of the Board. Rob was a long standing board member and has supported our conservation activities across the state. Rob lists his greatest accomplishment as when WWA received the Time Mirror/Chevron Conservation award for working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, restoring over 3,000 wetlands and tens of thousands of acres of upland nesting cover in Wisconsin.

Jim Weix – Vice President & President

Jim Weix was one of the original founding members of what was then called the Wisconsin Waterfowlers Association. WWA later changed it to the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. Since WWA only had a couple of

members, Jim was immediately put on the Board of Directors and made editor of a still non-existent WWA newsletter. Jim designed WWA's first newsletter, in preparation for the Milwaukee Sports Show. Jim was one of the first WWA Life Members and also founded the Rock River Chapter in Oconomowoc, now part of the Waukesha County Chapter. Jim later became Vice-President and President of the Board.

Jay Reed – Outdoors Writer

Jay Reed, considered the premier outdoor writer of his time in Wisconsin, published articles on the outdoors for 39 years in the largest circulation newspaper in the state, the *Milwaukee Journal*. Born in Nelson, WI in 1928, he was an avid outdoorsman from the time he was in grade school. Jay quit high school at age 15, and at 17 lied about his age to enlist in the Marines. When he became a civilian again, he joined the Appleton Post-Crescent and turned his attention towards outdoors journalism. In 1963, Jay was recruited by the *Milwaukee Journal* as their outdoors writer. Reed's writing revealed an ardent conservationist. He was not shy about expressing his opinions on the role of sportsmen and women in the future of our planet. Through one such article, lamenting the loss of Wisconsin hunters due to state regulations, Jay played an integral role in the creation of WWA, as you can read in "The History of WWA", starting on page 1 of this booklet. Jay died of cancer in 2002 at the age of 73.

Bill Peebles – Secretary

Bill lives on a dairy farm in Waukesha County that has been in his family since 1866. He attended the University of Wisconsin - Madison and received his BS degree in agriculture. There he met his wife, Allene, and together they raised four children, all of whom are committed to protecting our wetlands and preserving our farmland. Bill, who joined WWA in its first year of organization, is now a Life Member of WWA and also helped form the Rock River Chapter, served seven years as Secretary of the Board, volunteered for the Great Lakes monitoring program, headed numerous youth environmental education programs and gave several duck hunting seminars for the Association. Additionally, Bill sat on the Waukesha County Conservation Alliance Board and was co-chairman of the committee that helped the County to open several thousand acres of hunting land that had been purchased with stewardship funds and then closed to hunting. Bill reports that while he initially tried to restore wetlands years ago by using dynamite to blast potholes for ducks in his swamp, he quickly realized the temporary nature of his restoration techniques and is proud to report that the last two wetlands restored on his family farm are very successful WWA projects, including a prairie planting. He is happy to report he has 67 years of consecutive duck hunting and still counting...

Dale Arenz – President

Dale joined WWA back in its first full year of existence by attending the Association's first banquet, held in 1984. Dale became more involved in the organization over the years, elected as a member of the Board of Directors in 1999, Secretary in 2001 and then as President in 2003, a term he held for 10 years. Throughout his tenure, Dale also founded and Chaired WWA's State Shoot at Wern Valley, wrote many articles for *Wisconsin Waterfowl* magazine and, perhaps most notably, became WWA's first Life Sponsor with a \$10,000 cash donation to the Association. Dale is proud to share the story of his own personal WWA habitat restoration project, Sally's Marsh, a 100-acre wetland contained within a farm Dale co-owns. Dale has installed 52 wood duck box houses on the Marsh and reports that success has increased 50% through the scrape WWA completed on his property.

Dan Schlamp –Volunteer

Dan joined WWA through the Cedar Creek/Mequon Chapter of WWA and served ten years with the Chapter before his untimely death in 2007 at the age of 44. In his far too brief time with the organization, Dan earned the great respect of his fellow Volunteers, WWA Board Members and Staff for his tireless efforts furthering the Mission of WWA. He was a significant sponsor on both the Chapter and State levels through his company, Poulan Pro. Dan, while not a “diehard hunter”, believed strongly in the preservation of the sport of waterfowling, and was one of the primary volunteers that assisted in WWA’s restoration efforts at the Mequon Nature Preserve. In 2001, Dan was honored with the WWA Education Sponsor Award for his efforts on providing support for the WWA-Sponsored River Crossing Charter School, as well as procuring a donated school bus for the school’s students. In his memory, the Cedar Creek Chapter has created the Dan Schlamp Youth Endowment Fund – dedicated to youth hunter’s safety and education, ushering in the next generation of sportsmen and women.

Jeff Nania – Staff

Jeff Nania pioneered the ecosystem-based approach to restoration, now the national standard. He was executive director of WWA for five years and headed their habitat restoration team for 17 years, working in conjunction with more than 20 other conservation organizations and 9 government agencies to restore many thousands of acres of wetland and upland habitat. He is a nationally published writer. Jeff was active in the Wisconsin legislature, working on environmental policy and education, and has been a working part of drafting and passing over 30 bills. In 1997 he founded Outdoor Adventure Days and in 2002 co-founded River Crossing Environmental Charter School. His current focus is to work together with school districts to develop successful environmental project-based educational programs and schools. He has been recognized for his accomplishments locally and nationally, including being recognized in 2007 through Wisconsin Senate Joint Resolution 51 and he was the first person from Wisconsin to receive the National Wetlands Award. In 2008 Jeff was honored by Outdoor Life Magazine as one of the 25 most influential conservationists in the United States and he worked with the Bush administration to be part of a team developing two executive orders detailing future efforts and funding for effective environmental education and wetland restoration. In 2009 Jeff was again requested by the Obama administration to detail implementation of those executive orders and develop environmental policy. Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education named Jeff the 2013 Non-formal Educator of the Year for his work in environment-based schools. In 2015 Wisconsin Outdoor News recognized Jeff with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Jeff is currently the interim project director for the Little Plover River Watershed project in the Central Sands Area of Wisconsin.

Louie Meister – Owner, LMS Construction

Louie Meister and his company, LMS Construction, have played an integral part in the success of WWA’s Habitat Restoration program. Louie, having met Jeff Nania (see bio on page 6) in a gun shop, bartered a gun for restoration project construction work, and the partnership continues to this day. Louie pioneered wetland restoration practices that are now used nationally due to his ability to understand the project and then artfully sculpt the landscape. Donations from LMS Construction have provided several years of WWA grant match requirements, allowing the procurement of tens of thousands of dollars of grant funds to complete WWA’s restoration work. To date, LMS Construction has completed dozens of restoration projects for WWA, restoring thousands of acres on the Wisconsin landscape. To quote Jeff Nania, “when there was real work to do, WWA never had a better friend than Louie Meister.”

Dale W. Schultz – Wisconsin Senator

Senator Schultz is a passionate advocate for the environment, and all of the wildlife and plants that live here. He graduated from Madison West High School to which he returned in 2015 to give the commencement address, and then earned a Bachelor's Degree from the School of Business at UW-Madison. He was elected to the State Assembly in 1982, and then to the State Senate during a special election in the fall of 1991 where he remained until his retirement in 2014. During his legislative tenure, he was the Majority Leader in 2003, and the chair and co-chair of numerous committees, working closely with Jeff Nania on legislative issues pertinent to the Association. Dale and his wife, Rachel, own the Century family farm in western Sauk County, where they have restored prairies, managed the woodlots, created wildlife scrapes, and planted a variety of food crops to help enhance the biome diversity. Senator Schultz is an avid hunter and angler, and continues to remain engaged in public life by promoting reforms for public schools, supporting environmental initiatives, and demonstrating that bi-partisan collaboration is the best way to accomplish change that is long lasting.

Loren Voss – Volunteer & Staff

Loren joined WWA as a Charter Member of the Fond du Lac Chapter in 1986 and served on the Chapter for 25 years, sponsoring the event for 20 years. Throughout his tenure with WWA, Loren served as a Chapter Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary on various WWA committees and in 2002 was honored as Volunteer of the Year. In 2004 Loren joined WWA as a Regional Director staff member, working for WWA for two and a half years. Loren is proud of what he accomplished as both a volunteer and paid staff of the Association, including: the recruitment of various State Sponsors; the receipt of many donations for the Association from various businesses and personal contacts; the sale of many raffle tickets; serving on the original Calendar Raffle Committee; giving the most warnings for blocking aisles at various sport shows when hawking raffle tickets; the procurement of various raffle items, and serving as the go-to Staff that WWA Committees relied on to represent WWA at events.

Tom Lutes – President

Tom has been hunting and fishing since his teenage years, mostly pheasants and rabbits, growing up in rural Illinois. Some years later he caught the waterfowling bug and it has been his passion ever since. As years went on, like many outdoorsmen, he became interested in conservation and sustaining the resource. Tom belongs to, and has been involved in various ways with, WWA, Ducks Unlimited, Delta, Pheasants Forever, NWTF, Ruffed Grouse society and Trout Unlimited. He was first exposed to WWA while running Final Approach, when Rob Monette called on him, soliciting a donation. After that first introduction, he learned more about the unique and valuable role WWA plays in Wisconsin waterfowl conservation. Most notably, youth education, political activism and wetland restoration on private lands. That led him to getting involved on the Board and subsequently serving a 2-year term as President. He is very honored to be named to the WWA hall of fame and congratulates all of the other inductees that have committed immeasurable time and resources to the organization.

Lloyd "Frosty" Stevens – Volunteer & Board Member

Lloyd Stevens, better known as Frosty, was born in Blue Earth City, Minnesota, on April 30, 1930. His family moved to Wisconsin and he grew up in Pewaukee. On May 5, 1950, he married Viola Bartlett and had four children: Gary, Terry, Cynthia, and Michael. Frosty was an avid sportsman who enjoyed all hunting, fishing, and spectator sports. His love for the outdoors led him to become involved with WWA. Frosty was a very dedicated volunteer and was a

three-time recipient of the WWA Volunteer of the Year Award. He was a member of WWA's Board of Directors in the early 1990's as well as serving as a committee member and eventual chairman of the Waukesha County Chapter. Frosty worked closely with the Columbia County Correctional Facility in having inmates donate labor for the building of blinds and wood duck houses. Following his stroke at age sixty, he was unable to continue working as a car salesman. The time he spent working on WWA projects increased. He put in many hours working to make the Waukesha Chapter WWA's top-netting banquet fundraiser. He was a regular in the state office and in the community working to raise funds, solicit sponsorships, and get donations. Thank you WWA for giving Frosty a true sense of purpose during the years following his stroke. His enthusiasm for WWA was evident to all who knew him!

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