



WISCONSIN WATERFOWL ASSOCIATION

RESTORATION EDUCATION LEGISLATION

May 20, 2020

Wisconsin Waterfowl
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Dr. Frederick Prehn
Chairman, Natural Resources Board
Department of Natural Resources
Madison, WI

Subj: **2021-25 Wisconsin Waterfowl Zone Structure Proposal**

Dear Dr. Prehn and Members of the Natural Resources Board,

The Wisconsin Waterfowl Association (WWA) supports the DNR's Duck Zone Structure proposal. The significant change within the DNR's proposal is the creation of an Open Water Zone, while the Mississippi River zone will be absorbed into the South Zone. We believe the proposal makes reasonable tradeoffs to balance the often-conflicting opinions of Wisconsin's waterfowlers.

There is little debate that the proposed Lake Michigan Open Water Zone offers a unique waterfowling experience, as expected by the US Fish and Wildlife Service: horizon-view expanses of choppy blue-grey water, long strings of decoys, pumpkinseed layout boats, and chase boats. It requires unique skills and equipment, while demanding particular attention to safety issues. And it rewards the successful hunter with species not contemplated by the traditional Wisconsin hunter: scoters and long-tail ducks, as well as diving species—scaup, redheads and canvasbacks—in in prodigious numbers. The creation of large mussel beds, formed of invasive zebra and quagga mussels, has drawn these birds to this reliable food source over the past three decades. The migratory patterns of these birds mean seasons will generally start and end later compared to more traditional Wisconsin zone seasons. A by-product of this zone's later season dates will be more possible days afield for the versatile Wisconsin waterfowler.

Some Mississippi hunters believe the proposed loss of "their" zone short-changes the large number of hunters on Wisconsin's west coast to appease a smaller number of East Coast hunters. But that same large Mississippi contingent, in both our survey (n=713) and the DNR's public input, preferred the same season dates and splits as the South Zone. So, absorption of the Mississippi River Zone into the South Zone has no significant impact to the stated desires of the majority of Mississippi river hunters. Of course, that is not to say that all waterfowlers will be happy.

Of additional interest to the NRB might be the following results from our survey:

- 58% of opinioned respondents prefer State Highway 64 to divide North and South Zones.
- All hunters preferred any in-season federal restrictions on the daily scaup harvest be implemented early in the season.
- Over 84% of respondents support increasing the Waterfowl Stamp fee by \$5.

We encourage your approval of this proposal.

Bruce Ross

Bruce Ross
Executive Director

P.O. BOX 427 • WALES, WI • 53183-0427

PHONE: 262-968-1722 • WWW.WISDUCKS.ORG • WWAINFO@CENTURYTEL.NET