

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday September 15, 2021

Board Members in virtual attendance: Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Jim Freck, Joe Gonyo, Russ Olson, Pat Smith, and Bruce Urben.

Unable to Attend: Ian Bartelmez, Dennis Fleischer, and Todd Schaller

Also virtually present: Kelcy Boettcher and Bruce Ross

Agenda:

- **6:35 PM – Meeting Convened**

- **6:36 PM – Financials Update**

BoD members received the financials via email and had no questions. The budget continues to be a “good news” story running roughly \$84,000 in the black. Bruce Ross & Kelcy Boettcher will begin the PPP forgiveness paperwork this month.

- **6:39 PM – BBB Accreditation**

Bruce Ross reported that our recent BBB accreditation helped improve WWA’s accounting practices and increased transparency of funding lines relative to taxes, 990, and future audits. The process examined how much WWA spends on fund raising, programs (mission), and administrative costs; BBB for WWA within acceptable standards in all cases. Annual “effectiveness evaluations” are required. Compliance can be achieved by the Executive Director performing evaluations and reporting his findings to the BoD. BBB’s accreditation remains “good” for two years. Bruce Ross will explore BBB’s permissions/limitations of the accreditation. We anticipate using it to aid fund raising.

- **6:47 PM – Executive Director’s Report**

A written report was not prepared for presentation; Bruce Ross briefly addressed two topics: Legacy Gift Giving and WWA’s potential role in wetland mitigation bank management. Bruce, Russ Olson and Kelcy Boettcher plan to combine efforts to purchase and launch the Planned Giving in a Box fundraising initiative during late-September or October. Regarding wetlands mitigation, Peter Ziegler requested the Board be reminded of the opportunity presented to WWA through the wetland bank mitigation opportunity. In short, the wetland mitigation management role brings an endowment that WWA could benefit from. Additionally, by taking on the management role, WWA could open more wetlands to public hunting. The Board acknowledged the benefit and will revisit the issue at a later date.

6:47 PM – Education R3 Grant Opportunity

Bruce Urben brought the DNR’s R3 Grant opportunity to the Board for a decision to pursue or not to pursue (submission deadline was midnight 15 September). He and Bruce Ross prepared the grant paperwork requesting \$50,000 for WWA’s use to introduce and retain ten first-year and 15 second-year new waterfowlers from the single female and persons of color demographic categories. If awarded the grant will begin in 2022 and continue through 2023. The grant request capitalizes on the EXPO’s success and anticipated growth to attract newcomers through the multi-faceted slices of exposure afforded during an EXPO (harvest-to-table, wetland management, dog training, merchandise, decoy carving, calling competition, etc.).

The critical question is, “How do we connect with these groups?” Social media and use of an “influencer” (an entity that already has group connections and will broker and guide WWA’s introduction to such groups) are the most likely avenues of approach. WWA’s ongoing social media growth is beneficial, however an approach similar to the media approach used for the

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EXPO (aid by an external media marketing firm) is more likely to yield greater coverage. Regarding an influencer, a DNR contact mentioned an individual, Chris Kilgore and his organization - "Color in the Outdoors" as a potential access. In this case the term "persons in color" includes persons of Black, Native American, Asian, Middle Eastern, etc. descent.

In addition to the EXPO potential attractants include an expanded LTH initiative, mentored hunting opportunities, as well as a larger approach similar to that which Milwaukee/South Suburban Chapter does with an extended program that includes Hunter Safety, gun handling and use at a local trapshooting facility in culmination with a released pheasant hunt over dogs and on private land.

Benefits: If awarded the grant, WWA could hire a part-time or limited-time grant manager who could also aid EXPO management, thus allowing the Executive Director to shift a significant number of man-hours expended on this year's EXPO back towards his primary WWA responsibilities. Further, WWA gains greater exposure and growth in membership and brand recognition, thus growing in size, name recognition, and brand acceptance.

Risks: If we fail to achieve the stated growth and retention goals, WWA takes a potential credibility hit. Success will depend on increased volunteerism in the form of making and maintaining contacts to the target audience and increased mentorship responsibilities (fiscal and manpower). Note: WWA will receive grant reimbursement on an "as-we-go" basis, meaning WWA receives reimbursement for expenses as we submit a claim against the approved grant. There are roughly ten draws allowed against the grant, thus allowing WWA not to tie up significant amounts of cash.

George Ermert motioned to "Accept the proposal to submit the R3 Grant application." Russ Olson seconded the motion; the Board unanimously voted in favor of the motion.

- **7: 30 PM – Committee Updates**

Habitat Committee (Jim Freck presented): The EXPO resulted in four new wetland habitat applications. Currently, six jobs are permitted and funded. The committee is working on a rice planting initiative for Collins Marsh near Manitowoc. The rice project is notable in that it is not in Northern Wisconsin, and if successful may result in similar efforts within other regions.

Education Committee (Bruce Urben presented): Post-EXPO, the Education committee's time focused on R3 Grant research and preparation. The committee remains in contact with. Work continues with Dr. Orlofske (UWSP) regarding efforts to secure a grant for the avian parasite study in 2022 and updates to the UWSP Museum of Natural History in which WWA will be highlighted. The committee will work to increase awareness of and access to duck and goose banding opportunities in 2022. George Ermert requested the committee keep him informed of the opportunities and changes so he can post information on WWA's FB page. Bruce Urben reported that Dr. Orlofske's ricker breast article had strong viewership; he will continue to work with her to continue similar writings for future newsletters. The Green Bay LTH (15 & 16 Oct) remains a "GO;" additional mentors are welcome.

Development Committee (Dave Elwing presented): As a follow-up to discussions during the Chapter Chair Chat on 11 Aug, Dave Elwing accompanied Marv Tibbitts to the Reedsburg Outdoor Club's monthly business meeting on 6 September to pitch holding another Meet & Greet at their facility. The Club members approved the idea; we will hold the "Meet & Greet" on 11 December (noon to 4 PM) to bolster Baraboo Chapter's ranks. Target populations will be the Reedsburg, Baraboo, and Dells areas while focusing on the Reedsburg Outdoors Club, and the Lavelle, Hill Point, and Delton Sportsman Clubs. Learning from the Wausau Meet & Greet, we

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will target local newspapers and media stations for advertisement space, as well as area fliers. The Committee hosted the September Chapter Chair Chat on 8 September; the topic was “Retaining WWA Funds at the Chapter Level.” The only chapter to Zoom in was the Milwaukee/South Suburban Chapter (Jimmy Olszewski). While in support of the concept, Jimmy acknowledged that his chapter was small and might not benefit overly from the initiative. That led to a great discussion about his family-run chapter’s family-focused Hunter Safety/mentored shooting/pheasant hunting program. WWA seed money could be placed against this “education Mission” and if the R3 Grant is approved, Jimmy’s program could be a great R3 pilot because one of its audiences are Single Mom’s with children. October’s Chapter Char Chat is scheduled for 7 PM on 13 October; topic is TBD. Rob Monette and Dave Elwing are working with Abe Shinnors (Wausau) on a Class A gun raffle and calendar sales.

Membership Committee (George Ermert presented): George reported that the EXPO brought in seventeen new memberships (exclusive of calendar sales). Social media hits (FB) remain on the rise climbing towards the 4,000-goal set earlier. George suggested tapping into FB’s advertising capabilities to track viewers’ purchases and thus better connect them to WWA and our sponsors. 2022 calendar sales will become a focus during the upcoming months.

Policy/Advocacy Committee (Bruce Ross presented): A sandhill crane hunting proposal is being brought forward by Representative Tittle (Manitowoc) on behalf of his farming constituents. George Ermert and Bruce Ross met with Rep Tittle to attempt to add WWA’s support, but to also try to slow the bill’s introduction until a better alliance can be established and Rep Tittle can be better educated on potential pitfalls. Slowing the introduction was not successful, but WWA is on the ground floor for the action, furthering our “Legislative Mission” and our role as the waterfowler’s advocate in Madison. Based upon his experience, George Ermert cautioned the Board that while he fully expects a sandhill hunting bill to come before the legislature this session, he is equally confident that it will not pass because of the rush being placed on it by Rep Tittle.

Bruce Ross met with the Migratory Game Bird Committee to initiate discussions about how to best use the revenues from the state duck stamp’s \$5.00 increase. WWA will benefit from the increase through additional monies being available for approved/ in-the-cue projects, rice planting, and other “shovel-ready” initiatives.

Bruce Ross highlighted this year’s Open Water Zone is in place, but that some problems may arise because hunting within offshore marsh grass will be considered as hunting within the Open Water Zone and not the Northern or Southern Zones. Hunter education is needed, and he will work with the DNR to craft proper “warnings” to ensure hunters do not inadvertently illegally hunt within the Big Water Zone before season opens. (Northern, Southern, and Open Water Zones open 25 Sep, 2 Oct, and 16 Oct, respectively) The most likely area of concern will be the Marinette area.

- **7:52 PM – Class A Online Sales Review.**

Bruce Ross met with the attorney that reviewed WWA’s Class A sales procedures following last month’s Board meeting. The attorney made a number of written recommendations that Board members reviewed in advance of this meeting. While in most cases the recommendations did not alleviate risks, they adequately minimize or mitigate risk to WWA while concurrently demonstrating a good faith, proactive organizational effort to comply to WI Department of Administration (DoA) guidance. Bruce Ross posed two questions to the Board: 1) “Do we want to continue Online Class A sales?” and 2) “Do we agree with instituting a “check the box”

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Wisconsin residency requirement as a means of due diligence to ensure we only sell to in-state residents?" The Board answered "Yes" to both. WWA's Calendar Raffle sales procedures will undergo a similar review and guidelines in the future. George Ermert motioned (Pat Smith seconded) to accept all recommendations to revise WWA's Class A online raffle procedures and to move calendar raffle discussions to a later date. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion. Bruce Urben recommended that Chapter Chairs review WWA's amended Class A policies and Procedures prior to conducting any further online Class A raffles. All Board members concurred.

- **8:10 PM – EXPO Update**

Based upon this year's successes and the need to move forward with EXPO 21 wrap-up and EXPO 22 planning, the discussion focused on what WWA's role (leader or steering group member) and, more specifically, what the WWA Executive Director's role should be regarding EXPO 22. Bruce Ross reported that during the initial post-EXPO Steering Group meeting, all EXPO partners except Ducks Unlimited "rogered up" to remain on the EXPO 22 Steering Group. George Ermert expressed concern relative to the Executive Director's heavy involvement during EXPO 21 and that WWA was being shorted by the Executive Director's time and attentions being so heavily focused on EXPO planning and execution. The Executive Director's inability to focus on identifying additional external funding sources was cited as the primary concern. George and Pat Smith recommended hiring an EXPO Lead to shift EXPO responsibilities from the Executive Director. The majority of Board members saw merit to WWA retaining the Steering Committee Leadership role and the Executive Director filling that responsibility, at least for EXPO 22. All Board members agreed EXPO planning needs to continue. George Ermert recommended the Board not vote on WWA's leadership role until further discussions relative to EXPO leadership and its impact upon WWA's daily operations can be discussed in greater detail.

Bruce Urben motioned (Mike Depies seconded) that WWA remains involved with the EXPO as long as WWA and Bruce Ross have the lead for 2022." The motion carried with one dissenting vote.

- **8:30 PM – Retention of Funds at Chapter Level**

In the interest of time and in light of the fact this was an "update" versus a "decision" topic, the Board chose to move discussions relative to retaining funds at a local chapter level to a later date.

- **8:31 PM – Hall of Fame Discussion**

As discussed during August's BoD meeting, a Director is needed to chair the 2021 Hall of Fame (HoF) nomination review/awarding efforts. Following an initial request by the President for a volunteer to chair the HoF Committee that met with no volunteers, the President suggested not selecting new HoF members for 2021. Following further discussions regarding the value of recognizing strong volunteer donations, timelines, time commitments, etc., Pat Smith volunteered to lead the 2021 HoF Committee. Other HoF Committee members include Ian Bartelmez, Loren Voss, and John Regan – past HoF Chair.

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- **8:37 PM – President’s Recap/Action Items**

Bruce Urben’s recap of the evening’s agenda, action items, and decisions includes:

- 1) The Financial Report shows WWA to be substantially in the black.
- 2) We discussed BBB accreditation and how WWA can best use this to our advantage. The Executive Director will consult BBB to identified parameters (permissions/restrictions) of using the accreditation in daily correspondence, for fund raising purposes, etc.
- 3) The Board received reports from each state-level committee.
- 4) The Board received State Committee updates
- 5) Revisions to WWA’s online Class A Raffle procedures passed, and all Chapter Chairs will be required to review the updated procedures prior to conducting new Class A raffles.
- 6) The Board voted in favor of WWA’s Executive Director, Bruce Ross, and as an organization, WWA leading EXPO 22.
- 7) The Board accepted Pat Smith as the 2021 HoF Chair.

- **8:40 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

The next board meeting will be Wednesday 20 October from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM via Zoom.