

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday April 20, 2022**

Board Members virtually present: Kevin Banaszak, Ian Bartelmez, Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Dennis Fleischer, Joe Gonyo, B.J. Grassmann, Russ Olson, Todd Schaller, and Bruce Urben

Also virtually present: Bruce Ross

Unable to Attend: Kelcy Boettcher (Vacation) & Pat Smith (Medical)

Agenda:

- **6:33 PM – Meeting Convened**

- **6:34 PM – Agenda Repair**

Bruce Ross requested that a few moments be spent discussing the Internal Grant Program during this BoD meeting.

- **6:35 PM – Financial Report**

Bruce Ross presented highlights of the financial report that Kelcy Boettcher emailed to all Board members. WWA's budget is roughly \$20K ahead of projections thanks to Appleton and Green Bay Chapters reconciling early. George Ermert asked how wood duck box sales were going. Bruce Ross reported that roughly 100 kits/boxes were sold, yielding between \$2.0-\$2.5K. Mike Depies reported that only one kit and 13 assembled boxes were left. The majority of sales were online. The BoD agreed to continue online sales until all kits/boxes are sold. B.J. Grassmann highlighted the need to identify wood sources sooner-rather-than-later for next year's sales.

George Ermert also asked why the calling and carving contests had budget lines in the WWA budget if they are conducted in conjunction with the EXPO. Bruce Ross explained that Sherpers is a \$1.6K sponsor for the calling contest and the carving line reflects anticipated entry fees collected from entrants. Bruce Urben pointed out that typically WWA budgeted for prize ribbons, advertising, and cash prizes, but for 2022 those costs are being born through sponsorships. George Ermert suggested that since the contests are part of the EXPO, their budget lines should be dropped from the WWA budget. No decision was made regarding the matter.

Ian Bartelmez asked when the BoD approved hosting the carving and calling contests, and if expenditures of WWA funds had also been approved. Bruce Ross re-confirmed that contest expenses are covered by the EXPO, not directly by WWA. Ian Bartelmez expressed caution against tapping WWA sponsors too often (i.e., Sherpers) so as not to burn out their good will. However, Bruce Ross reported that the reverse is being seen; long-time sponsors are bringing more cash to the table because of marketing opportunities afforded by the EXPO.

- **6:50 – Executive Director's Report**

EXPO. Bruce Ross reported the EXPO is financially solid already with roughly \$5K of in-kind advertising, (3) \$2.5K level sponsors, and (3) \$1.5K level sponsors. Additional sponsors are still expected, and the 2021 EXPO generated roughly \$20K that remains available. Booth spaces remain available for rent, plus the anticipated 4K attendees should generate roughly \$32K. While still in the works, Scheels may become a major contributing donor with a 3-year sponsorship for EXPOs 23/24/25.

EXPO 22 will have less speakers than EXPO 21 to avoid space and volume conflicts; two versus three stages will host the speakers providing a greater distancing and space/volume deconfliction.

The EXPO's social media following is growing. The predominant crowd is 18-35 years old ... the same age group WWA needs to target to become members.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday April 20, 2022

Bruce Urben reminded the BoD that several months ago concern was expressed that Bruce Ross's time was being dominated by the EXPO and that an EXPO Co-Chair was desired. Toward that end, Mark Kakatsch (Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Chair) recently stepped forward to co-chair EXPO 22. Todd Schaller & Jeff Hintz will co-chair volunteer identification/coordination for EXPO 22.

During the most recent EXPO Steering Committee Bruce Ross asked the EXPO Steering Committee members their thoughts about how EXPO net proceeds should be utilized. Rather than accumulate excess funds, Bruce Ross suggested the Steering Committee consider a way to support conservation scholarships, habitat work, or target R3 (Recruit, Retain, Reactivate) initiatives. No decisions were made, but the EXPO Steering Committee will continue to discuss the issue.

Mike Depies asked if the EXPO has a focus to attract a "younger crowd," to which Bruce Ross responded that the EXPO is marketed as a "family friendly" event and that all ages are encouraged to attend. Regarding youth attendees, although DU chose not to host EXPO 22's Youth Zone, archery, pellet guns, and other youth-focused activities will still be present. Kevin Banaszak asked what age group Mike meant when he asked about a "younger crowd;" Mike confirmed that he meant up to 18 years old.

To continue to get a better understanding of "who" attends and "why" they attend, Ian Bartelmez suggested randomly placing questionnaire boxes around the EXPO asking respondents to indicate: 1) How they heard about the EXPO, 2) Their age, and 3) their sex.

Grants. Bruce Ross briefly touched upon the topic of "Grants." There are two volunteers researching GIS-related grants for WWA's benefit. WWA's Internal Grant program will be addressed later during this meeting's agenda.

- **7:13 PM – DNR Collaboration**

Bruce Ross, Todd Schaller, and Peter Ziegler met with the DNR's Wildlife Director, Eric Lobner, on March 18th to discuss Wildlife's internal re-organization. Of keynote to WWA, Taylor Finger's responsibilities as the DNR's waterfowl biologist will expand to include all Wisconsin game birds, thus potentially diluting his ability regarding waterfowl. The re-organization is primarily manpower-driven (adjusting to manage vacancies) versus fiscally-driven. WWA may be able to assist the DNR through land management responsibilities for properties that the DNR does not have the manpower to manage and oversee wetland restoration. Through state, federal and non-profit funding, WWA may be able to hire a person to help manage state-level wetland restoration projects. WWA needs to identify sufficient funds to off-set 25% of the individual's salary (Pittman-Robertson or other funding streams will pay the balance). This is a potential utilization for some of the EXPO's net funds. Bruce Ross raised this topic to inform the BoD; a decision was neither solicited nor desired at this point in time.

- **7:25 PM – 2021 Membership Demographic Survey**

The Development Committee's Kevin Banaszak and Dave Elwing provided initial results from the 2021 Membership Demographic Survey during March's BoD meeting. George Ermert suggested the Membership & Marketing Committee collaborate with the Development Committee to capture the results in the form of a PowerPoint presentation that could be further reviewed and used by other committees and chapters; George Ermert presented that effort to the BoD. The presentation will be posted on the WWA Board site and distributed to chapter chairs for their review and use. General take-aways: 1) in the future we need to be more proactive determining survey results (the Development Committee took 10 months to consolidate results and provide

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday April 20, 2022

usable results); 2) similarly, action items need to be identified and actions taken within a reasonable timeframe; 3) members (16% of respondents) want to volunteer - - we need to do a better job of publicizing volunteer opportunities (habitat, education); 4) membership is concentrated in Eastern Wisconsin (33 of 72 counties), but members hunt across the state - - we need to examine how to gain a presence in Western Wisconsin through membership and habitat projects; 5) the majority of respondents (81%) indicated they hunt public lands (55% public & 25% public/private mix) - - WWA needs to support habitat and legislative initiatives that support public lands; 6) social media can yield much more value to WWA than it currently does - - EXPO 22's biggest social media hits are 18-35 year olds (only 10% of respondents were 18-34 years old).

Bruce Urben asked committees to continue reviewing the survey to identify other take-aways and action items that can better position WWA for success. George Ermert will collaborate with Kelcy Boettcher upon her return to post the survey presentation on the WWA website.

A follow-up survey is planned for social media release; the June survey went out via email. While a number of survey shortfalls were identified (requiring answers to all questions, asking too many "ranking" questions, etc.), Todd Schaller recommended not changing the survey too drastically, otherwise its results will not be able to be compared with initial survey results.

- **7:54 Chapter Reorganization Update**

A written update with proposed chapter charter tiers and benefits was provided as part of the BoD read-aheads. Board and chapter input is needed before any decisions can be made. In the interest of time and to continue to move forward, Bruce Urben asked all Board members to review the current proposal and provide feedback to the ad hoc committee through Bruce Ross NLT 1 May to allow consolidation and distribution to chapters prior to May's BoD meeting on May 18th.

- **8:06 PM – How WWA Recognizes/Awards People Discussion**

Following feedback received after the 2022 Policy Maker of the Year recognitions of Representative Born and Governor Evers, Ian Bartelmez suggested the BoD examine "how" and "why" WWA recognizes individuals. He received several negative comments regarding Governor Evers's recognition, including comments from long-time local chapter sponsors/donors. Additionally, a number of negative posts were made on the WWA FaceBook page. The negative FaceBook posts were removed resulting in concerns being expressed that the Board is not receptive to WWA member opinions. A lengthy discussion regarding the polarized political environment, and the connotations associated with "honoring" versus "recognizing" or "thanking" an individual ensued. Also, the value of this discussion being "a teaching moment" was highlighted to ensure the Board does not allow itself (and WWA) to become embroiled in the polarized political environment, stripping away positive gains made to date. As George Ermert highlighted to the BoD, this was the first time in the 20 years he's been associated with lobbying on the Hill that significant conservation gains were achieved thanks to WWA's policy efforts. He further suggested that if WWA wishes to continue achieving goals, WWA needs to continue to recognize /award policy makers that champion our causes (as Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, and many other non-profits do). Dennis Fleischer suggested that the BoD proactively reach out to any sponsors that expressed misgivings relative to continued WWA support like those received by Ian Bartelmez and Kevin Banaszak are (Kevin reported that he too received concerns from several Midland Wings sponsors/donors) to explain "why" the PMOTY awardees were selected. George Ermert reported that the WWA FaceBook page received "Zero Unlikes" as a result of the

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday April 20, 2022**

recognitions. Bruce Urben reminded the Board that it was a Board decision to recognize both individuals as Policy Makers of the Year based upon their 2021 contributions to conservation, and that ultimately it becomes the responsibility of each Board member to be able to explain that decision to anybody who questions the recognition. Regarding removal of negative or obscene FaceBook comments from the WWA website, the website is the property of WWA and as such, WWA has the right and a legal authority to remove any posts believed not to further WWA's mission and beliefs.

- **8:34 PM – BoD Retreat**

B.J. Grassmann previously suggested the BoD hold a physical meeting, as was done prior to February's Annual Meeting. The suggested time frame is mid-September (post EXPO and pre-hunting season). Bruce Ross offered the Ne-Pee-Nauk Hunt Club near Lake Puckaway as a potential location for an overnight venue. Bruce is a club member. The Board members present agreed that it was a good idea. B.J. Grassmann and Bruce Ross will examine dates and return during May's BoD meeting with suggested dates and a schedule of events.

- **8:37 – Internal Grant Program**

Bruce Ross announced that to date, no chapters applied for any internal grant money and suggested the reason was because the information had not been sufficiently broadcast or understood by chapters. He will push the information through several venues but asked the Board's permission to also extend deadlines for submissions and decisions by several months. The BoD concurred.

- **8:39 PM – President's Recap/Action Items**

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

- 1) George Ermert will distribute the 2021 Membership Demographic Survey to committees and chapters for review/reference.
- 2) BoD members need to review the draft Chapter Charter Reorganization initiative and provide feedback to Bruce Ross NLT 1 May.
- 3) B.J. Grassmann and Bruce Ross will provide the BoD with recommended dates and a schedule of events for a Board retreat in September.
- 4) The Board needs to revisit the discussion whether the WWA Carving and Calling Competition budget lines should remain in the WWA Annual Budget or are they better suited to be included in the EXPO's budget based upon the current construct.

- **8:44 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting via Zoom at 6:30-8:30 PM on May 18th.