

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association  
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday September 20, 2023**

**Board Members virtually present:** Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Dennis Fleischer, Jim Freck, Shawn Gibbons, Joe Gonyo, B.J. Grassmann, Russ Olson, Todd Schaller, Kim Shady, Bruce Urben  
**Also virtually present:** Bruce Ross, Kelcy Boettcher, Anna Rzchowski and Jacob Buck (Operator of The Fowl Drake and a WWA sponsor/donor).

**Unable to Attend:** Kevin Banaszak, Ian Bartelmez and Pat Smith.

**Agenda:**

- **6:30 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**
- **6:35 PM – August Board of Directors (BoD) Minutes (President Urben)**

Todd Schaller motioned to approve. Mike Depies seconded. The Board unanimously approved August's Board meeting minutes.
- **6:40 PM – Intro Anna Rzchowski**

Bruce Ross introduced WWA's newest full-time Public Lands Ecologist Anna Rzchowski. Anna expressed her excitement in joining the organization and is looking forward to making an impact with our habitat program. Anna gave a quick overview of her ecological restoration background; she was most recently working with Quercus Land Stewardship on prairies, wetlands and woodlands. The board members each gave Anna a brief introduction on their history with WWA.
- **6:50 PM - Wild Rice (Executive Director Bruce Ross)**

WWA volunteers collected 225 lbs of rice in three hours over two days and Peter bought a little over 1,000 pounds of wild rice. The rice has been spread at Powell Marsh, Brule River Forest area and Crex Meadows.
- **6:53 PM – August Financials (Executive Director Ross & Director of Administration Boettcher)**

Kelcy Boettcher distributed and posted August's financial spreadsheets, accompanied by an explanatory summary. Directors asked no questions and accepted the August financial statement as delivered. Bruce Ross reiterated that we have been successful at diversifying our sources of revenue, which is assisting in the fact that events have been very inconsistent and are averaging a little below budget to date. Bruce Urben asked that all of our board members, as the biggest advocates of WWA, consider becoming sustaining members. Bruce Ross shared one of the Planned Giving videos Russ Olson had prepared for the website and Russ noted that required minimum distributions (RMD's) are perhaps the most beneficial option for those aged 70 ½ or over and he would encourage board members to refer anyone they know of in that age range to our website to view that video. The organization has had two people reach out to date to express interest in including WWA in their planned giving.
- **7:03 PM - NRCS (Executive Director Ross)**

WWA has received the contract from the NRCS for the easement monitoring role that we proposed to them a few months ago. The contract was placed on the board secure page and emailed to all board members. The total three-year value of the contract will be just north of \$300K, which will fund a full-time equivalent person and the support necessary for that person, including overhead and existing staff time. The plan is to hire another person under this contract to work on which easements need to be monitored and what properties need to be visited. The plan is to work geographically around the location of all of our ecologists to minimize travel costs. Each visit may take anywhere from 30 minutes to a few hours and WWA will have 3.5 ecologists working to fulfil the contract and will be monitoring our time and costs per visit. Peter Ziegler reached out to other biologists who do this work to estimate our time. NRCS has outsourced this work in the past, and WWA was a part of that approximately 15-20

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years ago. Bruce Ross plans to sit down with NRCS within the next 30 days of signing the contract to assign properties and in the course of that we'll be able to best determine when to hire to add the additional capacity to take this on and continue our public lands property work. Dave Elwing offered to assist in the contract overview with NRCS. Todd Schaller voted to approve the NRCS contract as proposed. Shawn Gibbons seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- **7:20 PM – ED Update (Executive Director Ross)**

The annual report is in the mail to the "Top 200" plus legislators and other interested friends. Jim Freck has been polling opinions on Hall of Fame and is putting that together as a package for the board to consider. Our relationship with The Fowl Life gets stronger, with Bruce participating in their most recent podcast where it was announced they will be focusing on Wisconsin moving forward. Dave Elwing and Bruce Ross visited Prairie du Chien to help the chapter with a local fundraiser to further stimulate that chapter's involvement. 2023 calendar decoy auction sales are going strong and we've netted approximately \$3500 to date. Mike Depies is channeling some energy towards the 2025 calendar and ideas for similar opportunities within the calendar to generate revenue beyond the raffle. If anyone has any ideas, please reach out to Mike. We're in the middle of our BBB evaluation and the board needs to do an internal weakness/strength evaluation and Bruce is working to provide that to the board soon.

- **7:25 PM – EXPO Report (Executive Director Ross)**

The EXPO went well with approximately 5,000 attendees, a substantial increase over the last two years with quite a few more vendors and booths and now need to reconsider how to manage booth space moving forward. Financially the EXPO exceeded budget by a little bit with a little more than \$60,000 in the bank with a few small bills trickling in yet; sufficient funds to put on next year's EXPO and continue to support the PLE program as well as the scholarship and science piece and continue to incrementally professionalize the EXPO. George Ermert requested that the EXPO steering committee review the scholarship and science research programs and provide the board with more visibility. Goals for WWA name recognition and increasing our market share of waterfowlers in the state will need to be worked on further next year. Additionally, a better connection to the larger components of industry that might be willing to support and sponsor WWA will be a focus moving forward. George suggested a vendor event the night before the EXPO could help in those areas.

- **7:41 PM – Committee Reports (President Urben)**

President Urben called for any Committee updates for which notes/minutes had not already been distributed.

**Education Committee (Todd Schaller):** The committee did not meet in September, work continues on the R3 grant with good progress there with a report planned to be submitted to DNR by the end of September.

**Habitat Committee (B.J. Grassmann):** Wild rice and PLE updates were provided earlier in the meeting. Habitat work has been steady and the wood duck box program is in solid shape.

**Development Committee (Dave Elwing):** Dave thanked Russ again for his Planned Giving in a box effort. Prairie du Chien had their fundraiser, kept calendars to sell and continues their LTH efforts. Berlin, Fond du Lac and Ripon all have some opportunities for chapter development. Midland Wings banquet did quite well and thanks go out to Jim Freck and Mike Depies for their help. Mike is focusing on the 2025 calendar and John Regan would like to take the monthly calendar drawings back up to the Marsh Inn.

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**Membership and Communications Committee (George Ermert):** Nothing new and George reiterated that help is needed with social media.

**Policy Committee (George Ermert):** Sandhill crane briefing is coming up October 25<sup>th</sup> at the state capitol, talking about all things sandhill crane along with the science behind how a hunt is truly established.

- **7:49 PM –President’s Recap/Action Items (President Urben)**

President Urben’s recap of the Board’s agenda, action items, and decisions included:

- 1) The Board approved the NRCS contract.
- 2) Any ideas for 2025 calendar send to Mike Depies along with ideas to raise money through the calendar in addition to calendar sales
- 3) WWA should be discussing with the EXPO Steering Committee greater recognition and leadership.
- 4) Less than half of the board are sustaining members with the goal of 100%.

- **7:53 PM - EXPO by the Numbers (Shawn Gibbons)**

Shawn shared the marketing plan that was executed for the EXPO. Around 700,000 impressions were made on social media with about 300,000 engaged. Paid impressions reached 400,000 and 9,000 visited the website. About 5,000 attended, 1100 were advance tickets, with revenues doubled by decreasing ticket discounts.

**7:59 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

**Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting at 6:30 PM on October 18<sup>th</sup>.**