

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors in Person Meeting – Wednesday April 24, 2024**

Board Members virtually present: Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Jim Freck, Shawn Gibbons, B.J. Grassmann, Makayla Jacobs, Connie Markham, Russ Olson, Todd Schaller, and Kim Shady

Also virtually present: Bruce Ross, Kelcy Boettcher

Unable to Attend: Kevin Banaszak, Joe Gonyo, Pat Smith, and Bruce Urben

Agenda:

- **6:32 PM – Meeting Convened by Vice President Schaller**

- **6:33 PM – March Board of Directors (BoD) Minutes (Secretary Elwing)**

Secretary Elwing asked the Board to approve March's minutes. B.J. Grassman motioned (Shawn Gibbons seconded) that March's Board Minutes be accepted. The Board unanimously approved March's Board meeting minutes.

- **6:34 PM – Financials (Executive Director [ED] Ross)**

March financials are posted on the Board's secure website as per SOP. The actuals remain ahead of budget. No EXPO sponsorship money hit the spreadsheet last month as sponsorships are still in the agreement phase. ED Ross noted that the Valley shoot, while not posted yet, did very well.

- **6:42 PM – Executive Director's Report (ED Ross)**

NRCS Drone Proposal. ED Ross informed the Board that he submitted a grant proposal to establish a land surveillance drone program that will be used to more efficiently support NRCS and WDNR assessment and restoration contracts. If approved, WWA's partners within this five-year program will be UWSP academic personnel and Stantec, a drone technology and remote imagery company. The total proposal is valued at \$1,002,000 and includes two drones, software packages, personnel support, and overhead. Shawn Gibbons asked what the anticipated response time was, and ED Ross responded that it would be three to four months.

EXPO Update. ED Ross informed the Board that WWA's bid for a Wisconsin Department of Tourism grant was unsuccessful. However, Shawn Gibbons was able to secure a \$5,00 marketing fee from The Fowl Life and Banded companies. Sponsorship commitments are up to \$32,500, which is higher than previous years. ED Ross reported that the Women's Zone (led by Connie Markham) and the Youth Zone efforts are progressing nicely. He also reported that Ducks Unlimited and WDNR both signed on as Gold Sponsors (\$1,700 commitment) and asked the Board if the Association should do the same; WWA was a 2023 Gold Sponsor.

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Recognition. President Urben, on WWA's behalf, recently accepted WWF's Affiliate Organization of the Year Award. ED Ross also noted that Ryan and Jessica Peterson, who are responsible for implementing WWA's Wood Duck Classroom Program, were honored as WWF's Wildlife Educators of the year. George Ermert asked if WWF planned any press releases and encouraged WWA's media team to do so in an effort to gain positive awareness with groups beyond WWA's normal demographics, much in the same vein as the number of podcasts ED Ross recently participated in.

EXPO Media Update. Shawn Gibbons updated the Board on efforts to better market EXPO 2024 which include 8-second bursts on digital billboards along north and southbound lanes of Hwy 41 which display 1,000 times per day, streaming Hulu and Disney+ ads broadcast throughout a 2.5 hour drive from Oshkosh, and better event signage, to name just a few.

George Ermert asked if booths/exhibitors were up/down/on par with last year. Bruce Ross responded that May 1st is the deadline for "1st right of refusal" for previous sponsors. That said, exhibitors are expected to increase from 135 in 2023 to 150 in 2024. Banded will host a free

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beer and food party during the EXPO's final two hours to help keep attendees on site until the EXPO's end. Another "sponsor first" in 2024 is that the EXPO finally has a dog food sponsor – Eukanuba Dog Food.

Recruiting & Recurring Donations. ED Ross explained that while WWA's Planned Giving marketing contract is complete, the Association, through Russ Olson's oversight, will continue to target recurring donations, life memberships, and financial gifting (bequeathments, EOY distributions, etc.).

- **7:01 PM – Public Lands Ecologist (PLE) Program – One Year In (PLE Pfof)**

Mark Pfof delivered an update on various PLE assessments and projects including the White River Fishery Area in Waushara County, Navarino Wildlife Area is found in Shawano and Waupaca Counties, Peter Helland in Columbia County, Ertmer GHRA & Deppe Wildlife Area in Winnebago County, The White River Marsh in Green Lake County, a DOT Mitigation site in Brown County and Dyer's Slough in Marinette County.

- **7:18 PM – EXPO Gold Sponsorship Decision (VP Schaller)**

As highlighted during the ED Update, DU and WDNR signed on as EXPO 2024 Gold Sponsors and the question was asked, "Should WWA renew our Gold Sponsorship?" A Gold Sponsorship costs \$1,700 and comes with premiere billing, signage, and event sponsorship credit. Dave Elwing asked if the budget could absorb the cost, to which ED Ross responded that it could as part of normal operating costs. Dave Elwing, Todd Schaller, B.J. Grassmann, and Kim Shady spoke in favor of resuming the Association's Gold Sponsorship. B.J. Grassmann motioned (Shawn Gibbons seconded) that WWA renew its EXPO Gold Sponsorship. The Board unanimously supported the motion.

- **7:20 PM – Strategic Vision / KPIs / Planning (ED Ross)**

In an effort to continue developing an Association strategy vision, long-term / intermediate / near-term goals, and quantifiable key performance parameters ED Ross showed the Board the Development Committee's work-in-progress Sustainability Development Plan which included goals, responsibilities, annual projected growth, and strategies/initiatives to attain them. The sample was detailed and analytically supported throughout each mission/sub-mission presented.

VP Schaller asked what the best "way-ahead" for the other committees should be in order to be prepared to develop similar plans and encouraged committee chairs to contact Bruce Ross prior to their next committee meeting to do so.

- **7:36 PM – Calendar Planning (ED Ross for Mike Depies)**

The Calendar Committee continues to meet weekly or more frequently if needed. As discussed during previous BoD meetings, the calendar's selling price will increase to \$30, but doing so enables better prizes, including more guns. While the committee acknowledges that selling a \$30 calendar may result in less sales 5,000 calendars will be printed. The committee projects that more guns (Winchester, GForce, CZ, Stoeger, Ruger), name brand merchandise (Vortex, Yeti, Lucky Duck, Browning, Drake, OnX, and Urban Decoys), and better eye-appeal will offset the \$10 price increase. Selling 3,500 (versus ~4,300 as done for 2024) will allow the Association to spend \$18,000 on prizes while still matching the approximate net revenue of the 2023 and 2024 calendar sales.

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George Ermert asked when the calendars will be ready for sale to which ED Ross responded, “Mid-July.” Dave Elwing suggested that to reach a broader demographic, the Association advertises calendar sales in Wisconsin Outdoor News (WON).

- **7:16 PM – Committee Reports (VP Schaller)**

Membership/Communications (Shawn Gibbons). The committee launched a membership campaign in April with the goal of attracting (50) new members. (26) already joined, but the data captured reflects a high open or website hit, but a very small follow-through/buy rate for both email and social media deliveries (i.e. 40% email open rate but single digit commitment rate). Shawn Gibbons informed the BoD that one more email push will occur; as enticement, any new member will also receive free admission to EXPO 2024. Shawn Gibbons and Connie Markham will study trends in an effort to improve results prior to the next membership campaign. George Ermert encouraged more frequent/pro-active membership future drives.

Habitat (B.J. Grassman). Wood duck box sales wrapped up with 105 boxes or kits sold/distributed to chapters. Sales resulted in successfully enabling program sustainment (each box yields roughly a \$34 profit). Dave Elwing asked when new box production would start as 2025’s raffle calendar will feature several wood duck boxes and will encourage people to check/install boxes during the November through March timeframe. B.J. Grassmann explained that the correctional facility had some production delays but noted that the problem is hopefully resolved. Based upon the profit margin, George Ermert asked if expanded sales was sustainable and if so, how should we do it? Dave Elwing suggested advertising in WON. ED Ross suggested we need to make sure supply is adequate to meet any growing demand. Additionally, the committee is making plans for the 2024 wild rice harvest.

Policy Committee (George Ermert). The Policy Committee’s focus is on bringing the Sandhill Crane (SHC) Legislative Council Study to fruition through voting on 26 April. Success looks extremely favorable, after which minority party and public membership will be decided. The study sponsor, Representative Paul Tittl, and the Vice Chair, Senator Romaine Quinn, both know WWA and are supportive of our efforts.

Education Committee (Todd Schaller). The Education Committee is focused on fleshing-out plans to advance the committee’s Strategic Vision / KPIs / Planning goals.

Development Committee (Bruce Ross). Nothing further to add beyond the discussion already held relative to the committee’s Strategic Vision / KPIs / Planning goals.

- **8:13 PM – Vice President’s Recap/Action Items (VP Schaller)**

VP Schaller’s recap of the Board’s agenda, action items, and decisions included:

- 1) The Board unanimously approved March’s Board minutes.
- 2) The Board unanimously approved WWA’s resuming EXPO Gold Sponsorship level.
- 3) Committee chairs were tasked to work on their committee’s strategic vision, goals, and KPIs prior to May’s BoD meeting.

- **8:5716 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting at 6:30 PM on May 15th.