

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association  
Board of Directors in Person Meeting – Wednesday May 15, 2024**

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

**Also virtually present:** Kelcy Boettcher and Bruce Ross

**Unable to Attend:** Joe Gonyo and Russ Olson

**Agenda:**

- **6:33 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**

- **6:34 PM – April Board of Directors (BoD) Minutes (Secretary Elwing)**

Secretary Elwing asked the Board to approve April's minutes. B.J. Grassman motioned (Jim Freck seconded) that April's Board Minutes be accepted. The Board unanimously approved April's Board meeting minutes. Secretary Elwing informed the Board that minutes from May's Executive Committee held May 13<sup>th</sup> are posted on the Board's secure webpage.

- **6:34 PM – Financials (Director of Administration [DA] Kelcy Boettcher and Executive Director [ED] Ross)**

DA Boettcher posted April financials on the Board's secure website as per SOP. ED Ross brought the Board's attention to the Association's recently received 2023 Financial Compilation (the Compilation is also posted on the secure webpage) and explained its purpose. ED Ross briefly explained the purpose and process required to produce this level of financial overview. B.J. Grassman asked, "What triggers the next level of review?" ED Ross replied that while a Compilation is sufficient now, should the Association's donation revenue (excluding grants) grow to having \$500K, or should a donor request it, a more detailed Financial "Review" will be required. Further, should donations reach the \$1M mark, the State of Wisconsin requires a full Audit. However, if the Board desires, an incremental step beyond the current compilation, inclusion of Association-generated footnotes, can be incorporated for 2024's Financial Compilation as a step towards higher levels. ED Ross relayed that when President Urben asked the performing CPA for a comparative status of WWA to other non-profits which he has performed financial compilations for, the CPA responded that WWA's on-hand liquid assets exceed 6-month projected expenditures, which is "good" and better than many similar sized organizations.

- **6:40 PM – Executive Director's Report (ED Ross)**

EXPO Update. ED Ross reported that EXPO preparations are moving forward "well and as expected" and that several major donors, including onX and Vortex committed since April. OnX committed to being a \$3,000-level EXPO Sponsor with an additional \$2,000 in marketing funds to secure additional EXPO billboard advertising (thanks to Shawn Gibbons' & Connie Marham's marketing expertise). Further, onX committed \$5,000 worth of onX Elite subscription gift cards to WWA for the 2025 Raffle Calendar. In addition to being an EXPO Sponsor, Vortex also donated \$5,000 which the Association will use to purchase binoculars for the 2025 Raffle Calendar. Swift Waters LLC made more updates to the EXPO website, while planning for the Women's Zone and the Youth Zone also progressed nicely.

VP Schaller (also an EXPO Steering Committee [SC] member) stated that EXPO volunteers are still needed. He thanked Board members for their past support and asked that it continue. Further, he asked that any Directors affiliated with chapters seek chapter assistance as EXPO volunteers. Chapter members can volunteer through the EXPO website or by reaching out to

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him. George Ermert asked if the Association used e-blasts to recruit volunteers to which ED Ross answered that we do not but can.

George Ermert asked ED Ross, “What constitutes success for this year’s EXPO? The EXPO SC’s goals for EXPO 24 are: 1) 6,800 attendees; 2) Netting \$15,000; and 3) Selling 180 vendors/booths. To date roughly 135 vendors signed contracts and filling the delta is achievable.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Update. WWA ecologists are monitoring over 200 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) plots and 20 Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) assessments. Plans to hire a fourth ecologist using NRCS contract funds remain on hold as the Association continues to develop a better understanding of NRCS expectations. In the interim, Anna Rzchowski, Mark Pfof, and Peter Ziegler are performing field duties while Bruce Ross and Kelcy Boettcher perform administrative oversight, all with billable contract hours. Hiring may occur later in the calendar year.

Association Website Update. DA Boettcher sent website Requests for Proposal (RFPs) to five website designers. Responses are due NLT 30 May 2024. ED Ross reminded the Board that funding for a website update was not included in the 2024 Budget and that the Board should expect to discuss and hopefully make a decision during June’s Board meeting. If approved, an updated website could be in place by the end of summer.

- **6:50 PM – Public Lands Ecologist (PLE) Monthly Update (PLE Anna Rzchowski)**

PLE Rzchowski summarized efforts to monitor and develop easement management plans for the 20 WRE properties as well as the combination of 120 new and existing CRP contracts in Grant County. CRP contracts tend to be simpler to manage because they are usually erosion management efforts achieved through grassland or prairie restoration. To gain better perspective, VP Schaller asked what the acreage of these properties tends to be; PLE Rzchowski responded that CRP parcels range from as small as ½ acre to 100 acres, while WRE easements tend to be in the 50-100 acres range. ED Ross amplified that one of the reasons the Association sought this contract out was to gain better insight as to NRCS’ needs and thus to expand the Association’s means of support (and increase recurring revenue).

Regarding WWA’s DNR PLE support, PLE Rzchowski updated the Board on several ongoing efforts including Navarino Wildlife Area (Shawano and Waupaca Counties), Peter Helland Wildlife Area (Columbia County), Allen Creek (Rock County), White River Fishery Area (Waushara County), and efforts within the Kettle Moraine Southern Unit (KMSU) (Waukesha County).

- Navarino (16-acres) received \$8,000 in DNR General Permit (GP) fees funding.
- Helland (125 acres) is awaiting permit approval.
- Allen Creek (80 acres) is a mixed marsh and upland property for which DNR & NAWCA funds are being sought to remove drain tiling as a means of wetland restoration.
- White River Fishery & KMSU are awaiting permit approval as is the KMSU (80 acres) WDNR fund the KMSU work and WWA will provide technical assistance for the project; this allows WWA funds to be stretched to address other projects.

In closing, PLE Rzchowski thanked the Board for the recently acquired survey equipment as it significantly speeds up surveying, in turn allowing PLEs to be more efficient and make better use of their time. ED Ross stated that WDNR paid for 75% of the acquisition and that the Association is in the process of purchasing a second set of equipment.

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George Ermert asked if PLEs would be onsite during construction efforts to take photos or video to place on social media to better show Association accomplishments performed on member's behalf.

President Urben volunteered to coordinate local television coverage for work performed at Navarino.

George Ermert asked how many projects would be completed by the year's end. PLE Rzczowski and ED Ross estimated that roughly 200 acres (3 projects) might optimistically be completed by the end of the year due to uncertainties regarding permitting, funding, weather and contractor availability.

VP Schaller suggested that the Association clarify the term "wetland acres" during any press releases or public service announcements clarify that while all efforts result in habitat, not all result in expansion of hunt-able lands.

- **7:11 PM – Strategic Vision (SV) / Key Performance Parameters (KPIs) / Planning (ED Ross)**

President Urben started the discussion by stating his opinion that the SV is a key element needed for the Association to move forward and that all Directors should be involved.

ED Ross presented a draft, spreadsheet-based SV with KPIs to the BoD and walked the Board through one Committee's portion to enable a better understanding of the methodology behind developing goals and measurable PKIs. The Association's efforts should be reflected within the SV and the expanded levels of it should capture actions necessary to successfully achieve those goals. PKIs allow success to be measured. Unsuccessful efforts can be evaluated and either discarded or, if deemed to have merit, have more resources applied. George Ermert shared his opinion that the SV is a living document and that getting overly detailed within the actions and KPI was unnecessary. Dave Elwing concurred that the SV was a living document, but stated his belief that detailed actions are needed to develop and sufficiently test courses of action. Shawn Gibbons agreed with the need for an SV and encouraged a balance between "execution" and "overhead," stating that the most important aspect is moving the Association forward and not to get bogged down in administrative oversight.

President Urben asked what the next step should be. ED Ross explained that Committees need to review, modify, and adopt their draft goals and be prepared to present them to the BoD during June's Board meeting. President Urben then tasked each Committee to take ED Ross' request for action and to be prepared to further discuss and make decisions during June's Board meeting.

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

2025's raffle calendar planning is wrapping up; most recent efforts focused on editing, rule reviews/updates, and making the cover "sell" the calendar despite the increased selling price by reflecting merchandise enhancement over previous years. Upgraded examples include better (and more) firearms, an increase in Vortex binoculars from 1/month to 1/week, incorporating onX Elite subscriptions with each WWA knife, and including a Yeti coffee mug with every Tera Verde coffee gift box - to name a few.

Enhanced marketing and increased sales will be critical to overcoming the selling price increase and deeper expenditure to award better prizes. The Association will break even after selling (2,000) \$30 calendars; roughly (4,300) 2024 calendars were sold at \$20 each. If all 2025 calendars (4,500) are sold, the Association stands to net \$80,000. President Urben asked each Director to consider taking a case (100 calendars) and distributing them to places of business to expand sales.

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George Ermert informed the Board that while social media contributed to past calendar sales, artificial intelligence-assisted monitoring makes it increasingly more difficult to post and advertise anything gun-related on social media venues. Consequently, online marketing may be negatively affected. Connie Markham stated she will make “dummy” calendar covers so as to avoid triggering social media sanctions.

- **7:47 PM – Board Vacancy (President Urben)**

President Urben accepted Kevin Banaszak’s resignation from the Board and doing so created a vacancy. Association By-Laws allow the Board to approve an interim replacement. President Urben suggested that if the Board chose to pursue this course of action, that the Board consider the Association’s greatest area of need – Development – and nominate a person who will be adept in that area. President Urben asked the Directors if they were aware of any such candidates. Dave Elwing injected that while the By-Laws allow for an interim replacement, the more critical thing is that the Board identify and accept “the right” candidate who brings development skills and an understanding of the Association.

President Urben asked each Director to think about who they know and what the Association’s needs are, and then to discuss any potential nominations with Bruce Ross before moving forward or approaching the individual.

- **7:56 PM – Committee Reports (President Urben)**

In the interest of time and based upon Development and Habitat discussions already addressed during the Board meeting, ED Ross suggested simply addressing other committee highlights.

Membership/Marketing (George Ermert). The committee completed its most successful recruiting campaign to date by securing 43 of the 50 memberships targeted, yielding \$2,000 in membership dues. While only five were new memberships, the campaign successfully returned a high number of members who allowed their memberships to lapse.

Habitat (B.J. Grassman). Nothing additional to report.

Advocacy Committee (George Ermert). The Sandhill Crane (SHC) Legislative Council Study is moving forward and the committee is being formed. George Ermert met with Representative Paul Tittl (the study sponsor) to discuss WWA’s preferred committee make-up. In addition to the minority party, WWA recommends that three agriculture groups (Corn Growers, Potato Growers, and the Farm Bureau Federation), four conservation groups (WWA, Delta Waterfowl, International Crane Foundation, and Wisconsin’s Green Fire), and one academic from UW Stevens Point be incorporated into the committee.

Education Committee (Todd Schaller). Nothing additional to report.

Development Committee (Bruce Ross). The Development Committee will meet before the end of the month. This will be the first meeting since February.

- **8:00 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 unanimously approved April’s Board minutes.
- 2) Committees were tasked to review, modify, and adopt their draft goals and be prepared to present them to the BoD during June’s Board meeting.
- 3) Regarding the vacant Director’s position, President Urben asked each Director to consider any known acquaintances, what the Association’s needs are, and then, if a suitable

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candidate is determined, to discuss the nomination with Bruce Ross before moving forward or approaching the individual.

- **8:16 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

**Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting at 6:30 PM on June 19<sup>th</sup>.**