

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors in Person Meeting – Wednesday June 19, 2024**

Board Members virtually present: Mike Depies, George Ermert, Jim Freck, Shawn Gibbons, B.J. Joe Gonyo, 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: Dave Elwing, Russ Olson

Agenda:

- **6:33 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**
- **6:34 PM – May Board of Directors (BoD) Minutes (President Urben)**

President Urben asked the Board to approve May's minutes. Todd Schaller motioned (B.J. Grassmann seconded) that May's Board Minutes be accepted. The Board unanimously approved May's Board meeting minutes.
- **6:35 PM – Financials (Director of Administration [DA] Kelcy Boettcher and Executive Director [ED] Ross)**

DA Boettcher posted May financials on the Board's secure website as per SOP. ED Ross informed the board that while the first five months of event revenue has been strong, the West Allis Summer Bash was canceled and West Allis (older committee) and Waukesha (chair Mike Alaimo is moving to northern WI) chapters are fragile and the staff is working on a strategy to address this. Discussion was held on recruitment possibilities and B.J. offered to contact some duck hunting friends in the Waukesha County area. We received a new \$10,000 life member sponsorship from Rob Kieckhefer, one of the founding members of WWA.
- **6:40 PM – Habitat Review (Project Director Peter Ziegler)**

PD Ziegler presented the board with an update on what's happening in the private lands arena. We have a \$50,000 NAWCA partner grant with Pheasants Forever, with a balance of \$30,000 of that funding going to a single project in Waukesha County. We also have \$75,000 in Duck Stamp, with about \$25,000 from the prior FY, which will be rolled over into the next FY, most of which is committed to projects that could not be completed due to the warm winter. The \$50,000 balance will be coming to us as \$25,000 over the next two fiscal years. We are also working as a partner on a large NAWCA providing us with \$150,000 on two private lands projects located in Dane and Rock Counties. We are partnering in the Glacial Habitat Restoration Area (GHRA) field day on August 23rd in Waupun. We have 12 new project apps that have been reviewed this year, with six approved by the Habitat Committee to move forward with some type of work, and four to five of those likely becoming "full projects". We have ten projects designed and ready to go and five in preliminary stages right now and Peter gave an overview of a few of the projects. B.J. reminded the board about the importance of our private lands program as we are the only organization in the state that assists private landowners with wetland restoration, and that 75% of waterfowl are hatched on private lands.
- **7:03 PM – Executive Director's Report (ED Ross)**

ED Ross reported that he recently attended the DNR Roundtable, with 12-14 in-person and approximately eight more groups attending virtually. There is a structural deficit in the wildlife account with the expectation that they will encounter a \$15M deficit. WWF has put together a team to look at how they can help support filling that hole. While Bruce indicated that WWA will also attempt to help, it is with the understanding that DNR will use the funding in a natural resources' perspective. No announcement has been made on the next DNR secretary at this point.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors in Person Meeting – Wednesday June 19, 2024

Bruce has put together a rough draft of the 2023 annual report and will be sending out an email to committee chairs later this week, asking for their input, with the report expected to be finalized in another month or two.

EXPO planning is coming along well but Bruce reported he is a little disappointed by the current number of vendors, so some consolidation is happening. We took an aggressive position in moving indoor booths outdoors and will have a tent for the new women's zone, and that may have opened up more spaces than are wanted at this time. We did not take an aggressive stance with our marketing efforts towards vendors, but the committee is starting to reach out and the event will finish in the black regardless. If anyone knows of potential vendors, please pass that information on to Shawn. Todd asked that if any board members are interested in volunteering, or know of anyone that would like to, please reach out to him directly and Bruce reminded the board that we will also need assistance in our WWA both at the EXPO.

Delta Waterfowl has selected WWA as their third ever Partner in Conservation, which will be awarded at their waterfowl expo in Baton Rouge, LA, at the end of July. The EXPO steering committee is sending Bruce down to accept the award and overview the very successful Delta expo, which nets somewhere between \$500K-\$1M. Bruce has been directed by the board to try to make the EXPO more of a WWA event and is now asking the board to tell him what that looks like and how that is different from what we're doing now. Todd suggested a stand-alone meeting with board and chapters to go over what goes into the EXPO and what all would be involved in it becoming WWA's EXPO. George reminded the board that in order to grow, WWA will likely have to rely less on volunteers and more on investments into additional staff and the fundraising that would entail.

Bruce reported that we are expanding our Class A raffle offerings, many of which are now featuring quality donated product. We will have an ad in the next issue of *Wisconsin Outdoor News* focused on our Class A's and are considering advertising in the electronic editions. Division of Gaming has changed their online raffle sales regulations, and they now reflect almost exactly what our policies are, so we can expect to see some competition.

- **7:28 PM – Strategic Vision (SV) / Key Performance Parameters (KPIs) / Planning (ED Ross)**

ED Ross informed the board that there are a few more things he needs to do in order to get the strategic plan finalized for board approval, in particular on the professional side of the habitat world, but he is very pleased with where the plan is at right now. Over the next week Bruce will send out the "approval version" to the board, take comments back, with the possibility of having an approval of it before the next board meeting, understanding that it is a "living document" that will be fluid moving forward as the organization grows and adapts.

- **7:31 PM – Calendar Status (Mike Depies)**

The final draft of the 2025 calendar has been approved to go to print. The printer has let us know they are planning to go to print with the calendar yet this month, so we should have them in hand sooner than anticipated. We now need to work on getting calendars out for sale to as many statewide locations as possible and we could use help from all board members in this effort. Bruce Urben asked that each board member consider taking calendars to new locations and reach out to Mike with calendar inventory requests.

- **7:33 PM – Committee Reports (President Urben)**

Education Committee (Todd Schaller). Todd reported that their last meeting was on Strategic Plan efforts and if anyone is interested in duck or goose banding reach out to Todd and he will let you know when and where in your area.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors in Person Meeting – Wednesday June 19, 2024

Habitat (B.J. Grassman). The committee met today and PD Ziegler gave an update and the committee is ramping up efforts to try and increase the harvesting of wild rice by volunteers. This usually occurs end of August-beginning of September. If anyone is interested reach out to B.J.

Development Committee (Bruce Ross). The Development Committee met last month. A postcard is being sent out to our “Top 200” on sustaining memberships.

Advocacy Committee (George Ermert). We are still waiting for ballots to be finalized for formation of committees in the legislature. There are significant delays due to a few issues, including some concerns on names that were put forth for the Sandhill Crane committee, with one member that was recommended being from out of state. There is a possibility that no committees will be authorized due to the tiff between the Senate and Assembly. Bruce and George are having a call with Rep Tittl to talk about the flow and structure of the Sandhill Crane committee and who can come in and present, assuming the committee does go forward.

Membership/Marketing (Shawn Gibbons). Shawn asked that if anyone has anything they'd like posted online to also copy Connie on their requests to Shawn. Connie reported that with the Father's Day BOGO email, we also sold 16 WWA memberships. George reported that the committee will be meeting next month to discuss a fall membership drive.

- **7:43 PM – George Ermert Update (President Urben)**

Bruce informed the committee that George has notified him that he has been retained by DU to do work for their government affairs, focusing on the Knowles Nelson renewal. Bruce reiterated how critical George has been in our legislative efforts. George told the committee that this is a work load issue for his paid work vs his nonpaid volunteer work and he does not see this impeding in any way, but should be more of a benefit as it will allow him to be more tapped into issues that WWA has an interest in.

- **7:50 PM – Website Planning (AD Boettcher)**

Shawn Gibbons and Connie Markham (Swift Waters) excused themselves from the meeting for this discussion.

In mid-April Kelcy put forth a request for website designer contacts to our board and chapter chairs. From that, four potential web designers were identified, who were then sent an RFP on April 30th, with a deadline response date of May 30th. Three designers replied with quotes – our prior design and current host/maintenance firm SunAnt, Swift Waters and Billy Scheffki - and those quotes and a brief summary were posted onto the board secure site on Monday, with instructions sent later that day to the board to please preview the quotes and WWA's Conflict of Interest policy in order to be prepared to vote on and select a company to re-design WWA's website at this meeting. Bruce went over the conflict of interest with Swift Waters. Swift Waters is under contract for us with the Waterfowlers Academy at \$500/month and they are under contact for the EXPO at a rate of approximately \$1300/month. Swift Waters has routinely provided a stated discount of 50%, and while no discount is mentioned in their quote, they have come in significantly lower than the other two quotes. Bruce Urben asked each board member to weigh in with their thoughts. After discussion, Bruce Ross reminded the board that we did not budget for a website so any funding will have to come out of our operating cash. George Ermert motioned to move forward with the RFP as proposed by Swift Waters with the money being allocated from WWA operating expenses. Kim Shady seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- **8:10 PM –President's Recap/Action Items (President Urben)**

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

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors in Person Meeting – Wednesday June 19, 2024

- 1) The board will be receiving an email in the next week or two with the strategic planning documents.
 - 2) President Urben has asked that all board members sell calendars for the organization.
 - 3) Todd Schaller has requested volunteers for EXPO and B.J. is looking for volunteers for Wild Rice – contact them if interested.
 - 4) All board members that are not yet a sustaining member should consider becoming one.
 - 5) Swift Waters will be offered the contract for the re-design of our website, and funding will come out of the operational fund.
- **8:12 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting at 6:30 PM on July 17th.