

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association  
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday November 20, 2024**

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

**Also virtually present:** Kelcy Boettcher, Bruce Ross, and Justin VanDeHey (Guest)

**Unable to Attend:** B.J. Grassmann

**Agenda:**

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

- **6:35 PM – October Board of Directors (BoD) Minutes (President Urben)**

The October board meeting minutes were reviewed and approved without any questions or concerns.

- **6:36 PM – Financials & Calendar Sales Update (Director of Administration [DA] Kelcy Boettcher, Executive Director [ED] Ross)**

DA Boettcher emailed and posted the financial report to Board members prior to the meeting. While still lagging, actual numbers are roughly \$20,000 above budget. Raffle calendar sales exceed 2023 YTD sales with roughly 1,300 sold. Online sales are significantly above historical sales thanks to strong social media pushes. Mike Depies asked if the reformatted calendar stub design facilitated better scanning/auto-reading. ED Ross informed the Board that the Association has just become under contract with the auto-reader, with a test expected in early December.

- **6:35 PM – Executive Director Update (ED Ross)**

**Hall of Fame (HoF) Status.** As it is of a low priority and there is not an imminent need, ED Ross and Jim Freck have not redefined HoF criteria. Consequently, the Board accepted ED Ross's suggestion to defer HoF efforts to 2025.

**Annual Meeting.** Association By-Laws require an annual meeting; it is tentatively set for 18 January 2025, at the Beaver Dam Conservation Club. VP Schaller asked if anybody had ideas as to how to increase participation/attendance. President Urben stated that an annual meeting was conducted at Lambeau Field several years ago and acknowledged that while it was a lot of work, that it was well attended and yielded at least one BoD member. ED Ross reminded the Board that the 2022 annual meeting was conducted via Zoom because heavy snows and poor travel conditions prevented an in-person meeting ... that meeting was well attended. President Urben asked Directors to push annual meeting information out to all chapters and to encourage non-Board members to attend. VP Schaller suggested that the 2026 Duck Hunter's Banquet conducted concurrent with the Duck Hunters Expo, could become a statewide WWA event and thus assume the role as the annual meeting.

**Little Yellow River Update (LYR).** USFWS directed a grant of \$814,858 to the Association to undertake ditch disablements on lateral ditches that feed the LYR. WWA received four bids ranging from \$525,000 to \$13.3 M based upon the LYR Request for Proposal. Prior to being accepted, the lowest bidder withdrew his bid due to health reasons. The next bid was for \$2,319,242 resulting in a shortfall of slightly over \$1.5M. ED Ross is in discussions with USFWS to either identify additional funding or to reduce the scope of work. Once received, ED Ross anticipates a need for a quick-turn acceptance of the USFWS solution. Further, he anticipates that an answer will be required prior to December's Board meeting. Consequently, ED Ross requested BoD guidance as far as how to move forward relative to acceptance of the USFWS

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solution. The BoD agreed that review and decision powers are within the Executive Committee's purview.

**Staff Capacity.** Review and recommendations to divest Waterfowl Hunter Expo responsibilities from WWA staff members continues.

**Website Development Update.** Shawn Gibbons provided the Board with a demonstration and update of the in-progress revised website that Swift Waters is under contract to develop. All Board members were impressed. Shawn Gibbons will release an in-house Beta version for Board members to review and provide feedback on NLT 2 December 2024 to facilitate the website's launch prior to 1 January 2025.

- **7:33 PM – Sandhill Cane (SHC) Legislative Study Group (LSG) Update (VP Schaller)**

The LSG met on 13 November; the focus was on developing proposed legislation. Language for two potential Bills was drafted. One would result in a cost share between farmers and the State for AVIPEL-sprayed seed corn and the second proposed wording for SHC hunting. ED Ross expressed concern that while the AVIPEL proposal was a step in the correct direction, crop damage sustained by non-corn growers remains unaddressed, as does crop damage sustained at any time other than planting season. Further, if a crop damage and a hunting proposal are not linked, a major conservation management tool (hunting) will not be tapped resulting in an ever increasing SHC population bringing more crop damage. The LSG will reconvene in December to attempt to resolve this gap. ED Ross and VP Schaller see these bills as being two complementary parts of a more complete solution.

- **7:43 PM – Waterfowl Hunter Expo Update (ED Ross)**

The Expo Steering Committee has not met since October's BoD meeting, but work / decisions continue. Shawn Gibbons reported that Expo sponsorship costs are being increased (Title from \$10K to \$15K with a minimum of a 2-year commitment, Gold from \$3K to \$4K, Zone from \$2K to \$3K, and Activity to \$2K). Todd Schaller and Shawn Gibbons submitted paperwork for Winnebago County tourism grant based upon the visitors and revenue the Expo brings to Wisconsin Department of Tourism; a response is anticipated prior to the end of the year. Lastly, WDN's Taylor Finger announced his withdrawal from the Expo programming Body due to work commitments; WDNR will remain an active Expo participant and co-host.

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

President Urben asked that all committee reports be posted on the WWA website. ED Ross asked that committee chairs include DA Boettcher when they email their committee notes so that she can further post the notes to the website.

- **7:58 PM – Treasurer Vacancy (President Urben)**

Russ Olson resigned his Directorship and post as Treasurer prior to October's Board meeting. Association By-Laws require that WWA has a Treasurer. President Urben asked for a volunteer to fill the vacancy; no Director volunteered. Consequently, he asked Directors to reconsider and provide a response during November's Board meeting. Based upon his banking/investment background, ED Ross and President Urben discussed the position with B.J. Grassmann. Unfortunately, he is not able to assume the role at this time; ED Ross serves as the "Acting Treasurer" until a new Treasurer steps forward.

- **8:00 PM – BoD Vacancies (President Urben)**

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The Association has two Directorship vacancies, each expiring on 31 December 2025. President Urben asked Directors to provide names and contact information for any candidates to ED Ross and himself. This meeting's guest attendee, Justin VanDeHey, is a potential candidate.

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- **8:02 PM – Public Lands Ecologist (PLE) Program Extension (ED Ross)**

ED Ross is meeting with the WDNR Leadership Team on 10 December to discuss extending PLE Program funding. Funding is set to expire in June 2025. WWA's PLEs provide invaluable services to WDNR, but WDNR is facing a 2025 budget deficit which places PLE funding in jeopardy.

- **8:05 PM - Action Items (President Urban)**

- BoD authorized the Executive Committee to take action on the Association's behalf to review and accept or reject the USFWS LYR grant revision when received.
- Shawn Gibbons will send a link to a Beta version website to Directors for their review and comments. Responses are due NLT 2 December.
- Directors are asked, once again, to become sustaining sponsors with a goal of 100% Association Directors becoming/continuing as sustaining sponsors.
- The Christmas Bash will be held on 5 Dec & Manitowoc's banquet is 7 December.

- **8:08 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

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