

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Board Members present: Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, BJ Grassmann, Scott Hamele, Todd Schaller, Lou Schueller, Kim Shady, and Bruce Urben

Staff Members present: Kelcy Boettcher and Brad Heidel

Guests in Attendance: Brock Rosenkranz

Unable to Attend: George Ermert, Joe Gonyo, Connie Markham, and Pat Smith

Agenda:

- **6:37 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**
- **6:38 PM – Approve November’s Board Meeting Minutes (President Urben)**

Secretary Elwing introduced November’s minutes and motioned that the minutes be approved as written; President Urben seconded the motion. November’s Board minutes were unanimously approved as written.

- **6:39 PM – Financials (Director of Administration [DA] Boettcher)**

DA Boettcher forwarded November’s budgetary spreadsheets and a summary of budget activities to Board members prior to the meeting and noted that the Lakeshore Chapter’s banquet and Waukesha’s Xmas Bash results remained outstanding. While about 30 attendees less than expected, the Bash is expected to exceed budget. For the second consecutive year the Lakeshore banquet is not anticipated to do much more than break even. Calendar sales seem to be on par with 2024; BoD members were asked to help ensure individual sellers collect and submit all stubs NLT 9 January. Brock Rosenkranz, the Association’s recently hired Regional Director (RD) is tasked to streamline 2027 calendar sales and tracking. DA Boettcher stated that a decision as to when to discontinue online sales is needed. DA Boettcher reported roughly 1,250 online 2026 calendar sales, to date.

- **6:49 PM – President’s Topics**

New Director. President Urben introduced the Association’s newest Director, Lou Schueller. Lou is a lifelong waterfowler and strongly believes in WWA’s habitat mission focus.

Director and Officer Elections. President Urben thanked all Association Officers for their continued volunteerism and noted that no Directors opposed any Officer’s re-election. Officer positions include President (Bruce Urben), Vice President (Todd Schaller), Treasurer (Kim Shady), Secretary (Dave Elwing), and Member-at-Large (George Ermert). Additionally, President Urben announced that all five Directors whose terms expire on 31 December (Mike Depies, George Ermert, Scott Hamele, Kim Shady, and Pat Smith) expressed desires to be re-elected. DA Boettcher will initiate an electronic ballot for the Directors to ensure seats are filled prior to the end of the year (EOY); Directors and Chapter Chairs constitute voting members. Officer re-elections will be addressed during January’s Board meeting.

Annual Ethics, Conflict of Interest, and Sexual Harassment Policy Recertification. President Urben noted that Directors and Standing Committee members need to complete their 2026 ethics, conflict of interest, and sexual harassment reviews during January. VP Schaller suggested using Survey Monkey to expedite the process. DA Boettcher also noted that Constant Contact software could be used. DA Boettcher will initiate the recertification process.

Director Grassmann’s Resignation. President Urben announced his reluctant acceptance of Director Grassmann’s resignation from the Board. Director Grassmann plans to remain active within the Association through the Valley Chapter and by continuing as the Habitat Committee Chair. President Urben and the Board praised and thanked Director Grassmann for his contributions as a Board member and for his leadership within the Habitat Committee by

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initiating WWA's wild rice harvests, heading the wood duck box program, and his efforts with the Waterfowl Hunter Expo (WHE), and this year's WHE Hunter's Banquet. Director Grassmann assured the Board that he "wasn't going anywhere; just reassessing his focus efforts."

- **7:06 PM – ED Topics (ED Heidl)**

Storage Unit Inventory & Cleanout. Inventory and clean-out of the New Berlin storage unit was completed on 16 December. Saved inventory and shelving units were erected in the new Reedsburg storage facility. Relocation is anticipated to result in savings of \$3,600 per year.

Grants. No changes to the Association's grants. 4 of 6 required grant EOY reports are submitted, the balance will be completed by 29 December. ED Heidel stated that the staff will concentrate on expending the balance of the Public Lands Ecology (PLE) funds prior to the EOY. ED Heidel, Peter Ziegler, and Bruce Ross have a meeting scheduled with WI DNR's Jason Fleenor to layout a 2026 PLE work schedule and to draft a Memorandum of Understanding between WWA and WI DNR that addresses the PLE program from 1 January 2026 through June 2027.

ED Heidel resurfaced ongoing concerns about grant management as the number, complexity, and fiscal values of WWA's grants continue to increase. ED Heidel and DA Boettcher recently met with the Association's accountants (CLA) and during the meeting CLA demonstrated a software that WWA could use for grant management (cost: \$5,000 per year, down from \$6,000 thanks to ED Heidel's negotiation skills). The Board acknowledged increased difficulties and staff time commitments and unanimously agreed that ED Heidel should purchase a subscription to CLA's software.

Waterfowl Advisory Committee Meeting. ED Heidel represented WWA at WI DNR's Waterfowl Advisory Committee meet on 19 December. WI DNR's Taylor Finger hosted the meeting to discuss dates and formats of the 2026-2030 state waterfowl seasons. The WI DNR will solicit input via questionnaires. ED Heidel emphasized the need to get input from Wisconsin waterfowlers and to present their interests to Madison. President Urben stated that he represents WWA on the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation's Advisory Committee and noted that to prevent duplicative efforts, WWA usually combines efforts with WWF. ED Heidel and the Board agreed, but ED Heidel suggested a coordination meeting prior to questionnaires being sent to all parties. The Board agreed. Secretary Elwing asked if there was any discussion about not having an early teal season due to the number of wood ducks taken during the teal-only season. ED Heidel responded that a teal season is addressed in the questionnaire, but only in terms of when, duration, and bag limit. WI DNR Conservation Wardens present at the meeting did not express concerns regarding wood duck harvesting. VP Schaller commented that this input is really "Phase II" of a flyway-wide effort; Phase I examined an inaugural 3-year period (2023-2025 seasons) and assured the Board that USFWS was seeking input from all flyway states. ED Heidel will distribute an advanced copy of the Questionnaire to Board members. Director Hamele asked if bag limits are included in the questionnaire; ED Heidel responded that they are not.

Lakeshore Chapter. The Lakeshore Chapter remains a challenge in that over the past several year's it's banquet barely breaks even, they refuse to move their bank account from a local bank to BMO (thus giving ED Heidel and DA Boettcher asset visibility), they refuse staff input for raising event efficiency/generating higher revenue, and it's Chapter Chair seems to have increasing competition for his time and energy. 2024 and 2025 were noticeably poor performance years. Former-ED Ross had conversations with the Chair, Steve Dudak, regarding closing the chapter and pulling its charter. They reached a compromise to move the banquet earlier in the FY to increase attendance and revenue. The compromise did not work as

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evidenced by 2025's banquet.

ED Heidel re-surfaced terminating the chapter charter but not doing so before RD Rosenkranz can engage the chapter committee members to determine if there is interest in hosting some other type of event, like a bash, to prevent closing the chapter. Another option discussed was to open a completely new chapter somewhere within the region. ED Heidel will engage Steve Dudak in January and discuss options.

Regional Director (RD) Brock Rosenkranz. ED Heidel introduced WWA's newest RD, Brock Rosenkranz, to the Board. RD Rosenkranz comes to WWA from having been the state's National Deer Association "Field to Fork Coordinator" for the past two years. He also brings experience gained through leadership roles with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and as a longstanding delegate to the Wisconsin DNR Conservation Congress. RD Rosenkranz' contact information is: (608) 604-5000 and brosenkranz@wisducks.org.

Annual Meeting. As agreed during the November Board meeting, WWA's Annual Meeting will be hosted by Meat Eater at their new Brookfield store. ED Heidel asked the board for input regarding a month (April or May) in which to conduct the meeting. The Board chose April. Details will follow.

- **7:46 PM – Committee Updates (Committee Chairs)**

Habitat Committee (Director Grassmann and ED Heidel). The Habitat Committee did not meet in December. Projects continue to be received, but this month's focus is on permitting and administrative processing of approved projects. WWA has 200 wood duck boxes on hand and can easily fulfill chapter requests. McNaughton Correctional Facility will deliver a combined total of 500 assembled boxes and kits by next fall.

ED Heidel informed the Board of two recent discussions he had with private parties regarding new restoration/preservation efforts. One is a property in Jackson County to restore cranberry bogs to productive wetland habitat; the other possibility was raised by a party considering becoming a major donor to WWA. These will be brought before the Habitat Committee as per WWA's approval process.

Policy (ED Heidel). The fight to renew Knowles-Nelson's funding has seen little movement since November's Board meeting. The new proposed Bill removes Legislative fiscal oversight, an ongoing stumbling block with the expiring authorization.

The draft Sandhill Crane bills (crop damage and hunting) are expected to move out of committee for hearing by the Assembly and Senate in January. Lawmakers are in the final push for Wisconsin's legislative session. The Assembly will complete their business by the end of February and the Senate sometime in March. Nothing is certain, so WWA and our partners need to maintain a full court press to get some movement on the Sandhill crane legislation.

Education (VP Schaller and President Urben). EOY R3 reports are complete and the committee is already looking at 2026 events with a goal of increasing one Learn to Hunt (LTH) each year. In addition to generating a newsletter article regarding "The Impact of PFAS on Waterfowl," the committee plans to re-examine research and scholarship grants provided through WHE.

- **8:03 PM – Waterfowl Hunters Expo (WHE) Update (ED Heidel)**

Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grant. VP Schaller reported that the 2025 WHE JEM Grant final report was submitted, which resulted in the Department of Tourism approving a JEM Grant of equal value (\$39,000) to support WHE 2026. The unexpected high value is due to Swift Waters ability to demonstrate marketing influence and impact without incurring additional overhead.

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Location Discussion - Sunnyview Expo Center vs EAA. ED Heidel conducted site visits at both EAA and Sunnyview Expo Center and ED Heidel recommends that the 2026 WHE remain at Sunnyview. The amount of work already accomplished (parking lots paved, landscape seeded, expansion of outdoor water and power, plus a 200' x 200' gravel pad to the east of the main building for additional tentage) led to his recommendation. The EAA facility incorporated a single, non-air-conditioned space with no restrooms. The Board agreed that Sunnyview provides the best option for hosting the 2026 WHE. ED Heidel will remain in contact with the EAA regarding the possibility of hosting WHE 2027 there, if Sunnyview cannot support WHE needs.

Termination of Bast-Durbin (B-D) WHE Support Contract. ED Heidel relayed that B-D notified him that the price for their support for WHE 2026 would be \$26,000 (\$10,000 higher than 2025, no WHE sponsorship, and no additional services). When challenged on the price for supporting WHE 2026, B-D responded that there were no reduced-price options. ED Heidel recommended not renewing B-D's contract. He stated that, based upon his experiences managing Delta Waterfowl's Expo, he can perform the same support provided by B-D, providing former-ED Ross continues performing WWA grant solicitation and management, as offered in his resignation letter. ED Heidel also noted that B-D did no sales work as part of their previous WHE support. ED Heidel discussed the matter with Shawn Gibbons of Swift Waters (SW) prior to December's EXCOM meeting and SW supports terminating B-D's services. However, considering SW's impending retirement, ED Heidel will ensure that bridges are not burned between WHE and B-D in case WHE needs B-D in the future to assume SW's role. ED Heidel stated that he planned to discuss the matter with B-D by 19 December.

President Urben raised WHE Steering Team membership to the Board. Currently B-D is a Steering Team member, as are WI DNR, the Youth Zone, and the Ladies Zone coordinators. As discussed during December's Executive Committee meeting, the EXCOM will assume the role as WHE Steering Team, as WWA's ED, President, VP, Treasurer, and DA are already Steering Team members.

- **8:23 PM – Recap and Action Items (President Urben)**
 - The Board unanimously approved November's Board minutes.
 - 2026 Class A Calendar Raffle stub turn-in deadline is 9 January.
 - The Board approved purchasing an annual subscription to CLA's grant management software.
 - The Board will review and provide input to the Waterfowl Advisory Committee's questionnaire in consonance with the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation following a virtual WWA questionnaire input coordination meeting.
 - The Board agreed to an April 2026 Annual meeting at Meat Eater's Brookfield location.
 - The Board received a WHE update that included news of the 2026 JEM grant and the decision to remain at Sunnyview Expo Center for WHE 2026.
 - The Board discussed and agreed with cancelling Bast-Durbin's WHE 2026 support contract.
- **8:27 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting at 6:30 PM on January 21st.