

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, November 19, 2025

Board Members present: Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Joe Gonyo, BJ Grassmann, Scott Hamele, Connie Markham, Todd Schaller, Kim Shady, Pat Smith, and Bruce Urben

Staff Members present: Kelcy Boettcher, Brad Heidel

Guests in Attendance: Shawn Gibbons

Unable to Attend: Lou Schueller

Agenda:

- **6:33 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**
- **6:34 PM – Approve October's Board Meeting Minutes (President Urben)**

Secretary Elwing introduced October's minutes. Secretary Elwing motioned that the minutes be approved as written; Director Grassmann seconded the motion. October's Board minutes were unanimously approved as written.
- **6:35 PM – Financials (Director of Administration [DA] Boettcher)**

DA Boettcher forwarded October's budgetary spreadsheets and a summary of budget activities to all Board members prior to the meeting. The Association continues to await payment of the 3d quarter NRCS invoiced based upon the Federal government's reopening. DA Boettcher reported that 2026 raffle calendar online sales are up, thanks in large part to recent social media ads. However, returns for face-to-face (F-2-F) sales lag 2025 sales (~1,000 vs 1,280). Executive Director (ED) Heidel addressed accountability of F-2-F sales with Regional Director (RD) Monette. DA Boettcher confirmed that 9 January is "the drop dead" date for calendar stub submissions. ED Heidel stated that the recently hired RD will assist with sales and processing. Regarding calendar processing, the same data company used last year is under contract to digitally scan calendar stubs this year. Unfortunately, the scanned data is not compatible with the Association's membership database but is imported into Constant Contact. Director Depies reminded the Board that 5 December will be the next raffle calendar returns incentive drawing and asked the Board for their cooperation getting as many calendar stubs as possible, returned by that date.

DA Boettcher made a plea to push "Frosty Five" and XMAS Bash sales and stated that as of the Board meeting, the Frosty Five raffle, aided by online ads, was almost in the black.

President Urben asked if any consideration had been given to making a donations plea on Giving Tuesday (2 Dec). DA Boettcher responded in the negative. ED Heidel asserted that based upon his past experiences with Delta Waterfowl, Giving Tuesday requests resulted in dismal failure over the past several years and urged the online ads be tailored towards "giving Christmas through online calendar purchases" in lieu of "giving Tuesday" requests. Ther Board agreed. ED Heidel went on to suggest that if the Board wanted to make a "giving request" that the efforts be focused on end-of-year giving/tax write-offs.
- **6:41 PM – Waterfowl Hunters Expo (WHE) Location Update (ED Heidel)**

ED Heidel reported unexpected delays with Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) contacts resulted in a very low probability of holding the 2026 EXPO there. As currently discussed not only will proposals be too late, but rental fees for EAA facilities are exorbitantly high. ED Heidel will continue to engage EAA in hopes of relocating in 2027. Director Hamele suggested moving future WHE Expos to more centrally located facilities to continue to draw attendees from neighboring states and suggested looking towards the Wisconsin Dells area.

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Ultimately, the Board agreed that EAA was not a 2026 contender and directed ED Heidel to pursue 2026 WHE Expo support contracts with Sunnyview Expo Center, Winnebago County, Bast-Durbin, and Swift Waters, LLC.

- **7:09 PM – Presidential Topics (President Urben)**

President Urben announced that Lou Schueller joined the Board as a Director. He will fill a 1-year (probationary) term as per the Association By-Laws.

Five Director terms expire at the end of 2025. The Directorships are held by Mike Depies, George Ermert, Scott Hamele, Kim Shady, and Pat Smith. Additionally, President Urben announced that all Association Officer terms expire at the end of the year. Association Officers are Bruce Urben: President, Todd Schaller: Vice President, Kim Shady: Treasurer, Dave Elwing: Secretary, and George Ermert: Member-at-Large. President Urben asked the respective Directors and Officers to notify him of their intentions NLT 1 December.

- **7:14 PM – ED Topics (ED Heidl)**

Regional Director (RD). Brock Rosenkranz was hired as the new RD. Rob Monette would like to work until April 30th. He will assist RD Rosenkranz's transition. RD Monette told ED Heidel that if offered, he does not want a 2025 bonus, nor does he want to be paid for unused Paid Time Off. Director Elwing questioned whether Wisconsin state laws require unused PTO to be paid. Director Hamele and DA Boettcher confirmed that Wisconsin has no such labor requirement.

Storage Unit Inventories. The Association will relinquish the Brookfield storage unit at the end of December. ED Heidel, VP Schaller, RD Monette, and RD Rosenkranz plan to inventory and sort items in the Brookfield unit during December. Retained items will be moved to a new storage unit near RD Rosenkranz's location with estimated rental unit savings of \$3,600 per year.

Grants. The Public Lands Ecology Grant has a balance of roughly \$17,000. These funds must be used by the end of the fiscal/calendar year. ED Heidel will oversee the expenditure.

Employee Reviews. PLE Rzchowski recently enquired about doing an employee review for PLE Blake Bartels. Upon examining the matter ED Heidel realized that employee reviews, when done, have been informal. ED Heidel will institute a formal performance review process for all employees.

Annual Meeting. ED Heidel stated that he would like to move the annual meeting to a later date. He further reported that the new Meat Eater store in Brookfield is willing to host the event. Details need to be worked out, but the Meat Eater offer includes donating the facility and beer for the event, with the possibility of also donating the food, and attendees will receive special in-store discounts. Meat Eater is on-board for the 2026 WHE, too. Director Grassmann noted that Meat Eater is a popular chain and podcaster; as such, they could easily draw new attendees from the Brookfield / Milwaukee area. The Board agreed to delay the annual meeting and charged ED Heidel to pursue the opportunity. ED Heidel highlighted ED Rosenkranz's existing and positive relationship with Meat Eater through his previous role with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

- **7:27 PM – Committee Updates (Committee Chairs)**

Habitat Committee (Director Grassmann). WWA has 200 wood duck boxes on hand. Chapters identified a need for 35; the balance will remain in inventory. While unable to perform work under the NRCS contract due to the Federal Government shutdown, Blake Bartels created an interactive WWA habitat project map which details the type, size, location, and cost for each project. President Urben asked if the map will be hung on the Association website; ED Heidel confirmed that it would be. VP Schaller asked if private lands projects could be included on the

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map, potentially listed as a cumulative acreage to protect landowner privacy. ED Heidel noted that the US Forestry Service (USFS) recently contacted WWA about performing habitat work in NW Wisconsin.

Education (VP Schaller). The Association ran or financially supported four Learn-to-Hunts (LTHs) and one Learn-to-Cook event in 2025, with a total of 32 participants being introduced to waterfowling. VP Schaller and Director Markham applauded the “For Women, By Women” LTH in the Trempealeau Refuge for its growth and the camaraderie instilled among participants and mentors. While capped at ten mentees, over forty are signed up for 2026.

The R3 Pittman-Robertson grant is extended to 30 April 2026. VP Schaller reported that the Waterfowlers Academy will use remaining funds to purchase gear and replace expendables. The Board briefly discussed whether the Waterfowlers Academy should look at changes; VP Schaller said that he would engage event leaders for feedback and invited Board members to also provide their thoughts. One recommendation was to recruit event leaders in other areas throughout the state; all agreed. President Urben noted that the Waterfowlers Academy needs to remain plainly tied to/a part of WWA, as some confusion has surfaced amongst potential mentees in that they thought WWA and the Waterfowlers Academy were separate entities. VP Schaller will work on re-branding the Waterfowler’s Academy to demonstrate WWA’s ownership.

Policy (Director Ermert). Wisconsin’s Finance and Sporting Heritage Committees held a joint session on the proposed bills relating to sandhill crane (SHC) crop damage and hunting. Seven or eight coalition partners testified in support of a SHC season; ED Heidel and VP Schaller represented WWA while Brock Rosenkranz testified on Backcountry Hunters and Anglers’ behalf. VP Schaller noted that testimony by coalition members was solidly backed by science over passion. However, twice as many people (mostly individual citizens, not organizational representatives) testified against the bills. Opposing organizations included the International Crane Foundation, the Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance, and the Audubon Society of Wisconsin. Opposing testimony highlighted the potential to harm whooping cranes, potential flock decreases due to an avian flu pandemic, the removal of crop damage funding and the associated potential for fiscal deficit. Testimony from opposing citizens generally focused on the beauty of the birds and “why do the birds need to be hunted,” and generally drew unsubstantiated claims of mass eradication, like the American Bison. Director Ermert stated that a vote could come as early as a week, and that he believed one of the Democratic party members could be swayed to vote in favor of the proposed bills. VP Schaller asked how WWA should message where we and the proposals are at and what WWA is doing in support of the proposed bills. Director Ermert suggested waiting until after the vote; he noted that Wisconsin Wildlife Federation’s ED already released a statement on social media relating to the hearing.

Support for the Knowles-Nelson Program is in jeopardy as it is stuck between opposing sides. Environmentalists and Democrats believe that “there is not enough.” Bear hunting advocates are likely to vote “no” because the proposed bill does not include enough land acquisition funds. The bill is likely to be held up in the Senate.

President Urben thanked Director Ermert for his ongoing and tenacious support to the SHC hunt matter.

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- **7:37 PM – Recap and Action Items (President Urben)**
 - The Board unanimously approved October's Board minutes.
 - The Board agreed that the WHE will remain at Sunnyview Expo Center for 2026; Ed Heidel was tasked to pursue 2026 WHE Expo support contracts with Sunnyview Expo Center, Winnebago County, Bast-Durbin, and Swift Waters, LLC.
 - Directors and Association Officers need to declare their intentions to remain NLT 1 December.
 - The Board agreed that WWA's 2026 Annual meeting should be held at the Meat Eater store in Brookfield. ED Heidel will pursue the opportunity.
- **7:40 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

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