

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors In-person Meeting – Saturday, April 18, 2026

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

Staff Members present: Brad Heidel, Kelcy Boettcher

Guests present: Joel Kleefisch

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

Agenda:

- **10:01 AM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**

- **10:02 AM – Approve March Board Meeting Minutes (Secretary Elwing)**

Secretary Elwing introduced March's minutes, asked for questions/amendments, and, after receiving none, Director Ermert moved to accept the March BoD minutes as written. President Secretary Elwing seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved March's minutes, as written.

- **6:37 AM – March Financials (Executive Director [ED] Heidel and Director of Administration [DA] Boettcher)**

President Urben opened the discussion by commenting on "how good" the financials continue to look. ED Heidel brought an administrative matter to the Board's attention regarding a recently realized issue regarding ownership of the Association's QuickBooks software in that Past-Executive Director Don Kirby and Kelcy McCarthy are registered as the owners. Past-ED Kirby left the Association eight years ago and "McCarthy" is DA Boettcher's maiden name. Director Ermert motioned (Treasurer Shady seconded) a motion that DA Kelcy Boettcher be named as the primary Association representative for all administrative matters, including ownership of the Association's QuickBooks software/account, and that Past-ED Kirby be removed and ED Heidel be asserted as the software/account secondary owner. The Board unanimously passed the motion.

The previously approved annual operating budget required adjustment and funding source realignments within the Development and Program Services budget lines to address the following: previously forecast travel and hotel expenses, Regional Director (RD) Monette's extended salary through 15 April while concurrently paying RD Rosenkranz's salary and extending Lobbyist Joel Kleefisch's retainer through 30 April. ED Heidel proposed an \$18,500 bottom line increase. Vice President Schaller asked why Lobbyist Kleefisch's retainer funding was proposed to come from the Education funding line. ED Heidel explained that Lobbyist Kleefisch's efforts inform/educate legislators, but assured VP Schaller that Learn-to-Hunt (LTH) funding remained intact – VP Schaller's primary concern. VP Schaller motioned (Secretary Elwing seconded) that the Board accept the proposed amended budget as of 18 April. The Board unanimously passed the motion.

While not directly a budget-related matter, ED Heidel briefly addressed recognition for outgoing RD Monette, in that a presentation will be made during the Waterfowl Hunters Expo (WHE) banquet in August. President Urben and ED Heidel confirmed that although not interested in returning to his previously held post as a Director, RD Monette does want to remain engaged as a volunteer. Director Hamele suggested the benefit of RD Monette chairing the Waukesha banquet.

- **10:13 AM – Wisconsin Outdoor Industry Awards (Director Ermert)**

The State of Wisconsin recognizes outdoor-related industries for their contributions to the state and the people within the state. Director Ermert recommended that WWA nominate Lucky Duck for an award based upon the support provided to the Association throughout the years. VP

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Schaller suggested nominating Vortex, also a huge supporter of WWA and the WHE. A discussion about nominating WWA for the “For Women / By Women” (FW/BW) hunts also ensued. However, based upon the quick turn (nominations are due 19 April) the Board agreed to nominate Lucky Duck this year.

- **6:55 AM – ED Topics (ED Heidel)**

- Federal Firearms License (FFL). A suggestion arose / resurfaced about WWA applying for an FFL during March’s Board meeting. Pros included a perceived significant reduction on firearms purchasing costs, while cons included administration, management, increased insurance premiums (the Association would need a new insurance carrier) and transferring numerous firearms. ED Heidel investigated the pros and cons and recommended that WWA not pursue an FFL because the return on investment was not there.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Shared Employee. The part-time USFWS position discussed last month for northwestern Wisconsin remains on hold. While USFWS cannot hire new employees due to a federal government hiring freeze, vacancies can be filled by existing employees doing lateral moves. An unexpected issue arose in that USFWS anticipates the starting salary to be \$80,000 (significantly higher than WWA’s other lands ecologists).

Better Business Bureau (BBB) Status. ED Heidel reported that thanks to a sharp CPAs and DA Boettcher’s efforts the Association’s BBB accreditation was renewed. While our CPA convinced the BBB that a compilation sufficed now, a full audit is anticipated to be required in 2028. Related to that need, the accounting software that the Association uses was developed by our CPA’s company, thus creating a conflict of interest for the firm to represent WWA during a full audit. President Urben volunteered to speak with Russ Olson (WWA’s past treasurer) to identify a new CPA firm.

Wind Turbines. WWA was asked for an opinion regarding (47) 700-foot tall wind turbines planned for Columbia County. Director Ermert advised the Board not to engage because there is no proof that the turbines will be detrimental to waterfowl in the area, but more importantly, because getting into a “conservation vs green energy” controversy would not benefit WWA as an organization, or its members.

Membership Drive. A new membership drive started on 15 April and will run through 15 May. DA Boettcher reported a high success rate, with over \$2,000 (mostly \$150 & \$25 memberships) already realized. Further, the majority signed up as recurring memberships. Director Hamele applauded the effort and suggested a stronger emphasis be placed on signing up new life members. Secretary Elwing agreed and suggested a means to tally past / lifetime giving (like Ducks Unlimited’s approach) could yield more \$10,000 Legacy Life Sponsor Memberships if members were allowed to pledge their balance of \$10,000 over a period of five years. ED Heidel and DA Boettcher will examine possibilities.

Natural Resources Board (NRB) Testimony. The Association was invited to testify in support of an emergency ruling to approve the 2026-2030 DNR-proposed waterfowl seasons, and to support an elimination of waterfowl hunting blind concealment laws. The Board fully supported the 2026-2030 seasons proposal but could not support elimination of blind concealment laws as an emergency ruling. Most Board members agreed that blind concealment laws are confusing and should be simplified, but that a longer study and discussion on the matter is required and should be brought to the NRB as part of a standard 120–240-day NR10 Rule Making Process.

- **10:55 AM – Habitat Update (Director Shculer and ED Heidel)**

Dodge County. Discussed a new project in Dodge County.

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Jackson Marsh. The Jackson Marsh project may impact ~1,000 acres when finished. 70% of the water flows through an old, contaminated pipeline. Site visits/project tours might be conducted within the next 45 days.

Little Yellow River (LYR) Phase II. Brad Strobel (USFWS) reached out to ED Heidel regarding how much flood water is being retained within the LYR project and the potential for negative public perception since the project was supposed to help prevent area flooding. WWA will expedite work on 5th Avenue to alleviate some of the flood conditions. The municipality already has a work plan and grant money will cover the expenses. WDNR Secretary Hyun will tour the progress on April 27th; ED Heidel and PLE Pfost will be on hand.

- **11:12 AM – Event Update (ED Heidel)**

Valley Banquet and the Cabin Fever Winter Bash events exceeded budget. 2027 Raffle Calendars are on track to go to the printer by 15 May, allowing sales to begin in August.

- **11:14 AM – Annual Meeting (ED Heidel)**

The Annual Meeting sold out (50 tickets). Meat Eaters donated a \$250 gift card to the event and will provide 30% discounts to event attendees.

- **11:16 AM – Policy Updates (Director Ermert)**

Lobbyist Joel Kleefisch will continue to work with legislators and their staffs to keep the sandhill crane (SHC) hunting discussion alive and fresh. President Urben asked that the Board receive monthly updates.

- **11:32 AM – Education Update (VP Schaller)**

VP Schaller provided updates on several of this year's Learn-to-Hunt (LTH) events. He noted that the For Women/By Women (FW/BW) ladies have been conducting 50/50 raffles at several banquets and bashes and asked that those monies be separated to ensure they are available to support that event considering the end of the R3 grant.

- **11:33 AM – EXPO Update (ED Heidel)**

Event seminars are locked down. All but 20-30 vendor slots are full. Ongoing steering committee discussions include traffic flow, admissions, and how to pay for parking.

- **Recap and Action Items (President Urben)**

- The Board unanimously approved March's Board minutes.
- The Board unanimously passed a motion that DA Kelcy Boettcher be named as the primary Association representative for all administrative matters, including ownership of the Association's QuickBooks software/account, and that Past-ED Kirby be removed and ED Heidel be asserted as the software/account secondary owner.
- The Board also unanimously passed the proposed amended budget.
- The Board agreed that it did not make sense to pursue an FFL.
- The Board agreed not to take action on the wind turbine request.
- ED Heidel and DA Boettcher will examine the feasibility of tracking members' cumulative givings to entice more members to become \$10,000 Legacy Life Sponsors.

- **11:35 AM – Meeting Adjourned**

The next BoD meeting will resume virtual meetings and will be conducted at 6:30 PM on May 20th.