

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, June 17, 2026

Board Members present: Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Connie Markham, Kim Shady, Todd Schaller, Pat Smith, and Bruce Urben

Staff Members present: Brad Heidel, Kelcy Boettcher

Guests present: Shawn Gibbons/Swift-Waters

Unable to Attend: Joe Gonyo, Scott Hamele, and Lou Schueller

Agenda:

- **6:32 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**

- **6:33 PM – Approve May Board Meeting Minutes (President Urben)**

President Urben introduced April's minutes, asked for questions/amendments, and, after receiving none, Secretary Elwing moved to accept May's BoD minutes as written. President Urben seconded the motion. May's Board minutes were unanimously approved as written.

- **6:34 PM – April Financials (Executive Director [ED] Heidel and Director of Administration [DA] Boettcher)**

As per SOP, DA Boettcher posted the budget information on the Board webpage prior to the meeting. Overall, the Association's finances are in a good status, enhanced by event reconciling early. Treasurer Shady asked about the higher than usual outstanding balances, including ~\$22.5K belonging to the Waterfowl Hunter's Expo (WHE). ED Heidel and Shawn Gibbons answered the question by referring to an outstanding balance from Banded but assured the BOD that the matter was being addressed. Gunner Kennels is onboard as a WHE sponsor with an overdue balance, too.

Continuing with Association finances, DA Boettcher reported the R3 Grant close-out was submitted to WDNR; reimbursement is expected in July or August. Duck stamp project reports are being completed and submitted.

- **6:45 PM – President's Topics (President Urben)**

Director Hamele. Director Hamele relocated to Florida within the past month. He spoke to President Urben prior to departing and expressed a desire to remain as an active Board member through his term. President Urben asked the Board if there were any concerns regarding the matter. The Board unanimously agreed that Director Hamele's insights are valuable and agreed with allowing him to remain on the Board.

New Board Members. Megan Salazar expressed interest in becoming a Board member. She is one of the By Women For Women (BWWF) coordinators, is a monthly contributor to the newsletter, and attends many events to fund raise for BWWF. Additionally, she is part of Joel Kleefisch's "Raised in the Woods" podcast; she also has a full-time job with the Federal Government. Vice President (VP) Schaller and Director Markham spoke highly of her, highlighting that she did not grow-up as a hunter, but found the sport as an adult ...consequently, she is exactly the kind of person that WWA wants to target. Additionally, she provides different views and is passionate about all aspects of waterfowling. Some concern was raised about Megan possibly being spread too thin with all her other commitments. President Urben and ED Heidel will engage and interview her, ensuring that she is aware of the expectations placed on Board members.

On a related matter, President Urben will initiate a review of the Association By-laws and propose updates which reflect Board Member expectations.

Lastly, President Urben raised Jeff Pritzl's name as a potential Board member. Jeff recently retired from WDNR and was the runner-up candidate for the Association's ED job.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, June 17, 2026

- **7:08 PM – ED Topics (ED Heidel)**

USFWS Shared Employee. ED Heidel reported that the WWA-USFWS shared employee idea is dead in the water due to lack of funding. WWA and USFWS plan to pursue the MOU in case the position becomes a future option.

WDNR Meeting. ED Heidel and VP Schaller met with WDNR's Director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management, Scott Walter, and the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Division's Administrator, Eric Lobner. They wish to continue the relationship between WDNR and WWA. That said, funding is a major problem at this time, and the WDNR officials sought additional ways that WWA might be able to assist WDNR. meeting was spent on DNR budget shortfalls.

Partnerscapes Conference. Public Lands Ecologist (PLE) Mark Pfof requested to attend the upcoming Partnerscapes conference in Minnesota. Partnerscapes generally focuses on larger private land partnerships in the Western US, and this is the first time that it will be held this far East. PLE Pfof believes this is a good opportunity to showcase WWA's capabilities, progression, and potentially to identify new partners. Estimates cost to attend is \$1,500, of which PLE Pfof is willing to pay one-half. ED Heidel supported the idea. President Urban asked how much longer PLE Pfof is expected to remain onboard; ED Heidel responded that, "Mark works hard and is expected to be here through completion of the entire Little Yellow River project, plus his attendance gains national attention for WWA." The Board supported PLE Pfof's attendance.

Membership and Cumulative Membership Levels. ED Heidel, RD Rosenkranz, DA Boettcher and Secretary Elwing recently met to review the levels of Life Membership offered to WWA members. The discussion came about because Secretary Elwing suggested that the Association offers too many membership levels and in doing so dilutes the meaning of membership. This is especially true at the Life, Plus Life, and Legacy Life Sponsor Membership levels where WWA gives guns the member a gun for the latter two. The focus for membership at the higher levels should be about giving for conservation, not about what individuals get for giving. Additionally, WWA loses out by no tracking cumulative giving totals and encouraging larger donors to pledge future donations to achieve a higher Life membership level. Director Ermert applauded the discussion and stated that he was glad to finally see WWA targeting larger donations and asked if the Association's database allowed identification and targeting of our larger givers. DA Boettcher responded that can be done, but not easily, especially not beyond five years. President Urban stated his support but expressed concern about placing an additional burden on DA Boettcher and further stated that any changes should include past giving to the extent possible. President Urban went on to ask if funds received from Life Memberships would go into the endowment or to general operating funds. DA Boettcher explained that during 2020 funds were allowed to go to either the endowment fund or to be directed to the general operating budget, based upon the donor's request. President Urban stated his belief that the monies should go into the general operations fund, while VP Schaller affirmed his belief that these higher levels of giving should go into the investment fund. Director Ermert asked which members are close to the Legacy Life Sponsor level, etc., and who will be responsible for identifying and pursuing potential donors? ED Heidel stated that most of the responsibility will fall to him and RD Rosenkranz. Secretary Elwing volunteered to be the Association's Major Development Coordinator. ED Heidel, RD Rosenkranz, DA Boettcher and Secretary Elwing will continue to refine options and return to the Board in July.

Continuing the discussion on the multiple membership levels offered by the Association, ED Heidel proposed eliminating Plus Life and increasing annual membership from \$25 to \$50, as well as increasing canine life memberships from \$50 to \$250. President Urban encouraged placed stronger emphasis on the Recurring Sponsorship option. ED Heidel introduced a 6-month trial membership and gun sweepstake, after which the member is only given the option to

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, June 17, 2026

continue at the \$50 level. The trial membership will be pushed during the Waterfowl Hunter Expo (WHE) using QR Code scans to capture the individual's information when the sign-up. VP Schaller asked if ED Heidel was seeking approval from the Board. ED Heidel responded that he would bring it forward during July's Board meeting, but in the meantime, any comments, questions, or suggestion should be sent to him & Secretary Elwing for consideration.

- **7:47 PM – Habitat Update (ED Heidel)**

Ongoing Efforts. The wetlands team is staying busy. Progress continues with the wood duck box program with McNaughton Correctional facility, and the Association is awaiting the results of the \$1.3M NAWCA grant application that Peter Ziegler submitted. Peter and PLE Anna Rzchowski examined a potential project near Lake Poygan and PLE Blake Bartels completed 30 Wetlands Restoration Board (WRB) and 50 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) assessments, with 40 to go. PLEs Rzchowski & Bartels will be working on and billing PLE projects through June. Peter Ziegler & ED Heidel conducted a site visit by Lake Koshkonong for WWA signage placement along Hwy 26.

Wetland Study Counsel: Governor Evers appointed Peter Ziegler to the state's Wetland Study Counsel, effect 1 July 2026. The appointment is for a 6-year term. Peter was selected based upon his demonstrated proficiency at getting wetlands through the permitting process. Consequently, the rationale behind his selection and focus of his work will be to simplify the wetland conservation permitting process.

- **7:53 PM – Event Update (ED Heidel)**

There are multiple ongoing Class As. Director Ermert asked for a comparison between face-to-face and online Class A sales. DA Boettcher confirmed that most sales are online.

ED Heidel reminded the Board that a new Lacrosse event (bash & Class A) was coming up on July 1st. He also noted the possibility of an Eau Claire Chapter forming in the future through RD Rosenkranz's efforts.

- **7:30 PM – Policy Updates (Director Ermert)**

Sandhill Crane (SHC) Hunt. Joel Kleefisch continues to meet with legislators and staffers during the Legislature's summer break for the purpose of reintroducing the SHC Hunt Bill during the next session. President Urben asked that Joel Kleefisch provide a detailed monthly report of who he engages and that the report be made available to the Board.

Little Yellow River (LYR) Tour. On 16 July WWA will host a tour of the project showcasing work to date and discussing future opportunities. Expected attendees will include several state legislators and members of the International Crane Foundation (ICF).

Legislator of the Year Presentation. ED Heidel and Secretary Elwing recently presented WWA's Legislator of the Year Award to Representative Paul Tittl for his unwavering support of the SHC Hunt Bill.

- **7:50 PM – EXPO Update (ED Heidel and Shawn Gibbons)**

WWA will man two booths at this Expo. One will focus on public awareness, merchandise, and membership, while the other will focus on Class A sales and fundraising. Secretary Elwing will coordinate manning both. AMVETs will handle beer sales, and the VFW will sell food as they've done in the past. The WHE Steering Committee is meeting every two weeks. Karen Heidel volunteered to assume Director Hamele's role as Admissions Coordinator. Director Ermert asked about the status of volunteers. VP Schaller responded that numbers were down slightly but are generally good. Director Ermert followed up with a similar question about vendor sales/commitments. ED Heidel responded that the numbers of booths and vendors are both up.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, June 17, 2026

Shawn Gibbons added that the WHE is seeing increased sponsor revenue. Also, because vendor fees went up.

- **8:11 PM – Education Update (VP Schaller)**

Learn to Hunts. Several LTH funding sustainability concerns arose with the expiration of the WDNR R3 Grant, and whether this year's BFWF program should continue to receive funding at previous levels or should funding be reduced starting in 2026. In short, the BFWF LTHs received significant funding (lodging, partial per diem and travel, range fees, ammunition, etc.) under the R3 Grant, while Green Bay's and Midland Wings LTHs receive ammo and range fees. President Urben urged that a consistency between events be established and maintained, starting with 2026 LTHs.

BFWF organizers conducted 50/50 raffles during several WWA events which raised questions about whether the events "lost" fundraising opportunities because monies were "siphoned off" by the BFWF 50/50s. ED Heidel stated his opposition to "special 50/50s" as all monies raised by events should go to the state budget for distribution through the Association's standard budgeting process. VP Schaller and Director Markham noted that this year's BFWF hunt was set-up following previous years' funding guidelines (i.e. participants' and mentors' partial mileage and per diem) but further noted that LTH funding was also received from the Wardens Association and Delta Waterfowl. Currently, the Education budget line has \$9,684 in available funding, more than enough to cover funding the BFWF LTH at historic levels. With adequate funding available, Treasurer Shady suggested funding all 2026 LTHs under the same parameters as the BFWF LTH allowing participants and mentors reimbursement for lodging, partial per diem and travel and that the practice be examined for future years. Secretary Elwing asked what WDNR reimbursements were available> VP Schaller confirmed that, why the Association had not done it in the past, WWA could apply for a reimbursement of \$25 per participant to offset range fees and ammunition costs.

VP Schaller motioned, Director Smith seconded, that the 2026 BFWF LTH receive lodging and meals funding, and that the same benefits be extended to all 2026 LTHs. The motion passed 7:2 (President Urben and Director Ermert voted against the motion).

- **8:35 PM – Recap and Action Items (President Urben)**

- The Board unanimously approved May's Board minutes.
- The Board agreed to allow Director Hamele to continue in his Directorship capacity despite his retirement and recent relocation to Florida.
- President Urben and ED Heidel will reach out to Megan Salazar and engage Jeff Pritzl about becoming Board members. President Urben will review Association By-Laws to ensure expectations of Director's is adequately addressed within them.
- The Board supported PLE Pfost's attendance at the upcoming Partnerscapes conference.
- The Board supported examining Life and Annual membership levels, with ED Heidel bring suggestions to July's BoD.
- Director Ermert and ED Heidel will seek and distribute more detailed contact notes from the Association's SHC Hunt lobbyist, Joel Kleefisch, to help keep the Board apprised of ongoing actions, thus allowing Board members to engage and inform the public of WWA's ongoing activities.
- The Board supported funding BFWF lodging and meals in 2026 while extending the benefit to all LTH participants and mentors traveling 50 miles or more.

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, June 17, 2026**

- **8:40 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held via Teams on July 13 from 4:00 – 5:30 PM.

The next BoD meeting will be held via Teams on July 15 from 6:30 – 8:00 pm.