

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Board Members present: Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, Joe Gonyo, Scott Hamele, Connie Markham, Todd Schaller, and Bruce Urben

Staff Members present: Brad Heidel and Kelcy Boettcher

Guests present: Shawn Gibbons/Swift-Waters

Unable to Attend: George Ermert, Lou Schueller, Kim Shady and Pat Smith

Agenda:

- **6:35 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**

President Urben opened the meeting by asking if there needed to be any topics added to the agenda. Director Depies requested that time be set aside to discuss an internal grant initiative being submitted on behalf of the Cedar Creek Chapter.

- **6:36 PM – Approve June Board Meeting Minutes (President Urben)**

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

- **6:34 PM – June 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. President Urben noted that the Waterfowl Hunter Expo (WHE) is keeping the operating budget in the black. ED Heidel stated that a few overdue WHE booth and sponsor fees remain outstanding, but that he expected them to be collected shortly. DA Boettcher reported that events continue to return better than budgeted result. A number of Class A raffles are active (Remember When, Turtle Box, Browning Maxus & Midland Wings Pre-event), but that sales are going slower than anticipated; a social media blast is scheduled for next week. ED Heidel reported two new events recently occurred: Hustisford shoot (yielded \$1,500 and potentially a new chapter) and the Lacrosse Bash that was budgeted for \$1,500 but delivered \$4,200 (also a new chapter).

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

Director Hamele. Director Hamele relocated to Florida in June; the Board unanimously agreed to retain him as a Board member. ED Heidel will work with him to ensure Director Hamele's calendar sales and selling techniques are captured and continued.

New Board Members. Following June's Board meeting ED Heidel and President Urben interviewed Megan Salazar to become a new Board member. expressed interest in becoming a Board member. They were both impressed with her responses to "why" she wanted to become a Director and her full acknowledgement of the responsibilities expected of a Director (time, active participation, and fiscal resources). After minimal discussion Secretary Elwing motioned (Vice President [VP] Schaller seconded) that Megan Salazar be brought onto the Board of Directors (BOD) as of 26 July with a probationary term ending in December 2027. Board members voted unanimously to bring Megan Salazar onto the BOD.

Board Meeting Date Changes. President Urben proposed canceling the August BOD, as has historically been done, considering the time consumed in WHE preparations by most of the BOD members. ED Heidel countered with an earlier date, 12 August. The Board accepted the date change. (Note: after the BOD adjourned ED Heidel realized that a conflict with the 12 August date existed and changed the date to 11 August). ED Heidel requested a date change for September's Board meeting due to a conflict with his scheduled vacation. Considering WHE wrap-up and minimal planned activities VP Schaller motioned (Secretary Elwing seconded) that September's Board meeting be canceled. The BOD unanimously voted in favor of the motion.

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- **7:00 PM – ED Topics (ED Heidel)**

Outdoor Heritage Education Center Sponsorship. Mark Labarbara requested that WWA sponsor (at the \$250 level) the Outdoor Heritage Education Center’s “Wisconsin Wildlife Creer Collaboration Event Fall Workshop and the 2027 examination. WWA will receive wide social and print media acknowledgement for doing so, thus extending public awareness of the Association’s mission and achievements. President Urben motioned (Director Depies seconded) that WWA sponsor the event with Education budget funds. The Board unanimously supported the motion.

Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Search. As noted in previous Board meeting, the Association needs a new CPA because of more stringent audit requirements are associated with achieving the \$1M budget mark and because WWA uses accounting software developed by our current CPA, creating a conflict of interest for the CPA firm. ED Heidel announced that the previously anticipated \$1M operating budget threshold is likely not to be achieved before 2028 because the major North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant request that the \$1M level was predicated on was not approved. However, due to the CPA/software conflict of interest, a new CPA is still needed. One formal proposal has been received and upon receipt a second will be forwarded to Board members for their review.

Membership and Cumulative Membership Levels. ED Heidel introduced a concept to reduce the number of WWA membership levels and to create a cumulative giving option for conservation-focused philanthropists during June’s Board meeting. ED Heidel, DA Boettcher, Regional Director [RD] Rosenkranz and Secretary Elwing met continued discussions and propose the following:

Memberships. Eliminate the “Plus Life” (\$1,800) and “Habitat (\$100) memberships while retaining the “Regular” (\$25), “Contributing” (\$50), “Conservation Patron” (\$150), and the “Life” (\$1,000) memberships. Historically, Plus Life members received a shotgun (\$650 value) which resulted in the Association netting \$,1150 (only \$150 more than a Life membership). The Habitat membership was an intermediate between Contributing and Conservation Patron memberships and did not offer a real incentive to increase one’s membership level. Canine Life memberships increase from \$50 to \$250. Life memberships will be made more readily available through a year-long, \$100 monthly credit card charge option after an upfront \$200 payment; this will yield \$1,200 during the first 12-month period. After achieving a Life Membership status, members become eligible to continue their monthly sustained giving and thus receive cumulative credits toward becoming Curl Society members (see below).

ED Heidel proposed two WHE-associated membership incentive proposals: 1) FREE six-month trial memberships with eligibility to win a donated Benelli Super Black Eagle 3 (SBE 3), and 2) a Life membership drive with a Franchi Affinity Waterfowl Plus being drawn after every fifth Life Member that signs up at the WHE. A QR Code will be used to capture member data for both and at the end of the six-moth free period members will be automatically contacted to continue their membership at the “Contributing Membership” (\$50) level.

Curl Society (Cumulative Giving). WWA lacks an adequate cumulative giving mechanism. ED Heidel proposed a 3-tiered option, the Curl Society with giving levels of \$10,000 (Single Curl), \$20,000 (Double Curl), and \$50,000+ (Triple Curl). No memberships gifts are associated with the Curl Society, but contribution recognition comes through specially minted plaques, pins, and invitations to mission-related events. Sustained monthly giving (no perks for contributing) will receive increased visibility and emphasis with cumulative totals being counted toward Curl Society levels of giving. ED Heidel explained that Curl Society membership is different from being an event sponsor or a merchandise donor, but rather the Curl Society focuses on philanthropic cash giving with an eye towards conservation projects. President Urben asked for clarification for select event major sponsorships (\$5,000 level) and if they could be counted

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toward a curl society membership, specifically one supporter annually gives \$5,000 to sponsor the Green Bay Chapter's golf outing. President Urben expressed concerns about alienating those funds because the individual's donation would not qualify as being Curl Society-eligible. ED Heidel acknowledged the concern and that cases like that can be dealt with on a one-by-one basis. VP Schaller asked if a decision as to where within the Association's budget Curl Society funds will go was necessary. The Board agreed that major contributions will be placed in the Association's investment account(s), while sustained/monthly giving contributions will go into WWA's operating budget.

Following discussions Secretary Elwing motioned (Director Markham seconded) that the Association adopt the membership level changes and institute the Curl Society, as proposed. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

- **7:33 PM – Habitat Update (Director Depies)**

Private Lands. No new private lands projects were discussed this month. The committee talked about processes for funding on projects.

Public Lands. Regarding CRP and WRE monitoring efforts Public Lands Ecologist (PLE) Bartels completed CRP in the southeast portion of the state and has 40 properties left - 2 months of work. WWA picked up additional WREs from Pheasants Forever. Several Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) properties were discussed: Pumpkin Seed Creek (Winnebago County) will contract work this winter, examining the possibility of performing work at Earthmere Restoration area south of Lake Poygan and also in the Poygan region - ditches and restoration of 7,500 acres in the western part of the marsh - planning stages. Other efforts include Deer Creek in Outagamie County (1,500 acres) - working on designs for Sheboygan Marsh to ditch plugs and field tile removal, and Jackson Marsh - KCI engineering firm finished hydrology study and is working on their deliverable (report). Regarding Jackson Marsh, ED Heidel and Peter Ziegler met with the DNR and Washington County this week to set up the different sectors on this project. Wild Rice: Marty Moses (Pheasants Forever) expressed interest in joining WWA's wild rice harvest this fall. (WWA has an agreement with the DNR for harvesting – Peter Ziegler determines what lakes WWA can harvest).

Little Yellow River (LYR) will enter Phase 3 this winter. Peter Ziegler was recently at LYR is his Governor Evers-appointed State Wetlands Study Council capacity and relayed that the LYR project accounts for 87% of Wisconsin's wetland restoration efforts between 2023 and 2025. ED Heidel and Joel Kleefisch (WWA's paid lobbyist) plan to bring a group of legislators and staff members to LYR on August 13th to show them what WWA has accomplished and what is forthcoming.

- **7:40 PM – Event Update (ED Heidel)**

Green Bay's Golf outing is coming up. Director Depies reported that the Cedar Creek sporting clays shoot was a success being well attended and ending roughly \$1,00 over budgeted returns.

- **7:42 PM – Policy Updates (Director Ermert)**

The Little Yellow River (LYR) tour date shifted from 16 July to 13 August. WWA will host a tour of the project highlighting work to date and discussing future opportunities. Expected attendees will include several state legislators and members of the International Crane Foundation (ICF).

- **7:43 PM – EXPO Update (ED Heidel and Shawn Gibbons)**

WHE will have four food vendors this year. 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.

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- **7:52 PM – Education Update (VP Schaller)**

Waterfowl Wednesdays. In addition to being one of the WDNR's Outdoor Skills Trainers, Spencer Jost is an avid waterfowler and WWA proponent. As such he hosts LTH-like podcasts about waterfowling topics (decoy spreads, scouting, equipment, calling, dogs, etc.) VP Schaller reported the podcasts are well done, well attended, and well thought of by attendees.

R3 Report. WDNR assessed Recruit, Retain, and Reactivate (R3) statistics for Learn To Hunts (LTHs) for conducted between 2021 and 2025. 67% of LTH mentees purchased a hunting license in the year's following their LTH experience. Of WWA's 83 LTH mentees, 60 (72%) purchased licenses in 2025. That is a success! Director Markham and VP Schaller will develop an announcement strategy to relay the successfulness of the Waterfowler Academy LTH effort.

- **7:57 PM – Internal Grant Request (Director Depies)**

The Cedar Grove Scoutmaster wants his scouts to build and erect wood duck boxes. They will scout locations during summer outings and erect boxes in the winter. Director Depies asked that ten wood duck box kits be allocated to meet this request. President Urben noted that frequently WDNR or other land managers have complaints about projects which go unattended after the first year or two, becoming an additional property manager maintenance responsibility. Director Depies assured him that the concern and maintenance responsibilities would be included with the gift. President Urben motioned (Secretary Elwing seconded) a motion to approve Cedar Creel Chapter's internal grant request. The motion was unanimously approved.

- **8:04 PM – Recap and Action Items (President Urben)**

- The Board unanimously approved June's Board minutes.
- The Board unanimously voted to bring Megan Salazar onto the Board with an initial term of July 2026 through December 2027.
- August's Board meeting date shifted to August 11th, and September's Board meeting was canceled.
- The Board approved expenditure of \$250 to sponsor the Outdoor Heritage Education Center's "Wisconsin Wildlife Creer Collaboration Event Fall Workshop and the 2027 examinations.
- The Board voted unanimously to adopt new membership levels and to initiate the Curl Society.
- VP Schaller and Director Markham will develop a plan to announce/market the Waterfowl Academy's R3 LTH successes.
- The Board approved the Cedar Creek Chapter's internal grant request for ten wood duck box kits for presentation to the Cedar Grove scout troop.

- **8: 70 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

The next BoD meeting will be held via Teams on Tuesday August 11th from 6:30 – 8:00 pm.