

Waterfowl Advisory Group
Meeting Notes
August 1, 2009

1. **Welcome** – *Fred Slyfield (Vice-Chair)*
 - Attendees: John Arrabito, Larry Boose, Roy Christopherson, Michael Crowder, Ralph Engle, Scott Fink, Jason Gupton, Doug Hargin, Dick Jacobs, Chris Dorow, Dick Price, Pat Shearer, Fred Slyfield, Ben Welton, Dave Sievers, (WAG), Don Kraege, Mikal Moore, Doug Huddle, Jennifer Quan (WDFW), Roger Reynolds (guest), Mike Miller (USGS)
2. **Approval of minutes** – *Chris Dorow (Chair)*
 - Don Kraege commented on acquisition of Mesa Lake and retention of Waterfowl Art Committee
 - License fees raised by 10% for this biennium
 - Motion to approve minutes, seconded.
 - Minutes approved unanimously
3. **Proposed Habitat Acquisition Projects** – *Jennifer Quan*
 - Process to approve land acquisition: Lands 20/20
 - Includes public review process
 - Lands Advisory Group was eliminated recently
 - Requests feedback from Waterfowl Advisory Group
 - Discussed pros and cons of WDFW's land acquisition activities
 - Money for acquisition but not operation/maintenance
 - Discussed criteria for evaluating proposed acquisitions
 - Funding sources for land acquisition include:
 - Duck stamp, RCO (WWRP), Joint Venture, NAWCA, donated conservation easements, Coastal Wetland Grant, SRFB, Section 6, etc.
 - Specific projects highlighted
 - Rock Creek Watershed
 - Ephrata Lake
 - Nowak Ebey Islands
 - Grays Bay Estuary
 - Hoquiam Surge Plain
 - **ACTION: Provide Jennifer Quan's contact information to WAG**
4. **Snow Goose Quality Hunt Program** – *Doug Huddle*
 - Program objectives: open land for hunting, provide forage for snow geese, decrease crop depredation, work with landowners
 - Program challenges: public viewing vs. hunting, timing of cover crop planting, pass shooting vs. hunting over decoys, enforcement
 - 2008-09 season review
 - Low Adult:Juvenile ratio, indicating poor production in 2008
 - Cold snap in mid-December caused snow geese to depart Skagit
 - Hunter participation in program declined
 - January thaw resulted in flooding event, cut off access to fields

- Compared progress of program across years
- Areas to improve: use internet more effectively, increase utilization, mobility for hunt coordinator
- 2009-10: 14 hunt units on Fir Island, defacto reserve created near Port Susan, 3 hunt units, down substantially from previous years.
- May be losing a portion of the game reserve due to chinook recovery efforts
- Doug Huddle will be retiring in September

5. Sea Duck Management – Don Kraege

- Long-term gradual decline in Puget Sound scoter numbers
- Average harvest rate: 2.4%, (3% is considered sustainable)
- Harvest rate varies widely between counties (up to 7%)
- Surf scoters are majority of harvest
- Satellite telemetry project provided range of Puget Sound surf scoters
 - Most breed in N. Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan
 - Winter use areas are fairly confined
- Recommend continued restrictive harvest management
- Continue intensive monitoring: banding, productivity, population modeling, harvest model
- Sea duck permit (and other migratory bird permits) should be available from POS this year

6. Pacific Flyway Update – Don Kraege / Mikal Moore

- Discussed population trends in Pacific Flyway surveys
- Discussed new eastern WA helicopter survey, compared to ground count

7. 2009-2010 Waterfowl Season Proposals – Don Kraege

- Recommending liberal season (108 days), increase pintail limit to 2/4, increase scaup limit to 3/6 (86 days), and increase canvasback limit to 1/2.
- Dusky Canada goose breeding birds were at an all-time low, recommend decreasing quota from 80 to 40 in southwest zone.
- Sea ducks – continue conservative strategy, re-evaluate next year
- Hunting authorizations for migratory birds *should* be available at POS outlets.
- Eastern WA goose season remains closed based on 2009 nest survey
- Wrangel Island snow goose breeding pairs were similar, but had excellent production
- Snow goose: Oct 17-Jan 31, same bag limits
 - Discussion: could trade Oct days for late season master hunter season through March 10, similar to SW zone.
 - Recommend one drawing for Sat hunts, all units
 - Discussion: youth hunt is last week of Sept. instead of third week, due to Jan. 31 closure, and correlation with upland seasons.
 - Discussion: regarding state boat anchor rule in four bays. Sculling used to be a traditional hunt method. Member requests group consider sculling as an acceptable practice. Rule is not open for change for this season. MOTION: Consider recommendation to lifting anchor requirement on Skagit, Padilla, Samish, and Port

Susan Bays. Discussion: bring regulations to next meeting, add to agenda. Motion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- Motion: In Goose Management Area 1, recommend authorizing a spring snow goose master hunt similar to southwest zone, extending as late as March 10, but not taking away from general season. Discussion: Master hunt or all authorized hunters? Conservation hunt would require greater population increase. Would not be able to implement for 2009-10 at this point. Motion not seconded.
- Discussion regarding separation of dark and light goose bag limit, and merganser and duck bag limit.
- **Motion: Accept waterfowl season recommendations as presented. Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

8. Review of Bayview Reserve – *Don Kraege*

- Padilla Bay, in place since mid-1980s during brant closure.
- Protect main winter use sites (Swinomish and Bayview)
- Could be developed as a quality hunt site
- Need to review how well the reserve is functioning for brant
- Member observed very little brant usage, boundary poorly marked, but good diver habitat and usage. Member does not feel Bayview would make a good quality hunt area, but Samish Unit should be considered for restricted access.
- **Motion: Recommend WDFW absolve Bayview Reserve. Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

9. Status of waterfowl guide permit – *Chris Dorow*

- Mike Meseberg absent, intended to give a presentation
- Complaint about advertisements in pamphlet regarding “licensed WA guides” when there is no such license
- Would be beneficial to WDFW to receive recommendations regarding the guide license
- **Motion: WAG should drop the waterfowl guide permit issue from future consideration. Second. Motion failed (5 to 8).**
- Discussion: subcommittee needs to develop recommendations regarding the waterfowl guide permit, particularly which areas are restricted beyond RAA’s and leased land. Should guides be required to be bonded and insured? What about enforcement?
- **Motion: Drop existing waterfowl guide permit subcommittee, reappoint new subcommittee seconded. Motion passed.**
- **Fred Slyfield nominated to chair subcommittee. Seconded. Discussion: 2-3 members (Scott Fink, Pat Shearer), plus 1 WDFW (Dennis Beich).**

10. Election of Vice-Chair for 2010 – *Chris Dorow*

- Nominations: Dick Price nominated Doug Hargin. **Motion: to elect Doug Hargin as Vice Chair for 2010. Seconded. Motion passed. Motion to disallow nomination of non-present members for vice-chair. Motion seconded. Motion tabled.**

11. Other items

- Status of Governor's request to consider natural resources "super-agency". WDFW has been asked for information, but no decisions have been made.
- Budget: Frenchman Ponds excavation was not complete last biennium due to hiring freeze, however freeze is over for now.
- Eld Inlet no-shooting zone issue: good representation from enforcement at public meeting, citizens presented concerns about falling shot and noise pollution. Will likely increase no-shooting zone boundary.
- Members complimented Mr. Dorow on his chairmanship.

12. Adjournment –

- Meeting adjourned at 3:12 pm