

Wisconsin Conservation Congress
Fall Post Flyway Migratory Committee Meeting
Plaza Hotel & Suites, 201 N. 17th Ave, Wausau, WI
Saturday July 31, 2010

Meeting called to order by Chairman Koerner 9:00 am

Committee Roll Call: Dick Koerner, John Edelblute, Mitch Fisher, Richard Becker, James Brakken, Craig Conroy, Todd Cook, James Daily, Noel Dolde, Ron Earnest, Paul Gettelman, Roger Hanson, Martin Haas, Ray Heidel, Rick Koenig, Andrew Limmer, Al Marotz, Guy McFarren, Tim Morgan, Jerry Rowland, Jeff Scott, Allen Shook, Kurt Staab, Alan Suchla, Herbert Theisen, Brad Wagner - present.

Excused: Tim Morgan

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources: Kent Van Horn - Migratory Gamebird Ecologist, and James Christopoulos - Assistant Migratory Gamebird Ecologist

Guests: Rick Kirchmeyer, Congress Secretary

Department Informational Items and Updates by Kent Van Horn

Additional Duck Zones: The USFWS has been apposed to allowing states to create any more duck zones. Presently, the Feds allow up to 2 zones with 1 split or will allow 3 zones with no split seasons. Wisconsin has asked for 3 zones with split seasons or 4 zones with no splits. Other states have joined Wisconsin in asking for this season structure.

The Feds recently completed a study to determine if any change in zone structure would have an effect on the ducks. The study was inconclusive; Wisconsin has decided that they want to try it. If the new zone structure has a negative effect on the duck population, then they will change it. The feds agreed finally agreed to allow the changes this past Thursday at their meeting on July 29, 2010.

This is a big victory for us in Wisconsin and for all those that have been lobbying the feds. The feds will do an environmental impact study this fall and make a final decision next spring. However, Wisconsin will begin to plan now as if we have these new zone changes in order to have everything ready for implementation of the new zone structures for the 2011 waterfowl season.

The WDNR will form an ad-hoc committee with other groups to come up with three options for changes and then send out survey to other duck hunters around the state.

Ray Heidel asked about time line, Kent replied that the feds want proposal by April 2011.

Chairman Koerner asked for a raise of hands for volunteers to the ad-hoc committee; half the room raised their hands to volunteer. Kent then asked that we make sure we have representatives from all regions of the state and try to limit this to 6 or 7 committee members. It was decided that volunteers would sign up and the chairman and vice-chairman would choice the persons.

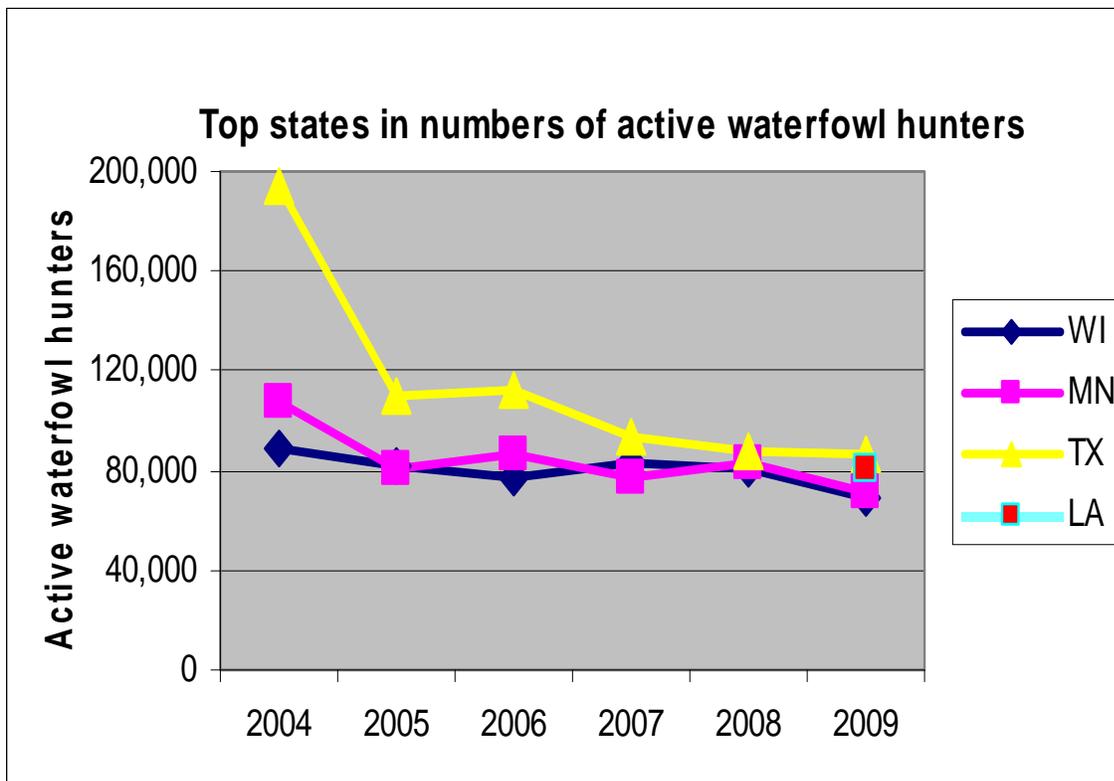
The committee then went around the table and made their introductions.

Update on ad-hoc open water hunting issue: Kent and Todd began set up meetings with local organizations to discuss expanding open water hunting opportunities but had to cancel the meetings do to the State mandatory furloughs. Kent and Todd concentrated their time on higher priority issues. The meetings with local groups will be set up in the future as time allows.

Kent's presentation:

Conditions in Wisconsin and for MVP geese in Ontario and Continental

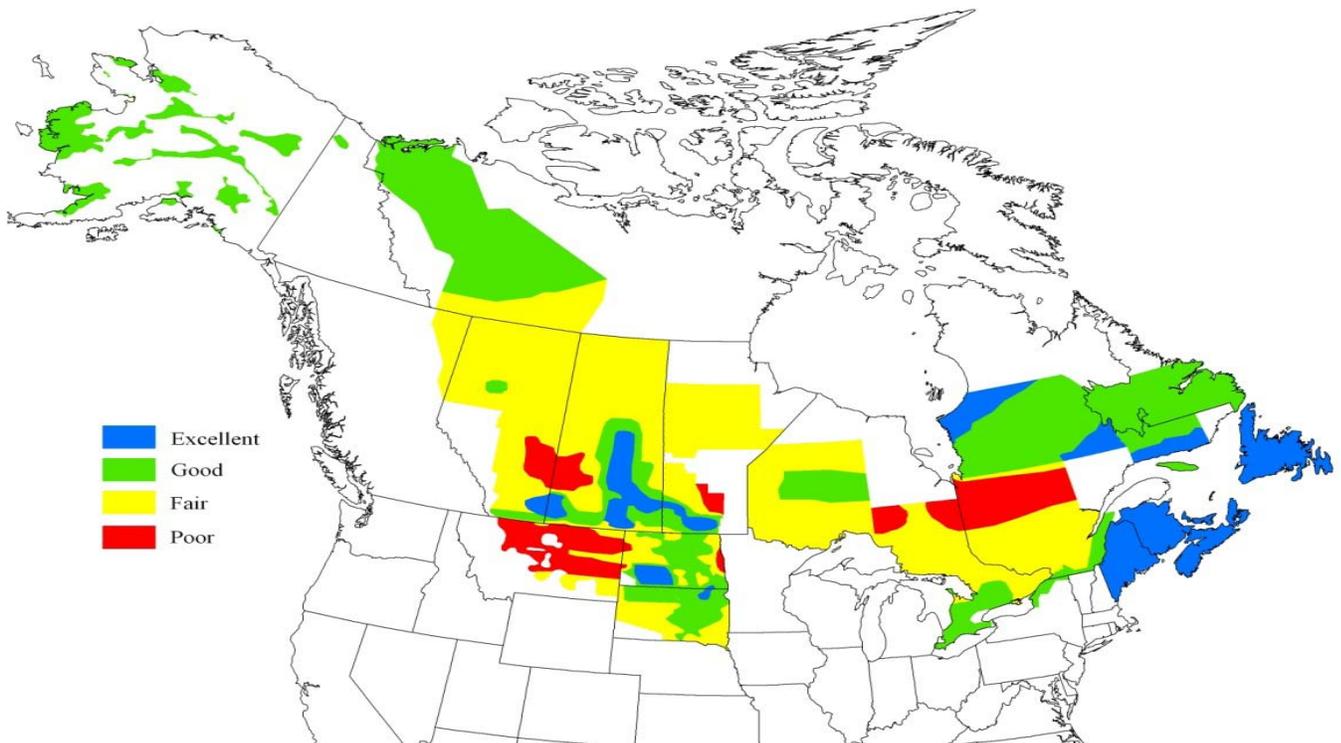
Top three states in of active waterfowl hunters:



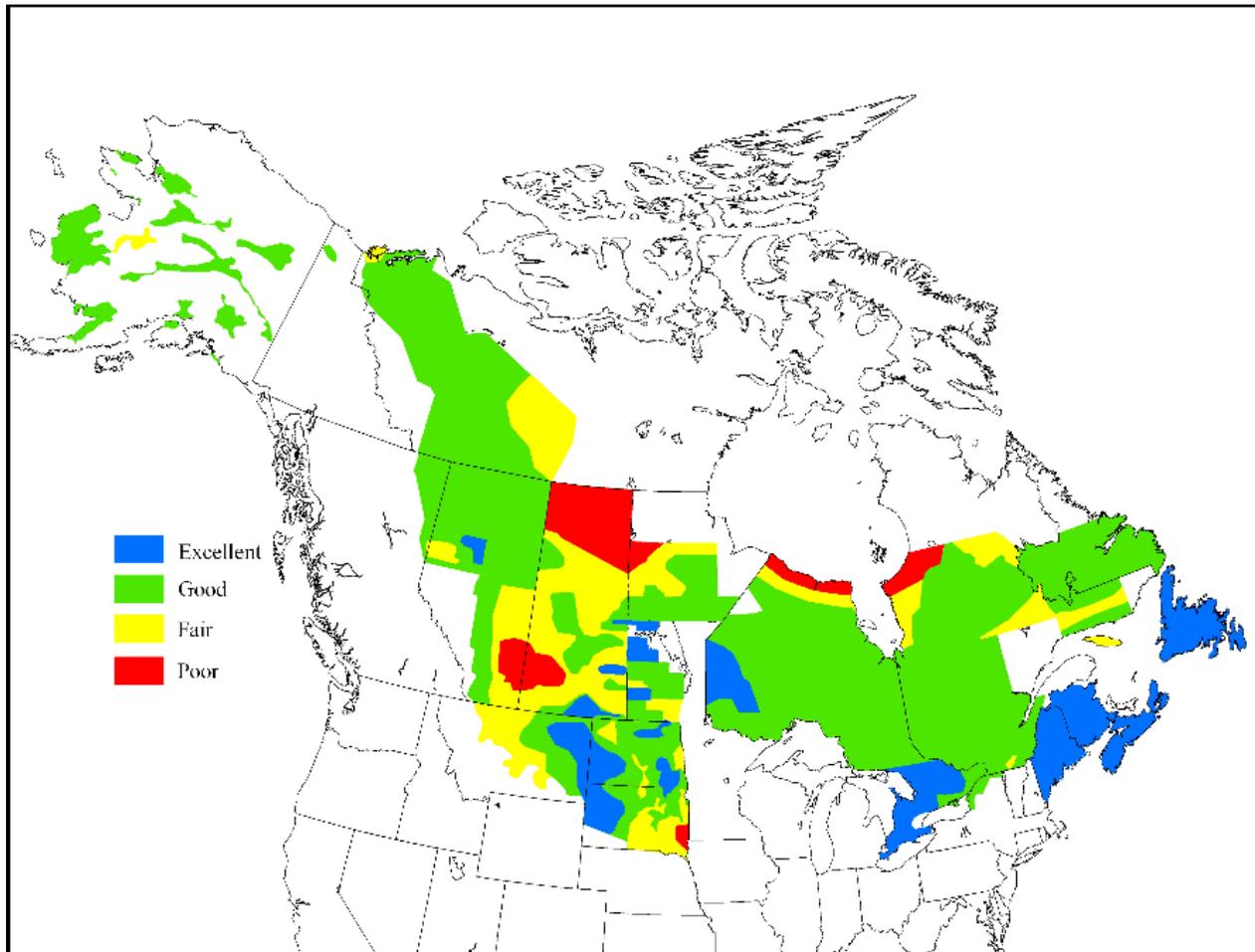
Waterfowl hunter numbers have been stable in Wisconsin. Minnesota and Wisconsin lost a few duck hunters last year because of the dry conditions, but goose hunter numbers stayed about the same. Increased license fees in Wisconsin may have had an effect on hunter numbers. The Conservation Patron License saw two consecutive years of fee increases causing WI to lose some duck hunters. The 2004-2005 extreme decline of Texas waterfowlers from shown on the chart may reflect Texas' unorthodox methods to counting hunter numbers. It doesn't necessarily mean they lost 100,000 duck hunters in one year, Van Horn said.

Conditions this year were wet in the Dakotas, dry in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota and the upper peninsula of Michigan (see chart). The ducks move where the water is so it does not affect their numbers quite as much as one might think. Prairies in Canada had good water as well.

2010 Breeding Waterfowl Habitat Conditions



2009 Breeding Waterfowl Habitat Conditions



WI mallards are down about one percent but up nine percent in long term average (see chart). The ducks move to where they find abundant water and the numbers are good in other areas so the feds offered us a liberal season of 60 and 6.

- Wisconsin – 198,242, down 1% from 2009, +9% LTA
- Minnesota – 242,000 up 3% from 2009, +8% LTA
- Michigan – 339,856 up 31% from 2009, below average
- Traditional Survey area – 8.4 million – Down 1% from 2009, Up 12% LTA
- Preliminary Mid continent mallards 8.6 mil.
- Canada Ponds – Up 3% - 3.7 million ponds

2010 Overall Duck Story

- Breeding conditions in Wisconsin were drier than average.
- Ducks respond to water – It was outside of WI this year. Total ponds across Canada and US survey area - 6.7 million up from 6.4 m (09) and 34% above LTA
- All duck BPOP's (except BW teal) are up from 2009 or relatively unchanged. Total ducks 41 million – 21% above LTA

Overall Duck Surveys

Continental blue wing and green wing are way up; cans down slightly. Pintails up again, still below historic levels but still abundant. There are up 9 percent since last year so we are getting two pintails in the overall 6 bag limit. Not that there was many more pintails but they changed the modeling on how to figure daily bag. If the population model goes down to 1.75 million, the season will close. Louisiana and Mississippi are the two big states that kill most pintails. WI harvest on pintails is low.

Canvasbacks are down a little from last year but still ok. Over the past 65 years the population has stayed pretty stable, down about 3 percent from last year but up 3 percent from the long term average. Scaup up slightly and stable from the last 10 years. Scaup are still the third most abundant duck behind teal. We are under a moderate framework for scaup with 2 birds and 60 days; if the population goes up we will get 4 and 60 days.

Dry spring this year in WI; breeding ducks in here were down slightly. Bluewing Teal numbers were down but the data shows more that the ducks moved to where the water was, not so much that the population was down. Wood ducks in WI are down a little because key areas in northern WI, where they are counted, had low water levels. The bag went to three birds last year as part of a three year evaluation of the impact of 3 birds per day.

In WI 75 percent of all harvested ducks are mallards, bluewings, or wood ducks.

So far there has not been a change in the overall harvest on woodies. The impact on woodies is determined by the weather conditions in the fall. The impact of the more liberal bag has less affect than the fall hunting conditions.

See attached chart for Wisconsin Estimated Harvest by species

Canada Geese

Wisconsin's goose harvest was low last year. Early season goose kill was affected by hot weather. In the regular season the late harvest of crops hurt the hunting opportunities and impacted the total harvest.

Kent said he is trying to shift the harvest of geese to the part early season to harvest more of the WI raised giant Canada. Therefore, fewer hunters are hunting Horicon and more are hunting exterior zones. This puts more pressure on WI birds than migratory MVP birds.

Goose populations had been having very good breeding season but the early nesting was hurt from predation by gulls on the young geese. The MVP birds are up at 239,000 but slightly below the long term average; 6 percent from LTA. WI geese are up 12 percent from last year and are double the LTA.

Jon Edelblute asked if we could go up to 3 bird bag per day. Van Horn reminded Edelblute that we are in year 4 of the 5 year study that changed to 2 birds per day. We can not go to a 3 bird bag at this time.

In Minnesota, 92 percent of their annual goose harvest is made up of their locally raised giants; therefore they are able to go to a 3 day bag. They have little migration from the eastern prairie Canada geese as well. We are at about 55 percent in our harvest of giants in overall seasonal bag. We have to be careful not to hammer the MVP birds or we end up with a one bird per day bag limit. WI has a very large number of goose hunters.

Other Migratory Birds

Morning doves are being banded in WI; there is a trend of a slight increase in the population. The WI harvest was about 100,000 in last year.

Wisconsin is number two in the nation for woodcock hunters. Wisconsin killed about 29,200 birds last year. The long term decline in woodcock numbers seems to point to the maturing of the forest. Forests have to be managed for the birds as well as trees.

2009 Banding Success

- 4766 Total Geese
- 6363 Total Ducks
- 3930 Mallards
- 1968 Wood Ducks
- 358 Blue-winged teal
- 75 Green-winged teal



Kent reminded the group to always report bands. Bands are starting to show up on EBay. It's critical that recovered bands must be reported to the USFWS. The data is needed to justify hunting seasons. Without it the harvest of migratory birds could be restricted or closed.

Rule Proposals:

Kent reminded the committee that the Burnett County and Rock Prairie subzones were eliminated after the vote at spring hearings and it will go into effect in the fall season. The elimination of Collins zone in 2011 will be on the menu next spring. It will be move it to the exterior zone but they will still maintain the refuge. Local hunters were surveyed last year, 80 percent of zone hunters said they wished to eliminate the Collins goose zone.

The 2009 survey of state waterfowl hunters showed that the bag limit is just about right, and 70 percent thought the season length was about right. (*see attached survey*)

Proposed Duck and Goose Season:

Early goose:

- September 1-15, 2010
- The statewide bag limit is 5 geese per day.
- Burnett Co. Subzone remains closed, but may be eliminated by emergency rule in August (would become part of Exterior zone).

Exterior zone: Will open two days after the close of the early season. We still have the option to split goose season up to two times. Kent recommends that if we want two splits, close season during gun deer season if we want to go later into December.

Exterior Zone: Daily Bag of 2.

- North - Saturday Sept 18 - Dec 11.
- South – Saturday Sept 18 – October 10 and October 16 – December 16.
- Mississippi River Subzone: Oct. 2 - Oct. 10 and Oct. 16 – Dec. 30th.

Horicon Zone: 2 periods. Daily Bag of 2, 6 Tags per hunter.

- H1- Sept 16 – Oct 31
- H2- Nov 1 – Dec 16

Collins Zone: Daily Bay of 2. 6 Tags per hunter

- 3 Time periods from Sept 16-Nov 19.

- C1-9/16-10/3, C2- 10/4-10/24, C3- 10/25-11/19).

Youth waterfowl hunt:

Proposed dates- Sept 18-19th

In 2009:

- Estimated 3,395 youth participated
- Harvested 7,809 ducks and 272 geese

Feds have just issued an Environmental Impact Statement on the way we managed waterfowl seasons and regulations. Just released comment open until March 2011.

Van Horn then reminded the committee of changes that affect Mead wildlife area. These changes were approved at the Spring Hearing 2010..

38. Close hunting hours at 1:00 p.m. during the first 16 days of the duck season after opening weekend (this provision would sunset after three years).

39. Close the Mead Wildlife Management Area to all waterfowl hunting prior to the opening of the duck season, except that duck hunting would be allowed on the youth hunt weekend.

40. Increase size of refuge areas in Townline/Berkhahn flowages.

41. Increase size of refuge areas in Rice lake/Pool 10.

The chairman called for a break and the committee broke at 10:46 am.

Chairman Koerner called the meeting back to order 11:00 am.

The committee then began discussion and voted on the Department's recommendations.

Al Shook motioned, second by Daily to accept the DNR proposal for northern zone duck season.

Jerry Rolland motioned to amend, Mitch Fisher second, to accept all the proposed seasons and zones. The motion to amend failed.

The motion to accept the Departments proposed northern duck zone season passed by voice vote with one grunt.

Motion was made by Al Shook, second by Todd Cook to accept southern zone for duck as written by the Department.

Ray Heidel says La Crosse wants an October 9 opener for the south zone. No other discussion.

Motion passed with one no vote from the guy who represents the river rats.

Motion was made to accept exterior Canada goose by Al Shook as proposed, second by Richard Becker. That is to include all exterior zones.

Discussion: Heidel says La Crosse wants exterior goose season in the south zone to coincide with the opening of duck season.

Brad Wagner thinks we should go for a second split for goose season during the deer season.

John Edelblute would like to close for 5 days at the start of deer season and re-open on Thanksgiving Day.

Edelblute motioned to amend to split Southern Exterior Goose season, second by Guy McFarren. The motion is to close November 20 through 24th, and reopen on November 25th Thanksgiving day. The season would then run through Dec. 21 and add one more weekend to the goose season.

Roger Hanson of Green Bay believes that the goose hunters in Green Bay would strongly oppose a closure during Thanksgiving.

Ray Heidel says La Crosse area hunters do not want a split during the deer season.

Jerry Roland Oconto agrees with Roger Hanson. He does not want to close the goose season because the geese move into the urban areas during late December were they find open and warm water because everything else is frozen. Closing the season during the deer hunt would actually provide less opportunity to hunt late season geese.

Ron Ernst favors the season to go late because in the southern part of the state hunters don't get a lot of geese early; more geese come down when things freeze up in the north.

Brad Wagner says we need to look at more than just Brown County; there would be more opportunity for more hunters that live in the south.

Andrew Limmer, Milwaukee County, wants the hunt during the deer hunting season. He says it's his best time to hunt geese; there is less competition for places to hunt.

The vote on the amendment, south zone only to add a second split to Nov. 20 to 24th and extend to the season to Dec. 26th failed. 10 yes, 12 no, Bayfield abstained from the vote.

The voice vote to accept as exterior season as proposed passed with 3 grunts

Motion to accept Horicon season as propose by Todd cook, Jerry Roland second.

The question was asked if we can put a split in the Horicon zone. Kent said the framework is too complicated. Guy McFarren asked if we can go to 3 birds per day. We can not go that 3 birds per day now because we are into the 4 year of 5 for the experiment.

Motion passes with one no

Collin Zone: Motion Mitch Fisher to accept as proposed, Ron Ernest to second, no discussion.

Motion passed with voice vote.

Al Shook, Paul Gettelman second, to accept light geese, brant, and white front geese as one vote.

Motion passed

Motion by Brad Wagner, second by Jeff Scott to accept bag limits as ducks, coots, and mergansers as proposed to include the shooting hours as proposed.

Noel Dolde motioned to amend to 1 pintail, no second, motion to amend fails.

Al Shook thinks we should amend to include the six ducks as all the others. It's not necessary Kent says.

Ray says La Crosse wants a ½ hour before sunrise opener for opening day

Motion carries

Motion was made by Shook, Jeff Scott to accept youth hunt as propose.

Mitch Fisher asked if there is any feed back on violations of adults bagging ducks because they are allowed to hunt geese if the season is open, or if there were any more complaints of the youth hunters scaring ducks away from the marshes. Kent says no.

Motion passed

Al Shook, second by Hass to accept the early Canada goose hunt as proposed.

Motion passes with one no

Falconry: Jeff Scott motioned to accept falcon, Gettelman second to accept as proposed.

The question was asked why the falcon hunters can hunt into January. Van Horn explained that it's because the Feds let them have the later season, 116 days total.

Motion passed.

The public hearings for the state are listed.

Public Hearings: Date and Location (all start at 7pm)

- Monday, August 2 - State Office Building, LaCrosse
- Tuesday, August 3 – WI Indianhead Tech College, Rice Lake
- Wednesday, August 4 - Agricultural Services Center, Appleton
- Thursday, August 5 – Comfort Suites, Pewaukee

Natural Resource Board Meeting

- Wednesday, August 11 – Superior

Member Matters:

Paul Gettelman asked if we can change the date of our December meeting to a day other than a Friday night, perhaps to meet in January. Problem with that is the executive council has to have the results from this meeting by the first week of Jan.

Ron Earnest complained that they had to kill about 100 geese in Walworth County because of complaints.

Al Shook wants the Friday night, Mitch Friday night. Roger Hanson likes the Saturday meeting and would like to see our December meeting go that way.

Jerry Roland wants to see the proposals from the ad-hoc committee and season zones after the results of the survey have been compiled.

Most of the committee likes the idea of Friday night December committee meeting.

Jeff Scott wants to see dead trees and stumps included in the description of vegetation in the new blind concealment regulation for duck hunters.

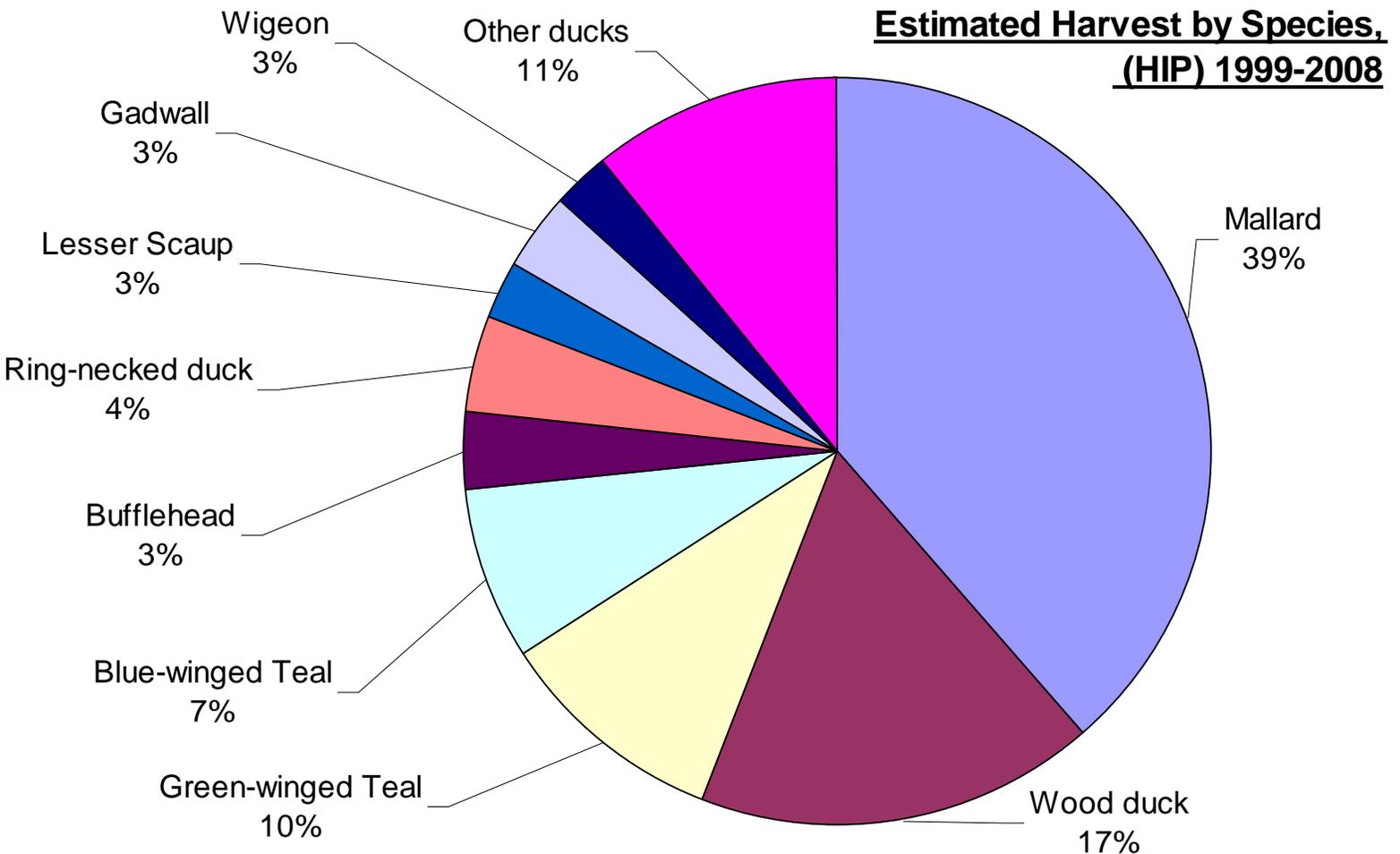
Rick Kirchmeyer, Congress Secretary, addressed the committee. He reported that Congress Chairman Ed Harvey will be stepping down next year. He reminded the committee that the trapper's national convention will be here in Wausau next weeks.

Motion to adjourn by Al Shook, second by Jerry Roland

Motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 11:59 am

Recorded by Migratory Committee Secretary Mitch Fisher, Sheboygan County



2009 Season WI Waterfowl Hunter Survey

- 79% thought duck bag limit was about right (80%)
- 50% favored 1 hen mallard (51%), 33% 2 hens (33%), 5% 0 hens (7%), 12% no opinion (9%)
- 70% duck season length about right (65%), 26% too short (28%)
- 61% thought timing of duck season was about right (59%), 23% too early (29%), 10% too late (6%)
- Opening day in the north- 48% for Saturday nearest September 24 (44%), 25% for Oct 1 (29%)
- Opening day in the south- 38% for Saturday nearest October 1st (40%), 20% for Sept 24 (18%), 20% for Oct 8 (20%)
- Prefer North/South zones – 55% ,
Single statewide zone- 27%, No opinion - 18%