

DNR/WCC Ad hoc duck zone committee meeting notes – September 10, 2015

Committee Members : *Attended* - Don Kirby (Wisconsin Waterfowl Association), John Wetzel (Lacrosse County Conservation Alliance and Wisconsin Wildlife Federation), , Al Shook (Wisconsin Conservation Congress), Ray Heidel (Wisconsin Conservation Congress), Rick Koenig (Wisconsin Conservation Congress), Wayne Norling (Wisconsin Conservation Congress), Tim Babros (WDNR), James Holzward (WDNR), Bill Hirt (WDNR), Pete Engman (WDNR), Tyler Strelow (WDNR), Kent Van Horn (WDNR), Taylor Finger (WDNR)

Did not Attend: (note: Invited to provide comment) Roger Hanson (Green Bay Duck Hunters Club), Todd Cook (Wisconsin Conservation Congress), Jon Bergquist (Wisconsin Wildlife Federation), Dan Rudebeck (Poygan Conservation Club and Wisconsin Wildlife Federation)

Prior to the committee meeting, all committee members were provided an 11 page background document which provided analysis of hunter harvest, hunter attitudes and duck migration in relation to issues of duck zone configuration as well as background regulations and process.

At beginning of meeting, most, if not all, of the members had reviewed the document. Members not present at the meeting received the document and were asked to provide input. Roger Hanson provided a couple of brief comments including that the GBDH were pleased with the current zone structure and dates, do not want to be part of a Lake MI zone and asked the committee to recognize that interest in layout boat hunting on Lake MI remains. Todd Cook provided a brief comment suggesting that the way the zones are currently structured provides the most opportunity. No other committee members provided comments outside the meeting.

The following was provided to the committee as a charge for the evening:

Committee charge:

Our goal in this step is to review the available information on Wisconsin's experience with the current 3 duck zone structure and determine the following:

1. Did the zone configuration created in 2011 "provide for a more equitable distribution of harvest opportunity for hunters throughout a state"? In other words, was the harvest or harvest opportunity different among the 3 zones based on the variation in climate, habitat, hunting techniques and/or duck migration found in our state.
 2. Determine if there are minor road changes or boundary clarifications that are necessary.
 3. Determine options to offer for comment in a randomly distributed hunter survey for different duck zone configurations.
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We went through a PowerPoint that contained similar information as that in the background document to allow for questions and clarification. Following the presentation, the committee worked through the tasks above.

1. **Answer – Yes.** The group agreed that based on the available data, the current 3 duck zone structure provided an equitable distribution of harvest opportunity among the variations in climate and duck migration. Within the limitations of

the available federal options for duck zones, the group could not think of a better configuration.

2. **Answer – Yes** - Hwy 10 – Stevens Point area – The group discussed one area that could use road adjustments. The line between the north and south duck zone lines was established at Hwy 10, 10 years ago. However, during this period, Hwy 10 was rerouted by DOT. Initially the DNR left the zone boundary at the “old Hwy 10” line but this resulted in a more complicated zone boundary since the old line was not Hwy 10 to Hwy 66 to Cty HH back to Hwy 10.
3. **Develop duck zone configurations options for a hunter survey**

The committee asked good questions related to data sources and available options, had great discussion and ended up focusing on 3 primary issues:

- Should the north-south duck zone line be adjusted?
- Did the Mississippi River zone we created 4 years ago provide something different?
- What about unique hunting opportunities on Lake Michigan?

We discussed challenges and limitations to the available data such as; harvest data becomes weak the smaller group of counties included in a sampling unit, harvest data is at the county so no way to see only Lake Michigan data, duck survey data is not available for most of the state with the best data on the Mississippi River. The group was comfortable that the duck harvest data for the counties along the Mississippi River represented mostly river based harvest since the Coulee landscape outside the river does not offer much duck hunting opportunity. However, on the east side of the state the counties along Lake Michigan have significant inland duck hunting areas so the county data does not represent Lake Michigan harvest.

In the end, the committee agreed to 3 basic options to be presented in a scientifically designed mail hunter survey:

1. Current 3 zone option with splits
2. Current 3 zone option with the north-south duck zone line moved from Hwy 10 to Hwy 64 with splits
3. A 4 zone option to include the existing 3 zones with the addition of a Lake Michigan zone, understanding that we would lose the opportunity for annual duck zone splits. Be clear in defining the zone as 500 feet offshore and along Door County.

As we work with our social scientists to design the survey, we will know better how we can represent these options in an objective fashion that gets the clearest response. We are looking to have results from the survey this winter and then we will meet with the ad hoc committee again before going out for additional public input.