

Wisconsin Conservation Congress
Migratory Study Committee Winter Meeting
Ramada Inn – Stevens Point, WI
Friday December 10, 2010 – 7:00 PM

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Richard Koerner at 7:00 PM.

The roll call was taken by Secretary Mitch Fisher.

Committee Members Present: Dick Koerner, John Edelblute, Mitch Fisher, Richard Becker, James Brakken, Todd Cook, Noel Dolde, Ron Earnest, Roger Hanson, Ray Heidel, Rick Koenig, Al Marotz, Guy McFarren, Tim Morgan, Jerry Rowland, Allen Shook, Kurt Staab, Alan Suchla, Herbert Theisen, Chuck Boley, Jeff Scott, and Jerry Rowland.

Committee Members Excused: Craig Conroy, Brad Wagner, James Dailey, Paul Gettelman, Andrew Limmer, and Martin Haas.

DNR personal: Kent Van Horn – Migratory Gamebird Ecologist, James Christopoulos – Assistant Migratory Gamebird Ecologist, and Todd Schaller – WDNR Warden

Also attending: WCC Chairman Ed Harvey and resolution authors Ben Loma (and friends), David Orf, and Robert Reidner

Chairman Koerner then read the migratory committee mission statement.

Migratory Study Committee Mission Statement

The mission of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress Migratory Committee is to represent the Stake Holders of Wisconsin by working with the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources to effectively manage Wisconsin's local ducks and geese, as well as migrating ducks, geese, swans, and other migratory birds for present and future generations to enjoy.

Koerner called for an agenda repair to give the resolution authors a chance to speak about their resolution now instead of later as written in the meeting agenda. This would allow the authors a chance to speak and leave early for their drive home.

Kent Van Horn then asked the committee to review a few slides that are related to the resolutions.

Resolution 440110: OPEN WATER DISABILITY WATERFOWL HUNTERS by Ben Loma of Oneida County

Chairman Koerner read the resolution. (See attachment)

The chair recognized the author of the resolution, Ben Loma. Loma said the resolution was written because a friend has MS and needs lots of help to enter a boat and the

disease makes it difficult or impossible to conform to the new regulations of concealment. He wants to hunt out of a pontoon boat. It will be difficult for the concealment. Todd Schaller informed the committee that the DNR has a disability advisory counsel and he would like the resolution to be reviewed by them. Kent also advises that we should send this to the disability counsel.

Ray Heidel supports the resolution, and adds that the resolution should also include the companion. Todd Cook says go for it, we already make things available for disabled people to hunt on land.

Al Marotz says we need this and we need to add a companion clause.

Motion by Todd Cook to pass this along to the DNR disability advisory council, **second** by Ray Heidel

Ed Harvey questions whether we should go through the congress run and then to the disability council.

Kent believes that we should go direct to the disability council.

Al Shook says we should go through the congress canals; "Don't let this die in the counsel."

Al Marotz wants to call for the question.

Shook, asked to Congress Chairman Harvey, "If we go to the counsel, how can we bring it back for the committee to vote."

The vote was taken and the motion failed.

New Motion by Al Marotz to send this to the CC hearing, there was no second.

Noel Dolde said the issue will be picked up by the advisory DNR disability committee by anyway, we should move this through the congress.

The authors' concern is about the concealment issue.

Motion by Ray Heidel to accept the resolution and change the language to include up to two hunting companions; **second** by Jeff Scott

Al Shook wants to change the language to one or more hunting companions.

Jim Brakken is afraid that adding more hunting companions would lead to confusion at the spring hearing.

Motion carries by unanimous voice vote.

Resolution 55-02-10: SANDHILL CRANE SEASON IN WISCONSIN by Robert Reidner, Lady Smith, WI

Dick Koerner read the resolution. (see attachment)

Dick asked Kent Van Horn to run through his slides to discuss the sandhill crane hunting issue.

The new Minnesota sandhill crane hunting season of 2010 is restricted to a different population or western MN sandhills; these are the Midcontinent population. Our Eastern population is different and Kent wrote the Federal plan for the eastern sandhill birds. Kentucky and Tennessee are working on a plan for a hunting season now.

Most people still think sandhills are rare birds. Kent recommends that we table the issue until next year so he can lay the ground work for this proposed season. Given the new administration in Madison, it would very advisable to put this off for a year until the public can be educated and the hunt plan can be devised.

Motion to reject by John Edelblute with a second by Jim Brakken and to encourage the author to re-submit the resolution next year

Tim Morgan asked Kent when could be having a hunt. Kentucky is having a hunt this fall. Kent will monitor the progress. Best case that we could have a hunt come 2013 if the stars all line up. If we put this thing on for this Spring Hearing (2011), it could be a major set-back for the plan. The press will get a hold of it and then the new administration would have to answer questions before he has his plan in place. That would not be a help, it may set the plan years back.

Noel Dolde says we should respect Kent's wishes and let him do his work.

Motion to reject carries.

Chairman Koerner thanked the author for coming.

Resolution 560110: NORTH/SOUTH ZONE DUCK HUNTING by David Orf, Hudson, WI

Chairman Koerner read the resolution. (See attachment)

Kent addressed the committee and told of the results of his survey of duck hunters including a question where 60% of the respondents said to leave to zone alone.

However, we now are looking at a new plan and may end up with three zones anyway. His data shows that the vast majority of ducks are killed by the first of November. A late season in the far north would not be productive.

Motion by Noël Dolde to reject, **second** by Ron Ernest

No discussion, **motion to reject passes** with one grunt.

Resolution 110110: WATER SET DECOYS ON PRIVAT LAND, by Craig Swenson, Portage

Chairman Koerner read the resolution. (See attached)

Dick and the committee passed this last year but it was rejected at the executive council meeting. John Edelblute read a new question that he wrote that removed the private water language in the resolution. John discussed the resolution with law enforcement and they said this could be ok if they removed the private water language because there is no State definition of private water.

Motion by Dick Becker to accept, **second** by Jim Brakken, the question as written by Edelblute

Jim Brakken said he made the second to the motion *only* so that he could open the discussion. He does not like the resolution; he thinks that it would favor rich people. It would favor rich people that have private land or rich people that would be able to buy land so they could leave their water set decoys unattended overnight. This is an unfair advantage he said. (Most likely Brakken is not a ditto head)

Guy McFarren says a land owner pay enough taxes and should be able to do what he pleases with his land.

Brakken responded that those waters belong to everyone.

Al Shook has problems with the language and wants the resolution voted on as written, and then make adjustments to it.

Roger Hansen says that his years he has seen nothing but problems with issues like this.

Dick opened the comment to the author.

Jim Brakken wanted to clarify that any small bodies of water may have a small stream in or out of it.

Jim Brakken withdrew his second. Guy McFarren offered a new second

The question was called.

A hand count showed the **motion carried, 9 yes, 8 no**, to accept the question as written by John Edelblute.

Motion to reject the original resolution by Noel Dolde, **second** by Tim Morgan

Motion passed unanimous voice

Chairman Koerner asked the committee to break for 15 minutes.

The Committee broke at 8:15 PM

Chairman Koerner reconvened the meeting at 8:30 PM.

Kent Van Horn began presentation and started with update of open water duck hunt issues. Lots of good stuff came out of the 10 meetings.

Attendances varied by lakes and users. Some thought the idea of someone sitting in the middle of the lake with a gun they thought that was frightening until they were told that people all ready do this and close to shore.

Few problems anticipated:

Castle Rock, Fence, North Twin, Trout, Lake Wisconsin all very low use for fisherman low use by hunters.

Castle rock issues of boundaries with bridges etc.

Moderate problems high to moderate duck use, Puckaway, Shawano, and Beaver Dam.

Puckaway, eastern side had voluntary avoidance zone, locals are not fond of the idea that would have duck hunters disturbing birds on that side of the lake. Plus there are private land owners that rent duck blinds and do not want the competition.

Beaver Dam Lake is not a very good shape, it's kind of long. The local biologist does not like the idea, thinks it will scare off all the ducks.

Shawano lake, there are rushes in the middle, moderate to heavy use by ducks. Local hunters are not too excited about the idea.

High level of discussion or adjustment:

Lakes Poygan, Winneconne, Butte des Morts have firearm issues, moderate fall fishing, high duck use, and local opposition from duck hunters is high. Maybe 90% of hunters were opposed. Most were hell bent to stop it. Kent talked to researchers, biologists from the area, they discussed the impact. They agreed that with the amount of ducks in Wisconsin, it would not generally hurt the population. If there is a high concentration of hunters on these lakes, it will shoot the ducks off; it will have an impact on the ducks using the lakes.

Koshkonong has a lot of ducks and a lot of duck hunters. He has been informed that the local duck club has enough money for a lawyer and will bring in an out-of-state biologist to fight any open water hunting. The local warden says he is always dealing with user conflict from land owners that hunt and other hunters that want to use the lake.

Lake Wissota – low use by ducks until surrounding areas freeze up

Grindstone – big lake, low use by ducks. Part of Grindstone is in the tribal lands. Musky fisherman use the lake late fall, but Green Bay has a lot of musky fisherman too and a lot of duck hunters but they can get along.

Potential Conflicts:

- On Lake Winnebago there are no reported conflicts between open water duck hunting and fishing
- Conflicts on Lake Winnebago did result from duck hunters on shore having conflict with anglers or other hunters
- Primary "user conflict" has been shoreline hunters and residences, blinds on public property and hunter/hunters
- In the last 4 years of the statewide summary of LE waterfowl issues no reports of conflicts with open water duck hunters
- Local reports from Big Green Lake and Petenwell indicate that these lakes are not heavily used by open water duck hunters.

Next steps:

- Need to complete staff analysis of local information collected during meetings
- Develop a draft proposal for each lake with specific issues
- Allow lake associations to discuss at their spring/summer 2011 meetings
- Generate a regulation proposal by fall 2011

When Kent was at the meetings, he asked the locals if they were familiar with the CC and the spring hearings. Most knew nothing of either.

Fall of 2011 Kent will make proposals that will be discussed at the Dec. 2011 migratory committee. The DNR will then advance the proposals at each local area on the DNR side of the question.

Members discussed the progress, some were in favor of removing some lakes; others are favorable to send this through the process. The proposals will be made for each lake. It will be a state wide question but the DNR will look closely at local support.

Season Review:

Spring was dry in Wisconsin; duck production may have been down. Lots of rain in the summer and fall; goose hunting pressure was down.

Jerry Roland said it was a weird season, asked if the migration was down.

Van Horn replied the feed back of the duck season was that it was an "ok" season, about what people expected. Wood ducks were the #1 bird in the bag followed by Mallards, then Teal. The three bird bag on woodies was good for hunters and may have contributed to them being #1.

Duck Season North:

Feed back from northern biologists that even if there was open water and no freeze up, the birds were still gone by the 1 or 2nd weekend of November.

- High water around opener great for ducks but also spread them out and impacted access.
- Hunting pressure was moderate to lower opening day.
- Harvest seemed good overall this year, wood ducks carried the day
- Marshes freeze up prior to season close but lakes/rivers were still open

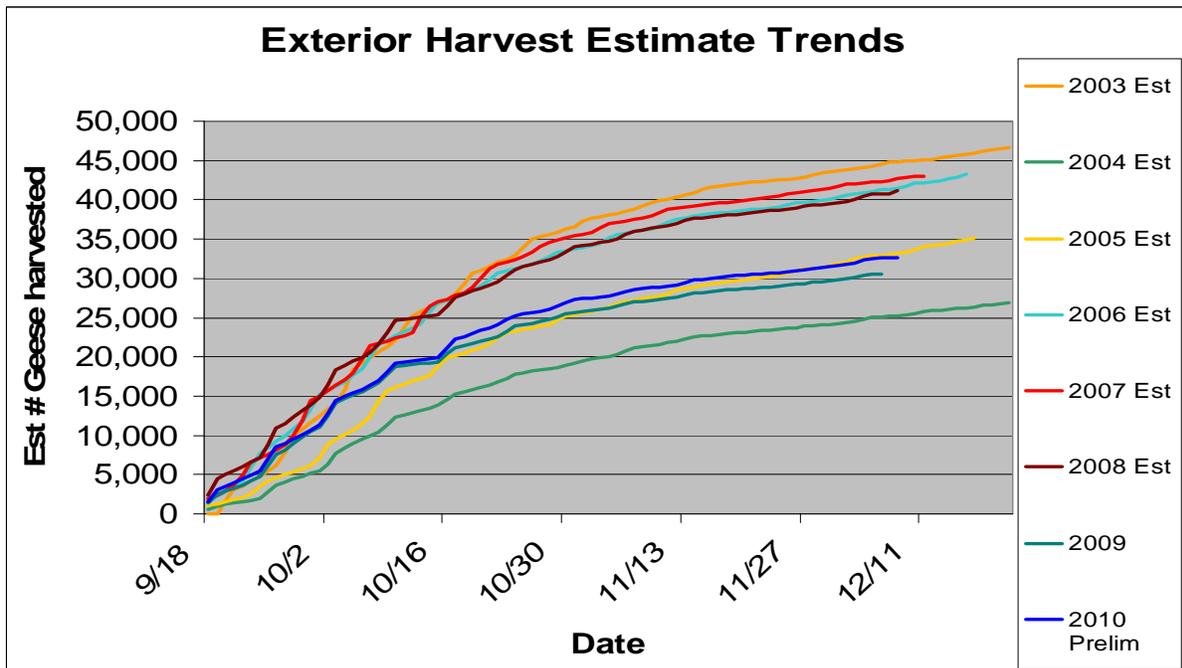
Duck Season South:

- High water at opener
- Cold spell just before opener then warm
- Teal low numbers roughly good to average
- Wood ducks again higher in importance opening day and October harvest- 3 WD daily bag is a good thing
- Open day hunting pressure lower in some areas (high water), "2nd opener" good
- Small/shallow water beginning to freeze before season end. First significant snowfall and cold snap days before season close. Most state locked up in ice by close.
- Miss. surveys showed dabblers peaking 1st week Nov. and moderate, divers peaking at same time with record counts. Because of high water early, 2nd opener turned into opening day.
- Early goose pretty good, later goose opportunity limited in some areas due to access (un-huntable urban fields/ponds)

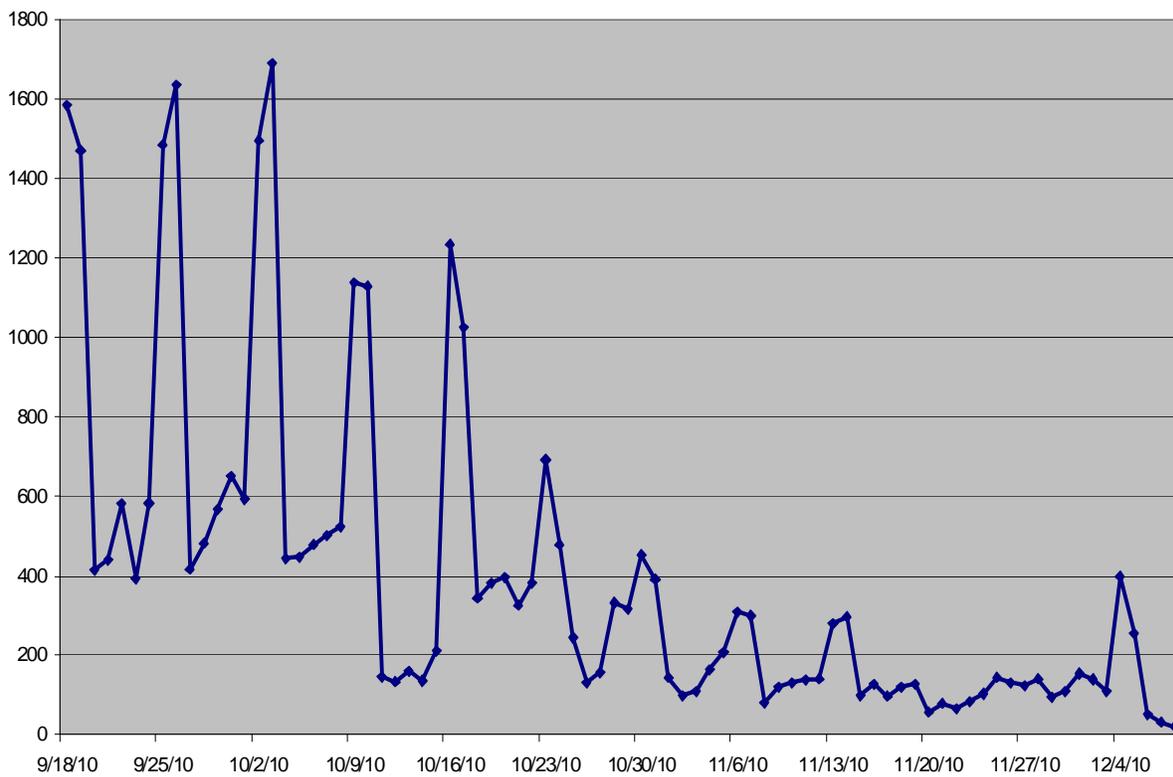
Hunter Bag Checks:

- This year, funds and staffing from the AI monitoring allowed us to both sample for AI and perform bag checks.
- So far this year, we have bag check information from over 410 hunters from Crex, Sheboygan marsh, and Mead.
- Top 4 species harvested inland were wood ducks (35%), mallards (27%), blue-winged teal (23%), and green-winged teal (11%).
- Miss. data not yet available

Goose round up, harvest was not as high as expected given the amount of birds.



2010 Exterior Zone- Estimated goose kill by day



Blue Wing Teal:

- The lower than historic WI blue-winged teal breeding population numbers continue to be a concern
- Due to game farm disease issues, 2010 spent raising sufficient numbers of 'bait' birds for final year of study
- Results thus far support grassland blocks and wet meadows as best nesting, adult hen survival low in WI. Mortality – mammals – 46%, raptors -21% and hay cut 4%.

Morning Dove: They have harvest data from the banding birds; 350 million birds across the nation. Population trends are that they are going up.

- In Wisconsin roughly 10,000-20,000 hunters harvest 100,000-200,000 doves each fall.
- Age ratio of WI 2009 harvest= 2.82 imm./ adult (unit aver. 1.94).
- 3rd highest of 19 EMU states, indicates good production & likely growing pop.
- Recent estimates of the continental pop. ~ 350 million birds- < 6% of the fall population is harvested.
- Each year for over 40 years the USFWS and WI DNR have conducted spring call count surveys
- WI dove population trends:
 - 2001-2010 = 1.5% increase
 - 1966-2010 = 0.7% increase
- As part of the national harvest management plan WI bands doves each year. Annual banding totals:
 - 2005 - 570
 - 2006- 1,035
 - 2007- 781
 - 2008- 667
 - 2009- 670
 - 2010- 829

Wood Cock: The long term decline has stabilized. Wisconsin is number two, Michigan number one in wood cock in harvest.

- After a long term (38 yr) decline of about 2% per year the population has leveled off in central US
- 2009 showed a non-significant increase from 2008
- WI has about 14,000+ active woodcock hunters harvesting roughly 36,000 woodcock per year (2nd in the nation in 2009)
- Woodcock habitat demonstration areas

Expanding Duck Zones:

Working with the feds is not an easy process. They are not finished with the environmental impact statement. Kent is still moving along with his plan with the idea that it will not change. He has a lot of data of duck hunters' preference. The ad hoc duck zone committee meet and did good work. See plan and time line for process slide.

- July 2010- The USFWS Service Regulations Committee recommends expanding the options available to states for configuring duck zones. An environmental assessment will be conducted in the fall of 2010 and changes to these guidelines announced in Jan. 2010. The USFWS will expect states to present a new zone configuration by April 2011.
- August 2010- The new guidelines and a process for determining these new goals are outlined to NR Board.
- September 2010- WI staff conducts analysis and preliminary work with USFWS staff on new duck zone options.
- October 2010- Ad hoc committee for duck zones holds meeting and drafts 3 configuration options to be included in a mail survey.
- November 2010 - A hunter survey is designed and distributed to a random selection of duck hunters in Wisconsin.
- December- January 2010-2011 - Survey data are summarized and analyzed. Final clarification on duck zone option rules issued by the USFWS.
- February 2011 - Final duck zone recommendation developed. Seek approval from Department Administration on this duck zone configuration.
- March 2011 – Present information on duck zones to the Natural Resources Board.
- April – Spring hearing question

- April- May 2011 - Submit new duck zone configuration to the USFWS for review.
- May- June - Receive feedback from USFWS and make any corrections/clarifications
- July 2011 - Take final duck zone configuration to public hearing
- August 2011 - Natural Resources Board approves new duck zone configuration
- September 2011 - Implement new duck zones for 2011 hunting season.

Roger Hansen asked how many surveys were send out, 1000 were sent out. Jerry Roland asked about the return rate. Not as good as some others, they take the names from the Hip surveys.

Review of what we could do with the zones. Kent reminded the committee of the survey from 2007 and 2009. The survey tells Kent that 60 to 70% of the duck hunters think the seasons are just fine. The question is whether we can make it better. The number one question is, "can we make the season last longer?"

Duck harvest data graph, most of the ducks are killed opening of the south zone. Last week of October increased harvest again. The last week of the season few birds are killed.

Support for different zones has different support depending on where you are in the state. Mississippi probably benefits with good duck kill numbers as the rest of the state freezes up.

Kent then showed us the three different choices.

1. Keep the zones the same
2. Add a third zone to include Lake Michigan, south counties of WI and lower end of Mississippi River and move the north south line.
3. Do the same but keep the north zone line the same.

See attached maps for existing and proposed changes map

Roger Hansen says they want a later season on Green Bay but they don't want to give up 10 days for a longer split. Best would be an 80 day season, but that will not happen☺. He says the pressure on Green Bay has gone way up from the internet, etc. hunters are coming from out of state to open water hunt on Green Bay.

Feed back from the new regulations on concealment:

Todd Schaller relayed a few water fowl shooting accidents, including two hunters being shot by there Labrador, the dog tripped over the gun and it discharged in the boat. Sever injuries at that close range.

Kent went through his presentation on new Federal guidelines for developing migratory hunting seasons. Koerner made this report optional for the committee; most members left that were traveling this night back to their homes before the impending winter storm. Many committee members that are staying overnight, stayed for the meeting.

ESI was done in the 70's one done in the 80's and they are doing one again. Looking at the opportunities to change into how they set the duck hunting seasons. Mostly this is how Kent will set the season and the time frames on how they go about setting the season.

Most changes would be to move the regulation process up so that we would understand the fed decisions earlier in the year. The problem if they bump it up is that they will not have the new brood and pond data from the new year. The problem is that if they have to go to the previous year's, data they may have to be more conservative. However, it would make the states process to publish the season framework a lot sooner.

Noel asked what the comments were but the comment period is still on going.

Also included was how frequent the changes can be made. Stock specific and harvest strategies. They could change the make up of the bag, stay with special regs on cans, blue bills, or lump ducks into groups but that may make the season shorter down to 50 days, and it may be more restrictive.

Management of scale, they could go smaller or bigger, stay with flyways or go to Great Lakes mallard population. The result could be more complex.

Zones and splits are part of the thing to.

What's missing is that they are not including any data about hunters in how they offer the seasons.

Member matters:

Scott asked if anything has been done about a swan season.

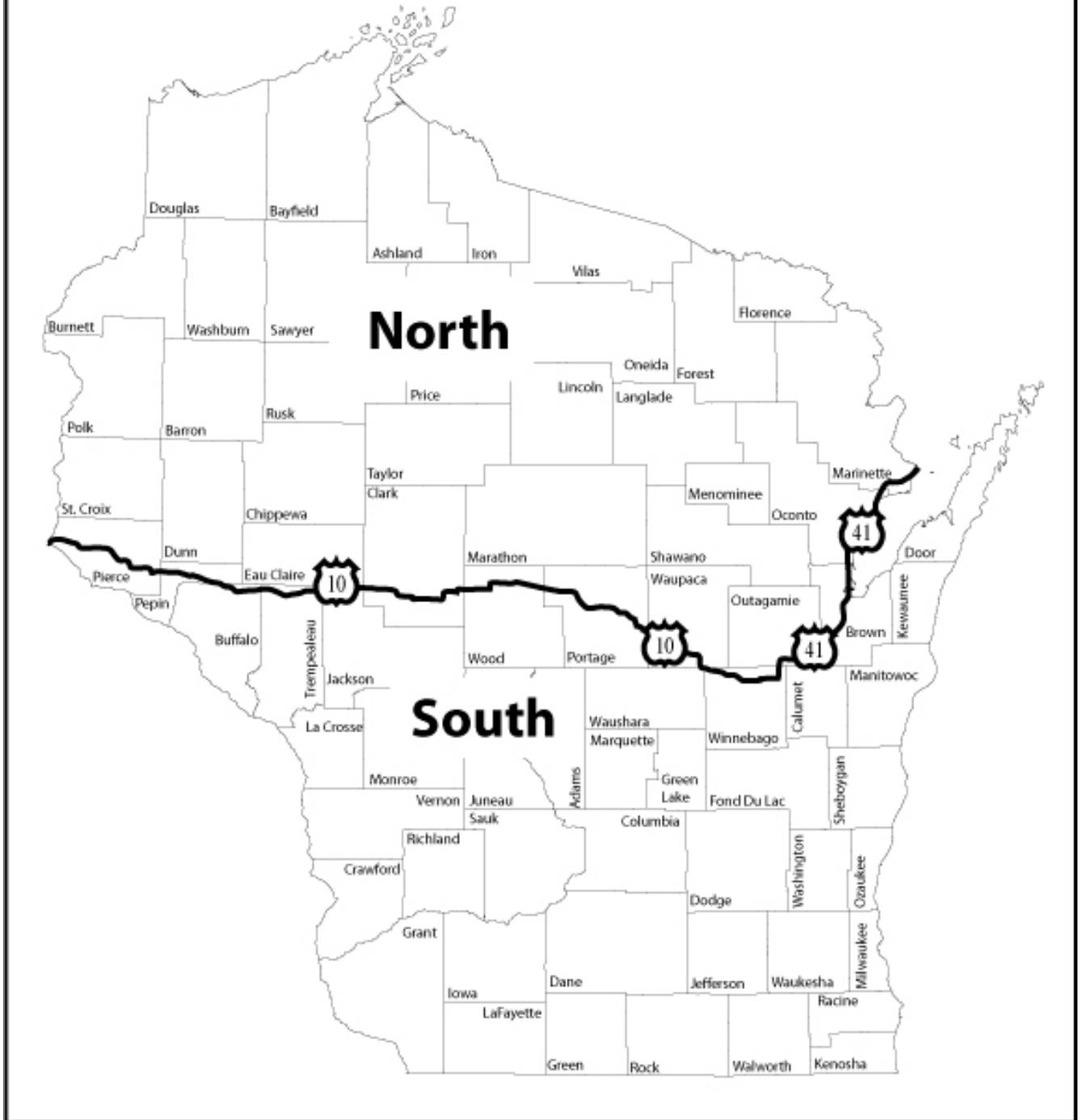
Motion to adjourn Dick Becker, John Edelblute second

Adjourned at 10:40 pm

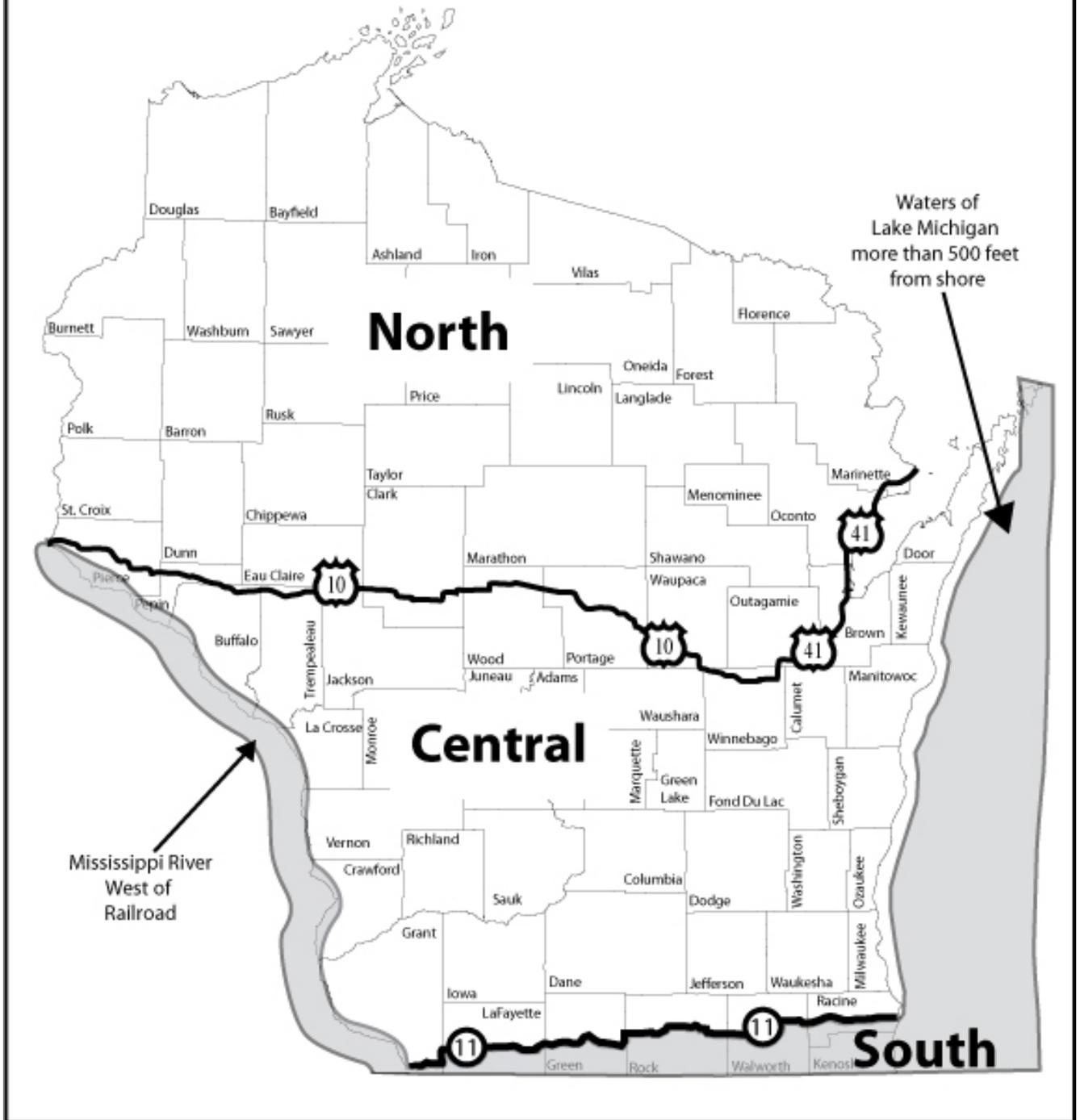
Respectfully submitted:

Mitchell Fisher, Migratory Committee Secretary

Current Two-Zone Configuration



Potential 3 Zone Duck Hunting Option



Potential 3 Zone Duck Hunting Option

