

THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES – JULY 25, 2012

Chairman Jeffrey Plummer called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Approval for the July 25, 2012 Meeting Agenda

- The July 25, 2012 Wildlife Advisory Commission Meeting Agenda was presented to the Commission.
- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Rodney motioned to accept the July 25, 2012 Meeting Agenda as presented.
 2. Commissioner Compton seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Approval for Minutes from June 20, 2012 Meeting

- The June 20th meeting minutes were distributed to the Commission prior to the meeting.
- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Rodney motioned to approve the June 20th meeting minutes as presented.
 2. Commissioner Boyles Griffin seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee Update – Presentation given by Ladd Johnson, Chairman of the Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee (MGBAC).

- Chairman Johnson reported that MGBAC held a conference call on July 24, 2012 to discuss the potential federal frameworks and the Department's tentative proposals for the waterfowl hunting seasons.
- The MGBAC is excited about the potential of five more days on the Canada Goose Season and the idea of possibly splitting the additional days during the late seasons.
- As far as the MGBAC, things are moving rather smoothly.
- Chairman Johnson highlighted the mission of the MGBAC, which is to assist with review of the Maryland Migratory Game Bird Stamp fund and provide input on waterfowl management on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). In addition, the MGBAC discusses sea ducks and everything pertaining to waterfowl and migratory game bird species in Maryland.
- The MGBAC is very comfortable with the potential proposals for the waterfowl seasons.
- Chairman Plummer added that waterfowl hunting license sales have been declining. There is a need for the next generation of waterfowl hunters to purchase licenses. It would be hard to sell a license for waterfowl if the geese are not migrating to Maryland. This would add to the revenue problem for the Department.

The Migratory Bird Regulation Process – Presentation given by Bill Harvey, Game Bird Project Leader.

- Mr. Pete Jayne gave the Commission a very short disclaimer for the new members regarding regulations processes. At the July 25th and August 15th WAC meeting, the Commission and staff will deal with the waterfowl regulations, which are done every year around this time. Staff members are looking for input from the Commission on these items. At the August meeting there will be a more formal presentation and a lot of information will be disseminated to the Commission from public input to the staff recommendations. It is at the August 15th WAC meeting that staff is looking for a formal vote on the waterfowl proposed seasons and bag limits.
- Mr. Bill Harvey explained the Migratory Bird Regulation process to the Commission in a Power Point Presentation. **[ATTACHMENT A]** The Migratory Bird Regulation process is a lot different than the resident game species regulations process. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS),

Canada Wildlife Service and all the states and provinces work together to come up with the annual recommendations for seasons and bag limits.

1. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service establishes the frameworks. The states and provinces work within those frameworks. The frameworks include the maximum amount of days and the maximum daily bag limit. The states and provinces cannot be more liberal than the federal frameworks.
2. Some species population monitoring is conducted during the breeding season, some are monitored during the winter months and some are tracked during both periods. Also, included in the populations monitoring analysis are banding surveys and results from harvest surveys.

The 2012-2013 Waterfowl Season Proposals – Presentation given by Larry Hindman, Waterfowl Project Leader

- Mr. Hindman outlined the 2012 waterfowl population status reports. **[ATTACHMENT A]** An important method for biologists to monitor the status of waterfowl populations is through wetland conditions.
- Mr. Hindman handed out the 2012 Waterfowl Breeding Habitat Survey map compared to 2011 Waterfowl Breeding Habitat Survey map. **[ATTACHMENT B]** This year shows wetlands being drier than last year. Without substantial amounts of precipitation, this could lead to extensive drought, which is problematic for ducks and associate wetland species. The total duck population is over 50 million, which is 7% above last year.
- The Wildlife Advisory Commission received the Waterfowl Status Report via email.
- Mr. Hindman highlighted the potential proposed Waterfowl Season and Bag Limits to the Commission.
 1. The Eastern Mallard breeding population (BPOP) index is used to set the Atlantic Flyway (AF) duck hunting regulations. Duck Season will include a liberal regulation option with a 60-day season and 6-duck bag limit for the AF states.
 2. There are no changes to the Black Duck hunting regulations.
 3. The Scaup BPOP has been increasing since 2006. Scaup are under the long term average. However, due to the increase in scaup to 5.4M a liberal regulation option is triggered. The potential proposal is 60-day season and 4-bird bag limit for AF states. Mr. Hindman pointed out that as habitat conditions are deteriorating and the fact that about one-fifth of these birds nest in the Prairie Pothole Range, biologists do not expect the BPOP for next year to be as high.
 4. Canvasback BPOP was 760K. The potential proposal for the Canvasback Season is a 1-bird limit.
 5. AP Canada Goose Harvest Strategy has 225,000 breeding pairs in the Ungava Region of Quebec. AP Canada Goose breeding habitat conditions were rated as average. AF recommended to USFWS a 50-day season, which includes five additional days for AP Canada Goose Season. MD will propose a 50-day season accordingly.
 6. Atlantic Brant Status was around 149.2 for this year compared to 148.9 from 2011. Biologists expect poor production due to spring flooding in Southampton Island. The potential Brant Season is 50-day with a 2-bird bag limit.
 7. Greater Snow Goose population is overabundant. The survey for the greater snow geese is around 1-million birds. The survey was conducted with five aircraft, which is depicted in the different colors on the May Photo Count in St. Lawrence River Valley slide.
 8. The proposed days for Youth Waterfowl Hunting are November 3rd and February 9th. Last year, staff received a lot of comments about adding another youth day toward the end of the Waterfowl Season.
 - a. Commissioner Boyles Griffin asked if the youth waterfowl dates are included in the regular

duck season dates. The youth waterfowl dates are outside of the regular duck season. These are special days for youth waterfowl hunters -- nothing else is open during this time period.

9. Duck Hunting Season potential proposed dates are October 13th – October 20, November 10th – November 23rd, and December 11th – January 26th. These dates are similar to the ones in the past years except the bag limit on scaup is now four but the total duck bag limit remains at six.
 - a. Chairman Plummer asked for update on the three-year wood duck initiative. Staff are tracking the kill rate on the adult males. Staff recommended three wood ducks for the bag limit.
10. Black Duck Season within the regular Duck Season potential proposed dates are November 10th – November 23 and December 11th – January 26th with a bag limit of one. The Black Duck Season from the State proposal is more restricted than the Federal Frameworks.
 - a. No comments from the Commission.
11. Sea Duck Hunting Season potential proposed dates are October 1st – January 31st with a bag limit of five with no more than four scoters.
 - a. No comments from the Commission.
12. AP Canada Goose Hunting Season potential proposed dates are November 17th – November 23rd and December 11th – January 30th with a bag limit of two.
 - a. No comments from the Commission.
13. Resident Canada Goose Hunting Season potential proposed dates are November 17th – November 23rd and December 11th – March 6th with a bag limit of five. Biologists just completed an evaluation on this species, which is done every three years.
 - a. No comments from the Commission.
14. Atlantic Brant Hunting Season potential proposed dates are November 14th – November 23rd and December 11th – January 26th with a bag limit of two.
 - a. No comments from the Commission.
15. Light Goose Hunting Season potential proposed dates are October 6th – November 23rd and December 11th – January 30th, with a bag limit of 25, which includes greater and lesser snow geese and Ross's geese.
 - a. No comments from the Commission.
16. Light Goose Conservation Order Season potential proposed dates are November 26th – December 10th and January 31st – April 13th, with no proposed bag limit. This season requires an environmental assessment. Hunters must have a Snow Goose Conservation Order Hunting Season Permit that costs \$5.00. This permit allows staff to follow-up with a questionnaire survey to hunters because Maryland is required by federal rule to estimate harvest from this season. Starting this year, staff will not have to evaluate the impact of using unplugged shotguns and e-calls.
 - a. Commissioner Compton requested that staff share the data on the impact of the use of unplugged shotguns and e-calls.
 - i. Data shows that these tools are very effective during the Light Goose Conservation Order Season. Mr. Hindman can send the report on this topic from USFWS to the Commission.
 - b. Commissioner Boyles Griffin asked if there is data that demonstrates that there is an increase in take during the Light Goose Conservation Order Season.
 - i. There is an increase in harvest during this conservation order season. However, the harvest has not been enough to suppress the population to the desired objective.
 - c. Commissioner Boyles Griffin asked for the list of the other states that also have this season.
 - i. The other states that have the Light Goose Conservation Order Season are New York,

New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Connecticut.

- Mr. Hindman mentioned a message from the Susquehanna Waterfowlers that each August, staff bands and there are three crews that operate out of helicopters. One is on the Ungava Bay Coast and the other two are conducted on the Hudson Bay Coast. Staff bands AP Canada geese to ensure safe harvest levels. That banding cost is over \$100,000 a year. This year, staff were made aware that the cost per hour from went up from \$811.00 to \$1,865.00, which added an additional \$35,000 to the cost of this work for this year that was not available in the current budget. Staff received additional \$20,000 from the Canadian Wildlife Service; staff used \$7,000 from the AF that staff normally uses for a nesting survey and put that money towards AP Canada Geese. Staff may have to change the way AP Canada geese data is collected.
 1. Commissioner Compton suggested that this shortfall should be outlined in the Commission's reply to the Governor's letter about general funds.
- The Waterfowl Hunting Season and Bag Limits public hearing is August 13th at Chesapeake College in Wye Mills at 7:00 pm. There is an online forum for the public comments.

WAC Letters to Governor O'Malley and Secretary Griffin

- Commission Compton motioned to include the letters to the Governor and Secretary Griffin in the July 25th WAC Meeting packet.
 1. Commissioner Gregor seconded.
 2. Motion passed.
- The Commission received copies of the letter about general funds [ATTACHMENT C] and Secretary Griffin's letter about a stakeholders meeting about hunting license fees [ATTACHMENT D].

Break 10:35 am to 10:45 am

Maryland Farm Bureau Update – Presentation given by Kurt Fuchs, Maryland Farm Bureau (MFB) Government Relations Assistant Director

- Mr. Fuchs handed out a 2012 Doe Harvest Challenge flyer to the Commission. [ATTACHMENT E] This year included a few changes. The doe harvest challenge expanded in Carroll and Frederick Counties, which is called North Central MD. Also, Wicomico County has been added to the Eastern Shore. The prize packages in the North Central have been altered because there are only two counties in that region. The North Central prize packages will be valued at \$200 and the grand prize will be the same as the other regions, which is \$500.
 1. Commissioner Compton asked if these counties are focused on because of high deer depredation. Mr. Fuchs indicated yes to a certain point. Mr. Fuchs added that it is also determined by the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board along with the Maryland Soybean Board. Commissioner Compton mentioned it would seem logical to complete the Eastern Shore by expanding this to Somerset and Worcester Counties. Mr. Fuchs responded due to lack of funding and lack of staffing the doe harvest challenge has not been extended to Somerset and Worcester Counties. This is one aspect of Mr. Fuchs position. It is not the core function of Mr. Fuchs's position at the MFB. MFB acknowledges that deer depredation is an important issue to the farmers. The fact of expanding to the doe harvest challenge to the additional three counties was a concern for Mr. Fuchs because he is the only one that handles this project for the MFB.
- The MFB disseminated the information on the black bear lottery to the MFB members. The MFB is very pleased with the increase quota for black bear harvest due to the increase in the black bear population. There has been a lot of crop damage due to black bears. WHS will be working with

landowners and hunters during the black bear hunt. MFB is very pleased with that program and MFB members have a lot of supporters.

Natural Resources Police (NRP) Update – Presentation given by Captain Lloyd Ingerson.

- Captain Ingerson indicated that NRP attention has been on boating, crabbing, and fishing.
- Captain Ingerson reported that every day there is a shift report that is produced. NRP has noticed an increased in black bear complaints. From May 1st until July 24th, nuisance bear complaint was up 60% from last year. The NRP Communication Center take calls on bear sightings and this was up by 300% from last year.
- Captain Ingerson added with this busy season he has not been able to compile the statistical data on violations and citations over a 12-month period. Captain Ingerson mentioned that if he is able to do this prior to the August 15th, he will send it via email to Ms. Spencer for the Commission.

Old Business

- Chairman Plummer reminded the Commission that members already have copies of the letter to the Governor about the increase in general funds to WHS with suggestions as how to raised additional monies through some of the non-hunting stamps along with review of increase fees.
- Chairman Plummer highlighted the letter that went to Secretary Griffin requesting a roundtable discussion with stakeholders to gather support for the increase in hunting fees prior to the Legislation Session process.
- Mr. Pete Jayne pointed out the “What New Section” of the 2012-2013 Maryland Guide to Hunting and trapping, which was a recommendation from the Commission to add that in the guide. Currently, there is no cost to WHS to produce this guide because the vendor gets paid through the advertisements in the guide.

New Business

- Commissioner Compton recently attended a meeting at Washington County Federation Sportsmen’s Club and the hot topic for conversation was the conversion of a rail-trail to a possible 23-mile biking trail. Apparently, it is possible there may be some loss of hunting rights because it is going to be converted to a public use faculty. Also, there are some properties that are being taken by eminent domain of that there will be 150 yards buffer associated with those trails.
 1. DNR generally does not put safety zones around trails. Mr. Jayne could not speak particularly to this one but it is not the norm. Mr. Jayne explained that the law specifies zone around occupied dwelling. A trail is not an occupied dwelling. It is the choice of the landowner to be more restrictive.
 2. Mr. Fuchs added that these are rail-trails that are not in use or minimum use in Washington County. Most farmers are unhappy with this as well.
 3. Commissioner Bonomo mentioned that usually the railroad still owns the right-of-way and when the railroad gives approval for rail-trail, the railroad also reserves the right in some point to take that back and convert it to rail if it would ever come to that. Commissioner Bonomo recalled while working for the Pennsylvania Conservancy, they did a lot of right-of-way acquisitions. Commissioner Bonomo is not sure how it is handled in Maryland but in Pennsylvania, it was never eminent domain; it was always the right-of-way generally obtained by the relationship with the landowner.
- Chairman Plummer indicated that on some of the hunting websites there are comments about Chesapeake Forest Lands taking some of the public hunting lands and converting these lands to leases for bids without public input.
 1. Mr. Jayne indicated that he can discuss this in general terms but the Forest Service would be

better suited to speak to finer details. Several years ago, DNR acquired about 58,000 acres and called it Chesapeake Forest Lands. It was primarily industrial forest lands. The agreement was to open at least half of those acres to public hunting.

2. The acquiring of the Foster tract (estimate 5,000 acreage tract in Worchester County) has changed the process some. The Foster tract has taken several years to complete the acquisition, which required DNR to honor current hunting leases. Those hunting leases have expired. Therefore, Forest Service plans to put that tract into public hunting. The Forest Service had planned to take out a similar amount of acreage out of public hunting to hunting leases.
3. Several new tracts have been added to Chesapeake Forest Lands over time.
4. The Commission requested adding this discussion to the October 17, 2012 WAC meeting agenda and send an invitation to Steve Koehn to speak on this topic.

Public Comment

- Mr. Johnson from the Maryland Waterfowl Guide Association indicated that the waterfowlers are generally pleased with the potential proposals for the 2012 Waterfowl Seasons.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 A.M.

The next meeting will be held at 9:30 A.M. on Wednesday, August 15, 2012 in the Tawes State Office Building, C-1 Conference Room; Annapolis, Maryland.

Attendance

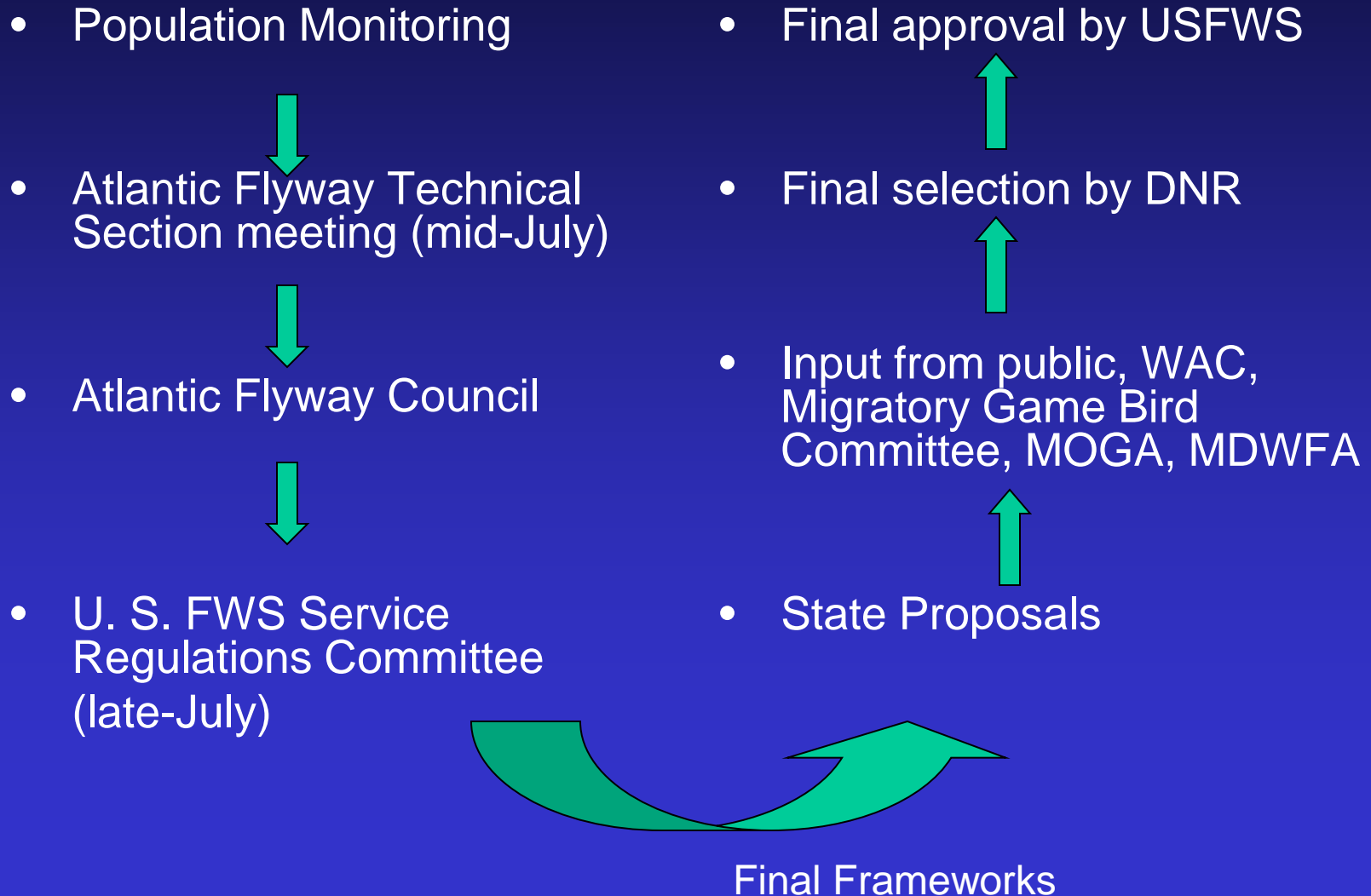
Members:	J. Bonomo, L. Compton, T. Gregor, S. Boyles Griffin, E. Gulbrandsen, J. Plummer, and C. Rodney
Guests:	K. Fuchs, L. Johnson, and T. Johnson
Staff:	B. Harvey, L. Hindman, L. Ingerson, P. Jayne, and T. Spencer
Absent:	G. Fratz

Migratory Bird Regulations

- Migratory Bird Treaty Act – established Federal authority for management of migratory birds.
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service promulgates hunting season frameworks.
- Frameworks include:
 - maximum season length
 - earliest and latest dates
 - maximum daily bag limit



Annual Regulation Cycle for Migratory Birds



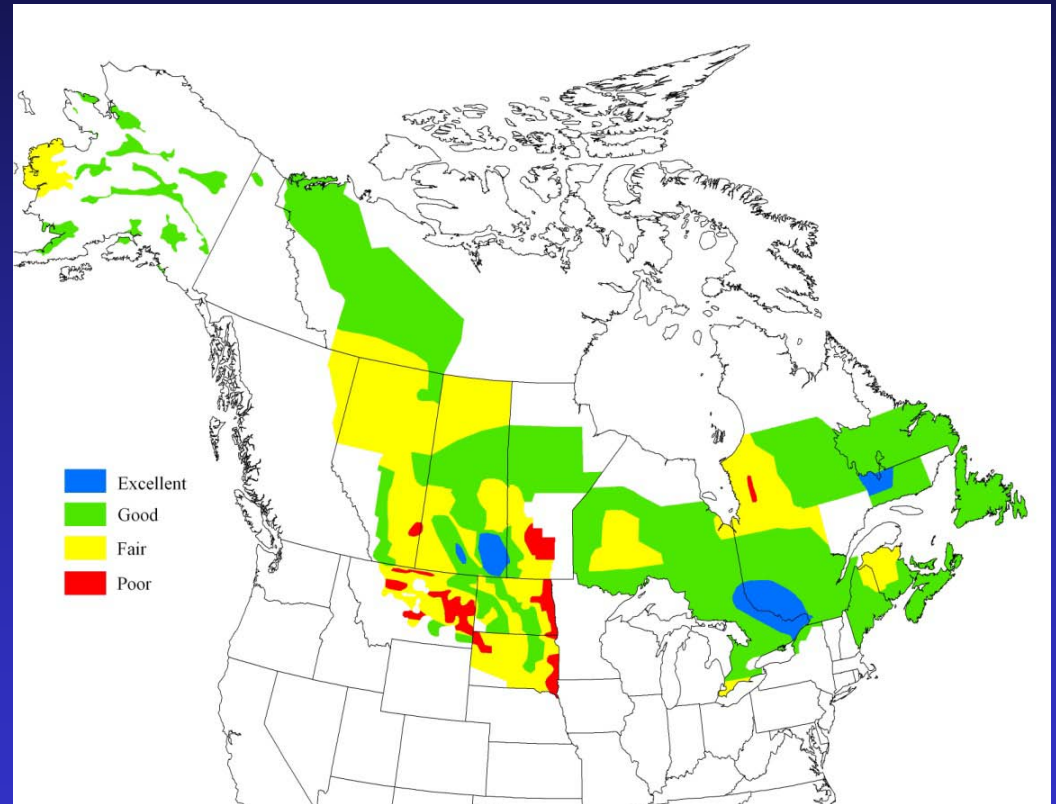
2012 Waterfowl Population Status



2012 Waterfowl Breeding and Habitat Survey

Total ponds in U.S. and Canada - 5.5 million (M)

32% below 2011 estimate
and 9% above the LTA
(1955-2011) average











Total ducks

48.6 Million

7% increase over 2011

43% above long-term average (1955-2011)

Millions

50
45
40
35
30
25

1955

1965

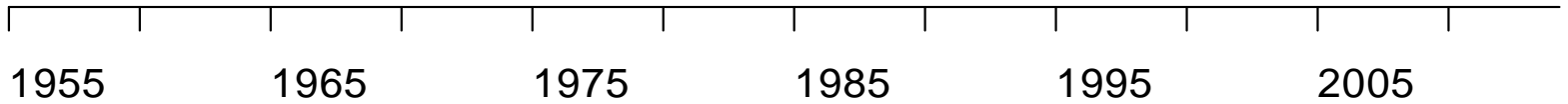
1975

1985

1995

2005

Year



2012 Breeding Ducks By Species (in millions)

Species	2012	2011	% Change from 2011	% Change from LTA
Mallard	10.6	9.2	+15	+40
Gadwall	3.6	3.3	-3	+96
American wigeon	2.1	2.1	No change	-17
Green-winged teal	3.5	2.9	+20	+74
Blue-winged teal	9.2	8.9	No change	+94
Northern shoveler	5.0	4.6	-22	+111
Northern pintail	3.5	4.4	-22	-14
Redhead	1.3	1.4	No change	+89
Canvasback	0.8	0.7	No change	+33
Scaup	5.2	4.3	+22	Same as LTA

Eastern Mallard Population Status

Eastern Mallards breed in southern Ontario, Quebec, and the northeastern U.S.

Eastern Mallard BPOP Index is used to set AF duck hunting regulations.

2012 eastern mallard BPOP was 837.6K, which increased from 746K in 2011.

A liberal regulation (60-day season and 6-duck bag limit) is prescribed for AF states in 2012.



Black Duck Population Status

Eastern Survey Area

Black Duck BPOP estimate from eastern survey areas for 2012 was 0.6 M, 11% higher than 2011, similar to the LTA (1990-2011).

No change in Black Duck hunting regulations for 2012.



Duck Breeding Population in Eastern Survey Areas

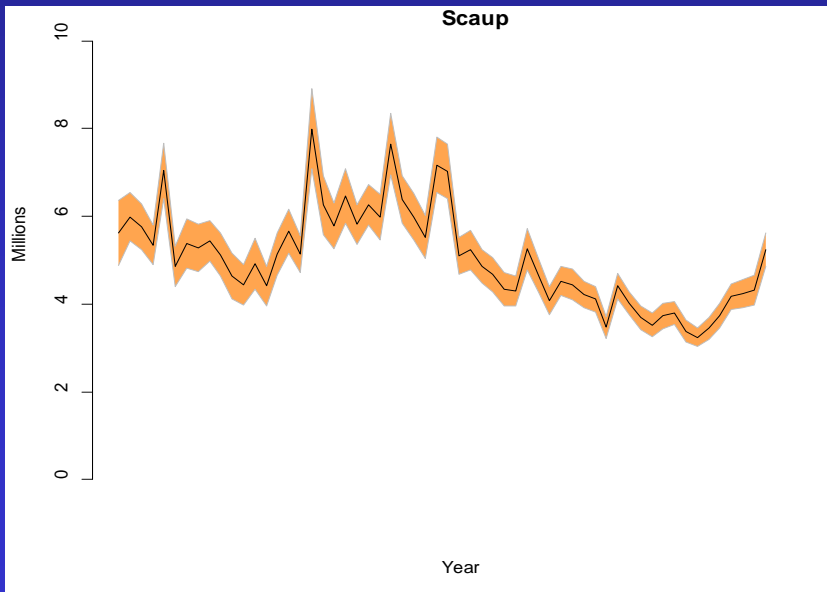
- Abundance of green-winged teal, ring-necked ducks, goldeneyes, mergansers, and hooded mergansers were all similar to their 2011 estimates and the LTA (1990-2011).

Scaup Population Status



The 2012 combined scaup BPOP was 5.4 M about 21% higher than the 2011 BPOP of 4.3 M.

Since 2006, the Scaup BPOP has been on an increasing trend.



Scaup harvest strategy prescribes a liberal regulation, i.e., 60 days and 4 bird daily bag limit for AF states.

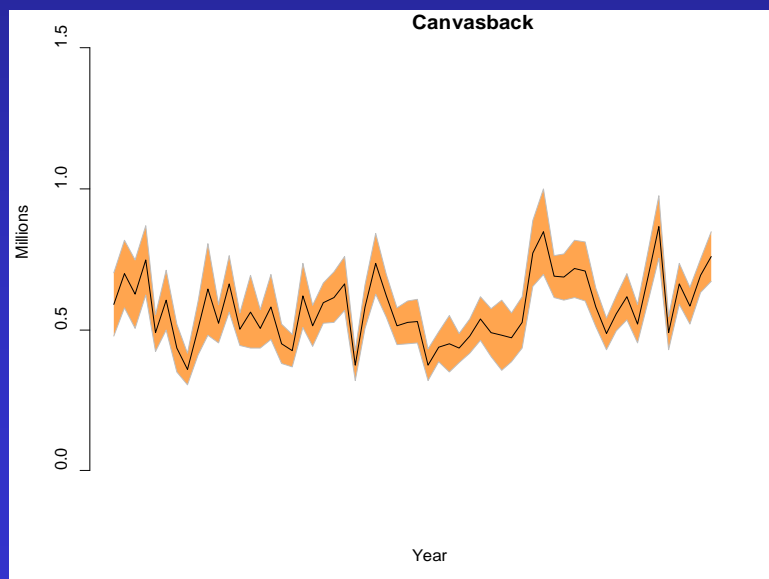
Canvasback Population Status



The 2012 Canvasback BPOP was 760K.

10% higher than 692K in 2011 and 33% above the 1955-2011 average (LTA).

Ponds in Prairie Canada were 3.9 million, 10% below 4.9 million in 2011 and 13% above the LTA.



Harvest strategy predicts a 2013 BPOP of 771K under a liberal season and a Limit of 1-bird per day.

Strategy predicts a 2013 BPOP of 711K with a Limit of 2-birds per day. Thus, below the BPOP of 725K required the following spring with a 2-bird bag limit.

AP Canada Goose Harvest Strategy

Atlantic Flyway Council

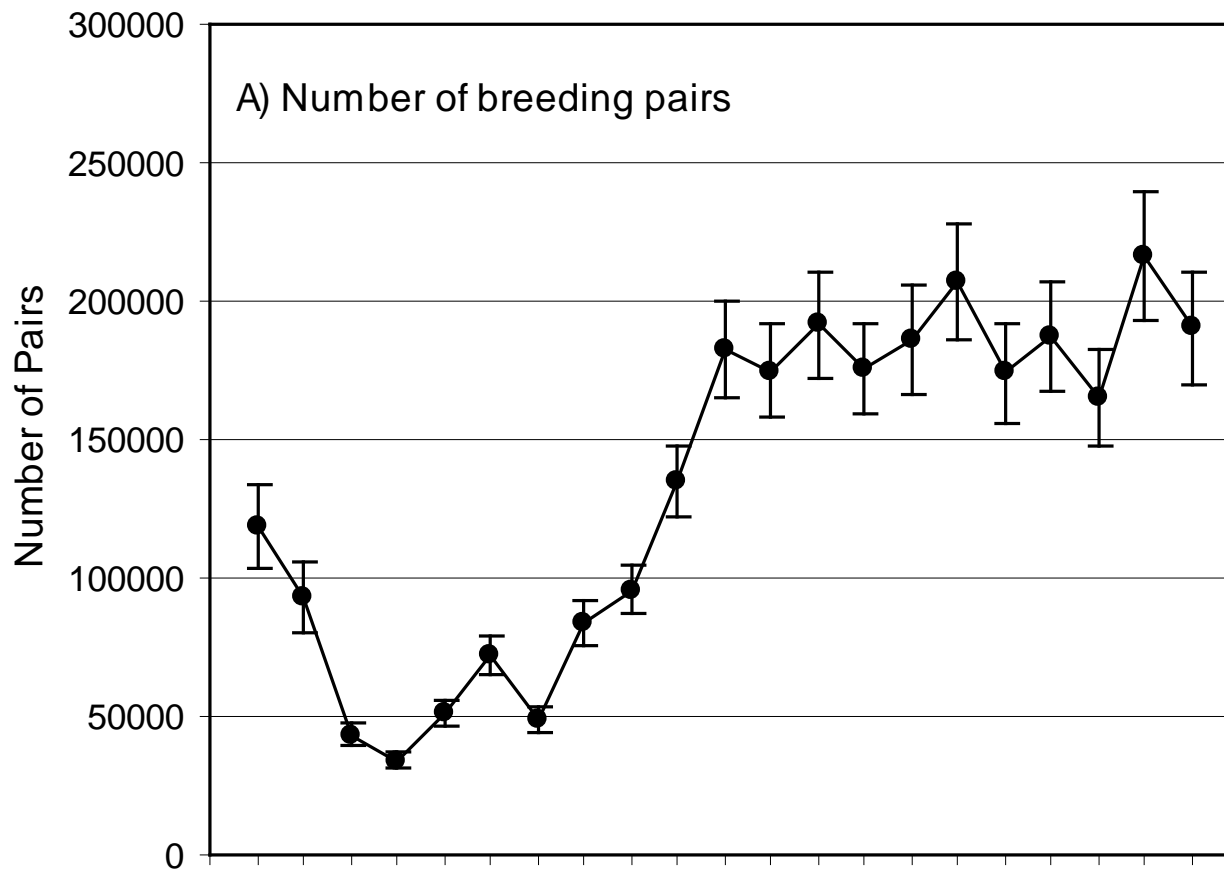
AP Population Objective - 225,000 breeding pairs in the Ungava region of Quebec.

3-year average (2010-2012) = 190,500 pairs

When the breeding pair index (3 yr. average) is at or above 150,000, moderate harvest regulations (50-day season) may be considered that would target a projected harvest rate of breeding adults not to exceed 10%.

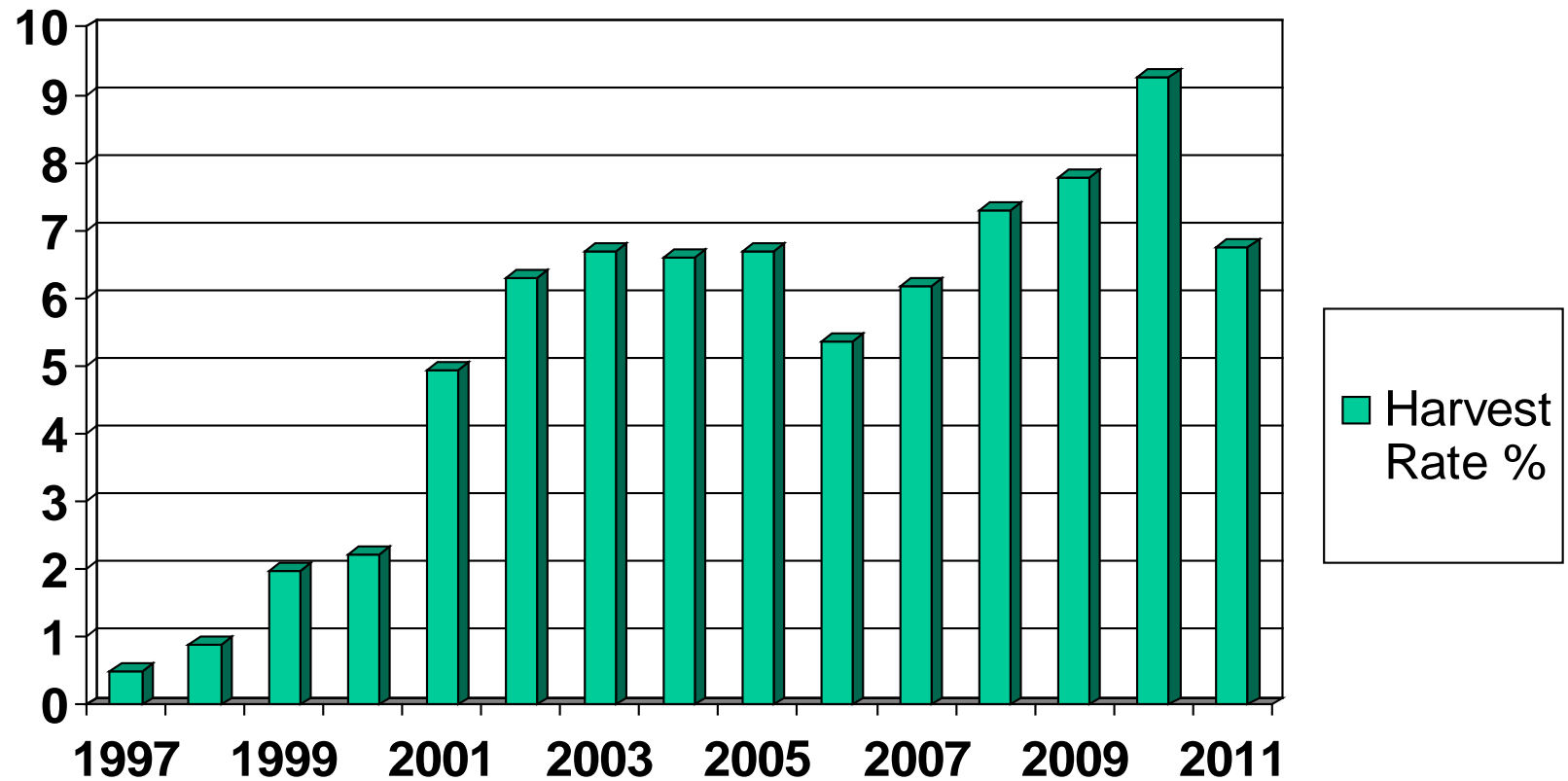
When the breeding pair index (3-year average) is above 225,000, liberal harvest regulations (60-day season) may be considered that would target a projected harvest rate of breeding adults not to exceed 15%.

Estimates of Breeding Pairs of AP Canada Geese on the Ungava Peninsula



AP Canada Goose Harvest Rates

Adults



AP Goose Production



- Breeding habitat conditions were rated as average.
- The percent of single geese (51%) observed on 2012 spring survey was identical to the 1994-2012 average suggesting an average nesting effort.
- A model using May temperatures and June snowfall to predict production suggested an average nesting season and an average fall.

Atlantic Brant Status

2012 Midwinter Survey - 149.2K compared to 148.9 in 2011.

Poor production expected from Southampton Island due to spring flooding.



Greater Snow Goose Management Plan

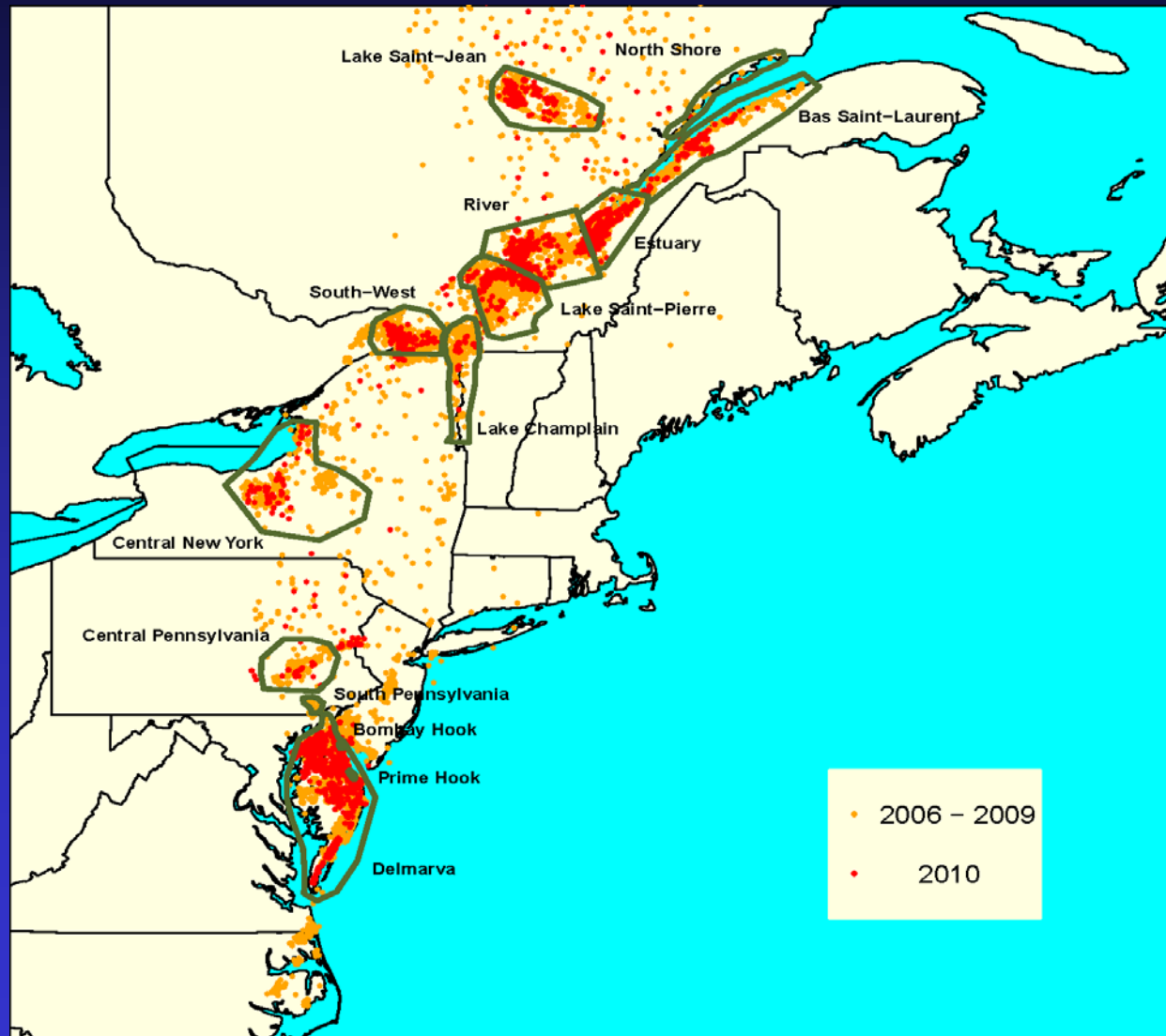
Atlantic Flyway Council

Objective - Reduce and maintain the population in a range between 500,000 and 750,000 as indexed by the spring survey in southern Québec.



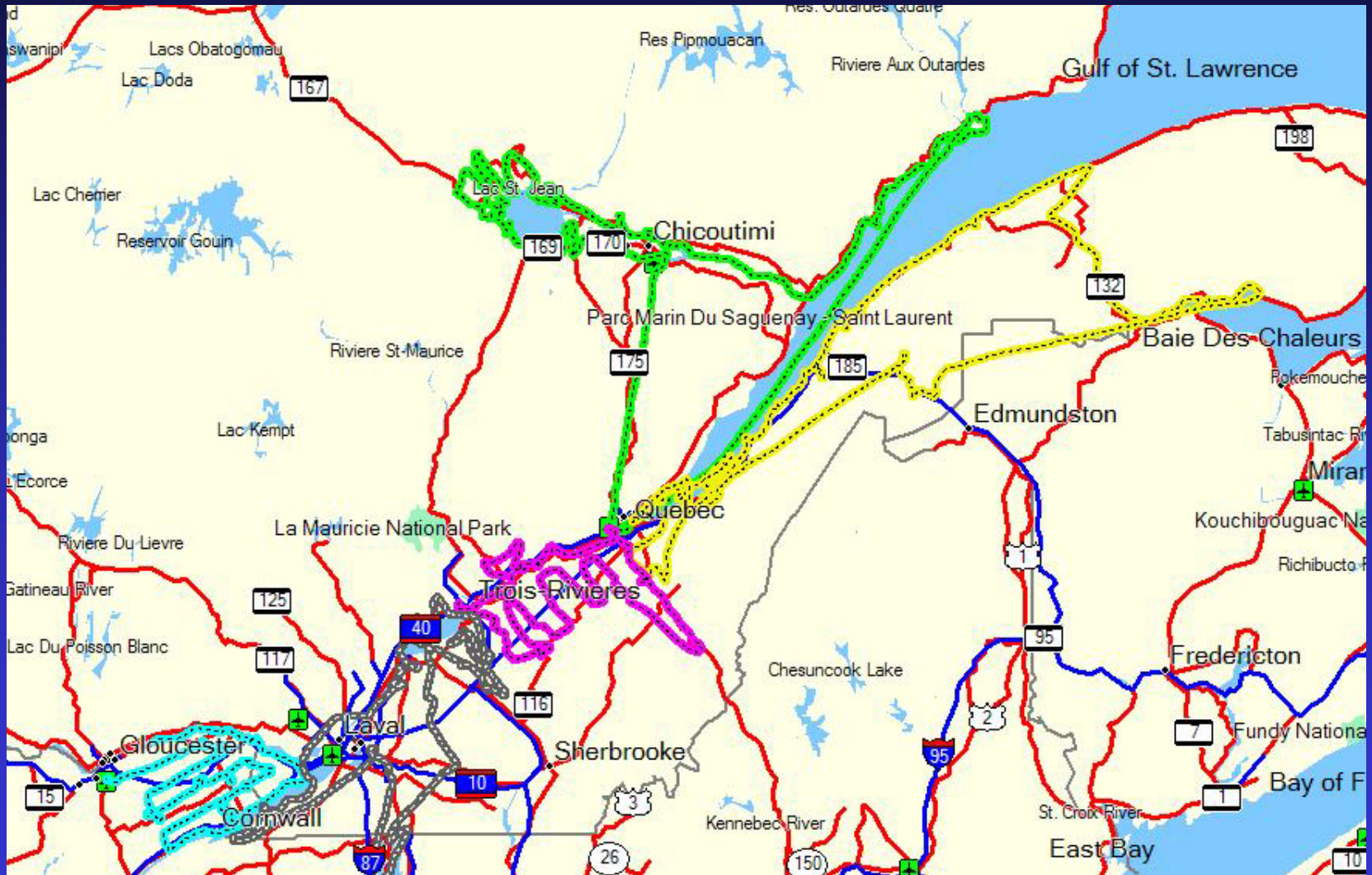
Distribution of Greater Snow Goose

Satellite Telemetry 2006-2010



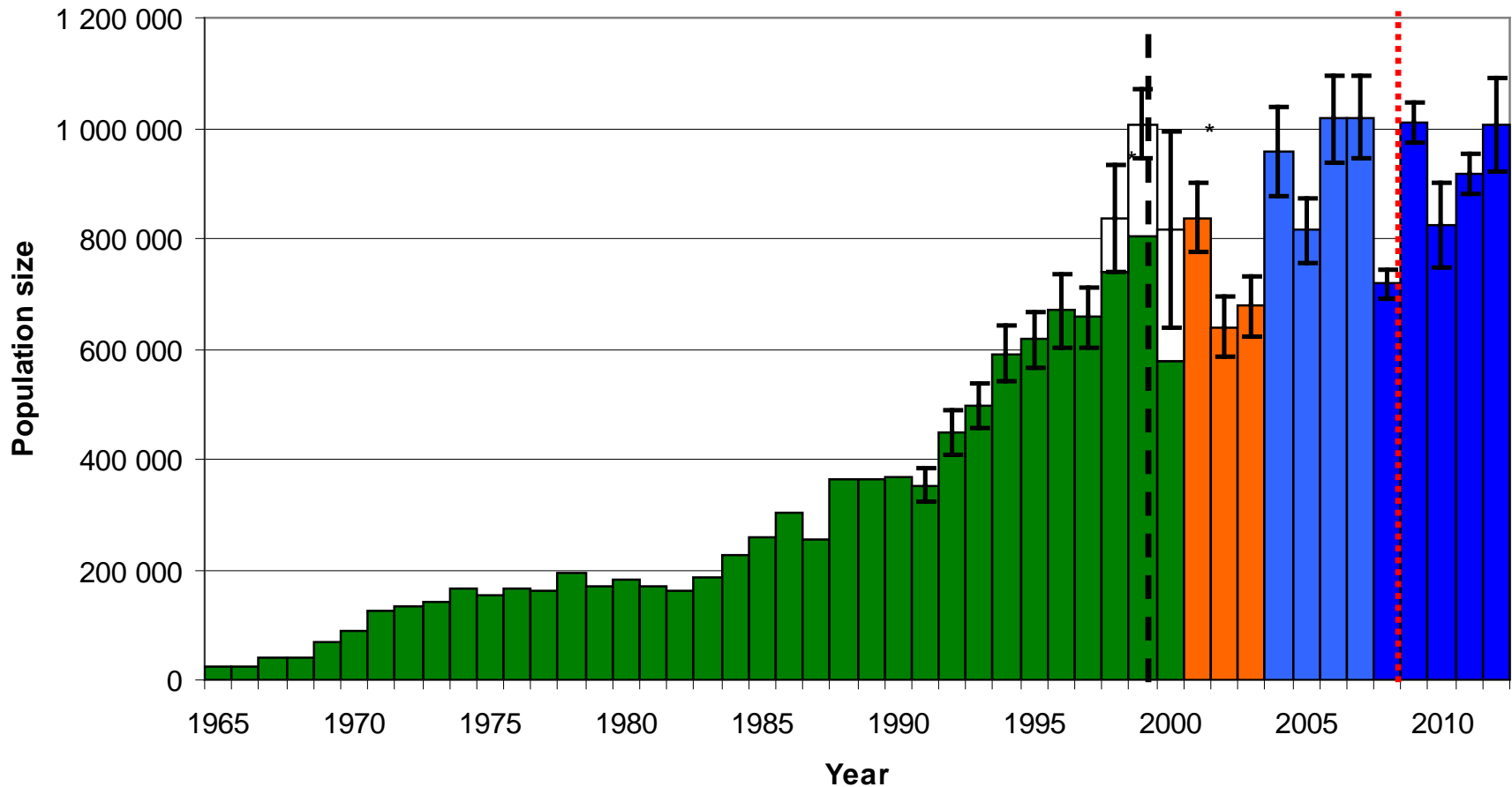
Greater Snow Goose

May Photo Count in St. Lawrence River Valley



Greater Snow Goose May Photo Count

St. Lawrence River Valley



Greater Snow Goose Nesting

- Nesting conditions on Bylot Island were good; high nest density.
- Low lemming abundance contributed to high nest predation by arctic fox.
- Production should be average and the fall flight should be about average.



Proposed 2012-2013 Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits under Consideration



MD DNR Priorities Considered when Formulating Hunting Season Proposals

- Must meet the biological requirements of the waterfowl resource to sustain populations.
- Regulation simplicity.
- Maximizing opportunity for all hunters, particularly youth.
- Maximizing open hunting days statewide, especially Saturdays and holidays.
- Overlapping duck and goose seasons to the extent possible.



Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days



Proposed Days

Nov. 3 and Feb. 9

Proposed Bag Limit

6 ducks (certain species restrictions),
2 Canada geese, 2 brant, 25 light
geese, and 15 coots

Requirements

Youth hunter must be accompanied
by an unarmed, adult at least 21
years old

Adult may assist in calling, setting
decoys, retrieving downed birds

Federal Frameworks

Duck Hunting Season

Season length: 60 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 22 - Jan. 27 (Sunday)

Bag Limit: 6 per day

Proposed Season

Oct. 13 - Oct. 20

Nov. 10 - Nov. 23

Dec. 11 - Jan. 26

Proposed Bag Limit

6 per day (including mergansers) but no more than 5 Long-tailed Ducks, 4 Scoters, 4 Mallards (2 hens), 4 Scaup, 3 Wood Ducks, 2 Hooded Mergansers, 1 Canvasback, 1 Black Duck (during Black Duck season), 1 Mottled Duck, and 1 Fulvous Tree Duck.

Federal Framework

Season Length: 60 days

Bag Limit: 1

Proposed Season

Nov. 10 - Nov. 23

Dec. 11 - Jan. 26

Proposed Bag Limit

1 per day

No open season for Black Ducks in October provides protection to Maryland's breeding population. Migrant stocks begin arriving in November.

Black Duck Season within Regular Duck Season



Special Sea Duck Hunting Season

Federal Framework

Season Length: 107 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 15 - Jan. 31

Bag Limit: 7 per day,

No more than 4 Scoters

Proposed Season

Oct. 1 - Jan. 31

Proposed Bag Limit

5 per day (no more than 4
Scoters)



AP Canada Goose Hunting Season

Federal Framework

Season Length: 50 days

Outside Dates: Nov. 15 - Feb. 5

Bag Limit: 2 per day

Proposed Season

Nov. 17 - Nov. 23

Dec. 11 - Jan. 30

Proposed Bag Limit

2 per day



Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Canada Goose Hunting Season Regular Season



Federal Framework

Season Length: 80 days

Outside Dates: Nov. 15 - Mar. 10

Bag Limit: 5 per day

Proposed Season

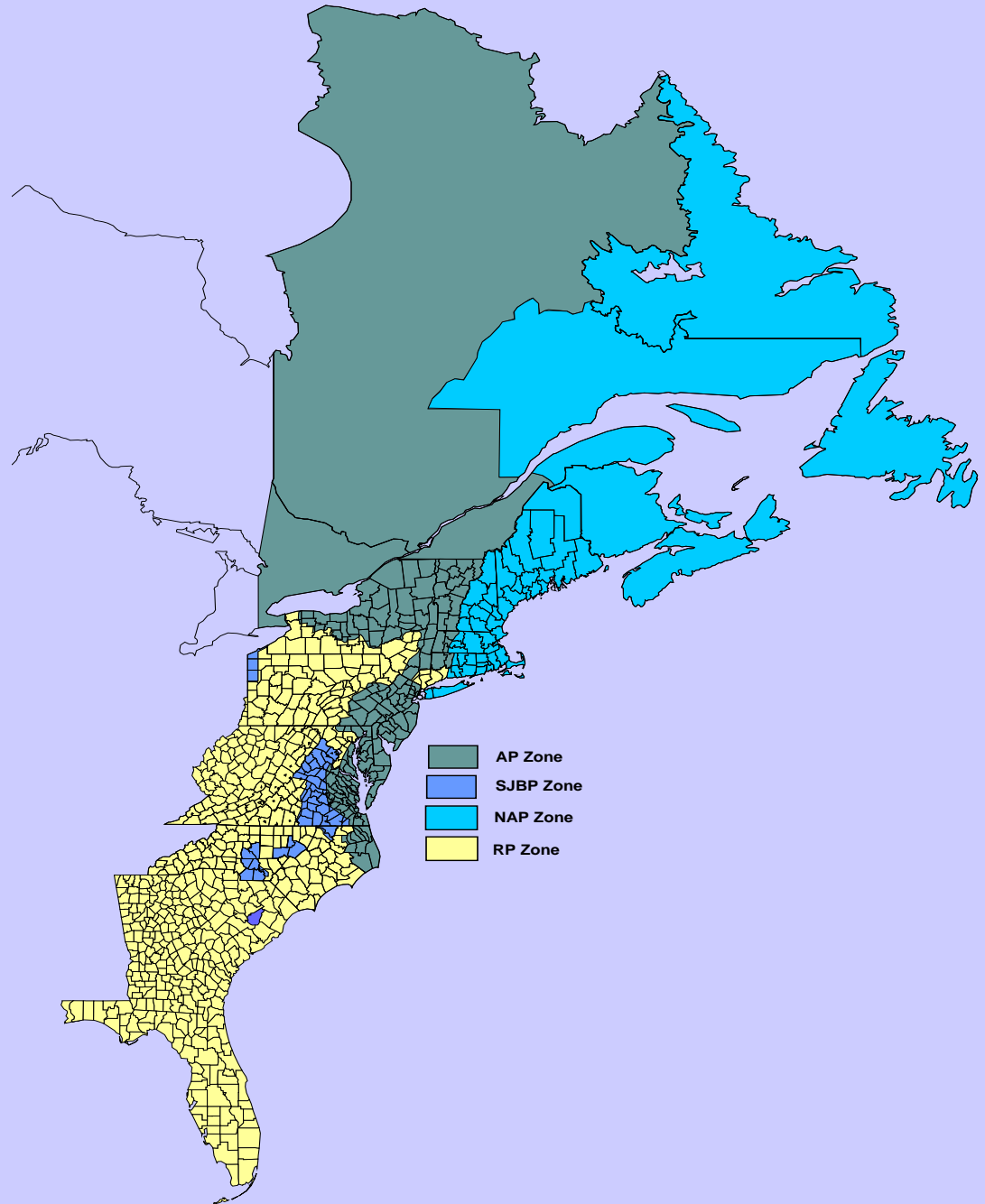
Nov. 17 - Nov. 23

Dec. 11 - Mar. 6

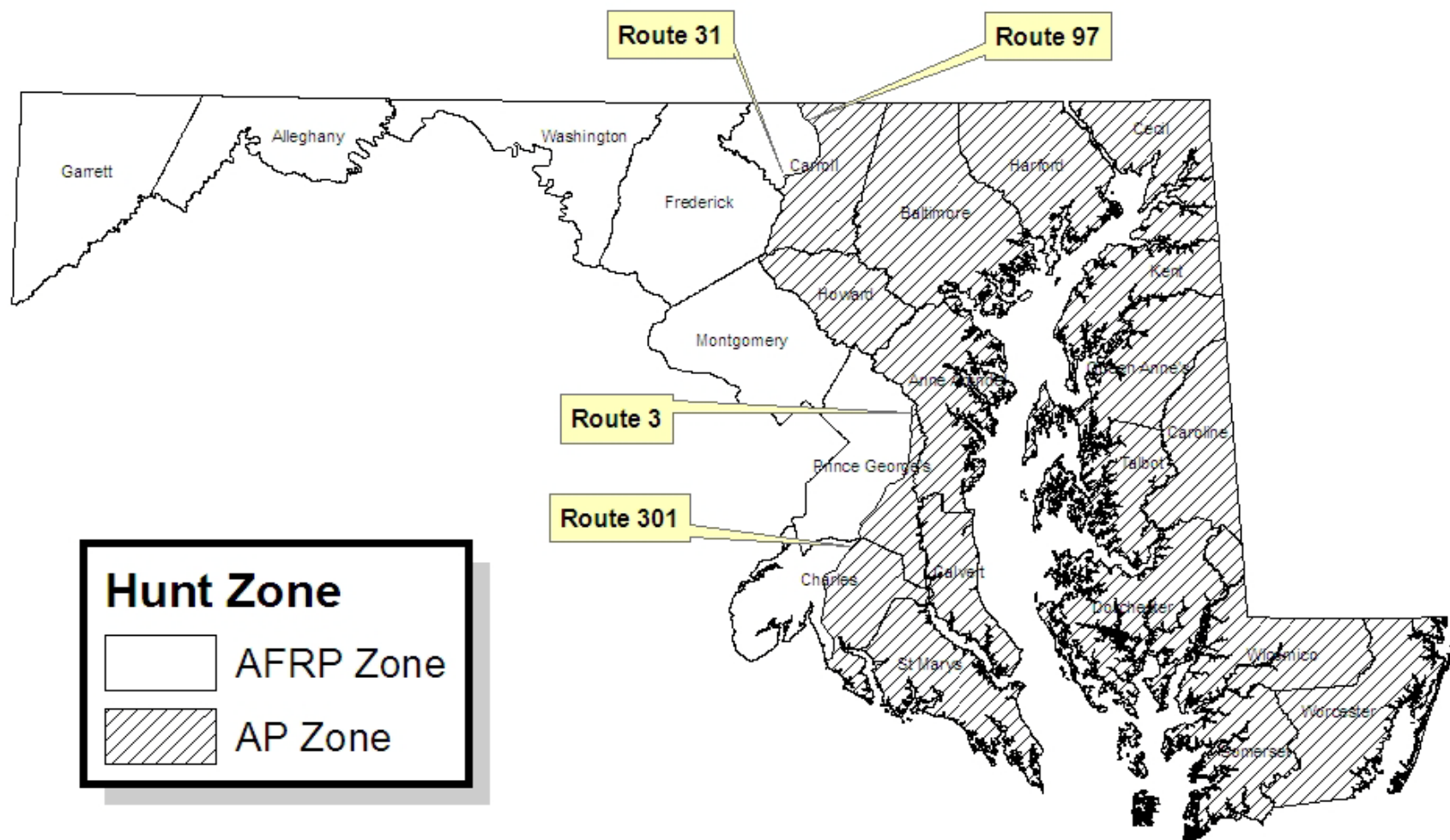
Proposed Bag Limit

5 per day

Canada Goose Harvest Zones Atlantic Flyway



Regular Canada Goose Hunt Zones in Maryland



Atlantic Brant Hunting Season



Federal Framework

Season Length: 50 days

Bag Limit: 2 per day

Proposed Season

Nov. 14 - Nov. 23

Dec. 11 - Jan. 26

Proposed Bag Limit

2 per day

Light Goose Hunting Season

Federal Framework

Season Length: 107 days

Outside Dates: Oct. 1 - Mar. 10

Bag Limit: 25 per day

Proposed Season

Oct. 6 - Nov. 23

Dec. 11 - Jan. 30

Proposed Bag Limit *

25 per day

* Includes greater and lesser snow geese and Ross's geese



Light Goose Conservation Order Season

Proposed Season

Nov. 26 - Dec. 10, 2012

Jan. 31 - April 13, 2013

Proposed Bag Limit

No bag limit

Hunters may use unplugged
shotguns and e-calls

Shooting hours extended to
1/2 hour after sunset

Participants must possess a Snow Goose Conservation Order
Hunting Season Permit. Permits available from DNR sport
license agents, online, or by phone (1-800-918-2870) for a \$5 fee.



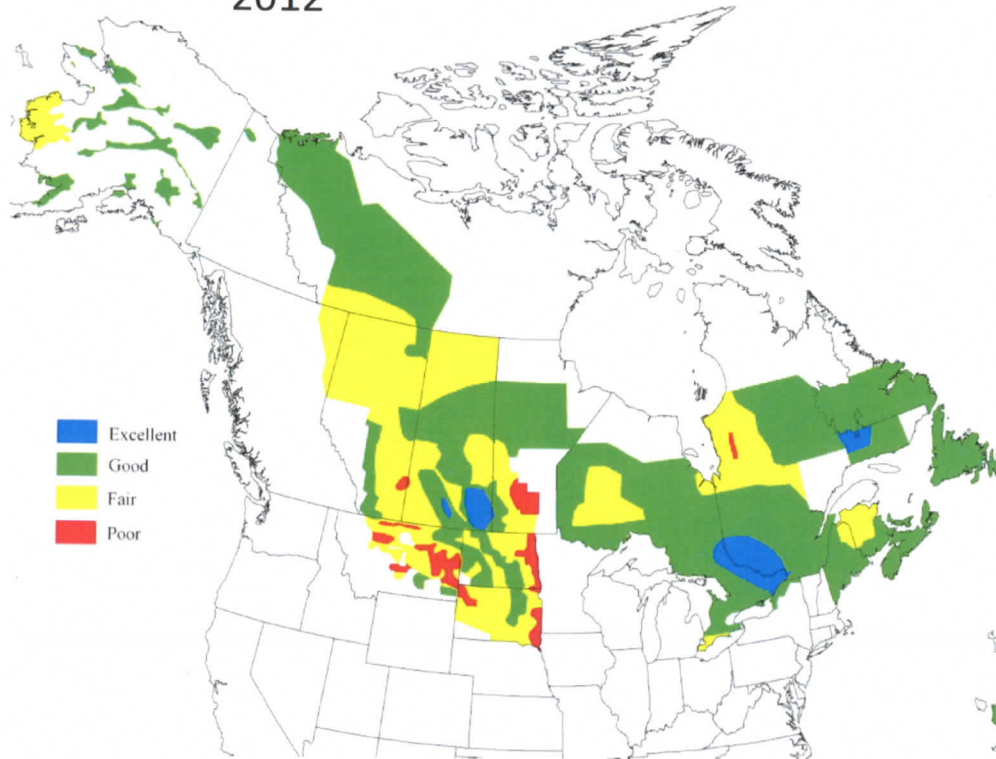


Questions?

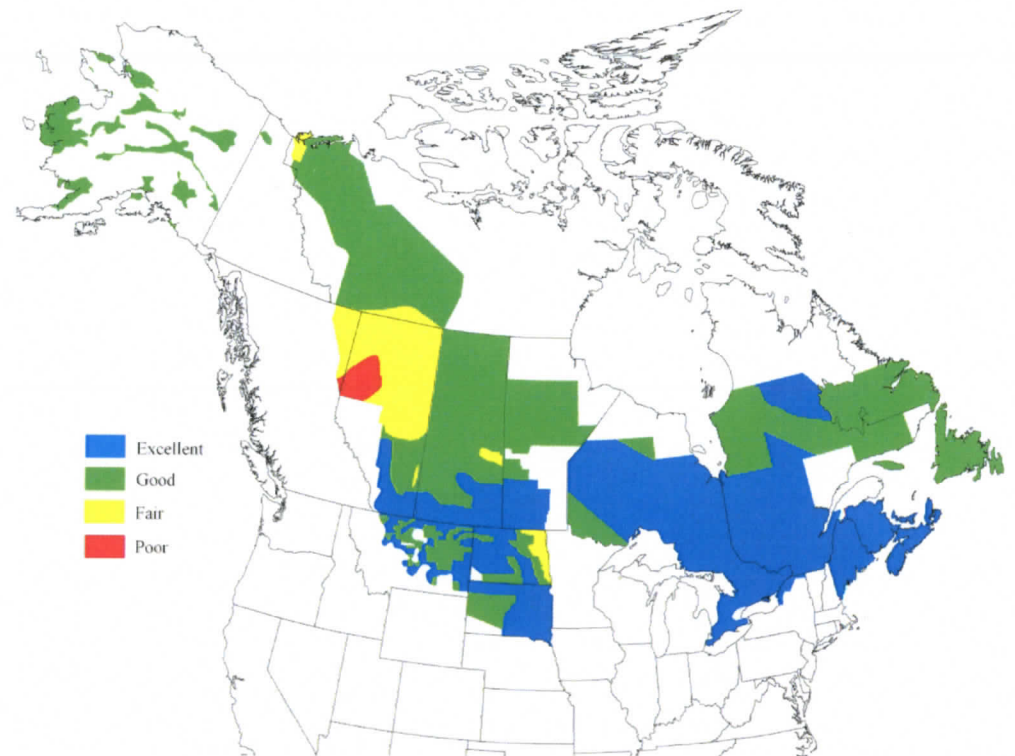
Breeding Waterfowl Habitat Conditions

(assessed by USFWS pilot biologists during spring waterfowl surveys)

2012



2011



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 Jeffrey Plummer
 Vice-Chairman
 Luen Compton, Jr.

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Jacqueline Bonomo
 Gary E. Fratz
 Tina Gregor
 Stephanie Boyles Griffin
 Erik Gulbrandsen
 Charles Rodney, Sr.

DNR POLICE REPRESENTATIVE

NRP Capt. Lloyd Ingerson

STATE PARK REPRESENTATIVE

Deputy Superintendent
 Chris Bushman

July 11, 2012

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
 Governor of Maryland
 100 State Circle
 Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

Dear Governor O'Malley:

I write you today on behalf of your appointed Wildlife Advisory Commission (WAC). As you know it is our duty to advise the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and act as a liaison between the DNR and the citizens of Maryland. As Chairman of WAC, I have been asked to bring to your attention, a grave concern we have identified.

Maryland, for such a small geographic state, is unique in its rich and diverse abundance of natural resources. From the Chesapeake Bay, to the Western Maryland mountains, to the beaches along the Atlantic and the farms in between, Maryland truly is "America in Miniature". We applaud the efforts by your administration to protect and preserve Maryland's natural resources. However, we have some concerns moving forward.

Clearly our state has been challenged by the ongoing economic downturn. However, the budget within the Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife & Heritage Service has reached some alarming numbers. Specifically, the General Funds that once amounted to nearly one million dollars have been reduced to \$140k in FY 2012. Funds that once amounted to 10% of the budget now represent about 1% of that budget. The Commission has diligently reviewed DNR revenue and expenses year after year. We find that the budget is at a point that continued budget cuts will have an adverse effect on our land and cherished species that thrive in the state.

Currently, hunting license sales support almost 60% of the entire budget for the Wildlife & Heritage Service. The Pittman Robertson Funds, derived from the sale of guns, ammo and some other sporting goods, make up a substantial portion of the rest of the budget. It becomes glaringly obvious that while the Wildlife & Heritage Service serves all of Maryland's citizenry, it is financed primarily on the backs of the 3-4% represented by the hunters. All Marylanders enjoy the lands and recreational opportunities created by the hard work of the Wildlife & Heritage Service, yet the majority pays nothing for that.

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Page Two

The WAC is working to identify minimal fees that the non hunting community could pay for use of the Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). Bike riders, horse riders, photographers, and hikers all currently use the system for zero dollars. We have also identified some review fees as well that would serve to reimburse Wildlife and Heritage Service for the reviews they currently perform for free. In total, we hope to identify \$100,000 that could offset some of the lost general funds. Frankly though, we still need your help!

Governor, you asked this body to serve the citizens and to advise. Well, it is with great urgency that we recommend the FY 2014 budget that you submit would include an increase in general funds directed to the Wildlife & Heritage Service so that we will not be forced to make decisions that may have irreversible and lasting effects on our natural resources, including species that are on dangerous ground. If you would include \$750,000 in general funds in the Wildlife and Heritage Service FY 2014 budget, and you would support the creation of user fees on MD's WMAs, we are confident that the state's natural resources can be sustained for the citizens of Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Plummer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jeff Plummer, Chairman
Wildlife Advisory Commission

**OFFICERS**

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 Jeffrey Plummer
 Vice-Chairman
 Luen Compton, Jr.

July 11, 2012

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 Maryland Department of Natural Resources
 Tawes State Office Building
 Annapolis, MD 21401

DNR POLICE REPRESENTATIVE

NRP Capt. Lloyd Ingerson

STATE PARK REPRESENTATIVE

Deputy Superintendent
 Chris Bushman

Dear Secretary Griffin:

As the chairman of the Wildlife Advisory Commission, I have been asked to write to you requesting another sportsman roundtable be arranged to discuss a hunting license fee increase. Last year, you stated a future meeting was something that you would consider. Secretary, this Commission believes that if the Department starts with the stakeholders and allows them to be a part of the process from the beginning, an increase will have a much greater chance to pass in the next Legislative Session.

This past year, the late submission of the bill and the late changes created a backlash that reached many of the legislators who opposed such an increase. The stakeholder groups are the key to passing any increase as they are the proven stewards of our natural resources. As time is of the essence, we formally request that you consider such a meeting within the next month so that a new bill with stakeholder support can be written.

Thank you for your consideration and we hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Jeff Plummer
 Wildlife Advisory Commission Chairman



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Wicomico Counties
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