

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Maryland Wildlife Advisory Commission

**Will Meet at 10:30 AM
On Wed., September 21, 2022**

C-1 Conference Room
Department of Natural Resources
Tawes State Office Building

Meeting Agenda:

Approval for the September 21, 2022, Meeting Agenda

Approval for Minutes from August 17, 2022 Meeting

Game Program Overview (Karina Stonesifer)

Regional Operations Overview (Harry Spiker)

Break

Maryland Farm Bureau Update (Colby Ferguson)

Natural Resources Police Update (Captain Shawn Garren)

Old Business:

New Business:

Public Comment:

Adjourn

NOTE: Free Parking will be available on the Navy Stadium Parking Lot, which is the third entrance on right off of Taylor Avenue.

**The Proposed Schedule for the 2022 meetings
Of the Wildlife Advisory Commission is as follows:**

January 19th	Google Meet
February 16th	Google Meet
March 16th	Google Meet
April 20th	Google Meet
May 18th	No Meeting
June 15	In-Person Meeting at Tawes State Office Building
July 20th	No Meeting
August 17th	Google Meet
September 21	In-Person Meeting at Tawes State Office Building
October 19th	Google Meet
November 16	Google Meet
December 22	No Meeting

***PLEASE NOTE THAT MEETING DATES ARE HELD
ON THE THIRD WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH***

Note: Unless notified otherwise, all meetings will be held via Google Meeting. When meeting in person, the meetings will be held in the C-1 Conference Room Department of Natural Resources - Tawes State Office Building beginning at 10:30 AM. Available parking is located at the Navy Stadium Parking Lot.

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THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 21, 2022

Chairman Carl Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. This meeting was held via teleconference and in person. Chairman Wagner asked for a roll call of individuals on the “call.” Unfortunately, because of the anonymity of Google Meet callers, it was impossible to determine the identity of every participant. The C-1 Conference Room had technology issues.

Approval for September 21, 2022, Meeting Agenda

- Motion to Approve the Agenda:
 1. Vice Chair Schroyer moved to accept the September 21, 2022, Wildlife Advisory Commission Meeting Agenda.
 2. Commissioner Parks seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Approval for Minutes from August 17, 2022, Meeting

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Showalter moved to accept the August 17, 2022, Meeting Minutes.
 2. Commissioner Schroyer seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Game Management Program Overview – Karina Stonesifer, Associate Director of Game Management

- Associate Director Stonesifer gave a Game Management Program Overview to the Commission. [ATTACHMENT A]
- The Game Management Program (GMP) staff will present at the Wildlife Advisory Commission on regulations and research projects throughout the year.
- The Game Management Program is divided into a Game Mammal Section and Game Bird Section. These programs generally oversee species that may be hunted and trapped in Maryland.
- The Game Management Program ensures that the species populations are healthy and abundant for today and future generations.
- The GMP staff members are subject matter experts. Beyond their scientific and conservation role, the staff spend a significant amount of time communicating with the public, along with the press members.
- The next regulations cycle for hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits will start in 2023 for the next two years. Staff will work on the regulations cycle from July 2023 through March 2024. It is a very lengthy process. There are many internal discussions, stakeholder discussions, public meetings, and public outreach. WHS is charged with implementing the regulations and laws when game species legislation is passed.
- The GMP received a Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Grant of \$250,000. The grant affords us the ability to do statewide CWD sampling this year.
- Associate Director Stonesifer acknowledged Harry Spiker’s excellent work as the former Black Bear Biologist. Harry Spiker is now the Regional Operations Associate Director.
- Game Bird Section Leader Bill Harvey gave an overview of the Game Bird Section. Game Bird Section Leader Harvey has a background in waterfowl management and is a leader in the Atlantic Flyway Council and processes therein.
- Game Bird Section Leader Harvey discussed the Mid-Atlantic Wild Turkey Research Project that will start this winter. Staff will mark hen turkeys and monitor them for several years in Eastern and Western Shore areas. The team will also work with the gobblers.
- A scaup telemetry study will also be conducted by WHS staff.

Regional Operations Program Overview – Associate Director Harry Spiker

- Associate Director Spiker gave a Regional Operations Program Overview to the Commission. **[ATTACHMENT B]**
- Associate Director Spiker has been in his role as Associate Director for about one year and is becoming more familiar with the team and the lands we manage.
- Regional Operations is the largest program in the Wildlife and Heritage Service.
- The Land Management staff are responsible for all aspects of land management, including boundary marking, recovery, habitat management, building, and equipment maintenance, posting signs, routine mowing, road maintenance, and running the managed hunt programs.
- Associate Director Spiker mentioned that in some situations, wildlife response staff must work with local jurisdictions, such as the health department and animal control. Also, wildlife response staff work with Natural Resources Police in different wildlife incidents.
- Director Peditto added Regional Operations Program is primarily funded by special funds from licensing and stamps revenue and the federal match that requires a 25% match to all federal funds.
 1. WHS received \$250,000 from General Funds for FY23. In the past, WHS has received less than 100,000 in General Funds. For the past eight years, the General Funds that WHS received generally were routed to venison donation/processing programs. We desperately need those funds for critical roles that are not eligible for special or federal funds. Important to remember that the USFWS will not allow special or federal funds to be used on venison donation or processing programs. This was a prior audit finding in Maryland.
 2. Normally, WHS relies on match to the federal fund revenues. WHS can only increase federal match by increasing the cash received or when DNR purchases land. WHS could leverage the land acquisition dollars as the match, but WHS cannot use match for every program.
 3. There are federal fund usage sidebars. Staff cannot use federal funds for nuisance wildlife response, deer management permits, reptiles, and amphibians. A lot of staff time is allocated to deer management permits, deer cooperators permits, and wildlife response – none of those hours can be billed to federal funds. Most of these calls are from non-hunters.
 4. WHS cannot charge farmers for deer management permits.
 5. Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) is crucial to this discussion because it covers species and projects that Pittman-Robertson (federal) does not. Maryland is looking at around 15 million dollars if RAWA passes. Maryland will still need to come up with the 25% percent stateside match. The land acquisition match dollars are eligible for Wildlife Management Areas projects – this does not help with match for game species management, including waterfowl, deer, bear surveys, etc.
 6. WHS staff members have two-time cards: the State Payroll Timecard and the Federal Timecard. The Federal Timecard is used to charge different projects, surveys, wildlife response, and effectively tracks the billable hours toward each eligible federal project.
- Mr. Lou Compton requested an update on Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) impacting the deer on the lower Eastern Shore. Mr. Compton expressed that it appears to be severe this year on the lower Eastern Shore. The hunting clubs and people are concerned.
 1. There was a social media post about the EHD.
 2. Allan Ellis interviewed Game Mammal Section Leader Brian Eyler on a radio show on EHD.
 3. It is often deadly to white-tailed deer. It is borne of midges that emerge out of standing water. The midges get into the white-tailed deer's sinus or nasal passages. The deer gets an infection, has a high fever, and dies; however, not all deer with EHD die. Staff members have handled deer in the winter with symptoms of EHD.
 4. EHD occurs every year in many states.
 5. Remembered that WHS gets regular complaints from farmers that there are too many deer.
 6. WHS tries to maintain a middle ground for the population, hunters, and farmers.
 7. Once staff has identified that some of these deer died from EHD, there is no need for the team to keep collecting dead deer.
 8. The deer population will bounce back.

9. EHD has not impacted Sika deer.
10. NRP has a 24/7 Communication Center that takes many wildlife calls. The NRP Communication Center has copies of the Wildlife Response Binder to help them triage calls, especially after business hours. The NRP Communication Center sometimes will dispatch an officer to handle a wildlife situation. If an animal has to be euthanized, NRP has two tools: an issued sidearm and a shotgun. NRP is very helpful to WHS.
11. WHS has the necessary tools and training to handle many wildlife situations, just no dedicated source of funding underwritten by those who are often filing the complaint that triggers our response.

Maryland Farm Bureau Update – No Report – Farm Bureau was absent again – no RSVP received.

Natural Resources Police Update – District Supervisor Robert Karge gave a presentation.

- District Supervisor Robert Karge outlined the NRP activity for August 2022. The total of NRP statewide violations in July was 3,180, broken down into citations of 869 and warnings of 2,311. There were 4% wildlife violations, 37% boating, 15% public lands, 30% fisheries, and 13% traffic violations.
- The most common violation was fishing without a license.
- Director Paul Peditto, Fisheries Service staff, and NRP will be training with the State’s Attorney. Principal Counsel of the Department of Natural Resources, Shara Alpert, initiated the meeting. Fifteen counties have NRP docket days to help educate the State’s Attorney on Natural Resources.
 1. NRP docket was established to improve the understanding of Natural Resources cases and the conviction rates.
 2. The NRP docket allows NR cases to be heard without commingling other violations.
- Questions and Answers Section:
 1. Commissioner Showalter asked if there is any data on NR’s successful conviction rates and penalties.
 - a. District Supervisor Karge needs to see if that data is available.
 - b. WHS does not track that data. The only thing WHS monitors is a suspension of hunting licenses, where it is eligible, and the court does not do it. It is a minimal scope of violations.
 2. Commissioner Parks asked if it would make sense to have the e-tickets translated automatically for non-English speaking individuals.
 - a. District Supervisor Karge noted that NRP has pamphlets for non-English speaking individuals when an officer gives out a citation. The brochures have different languages for some individuals to understand.
 - b. NRP will follow up at the next meeting with more information.

Old Business

- Chair Wagner asked about the status of the regulations that the Commission supported back at the March 16, 2022, meeting.
 1. Associate Director Stonesifer reported that the Wildlife and Heritage Service is waiting for the Department’s final approval. Proposed regulations have not moved to the legislative review committee or the Maryland Register.
 2. The Commission reviewed seasons and bag limits, and deer cooperators regulation proposals. The process included more than nine months of deliberation, stakeholders’ input, and three meetings with the Commission. The seasons and bag limits regulations were submitted independent of the Deer Cooperator Permit regulations in the event that the latter were held up at any point in the process.
 3. Director Peditto was asked to give an overview of the Deer Cooperator Permit (DMP) Regulations. DMP regulations are still pending.
- Questions and Answers Section on Pending WHS Regulations:
 1. Commissioner Parks asked why not charge a fee to the farmers for the issuance of the deer management or deer cooperators permits.

- a. WHS does not have the statutory authority to establish a fee.
 - b. The legislature would have to authorize the fee(s) for WHS.
- Chair Wagner requested that staff provide an update on the following topics at the next meeting:
 1. WHS Regulations Status (WHS)
 2. EHD Update (WHS)
 3. Conviction Rates and Translation Update (NRP)

New Business

- Chair Wagner took a few minutes to discuss what the Commission will discuss at the October 19, 2022, meeting.
- Chair Wagner encouraged the Commission to get feedback from constituents about hunting license fees. The last hunting license fees increase occurred in 1998. The Commission must consider increasing fees to raise more money during an Executive Session.
- Chair Wagner also requested Hunter Safety Field Day be added to the October 19, 2022, meeting agenda.
 1. Director Peditto mentioned that NRP manages the Hunter Safety Field Day.
 2. The Commission discussed that during the pandemic, many states eliminated the live fire field day. Most of the states did not go back to the field day model. None are reporting an increase in accidents, only an increase in licensed hunters.
 3. Director Peditto outlined that it is difficult to locate places for the field day, and there are capacity issues.
 4. Maryland has reciprocity with other states' hunter education safety courses.
 5. Commissioner Rossignuolo informed the Commission that she was a Hunter Safety Coordinator for two years. Commissioner Rossignuolo took the position two months before COVID hit. COVID brought in non-traditional hunters that have never hunted. Commissioner Rossignuolo outlined the challenges that COVID has brought to the hunter education safety course process.
 6. Chair Wagner concluded the discussion with the need for improvements, which is why the Commission needs to look at improving and streamlining the system.
 7. Associate Director Stonesifer suggested going to our new younger staff for input on this topic because they learn and think differently, besides the new staff members have great ideas. Associate Director Stonesifer encouraged the Commission to discuss ideas with a diverse group.

Public Comment –

- The public may contact the Members of the Commission at wac.dnr@maryland.gov.
- There were no further public comments.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

The next meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, October 19, 2022, using Google Meet.

Attendance

Members:	B. Alder, M. Cole, J. Parks, K. Rossignuolo, J. Schroyer, R. Showalter, and C. Wagner
Absent:	S. Keithley and T.J. Jenkins
Guest:	L. Compton and E. Gulbrandsen,
Staff:	R. Karge, T. Larney, J. McKnight, P. Peditto, T. Spencer, and H. Spiker, K. Stonesifer, and G. Timko

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Wildlife and Heritage Service
Game Management Program



Game Management Program

-Principal Responsibilities

- Ensure populations remain healthy and abundant
- Serve as subject matter experts and disseminate information to public and press
- Make management recommendations, develop regulations and implement legislation
- Hunting/harvest management and monitoring
- Human-animal conflict management and monitoring
- Monitor and manage wildlife diseases
- Coordinate university and in-house research and monitoring projects
- Serve as representatives on technical committees





Game Mammal Section Overview

Game Mammal Staff

Game Mammal Section Leader – Brian Eyler

Black Bear Project Leader – Jonathan Trudeau

Deer Co-Project Leader – Jonathan Trudeau

Deer Co-Project Leader – George Timko

Furbearer Project Leader – Josh Tabora

Chronic Wasting Disease Biologist – Lindsey O'Brien

Mammal Section Natural Resource Technician – Nick Stonesifer

Mammal Section Biologist - vacant



Black Bear Project

- **Monitors and manages black bear diseases including mange**
- **Currently working with Morgan State University and Responsive Management on public opinion and hunter surveys concerning black bears**
- **Revising black bear management plan**
- **Representative on Northeast Black Bear Technical Committee and Eastern Black Bear Workshop**
- **To-do list includes finalizing black bear management plan and development of additional bear population models**



Deer Project (Whitetail & Sika)

- **Monitors and manages diseases including hemorrhagic disease and chronic wasting disease**
- **Representative on Northeast Deer Technical Committee and Southeast Deer Study Group**
- **Manages Deer Cooperator Program**
- **Works with communities and governmental agencies to manage over-abundant deer**
- **Currently working with Morgan State University on sika deer hunter survey.**
- **To-do list includes development of sika deer management plan and statewide CWD sampling plan**



Furbearer Project (including rabbits & squirrels)

- **Monitors and manages furbearer diseases including mange, rabies and rabbit hemorrhagic disease**
- **Currently working with Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) on tapeworms in foxes.**
- **Currently participating in Clemson University study concerning weasel populations**
- **Representative on Northeast Furbearer Technical Committee**
- **Serves as primary wildlife response staff for Allegany County**



Game Bird Section Overview



Game Bird Staff

Game Bird Section Leader – Bill Harvey

**Upland Game Bird and Wild Turkey Project
Leader – Bob Long**

Waterfowl Project Leader – Josh Homyack

Waterfowl Habitat Biologist – Donald Webster

Game Bird Biologist – Hutch Walbridge

Game Program Database Manager – Brent Evans



Upland Game Birds and Wild Turkeys

- **Project includes wild turkey, bobwhite, ruffed grouse, and ring-necked pheasants**
- **Focus on habitat management and initiatives, especially for bobwhite**
- **Harvest management and monitoring for wild turkey**
- **Large-scale, multi-year telemetry project on wild turkeys beginning in winter 2023**
- **Represents Maryland on regional and national technical committees**



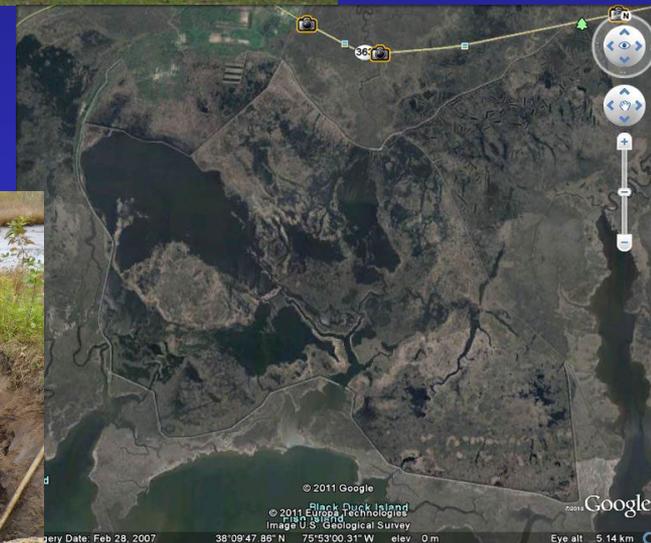
Waterfowl

- **Project includes all ducks, geese and swans**
- **Focus on harvest and population management**
- **Most research and monitoring efforts are coordinated through the Atlantic Flyway Council (17 states and eastern provinces)**
- **Currently involved in large-scale telemetry projects on mallards, black ducks and Atlantic Population Canada geese**
- **Represent Maryland and Atlantic Flyway on regional and national committees and working groups**



Waterfowl Habitat

- Wetland restoration and management on public lands
- Technical assistance to private landowners
- Phragmites control
- Regulated shooting areas



Regional Operations Program

Wildlife and Heritage Service

WMA Mission

To conserve and enhance diverse wildlife populations and associated habitats while providing public enjoyment of the State's wildlife resources through hunting and other wildlife-dependent recreation.

Regional Ops. Staff & Responsibilities



55 staff members working in 15 offices across the State.

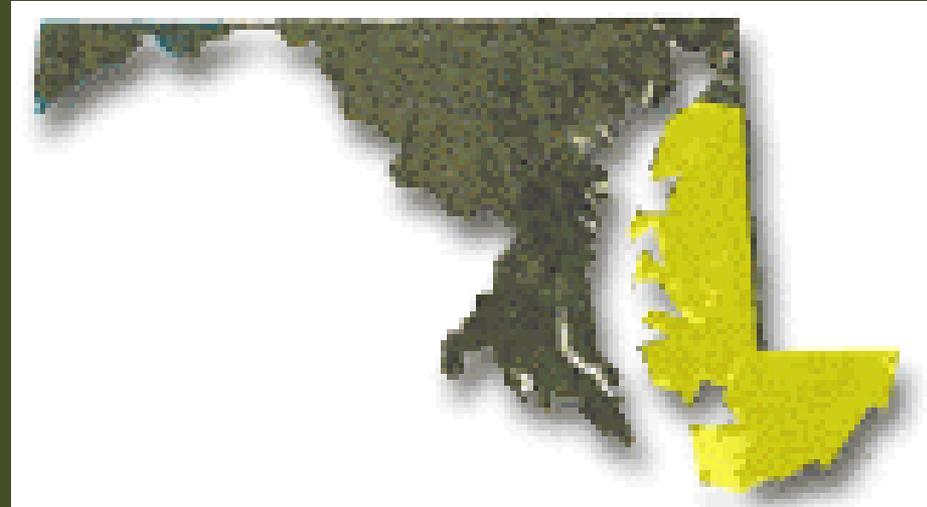
- 13 new staff have been hired within the last year*
- 3 additional positions currently being recruited*

Responsibilities:

- Land Management on WMA's and other lands (CWMA's, SF, NRMA's, etc.)*
- Nuisance Response Activities*
- Support other programs (e.g. Disease testing, wildlife surveys, harvest data, etc.)*

Eastern Region

- 13 Staff in 4 offices
- Responsible for 22 WMA's
- Staff covers 8 counties:
 - Caroline
 - Dorchester
 - Kent
 - Queen Anne's
 - Somerset
 - Talbot
 - Wicomico
 - Worcester



Central Region

- 12 Staff at 4 offices
- Manage 12 WMA's & 12 CWMA's
- Manages Free CR Public Hunting Permit System
- Manages several hunting lotteries for specific properties
- Staff Covers 7 Jurisdictions:
 - Baltimore County
 - Baltimore City
 - Carroll Co
 - Cecil Co
 - Harford Co
 - Howard Co
 - Montgomery Co



Southern Region

- 11 Staff at 3 offices
- Manage 11 WMA's & >30 other various huntable properties
- Manages Free SR Public Hunting Permit System
- Manages several hunting lotteries
- Staff Covers 5 Counties:
 - Anne Arundel
 - Calvert
 - Charles
 - Prince George's
 - St. Mary's



Western Region

- 17 Staff at 4 offices
- Manage 12 WMA's & several other huntable properties (SF, PS, NRMA, CWMA, etc.)
- Staff covers 4 counties:
 - Allegany
 - Frederick
 - Garrett
 - Washington



Land Management

- 62 Wildlife Management Areas in total
- Cover more than 126,000 acres
- Located in 18 of 23 counties
- 70% East, 20% West
- 5% South, 5% Central



Land Management

- Plant trees and wildlife food plots
- Enhance habitat with burning
- Remove invasive species
- Mow fields and meadows
- Boundary marking work
- Maintain roads and trails
- Repair and install hunting blinds



Wildlife Response

- Injured, dead or diseased animals (e.g. rabies, distemper, mange, CWD, AI, etc.)
- Nuisance Animals (e.g. food conditioned or habituated, on deck, in house, etc.)
- Crop & livestock depredation investigations
- In the last 2 weeks:
 - reports of foxes & raccoons held as pets
 - bears breaking into tents, cabins & vehicles
 - Potential tularemia outbreak
 - Dead vultures and other birds
 - EHD reports



Support to Other Programs



Questions?

