

THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES – OCTOBER 21, 2020

Chairman Lou Compton called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. This meeting was held via teleconference and videoconference. Chairman Compton asked for a roll call of individuals who were on the “call”. Because of the anonymity of Google Meet callers, it was impossible to determine the identity of every participant.

Approval for October 21, 2020, Meeting Agenda

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Michael moved to accept the October 21, 2020, Wildlife Advisory Commission Meeting Agenda.
 2. Commissioner Schroyer seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Approval for Minutes from August 19, 2020 Meeting

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Michael moved to accept the September 16, 2020 meeting minutes as presented.
 2. Commissioner Gulbrandsen seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Wildlife and Heritage Service Regional Operations Update – Introductory remarks were given by Associate Director Tim Larney.

- Associate Director Larney reminded the Commission that the three primary focus areas for Regional Operations are public land management, wildlife response and deer management permits. Currently, there are 64 wildlife management areas totaling nearly 128,000 acres. This is nearly triple the number of acres 20 years ago. The emergency wildlife response team is another focus. Staff responded to 926 incidents during this past year with 226 incidents after hours. Regional Operations staff are also responsible for managing deer management permits (aka “crop damage permits”). These permits require significant time and attention from several staff in each region. In addition, Regional Operations staff manage the free hunting permits that are issued from the Gwynnbrook Wildlife Office and the Myrtle Grove Wildlife Office.
- The Central Regional Operations presentation was given by Central Region Manager Jim Bennett in a PowerPoint Presentation to the Commission. **[ATTACHMENT A]**

Waterfowl Populations Update – Presentation was given by Waterfowl Project Leader Josh Homyack.

- Waterfowl Project Leader Josh Homyack outlined the waterfowl populations and the impacts of COVID in a PowerPoint Presentation to the Commission. **[ATTACHMENT B]**
- Staff attended the Atlantic Flyway Council Meeting virtually. The recommendations were sent to USFWS. The primary seasons for 2021-2022 will no-doubt look similar to the current seasons.
- The timeline of the season selections for the Wildlife Advisory Commission (WAC) and staff are in slide two of the PowerPoint Presentation – this slide includes the month that the Commission will vote on the proposed seasons and bag limits.
- There are several mallard population studies going ongoing. Maryland will be involved in a tracking study for mallards along with other states in the AFC.

2021 WAC Annual Schedule and Draft Monthly Agenda Discussion/Approval – Group Discussion

- Chairman Compton opened the floor to discuss the 2021 WAC Annual Schedule and Draft Monthly Agenda. **[ATTACHMENT C]**
- Discussion to add the Internal Bi-Annual Regulations Concepts to the October 20, 2021 meeting.

These regulations concepts are for internal use only and not to be shared with the public because there is a need for internal approval.

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Weinberg moved to accept the 2021 WAC Annual Schedule and Draft Monthly Agenda with the addition of the Internal Bi-Annual Regulations Concepts to the October 20, 2021 meeting.
 2. Commissioner Michael seconded
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Natural Resources Police Update – Presentation was given by Sergeant Bradley Lowe.

- Sergeant Lowe highlighted that there were twenty seven recent graduates from the NRP academy. The Western Region was not assigned any of new graduates because there is a larger need for officers in the Central and the Southern part of the State.
- NRP is preparing for the early muzzleloader season and black bear season.
- Officers responded to tree stand falls.
- Lt. Charles Fawley sent the NRP September 2020 Statewide Stats. The Commissioners received an electronic copy of the September 2020 Statewide Stats. Lt. Fawley will check with IT about the notifications at the bottom of the September 2020 NRP Statewide Stats re: “not for public distribution”. Lt. Fawley will contact Ms. Tracey Spencer along with the Commission the outcome of the response.
- Commissioner Michael mentioned a case that hunter’s privileges were forfeited. Commissioner Michael suggested that a press release should be done. Lt. Fawley responded that he will get in touch with the officer involved in the case and work with Commissioner Michael to compile a press release.

Maryland Farm Bureau Update – No Report.

Old Business –

- Chairman Compton asked the status of the live-fire field day component for the Hunter Safety Course.
 1. Discussion regarding increase in the apprentice hunting license because there is no live-fire component to purchase the apprentice hunting license. There is also evidence that some first-time hunters took an online course from other states that do not have a live-fire component for the Hunter Safety Course.
 2. Discussion continued and included dialogue about taking a course online and getting rid of the field day. The live-fire is a Hunter Safety policy and it is not regulatory. Therefore, the policy can be changed internally without any regulatory change.
 3. The outcome of the discussion: NRP will get the data about how many states do not have live-fire along with any data related to a trend of increased hunting accidents due to lack of live-fire exercise incorporated. The Commission wants the information from the Eastern states.
 4. Lt. Fawley agreed to gather this information for the Commission by the next meeting or for the meeting in January.

New Business

- Myersville Black Bear Attack Update – Presentation was given by Game Mammal Section Leader Harry Spiker.
 1. Game Mammal Section Leader Harry Spiker summarized the Myersville black bear attack in a PowerPoint Presentation along with key factors. [ATTACHMENT D]
 2. Mr. Spiker outlined that staff have been expanding the education component as to what to do when faced with a black bear. The information has been updated on the webpage.
 3. Commissioner Boyles Griffin thanked Mr. Spiker for his detailed presentation.

4. Staff met with the community that was in the area of the 2016 black bear attack. With COVID, that is something that we cannot do now but staff did conduct an online outreach program to central and north eastern Maryland after the Havre De Grace bear incident.
- Coyote Attacks in Maryland Update – Overview given by Game Mammal Section Leader Harry Spiker.
 1. There were two coyotes involved in four coyote attacks in Maryland recently.
 2. The April 29, 2020 coyote attack occurred in Owing Mills - that coyote tested positive for rabies.
 3. The October 1, 2020 coyote attack involved a woman who was walking her dog and bit the woman. Shortly thereafter the same coyote bit two other people - it was dispatched by police. The coyote tested positive for rabies.
 - Commissioner Keithley suggested that Maryland allow the collection of bear skulls because more people are outdoors and people are locating these items while out in nature.
 1. It is currently illegal to possess a bear skull (or other bear parts) without a possession tag or documentation from the Department that it will be used in a formal academic or scientific educational program. Game Mammal Section Leader Harry Spiker will work with NRP on this topic and report back to the Commission at the January meeting.
 2. Chairman Compton added Possession of Bear Skull/Pick-up Topic under Old Business for the January meeting.
 - Commissioner Keithley informed the Commission that it has been brought to his attention the increased in non-resident hunters that are coming to Maryland to hunt Sika deer. Commissioner Keithley indicated that Maryland should be able to capitalize on the increased Sika deer hunters by creating a Sika deer stamp.
 1. Discussion ensued about creating a Sika deer stamp with a fee attached. Fee changes will require the approval of the legislature. Maryland resident hunters will not be happy to have to pay for something that use to be included in their license. The Sika deer stamp will be a requirement for non-residents.
 2. Commissioner Michael mentioned it would be a good thing to know how many non-residents hunt Sika deer. Also, it is better that any fee introduction come from the Commission.
 3. Deer Project Leader Brian Eyler highlighted the data on non-resident Sika deer hunters: 28% are non-residents and about 2,000 non-residents hunt on Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.
 - Commissioner Weinberg asked if staff have considered moving back the early muzzleloader season by a week.
 1. Deer Project Leader Eyler mentioned that it is a regular dialogue that involves conflict between the archery and muzzleloaders hunters.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 12:26 P.M.

The next meeting will be held at 10:30 A.M. on Wednesday, November 17, 2020, using Google Meet due to COVID-19.

Attendance

Members:	L. Compton, S. Boyles Griffin, E. Gulbrandsen, S. Keithley, J. Michael J. Schroyer, C. Wagner, and R. Weinberg
Absent:	T. Gregor
Guest:	
Staff:	J. Bennett, B. Eyler, C. Fawley, B. Harvey, J. Homyack, B. Lowe, T. Larney, J. McKnight, P. Peditto, T. Spencer, and H. Spiker



ATTACHMENT A

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Wildlife and Heritage Service

Central Region Operations Update

Staff consists of 10 Classified and 2 Contractual Positions

Land Management Staff:

Gwynnbrook: Four Classified, One LTC

Millington: Three Classified, One STC (Vacant)

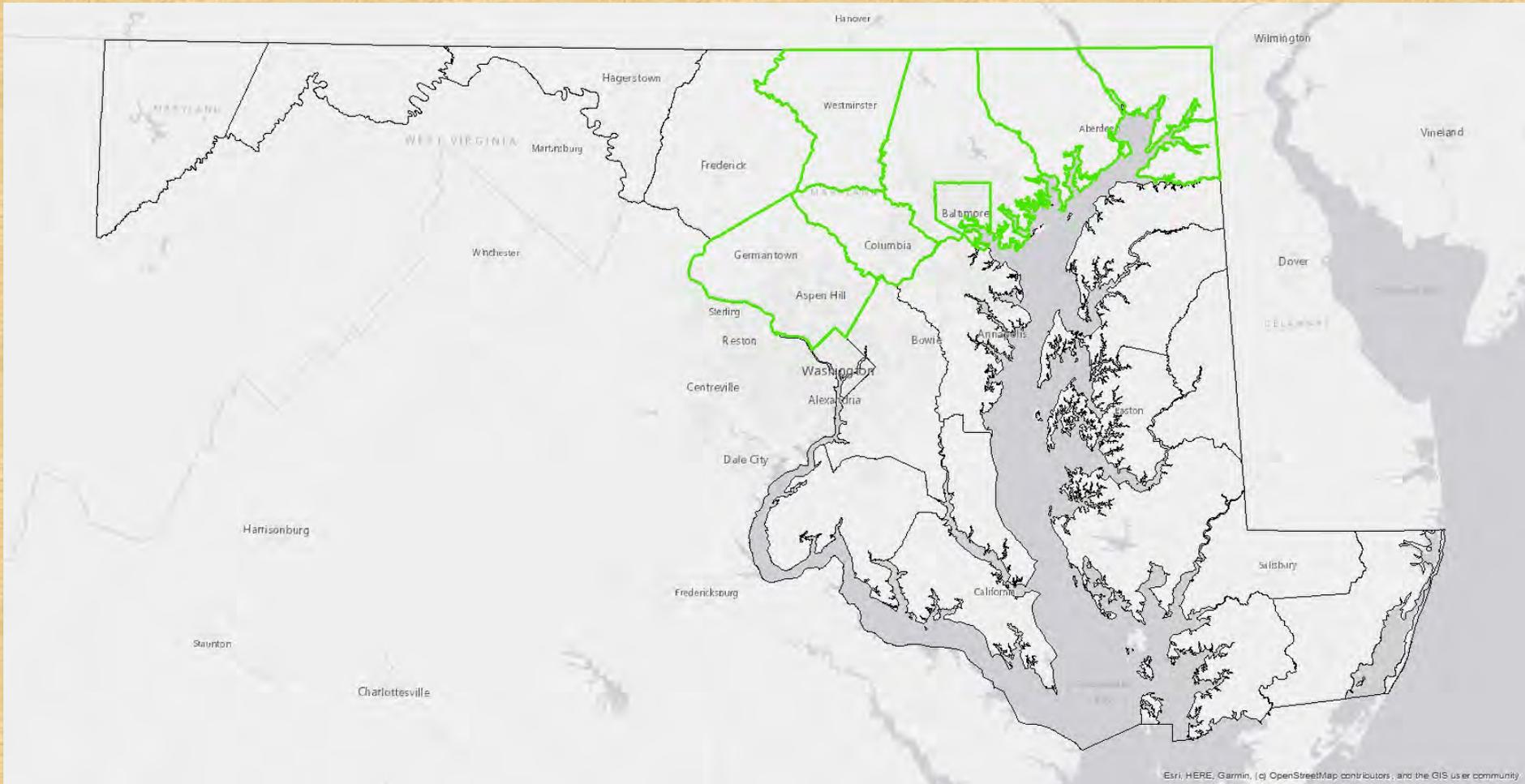
Response Staff:

Two Classified. One is based out of Seneca SP and the other is based in Bel Air.

Regional Manager and Land Management Staff assist with response as needed.

Central Region Consists of 6 Counties and Baltimore City

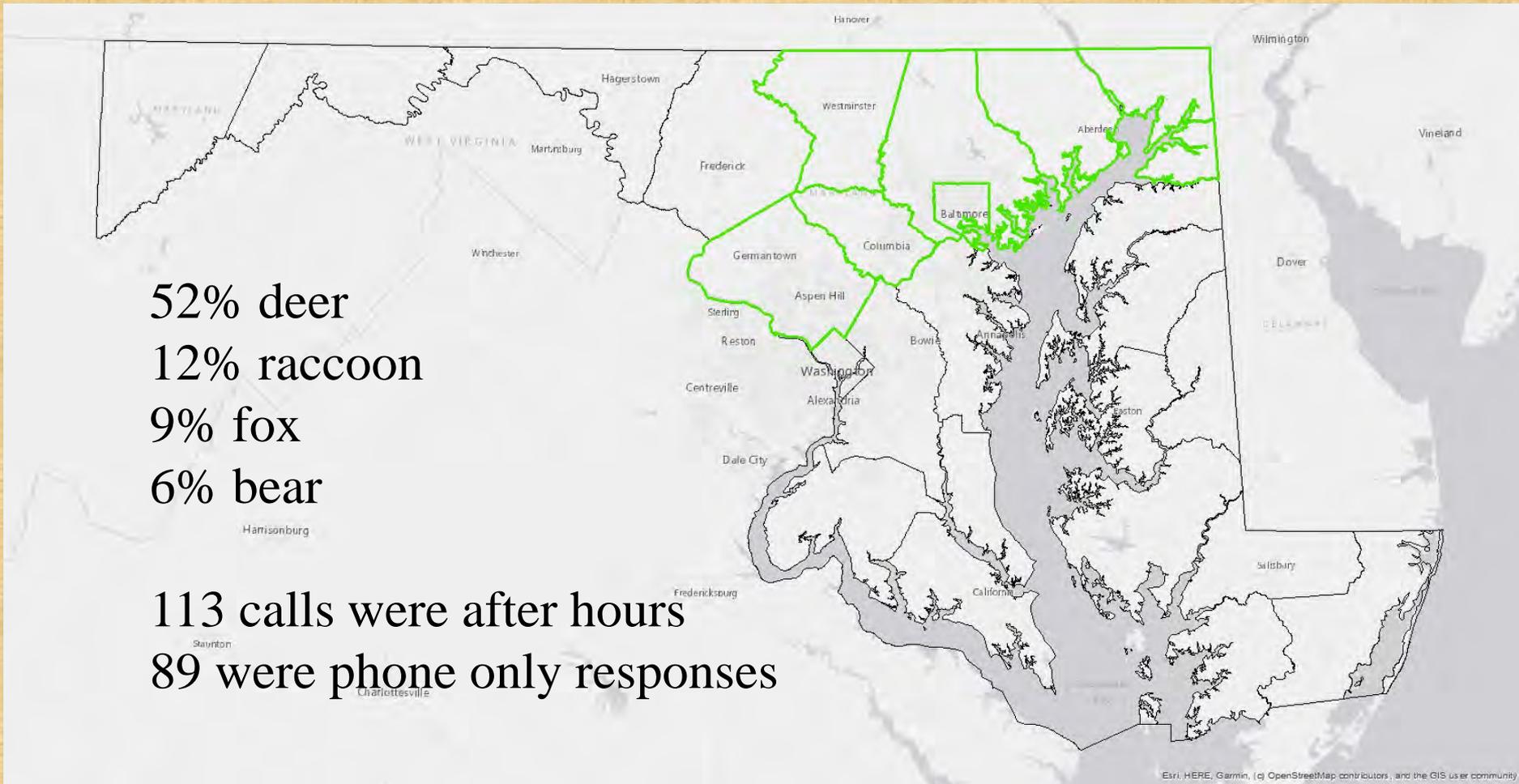
The region's population estimate is 3,323,981 out of an estimated Statewide Population of 6,045,680



Staff responded to 359 calls for nuisance or injured wildlife in past 12 months.

52% deer
12% raccoon
9% fox
6% bear

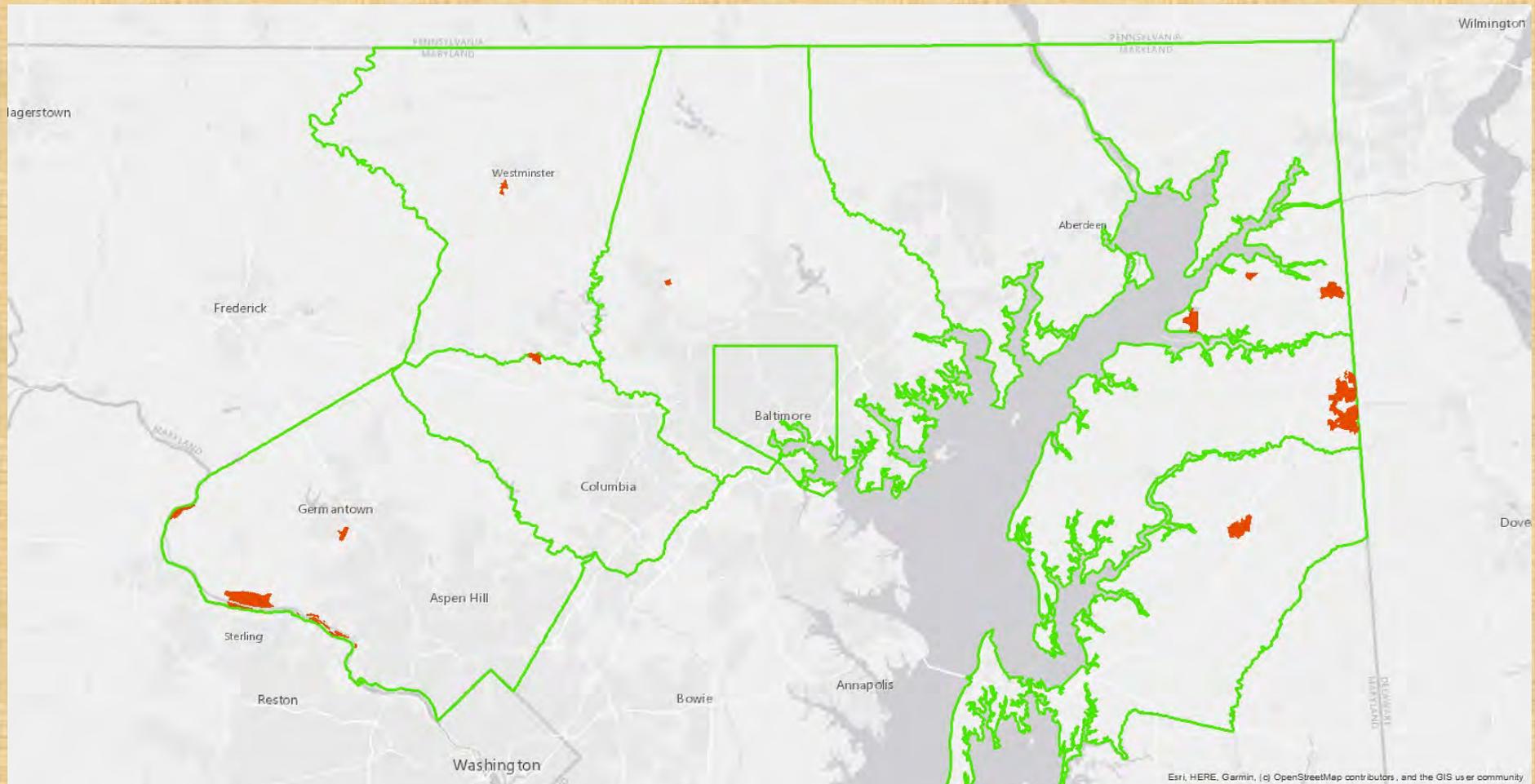
113 calls were after hours
89 were phone only responses



Land Management

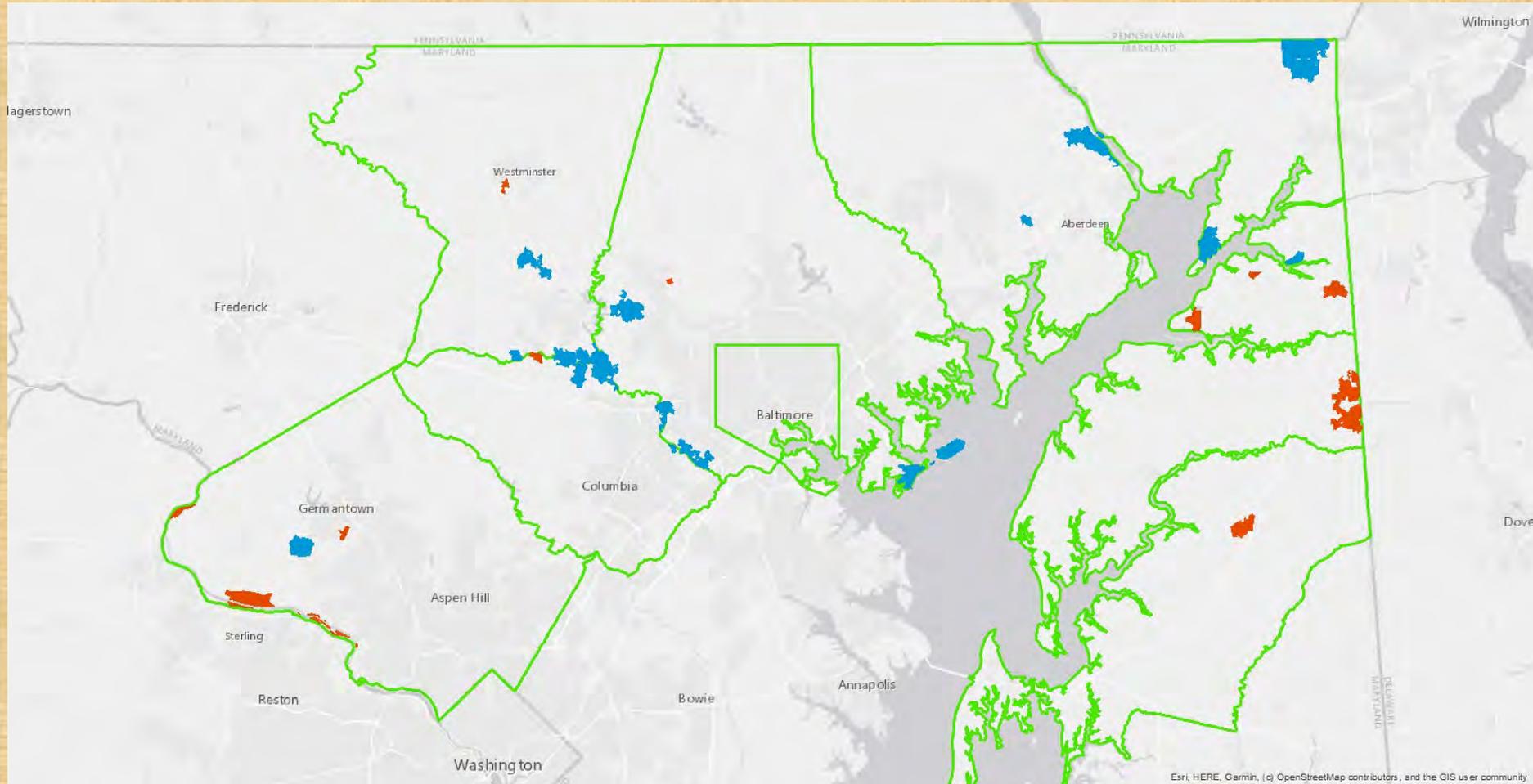
Ten WMAs in Central Region totaling 4756 Acres

Two in Kent and Queen Anne's Counties totaling 5043 Acres



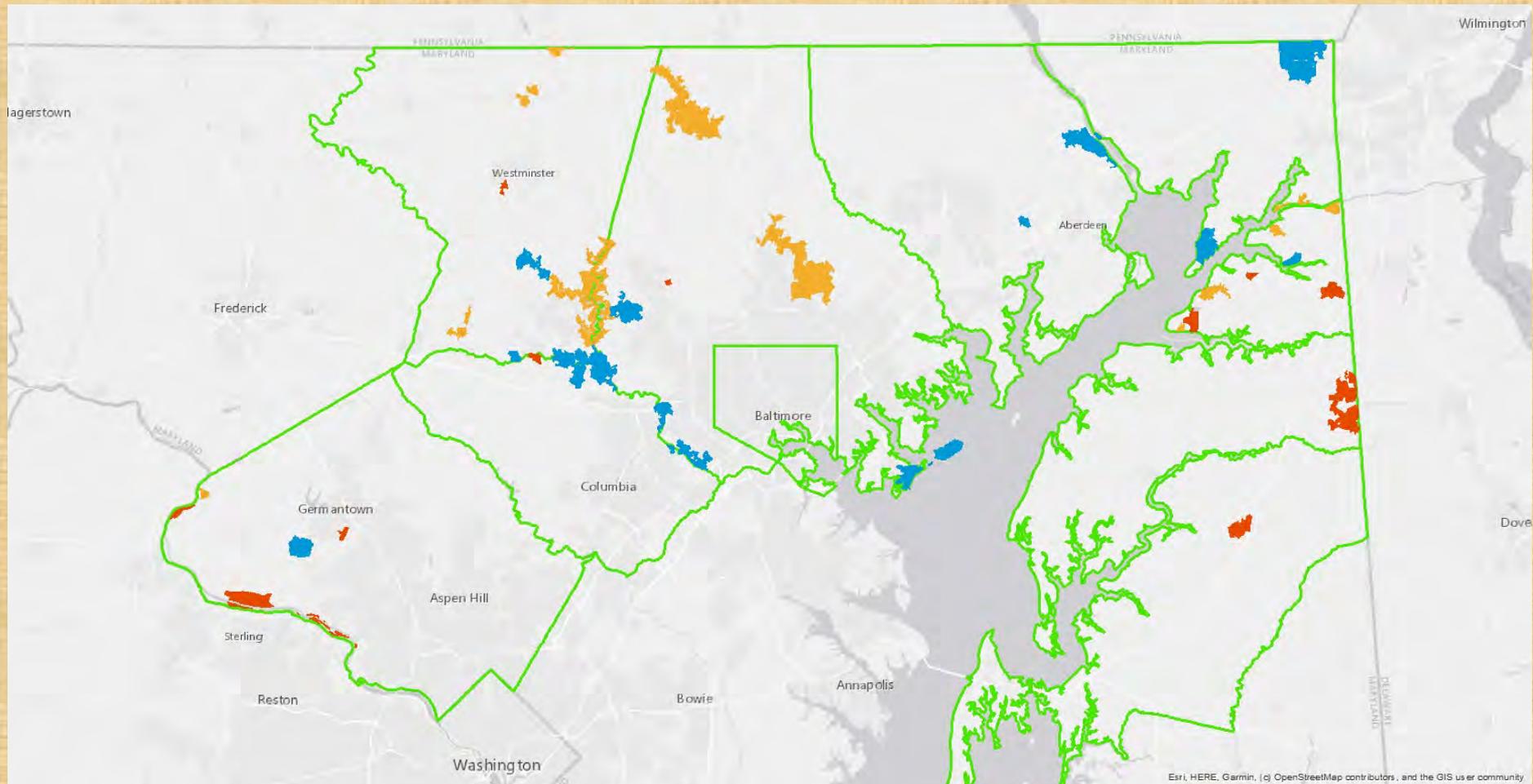
Land Management

Staff manages hunting access on 11 State Parks and One Demonstration Forest through the Gwynnbrook Permit System.



Land Management

Manage 17 Cooperative Wildlife Management Areas
Responsibilities vary on each.

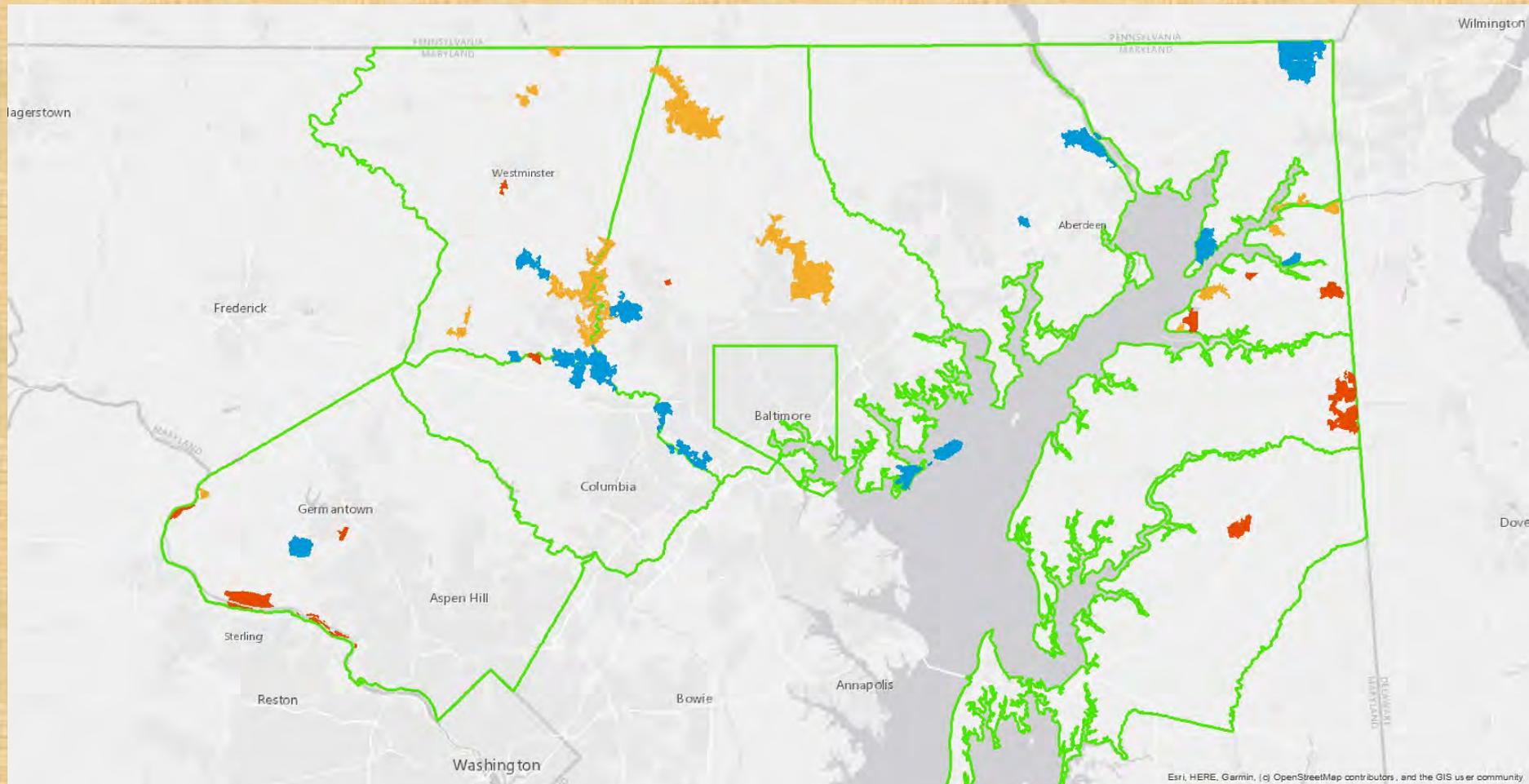


Land Management

Permits and reservations are handled out of the Gwynnbrook Office

3464 Permits issued to date for 2020-2021 Season

3649 Reservations made to date.

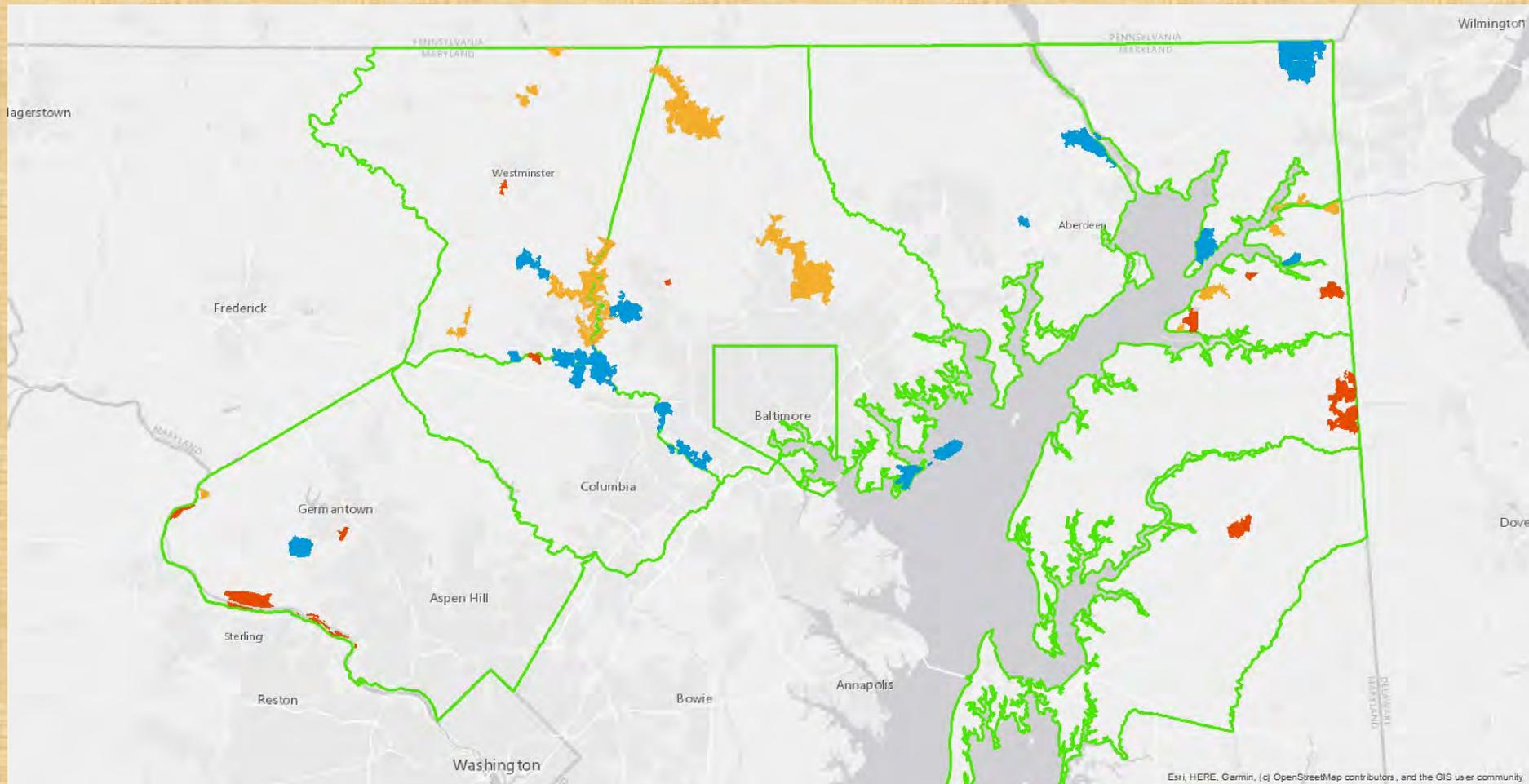


Land Management

Permit and Reservations for prior years:

2019-2020: 5469 Permits 14,685 Reservations

2018-2019: 4779 Permits 13,125 Reservations



Recent Projects

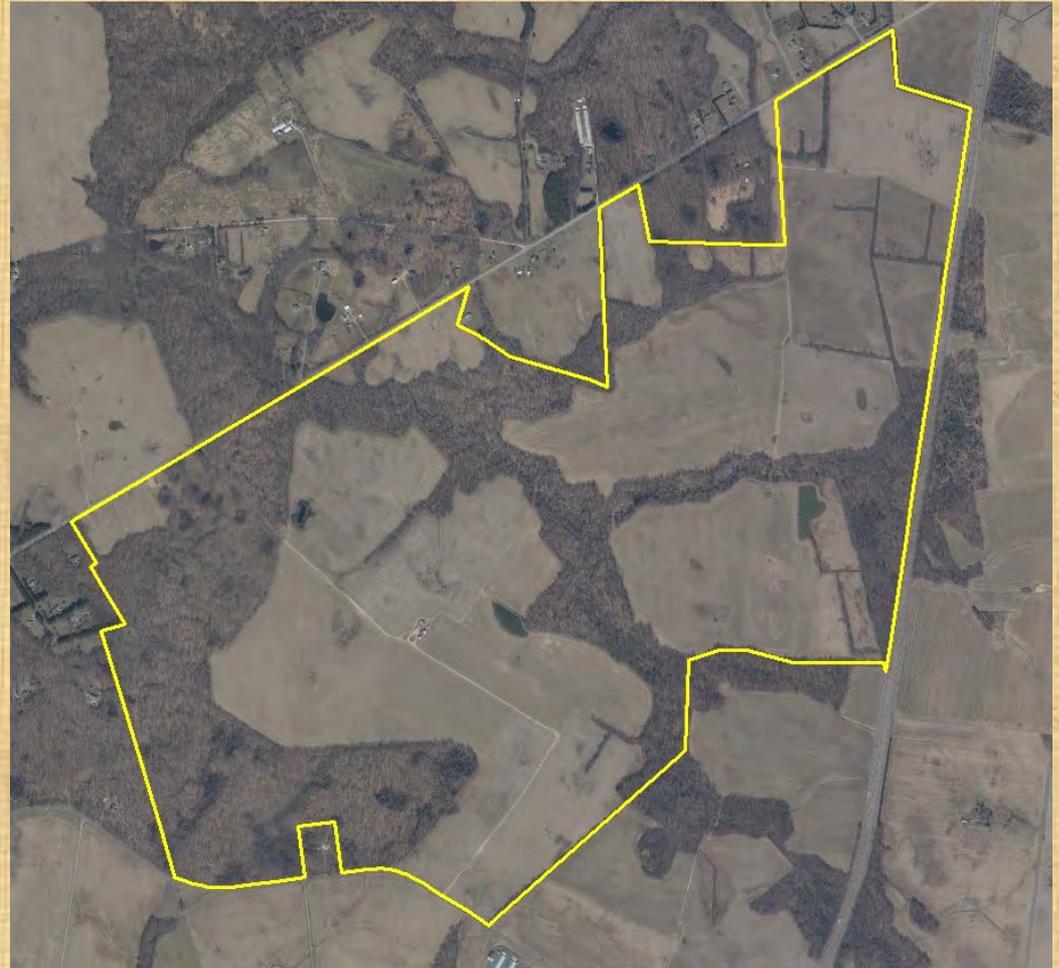
Acquisitions:

Browns Branch WMA – Queen Anne’s County

~ 1100 Acres

Purchased in 2019
Opened to hunting for
the 2019-20 season.

Recently began the
planning process for
the 15 year vision plan.



Recent Projects

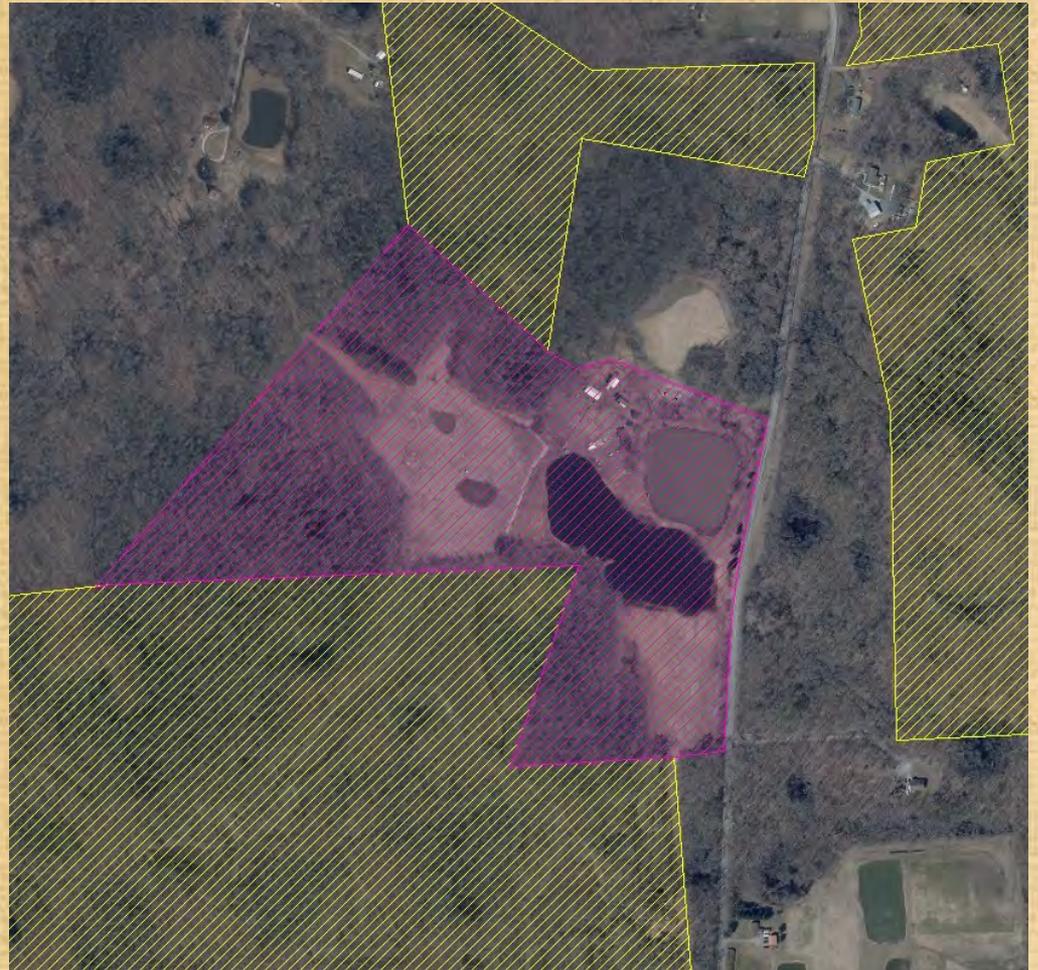
Acquisitions:

Black Bottom Road Parcel addition to Millington WMA

~ 51 Acres

ESLC has finished
structure removal.
DNR will close soon.

Staff is considering
designating as a dog
training area.



Recent Projects

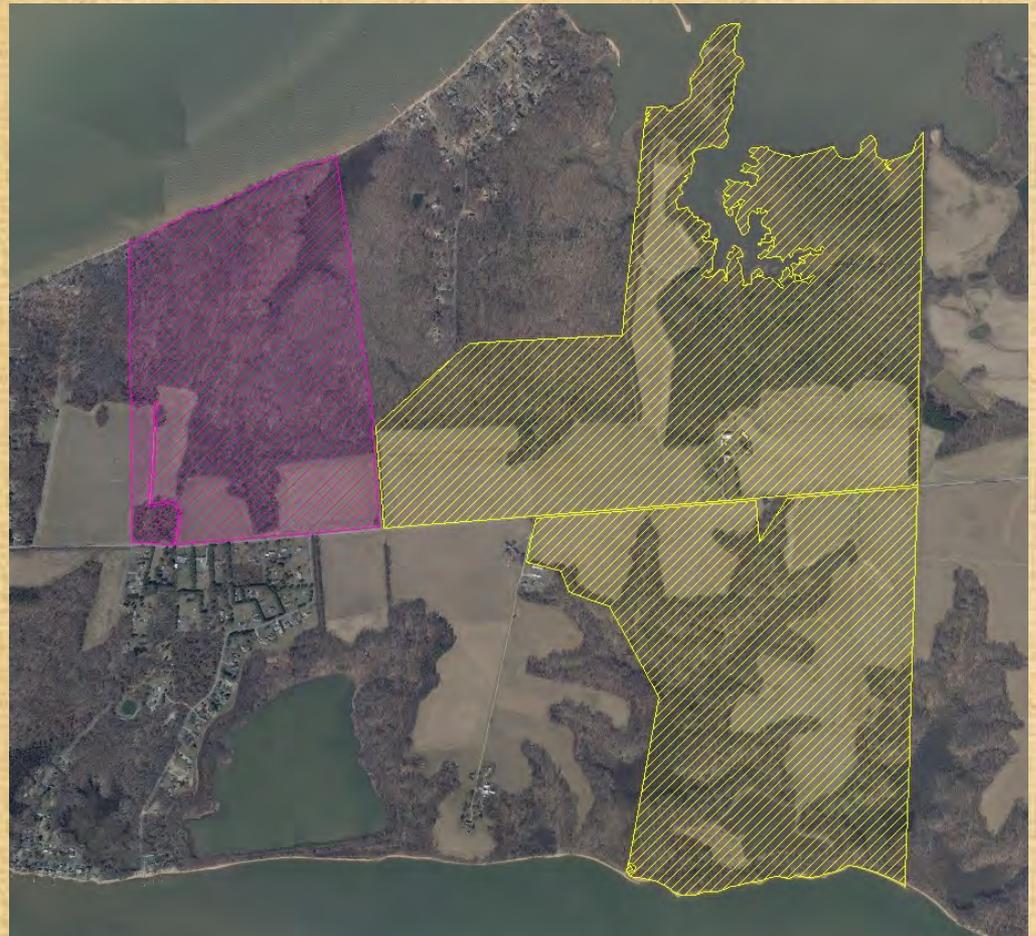
Acquisitions:

Missionary Servants Parcel addition to Grove Farm WMA

~ 250 Acres

ESLC has purchased and will perform some cleanup before transfer to WHS.

Will increase WMA by ~33%. Potential for ADA hunting access.



Recent Projects

Waterfowl Impoundments on Old Bohemia WMA:

2-3 impoundments
totaling 6 acres

Design is under revision
Based on SCS input.



Recent Projects

Conversion of mowed areas on Gwynnbrook WMA:

Convert lawn areas to
pollinator habitat.

Originally planned to
start in spring on 2020.
Plan is to start this fall
or spring of 2021.



Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Wildlife and Heritage Service



Questions?



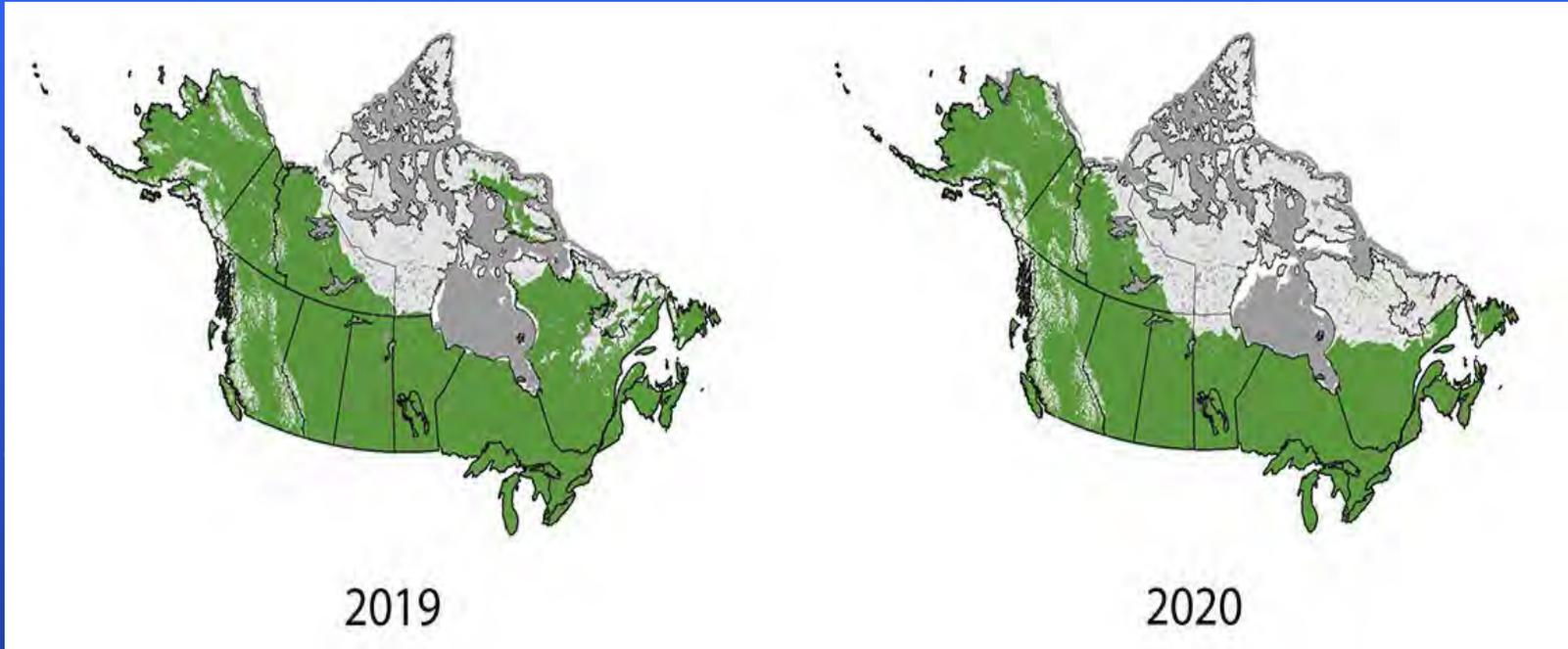
2020 Migratory Game Bird Status Update



Season Selection Process

- **2020-2021 season was set in April, 2020.**
- **2021-2022 season**
 - **Atlantic Flyway Council, Sept. 21-25.**
 - **FWS Regulations Committee, Oct. 20-21.**
 - **Proposed federal frameworks, early 2021.**
 - **MGBAC early January WAC reviews late January.**
 - **Maryland public meeting and comment period (mid February).**
 - **WAC vote late March with final season selection due to FWS, April 2021.**

2020 Habitat Conditions



re

similar

2020 Habitat Conditions

- Limited data available because of COVID.
- Snow and ice cover maps from satellite photography show more extensive coverage in 2020 than 2019 suggesting later spring phenology for those areas.
- Most recent data: 2019 total ponds 5.0 million ± 0.2 million and similar to 2018 and the LTA (both 5.2 million).

Adjustments to 2020 Regulatory Process

- Due to COVID USFWS and partners were unable to conduct survey operations.
- As a result no direct observations of most waterfowl populations or habitat were available to biologists.
- Regulatory decisions will be made based upon modeled population estimates based upon the most recent information available.

2020 Breeding Ducks in the Eastern Survey Area (millions)

Species	2020	2019	% Change from 2018	% Change from LTA
Mallard	n/a	1.00	n/a	n/a
Black duck	0.50	0.70	-28	-31
Wood duck*	0.94	1.02	-7	similar
Green-winged teal	0.35	0.30	similar	similar
Ring-necked duck	0.70	0.70	similar	similar
Common goldeneye	0.58	0.50	similar	similar

* *Wood Duck estimate from AFBWS and BBS*

Multi-Stock Duck Harvest Recommendation

- **Approved by USFWS-SRC spring 2018 as the method by which general duck season will be determined in the Atlantic Flyway.**
- **Optimal choice for the 2021-22 Atlantic Flyway duck season is the liberal regulatory alternative (60/6).**



Scaup Season

- Restrictive “hybrid” season for 2021-22.
- 40 days 1 bird/day and 20 consecutive days 2 birds/day.
- States choose where to place 20 days of 2 birds/day but must be consecutive.

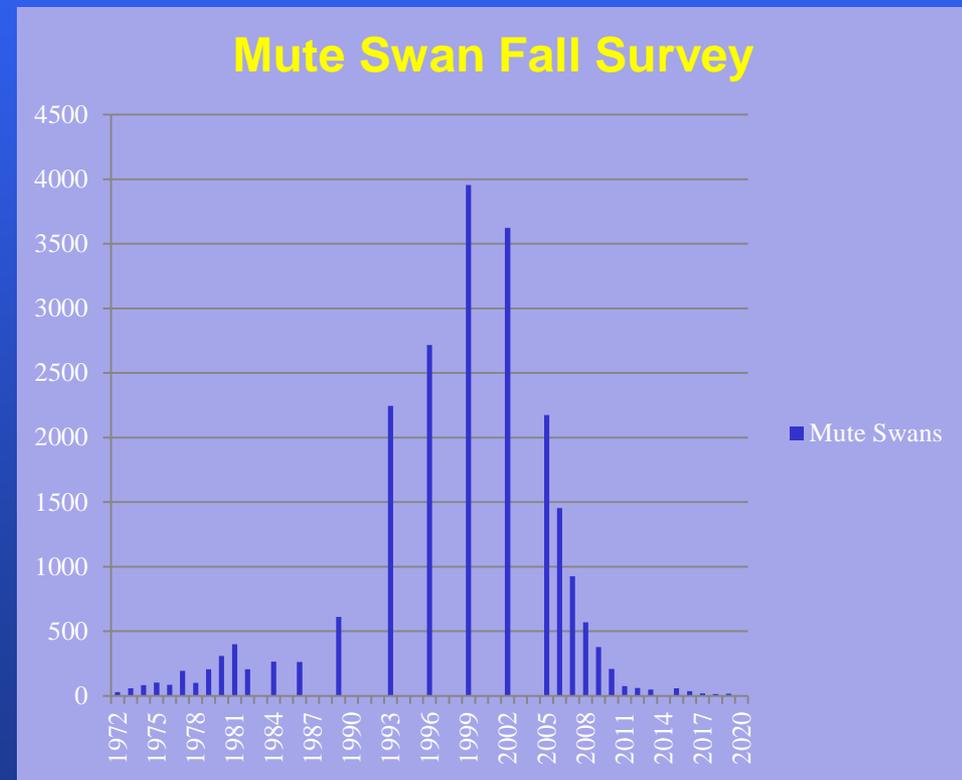


Duck Zones and Segments

- **Maryland will have 2 duck zones (East and West) for 2021-22 hunting season.**
- **Past USFWS options did not allow for 2 zones and 3 splits.**
- **USFWS allows zones and split options to be changed every 5 years.**
- **This concept received positive review's during our last public comment period (February-March, 2020).**

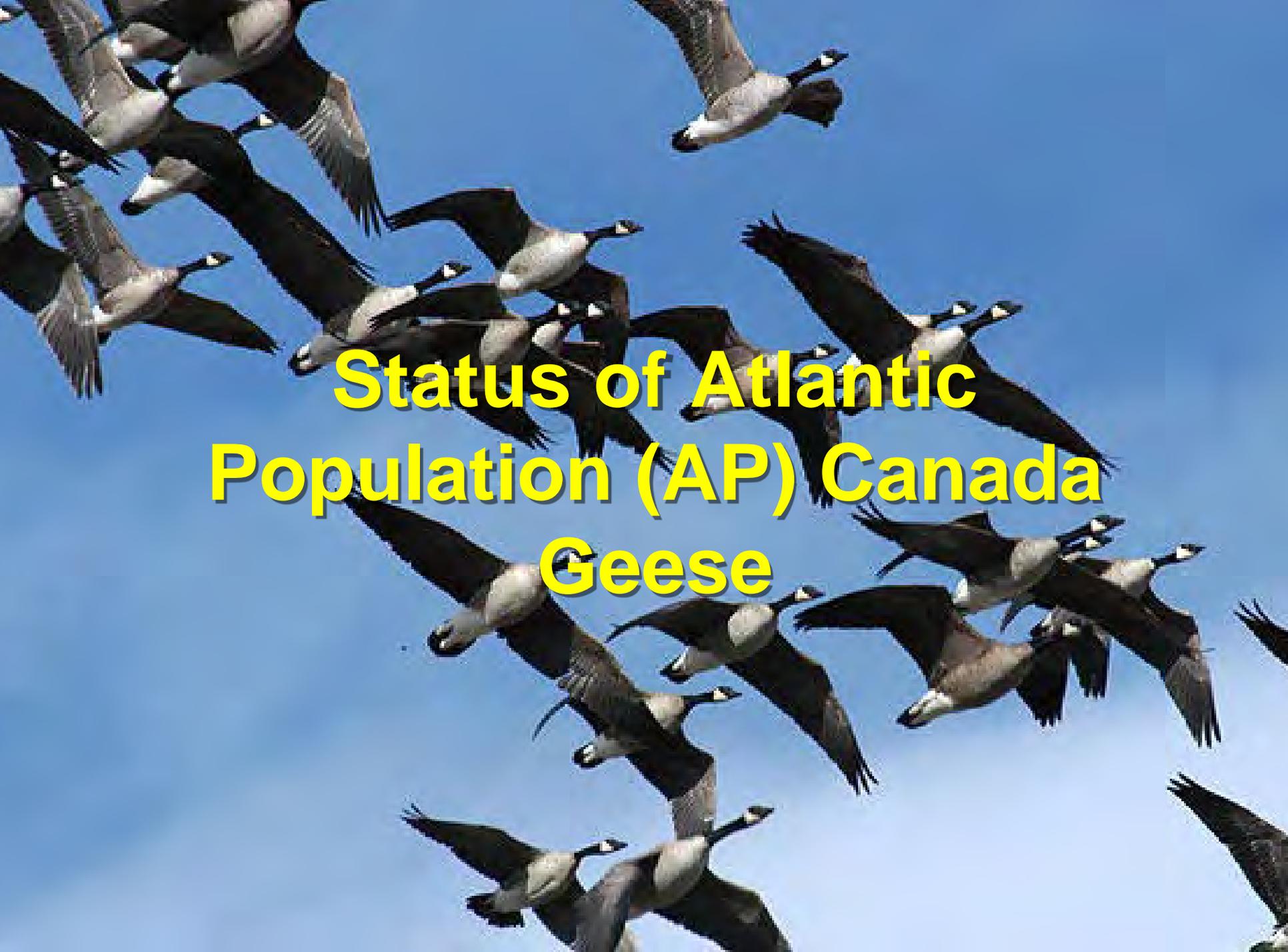
Mute Swan Management

- Spring and Fall aerial surveys not conducted due to COVID.
- Continue to remove birds opportunistically (7 in 2020, 21 in 2019, 14 in 2018).



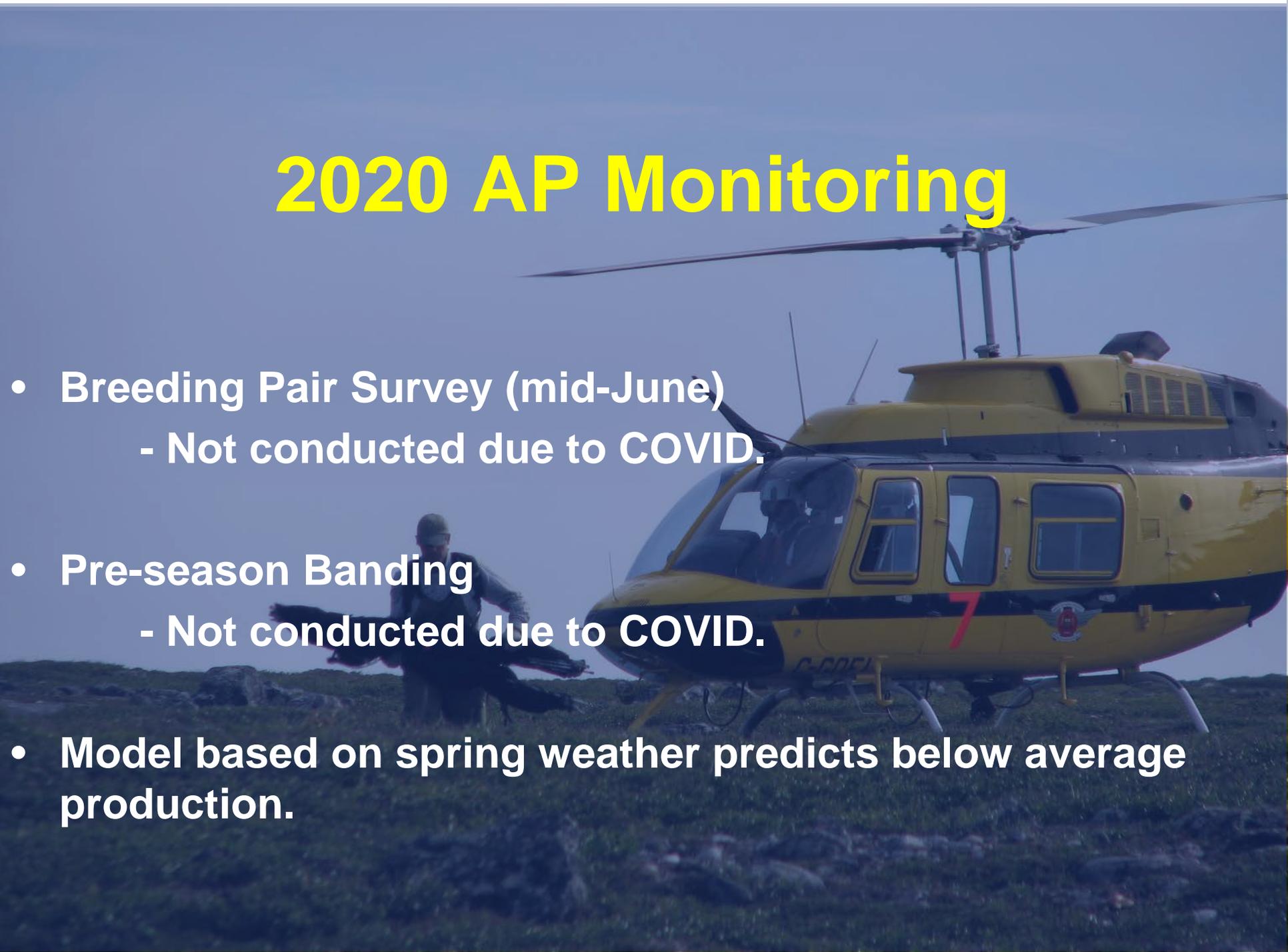
Changes for the Sea Duck Season

- 2015 AF and USFWS voted to reduce harvest 25% by the end of the 2020-21 season.
- Reduced the Special Sea Duck Season from 107 days to 60 and 7 birds/day to 5/day.
- Since 2016 season annual estimates of sea duck harvest have remained the same or increased for some species.
- Very likely that significant changes are in store for the 2022-23 hunting season.

A large flock of Canada geese is shown in flight against a clear blue sky. The geese are captured in various stages of their wing strokes, with some fully extended and others partially folded. Their bodies are primarily white with dark brown wings and necks. The text "Status of Atlantic Population (AP) Canada Geese" is overlaid in the center in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font.

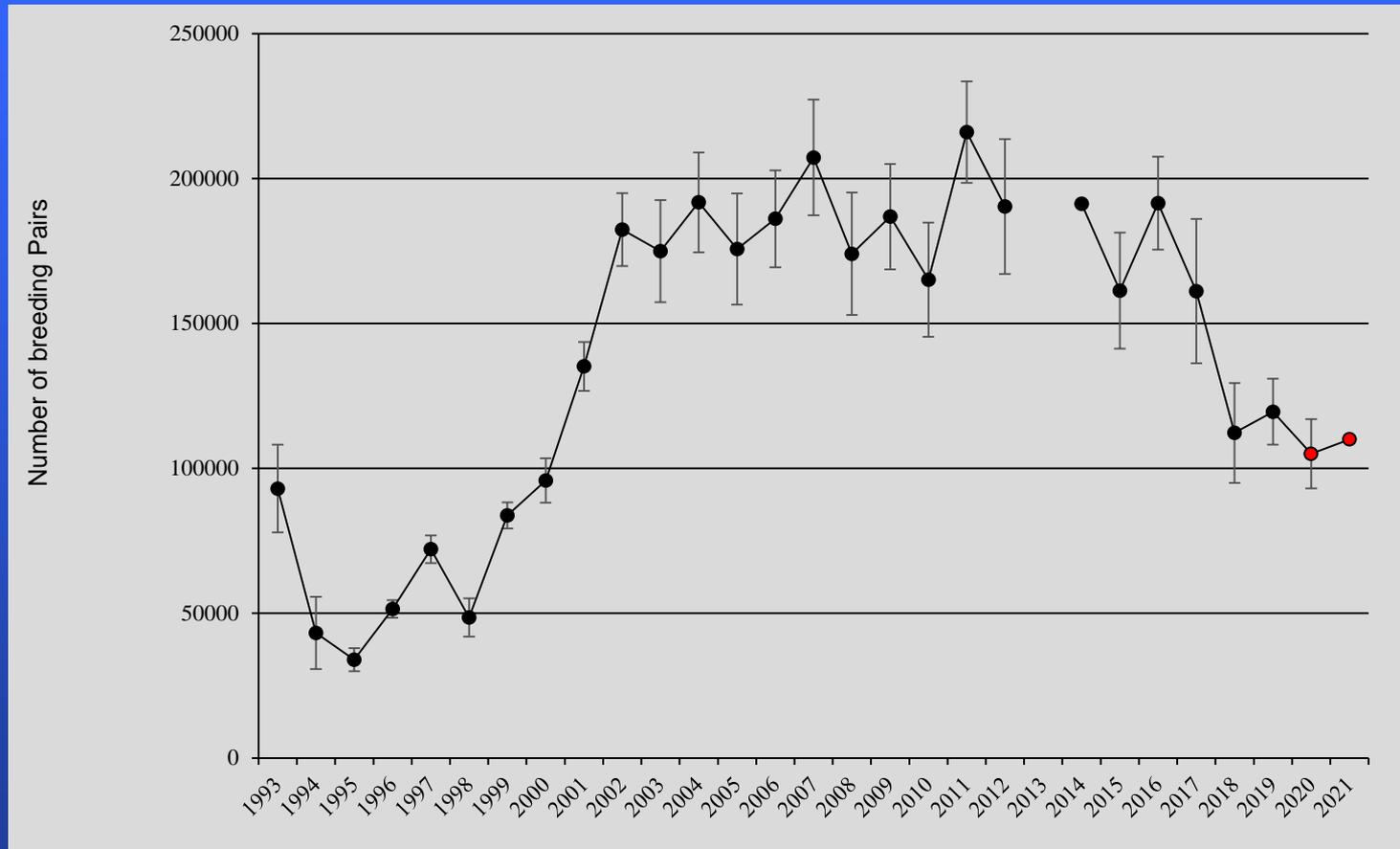
**Status of Atlantic
Population (AP) Canada
Geese**

2020 AP Monitoring

A yellow helicopter is parked on a grassy field. A person is standing next to it, holding a large object. The background is a clear blue sky.

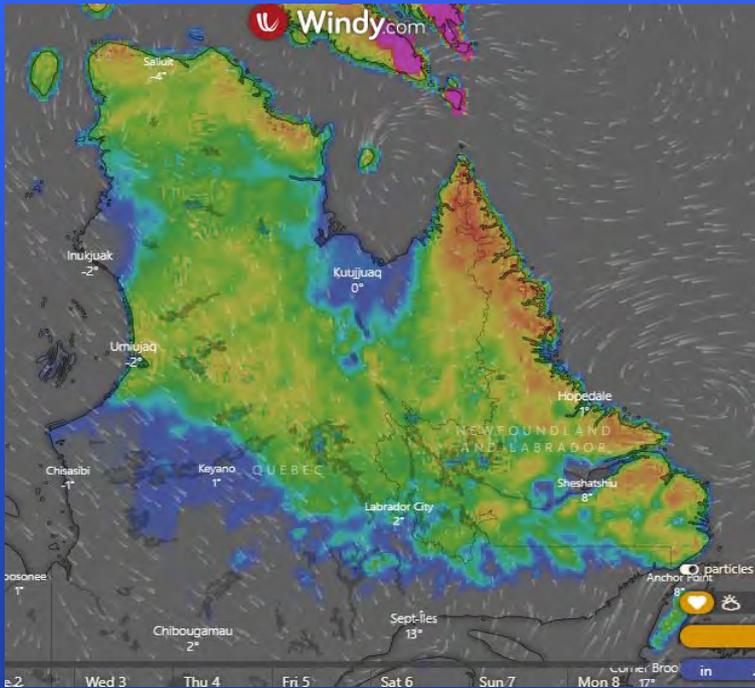
- **Breeding Pair Survey (mid-June)**
 - Not conducted due to COVID.
- **Pre-season Banding**
 - Not conducted due to COVID.
- **Model based on spring weather predicts below average production.**

AP Breeding Pairs

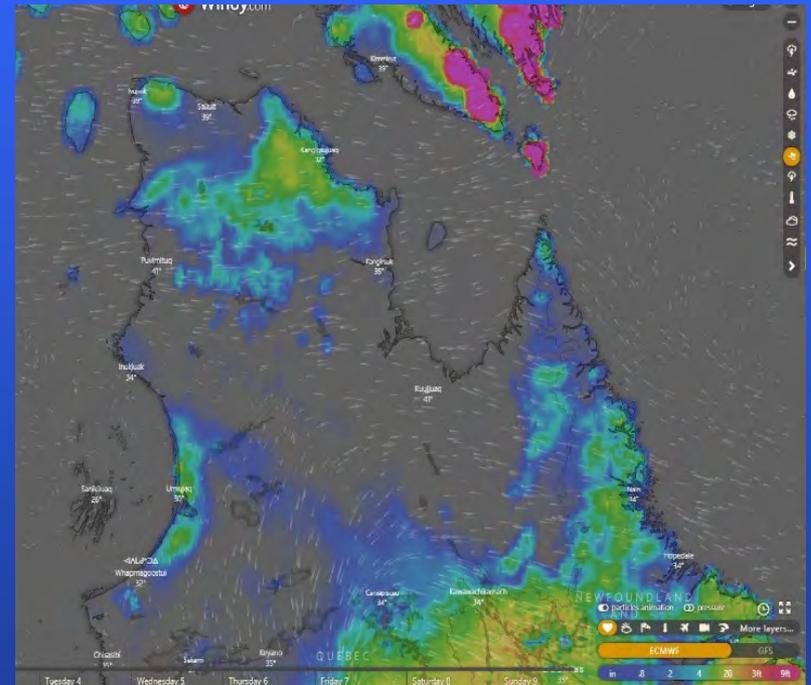


- = integrated population model prediction

Ungava Snow and Ice Conditions

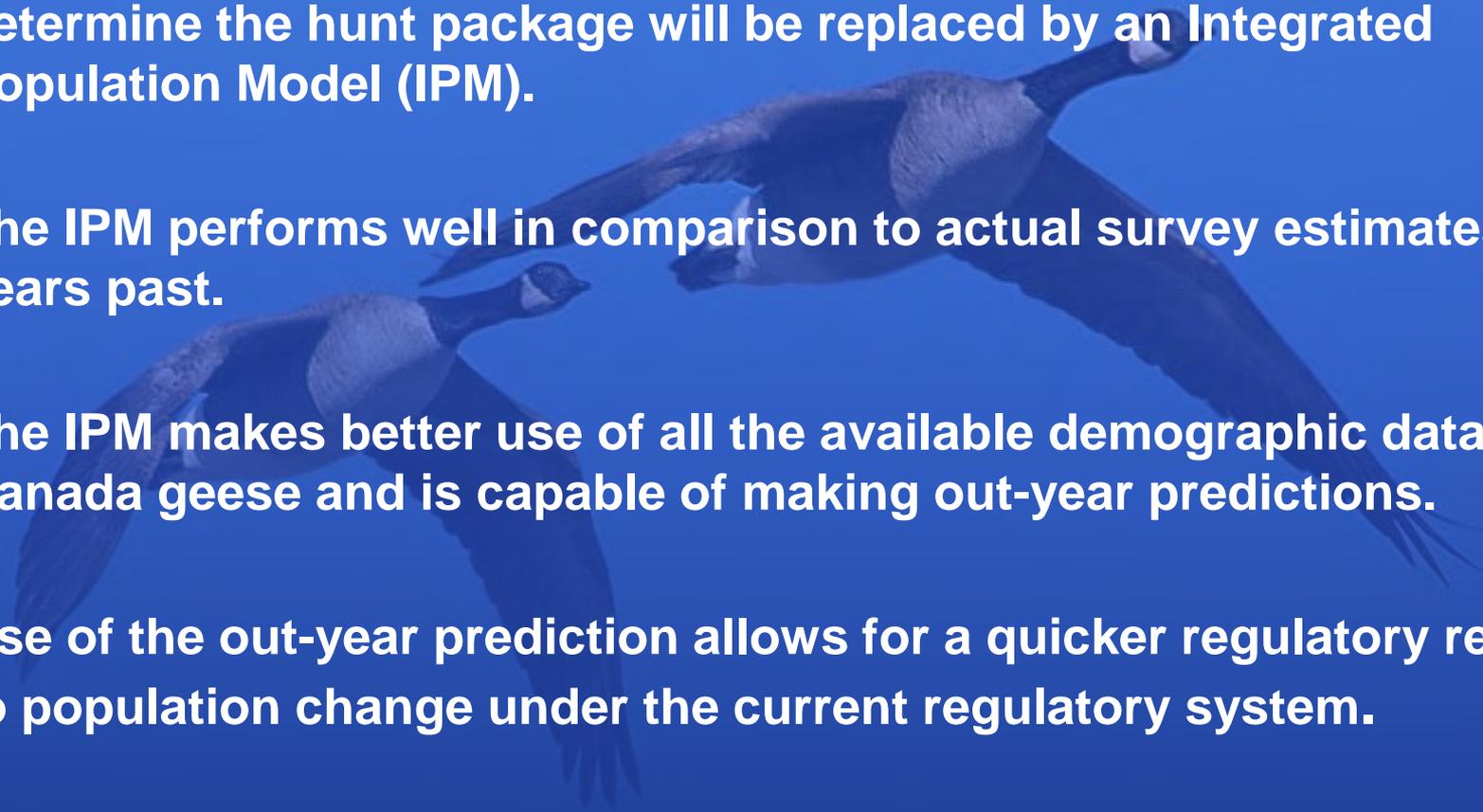


May 30, 2020



May 31, 2019

Changes in AP Management Strategies

- The current 3 year running average pair estimate currently used to determine the hunt package will be replaced by an Integrated Population Model (IPM).
 - The IPM performs well in comparison to actual survey estimates from years past.
 - The IPM makes better use of all the available demographic data on AP Canada geese and is capable of making out-year predictions.
 - Use of the out-year prediction allows for a quicker regulatory response to population change under the current regulatory system.
- 
- A photograph of two Canada geese in flight against a clear blue sky. The geese are shown from a low angle, with their wings spread wide, flying towards the right side of the frame. The lighting is bright, highlighting the texture of their feathers.

AP Pair Estimate and Hunting Implications

- IPM estimates 105,000 pairs for 2020 however this has no regulatory implication for hunting seasons.
- IPM estimate for 2021 is 110,000 pairs (2019 – 119,000, 2018 – 112,000 data from pair survey).
- Atlantic Flyway Council recommended remaining in the restrictive package (30 days) for 2021-22. The AFC further recommended all states have a one bird daily bag limit in their AP Canada goose hunt zones.
- Other significant changes made to harvest in the Atlantic Flyway.

AP Harvest Strategy

- **The Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section Canada Goose Committee is currently revising the harvest strategy with the last updates occurring in 2013.**
- **New thresholds are likely to be more conservative than current strategy. (ex. moderate package = 45/2 instead of 50/2) to meet target harvest rates developed by the IPM.**
- **Consensus that the restrictive package will require 30/1 framework for all states with AP Zones.**

**2021 WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION
ANNUAL SCHEDULE AND DRAFT MONTHLY AGENDA**

JANUARY 20, 2021

- Annual Election of the Chair and Vice Chair (Group)
- Proposed Migratory Game Bird Seasons and Bag Limits (Bill Harvey and Josh Homyack)
- 2021 Legislative Session Update (Paul Peditto)

FEBRUARY 17, 2021

- 2021 Legislative Session Update (Paul Peditto)

MARCH 17, 2021

- Migratory Game Bird Proposals – Commission’s Vote Required (Bill Harvey and Josh Homyack)
- Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee Report (Bill Harvey)
- 2021 Legislative Session Update (Paul Peditto)
- Call for Conservationist, Employee, and Farmer of the Year Nominations (Group Discussion)

APRIL 21, 2021

- 2021 Legislative Session Outcome (Paul Peditto)
- WAC Legislative Concepts Review (Group Discussion)

MAY 19, 2021- NO MEETING SCHEDULED**JUNE 16, 2021**

- Wildlife and Heritage Service FY19 and FY20 Budget Update (?)
- WHS Administration Update (?)

JULY 21, 2021 - NO MEETING SCHEDULED**AUGUST 18, 2021**

- Natural Heritage Program Update (Jonathan McKnight)
- Wildlife Diversity Advisory Committee (Jonathan McKnight)
- WHS Information and Education Program Update (Nancy Doran)

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021 – FIELD DAY OR BUSINESS MEETING OR NO MEETING**OCTOBER 20, 2021**

- WHS Regional Operations Program Update (Tim Larney)
- Waterfowl Population Update (Josh Homyack)
- Internal Bi-Annual Game Species Regulations Concepts (Karina Stonesifer)
- 2022 WAC Annual Schedule and Draft Monthly Agenda – WAC Review

NOVEMBER 17, 2021

- Presentation of 2020 Conservationist and Employee of the Year Award (Paul Peditto)
- WHS Game Program Update (Karina Stonesifer and staff)

DECEMBER 15, 2021 – NO MEETING SCHEDULED

2020 Bear Attack near Myersville, MD



- 53 yo woman attacked by a small bear (125 – 150 lbs) approximately ¼ mile north of her home on Rum Springs Rd., Myersville
- Attack happened shortly before 4PM on 9/21/2020
- Woman was walking her 2 german shepherd dogs on the rural road
- Local Fire Dept, WHS & NRP responded
- WHS maintained a trap in the area for 2 weeks

nwood

Thurmont

2020 Bear Attack
Rum Springs Rd

boro

Walk

2016 Bear Attack
Middletown

Clover Hill

© 2020 Google



Common Features of Non-Predatory Bear Attacks in North America

- Feeding
 - Bears that are accustomed to acquiring food from humans - usually intentional feeding
- Startle/Surprise
 - May include the presence of cubs
 - Outside a home (e.g. on porch, in trash, etc.)
 - Commonly occurs after dark
- Presence of Dogs
 - At home or in 'wild' situations - off-leash dogs especially
 - May incite a 'chase' reflex in the bear
 - Finally, media always portray the dog as a hero when in fact, it is usually a corroborative factor in the attack

Physical Human/Bear Encounters – How to React

- Always allow an escape route for the bear
- If the bear is unaware of your presence, back away
- If the bear is aware of your presence, back away and leave the area while talking in a calm voice and making yourself appear large
- If the bear makes contact, fight back with anything you have (stick, backpack, keys, etc.)