

## ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WILDLIFE & FRESHWATER FISH MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, February 28, 2017

Richardson & Robbins Building Auditorium

89 Kings Highway, Dover, Delaware

Phone 302-739-9912, FAX 302-739-6157

### ADVISORY COUNCIL

1. Edward A. Montague, Chair
2. Garrett Grier, Jr., Vice Chair
3. Raymond F. Burris
4. Neal Dukes
5. Robert C. Nichols (Absent)
6. Craig A. Karsnitz
7. Joe C. Johnson
8. Steven M. Kendus
9. Dale R. Scuse

### DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

1. Director David E. Saveikis
2. Rob Hossler
3. Capt. Nick Couch
4. Joe Rogerson
5. Justyn Foth
6. Craig Rhoads
7. Karen Kennedy

### PUBLIC

15 Visitors

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

#### **Agenda Item 1. Approval of Minutes (Chairman).**

A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to approve the January 31, 2017 meeting minutes as written.

#### **Agenda Item 2. Liberalized Black Duck Bag Limit (Rob Hossler).**

Rob Hossler, wildlife section administrator, gave a PowerPoint presentation on an opportunity to increase the daily bag of black ducks from one to two based on a recent decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Atlantic Flyway Council. Their decision was based on three developments: (1) the number of waterfowl hunters has declined with a corresponding decrease in harvest of black ducks, (2) improved biological data especially on black duck survival rates and (3) data from 2007 - 2016 indicating harvest has less of an impact on black duck survival than previously projected. A two bird bag limit would result in a projected 33% harvest increase in the flyway. Delaware's black duck season could therefore run for 60 days with a two bird bag limit. The last time Delaware had a two black duck bag limit was 1971.

#### **Agenda Item 3. Tundra Swan Hunting Proposal (Justyn Foth).**

In response to a member of the audience's request at the January Council meeting, Justyn Foth, Ph.D.,

waterfowl and gamebird biologist, gave a PowerPoint presentation on a possible tundra swan hunting season for Delaware. The Eastern Population Tundra Swan Management Plan implemented in 1982 set a population goal of 80,000 birds. In 1988, the plan was amended to include harvest based on population size, with further revisions in 1998 and 2007. The current 3-year average Eastern Population estimate of tundra swans is above 110,000 birds, allowing 12,000 permits to be issued among five states. In the Atlantic Flyway, only North Carolina and Virginia can currently harvest tundra swans. Any Delaware hunting season would occur as a three year experimental season as defined in the tundra swan management plan that allows a new hunt state to request issuance of permits up to 10% of its estimated wintering population based on an average of the state's last three years of the mid-winter survey data. Delaware's 3-year average for 2015 - 2017 is 311 birds, which could qualify Delaware to receive 31 permits proportionally from those permits currently issued to North Carolina and Virginia. Since the population of tundra swans continues to increase, Delaware will expand its mid-winter survey routes to areas within Delaware that were not historically surveyed. This could potentially increase our 3-year average estimate of wintering tundra swans and allow Delaware the opportunity to request more permits in future years. The earliest Delaware would be eligible for tundra swan hunting permits is the 2018/2019 hunting season.

A motion was made by Councilman Scuse and seconded by Councilman Karsnitz for the Division to move forward with the tundra swan hunting proposal. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Agenda Item 4. Proposed Migratory Game Bird Seasons (Rob Hossler).**

Rob Hossler, wildlife section administrator, provided Delaware's **proposed** 2017/2018 migratory game bird season dates. The proposed draft seasons are based on the following criteria: (1) within **established** Federal guidelines for splits and season dates, (2) maximizing the number of Saturdays and holidays included within the season dates, (3) overlapping duck and goose seasons to extent possible, (4) minimizing conflicts with November deer shotgun season as well as other firearms deer seasons and (5) extend season dates as late as possible. The proposed dates with **highlighted** changes from last year are as follows:

#### **2017 – 2018 Proposed Migratory Game Bird Seasons for Delaware**

##### **Dove**

Sept. 1 – Sept. 30 (30 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Oct. 17 – Oct. 21 (5 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Nov. 20 – Jan. 13 (55 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 15

##### **Resident Canada Geese**

Sept. 1 – Sept. 25 (25 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
\*No liberal hunting options.\*  
Limit: 15

##### **Early Teal**

Sept. 8 – Sept. 26 (16 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Teal season will be open all day in limited geographic areas. These areas are coastal areas east of Routes 13, 113/113A & 1 from south of the C&D Canal to Lewes.  
Limit: 6

##### **Ducks**

Oct. 27 – Nov. 7 (10 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Nov. 20 – Nov. 25 (6 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Dec. 8 – Jan. 27 (44 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 6 (except coots & mergansers), which may include no more than **2 black ducks**; 4 mallards of which no more than 2 may be hens; **1 pintail**; 2 canvasback; 3 wood ducks; 2 redheads; 2 scaup; 1 mottled duck; 1 fulvous whistling duck; 4 scoters; 4 eiders; and 4 long-tailed ducks. The season on harlequin ducks remains closed.

##### **Youth Hunt**

Oct. 21 and Feb. 10 ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Bag may include ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, Canada geese, snow geese and brant. Standard limits apply.

##### **Canada Geese (Migratory)**

Nov. 20 – Nov. 25 (6 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Dec. 15 – Feb. 3 (44 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 2

##### **Snow Goose**

**Oct. 10 – Feb. 10** (107 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 25 - No possession limit.  
\*Bombay Hook - No dates given yet.\*

##### **Conservation Order**

**Feb. 12 – Apr. 13** ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset  
Unplugged shotguns and electronic calls may be used to harvest snow geese  
Limit and possession: None.

##### **Brant**

**Nov. 20 – Jan. 27 (60 days)** ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 2

##### **Coots & Mergansers**

Same season dates and shooting hours as ducks  
Coots – Limit: 15  
Mergansers – Limit: 5, of which no more than 2 may be hooded.

##### **Rails, Gallinules and Moorhens**

###### **King, Clapper**

Sept. 1 – Nov. 9 (70 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 10

###### **Sora, Virginia**

Sept. 1 – Nov. 9 (70 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 25

###### **Gallinules, Moorhens**

Sept. 1 – Nov. 9 (70 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 15

##### **Woodcock**

Nov. 20 – Dec. 2 (13 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Dec. 13 – Jan. 13 (32 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 3

##### **Snipe**

Sept. 19 – Dec. 2 (75 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Dec. 13 – Jan. 13 (32 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 8

##### **Sea Ducks**

Nov. 20 – Jan. 27 (60 days) ½ hour before sunrise to sunset  
Limit: 5, which may not exceed 4 scoters, 4 eiders or 4 long-tailed ducks. The season on harlequin ducks remains closed.  
Season dates apply to the Special Sea Duck Area where ducks may be taken not less than 800 yards seaward of Delaware Bay shore between Port Mahon/Elbow Cross

Navigation Light and the Atlantic Ocean at the Delaware-Maryland line.

### Audience Member Proposal

A member of the audience proposed the following season for Brant: Dec. 2 – Jan. 31.

A handout of the base waterfowl season dates was provided to the Council members and the audience.

The audience made suggestions on simple inclusions for the upcoming hunting guide related to waterfowl hunting. A suggestion made by a non-resident hunter to open seasons on Thursdays to accommodate the three day non-resident hunting license was also discussed.

### **Agenda Item 5. Bylaw Changes – Meeting Dates and Purposes (Council).**

The Council discussed changing their bylaws to remove the mid-August meeting date because it is no longer needed since the federal process for setting waterfowl season dates has changed and therefore the August meeting could alternately occur on the last Tuesday of the month.

A motion was made by Councilman Kendus and seconded by Councilman Scuse to change the Council's Operating By-laws, Article V Council Business, Section 5.1 Meetings. The first sentence should read as follows: The meetings of this Council shall be the last Tuesday of each month. The remainder of the sentence should be deleted. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 6. Director Update (David E. Saveikis).**

Director Saveikis stated that the Division's most recent aerial waterfowl counts have been posted on the Division's website as well as all previous waterfowl counts.

Director Saveikis announced that both Councilman Scuse and Councilman Grier have agreed to be judges at the Division's annual waterfowl and trout stamp contests, respectively to be held on Saturday, April 8 at Owens Station.

Director Saveikis announced that a record 14,742 deer were harvested during the 2016/2017 hunting season, exceeding the previous record harvest by 61 deer. He also announced that 1,170 deer were harvested on the five specified Sundays open to deer hunting.

Director Saveikis reported that the Delaware Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus is currently working on new legislation to eliminate ethanol for boats and to allow use of air bows during deer shotgun seasons.

Director Saveikis provided Council members with the new 2017 Fishing Guide and rulers.

Chairman Montague complimented Rob Hossler and Justyn Foth on very well done presentations.

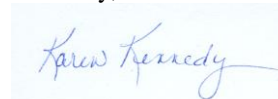
**PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS WILL BEGIN AT 7:00 PM**

### **AGENDA FOR THE 3/28/2017 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

1. Approval of Minutes (Chairman).
2. Migratory Game Bird Seasons Review and Recommendations (Rob Hossler).
3. Deer Harvest Update (Emily Boyd).
4. Director Update (David E. Saveikis).

There being no further business, a motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:26 PM.

Sincerely,



Karen Kennedy  
Recording Secretary