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15 MINUTES

Last week I had the opportunity to sit down with MDC Director Jason Sumners, TJ Graven, Legislative Liaison, Travis McClain, Law Enforcement and Laura Conlee Deputy Director at the request of Craig Sondker of MFOR as a representative of the Waterfowl hunters of MFOR in Missouri.

The conversation with them, for the most part, was good. They were all interested and opened to hear what we had to say. Craig put forward several points of concern and suggested changes which I only post some of those items below:

Deer — One non-resident public land tag for every 400 acres of public huntable land in a particular county or zone. Implement a buck restriction by requiring the harvest of at least one doe before harvesting a buck. Exempt youth under the age of 16 from any buck restrictions.

Turkey — Do not expand to all day hunting on public lands. Stop Fall hunting all together or at a minimum, a bearded bird only during the Fall season. Have hunters control predators. Have open season year round for predators such as Raccoon, Skunk, Opossum and Coyote.

Waterfowl — All areas of MDC waterfowl management is lacking, with the exception of Grand Pass. Pumps have been dysfunctional. Removal of the draw system for the River Blinds on the Mississippi River is a slap to the face to Missouri sportsman, MDC could turn this into a revenue making event instead of taking it entirely away and have it as before with an in person draw.

Above were some of the comments Craig brought forward to the meeting. When I was informed of this meeting there was several ideas that I wanted to present to Jason but decided to see what the general populace of Missouri waterfowlers had to say and I posted this question, which I also asked you members in the email distribution of last month's newsletter, which is also the basis of the title of this story:

If you had 15 minutes to sit down with Jason Sumners, MDC Director, to discuss waterfowl hunting in the conservation areas, what would be the one question you would ask or discuss?

This question was asked on a Missouri Waterfowl hunters Facebook group which are mainly normal, if you can call us that, run of the mill hunters. The responses, though some off key, were varied and some very good ideas and questions. The entire listing of what I presented to Jason, along with your responses and ones included are in this newsletter. As I stated before, the conversation was good, he took several notes, I even had an email conversation after the meeting with him, again, all positive comments. Hopefully something good will come of it and some of the ideas Craig and myself put forward will be considered and implemented.

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MEMBERS MEETING

This month's members meeting we will be having a movie night, if I can get the dvd player to work, for those who come two drink tickets will be provided for beer or soft drinks, so come on out and enjoy the evening!

HOLIDAY PARTY UPDATE

If you missed our holiday party last month you missed a really good time had by all. A few pics I took just before everybody showed up.

Jerry being Jerry and the ever popular Santa Suit.



Enjoying the evening



Enjoying each others company



FUND RAISER UPDATE

After all of the bills were paid we had a very successful fund raiser, raising over \$300 to add back to the coffers. Thanks for your support! The winning ticket of the meat raffle went to Willie Hate who is an associate of one of the workers at Borgett's Bar & Grill

BOARD ELECTIONS

WE ARE STILL IN NEED OF A MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN.

Ever had or thought there was a problem with the association? Ever complained about one thing or another on why this association does this or that and should do it this way? Ever thought about becoming a solution to these problems instead of just complaining about them?

MVDHA BOARD

- President:** Ken Liebel
- First V. Pres.:** Scott Thoele
- Fin. Secretary:** Rob Mueller
- Rec. Secretary:** Bill Hilgeman
- Correspondence Secretary:** Bill Hilgeman
- Membership Chairman:** Vacant
- Board of Directors:**
- Chairman of the Board** Jerry Mercurio
- Asst Chairman of the Board** Art Wende
- Directors:** Brad Douglass, Jerry Mercurio Jr., James Edwards, Nick Witte, Gary Hirsch



Here is your chance! There will be board member elections. Step up now and put your name in the hat. So if you are interested in becoming a board member, or if you have questions on becoming a board member, you can ask any board member, talk to Jerry, email your questions or interest to mvdha@mvdha.com or mail them to the address on the back of this newsletter and they will be forward to Jerry. We currently have our Membership position vacant and need it filled. If you want to make a change, here is your chance.

TROUT TRIP UPDATE

MVDHA is planning on our annual Trout Trip this coming year. The dates will be 13 March 2026 through 15 March 2026. Coming home on the 15th. We will be staying at Trout Hollow Lodge at Taneycomo as we did last year. The address for Trout Hollow Lodge is: 1500 Acacia Club Rd, Hollister, MO 65672. To reserve your room call Trout Hollow at 417- 334- 2332 and tell them you are part of MVDHA or online at <https://trouthollow.com/>

Reserve your room now so you can get the room you want. If something comes up that you have to cancel, you have two weeks before the trip to cancel without any penalties.

Don't forget that if you need to reserve a boat or a slip to set that up also. If you are a military veteran they also give discounts for that too. If you have never gone to one of our annual fishing trips to Taneycomo you are really missing out on one of the best trips or events that we do. It is always a great trip and Trout Hollow is one of the best areas to go to down there.

One note to mention, if you bring any food to be cooked at the cook-out, please make sure it is totally thawed out so there are no issues when it is deep fried. Hopefully we will see you there!

ANNUAL DUES

Your annual membership dues are now due. At the next Board meeting we will be going over our membership. Please consider renewing your membership dues of \$25. If you have not paid your dues yet, you can bring your money to the next members meeting or mail your check to the address on the back.

DU BANQUET

The St. Charles Chapter of Ducks Unlimited is having their 50th annual Banquet on:

Saturday, February 28, 2026 at 5:30 PM.

It will again be at the Pezold Banquet Center located off Highway N in Cottleville.

Only a limited number of tickets are available and seating is by tables of 8. We have some great items in the auctions and raffles including 17 firearms this year. Please order your tickets early as the Event has sold out the past few years.

No tickets will be available at the door the day of the Event.

Event prices:

Single - \$60.00 (includes a membership)

Couples - \$110.00 (includes a membership)

Greenwing (17 & under) - \$35.00

Sponsor Table (8 persons) - \$550.00

Tier I Table - \$950.00 (seating for 8, Bronze Sponsorship, Sportsman's Banner selection)

Tier II Table - \$1250.00 (seating for 8, Bronze Sponsorship, Great Guns & Gear Banner selection)

Please go to the Ducks Unlimited website (<https://www.ducks.org/events>) and search under "Events" in Missouri using your Zip code to get tickets if the link below does not work:

Find a DU Event Near You | Ducks Unlimited

If you are unable to attend the Event please consider renewing or becoming a member of Ducks Unlimited by making a \$35.00 donation to help our fundraising effort which includes the national Ducks Unlimited magazine. You can do that at the website (<https://www.ducks.org/>).

Hope you can attend for a fun evening and to help raise money for the Ducks!

DELTA BANQUET

Delta Waterfowl Confluence Chapter

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Doors Open: 6:00 PM | Dinner: 7:00 PM

The Christy | 9000 Veterans Memorial Pkwy | O'Fallon, MO 63366

Ticket Options:

Youth Ticket - \$35

Single Ticket - \$80

Couples Ticket - \$150

Silver Table - \$600

Includes: 8 Event Tickets, 8 Delta hats, 8 Friends of Delta Memberships, 4 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, and Advertising at Event and on Social Media.

Gold Table - \$1,000

8 Event Tickets, Preferred Seating, 8 Delta hats, 1 \$100 Delta Waterfowl Membership Sponsor, 7 Friends of Delta Memberships, 8 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, Advertising at Event and on Social Media, and Ability to Display Banner or Table Cloth.

Sponsor Gift - Swamp Gear pack 20 Mag Bag Cooler

Platinum Table - \$2,500

8 Event Tickets, Preferred Seating, 8 Delta hats, 1 \$100 Delta Waterfowl Membership Sponsor, 7 Friends of Delta Memberships, 16 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, Advertising at Event and on Social Media, and Ability to Display Banner or Table Cloth.

Sponsor Gift - Savage Axis 30-06

For more information, please contact: Jameson Perkins at (314) 707-9543 | perkinsjameson27@gmail.com

15 MINUTES

If you had 15 minutes to sit down with Jason Sumners, MDC Director, to discuss waterfowl hunting in the conservation areas, what would be the one question you would ask or discuss? The responses I received were varied, some were interesting, some I know in the back of my head would have been shot down almost immediately but they were all given to Jason for consideration:

Water levels in the conservation areas had several responses.

Hunters would like to have pools filled to hunt the same number of parties at the beginning of the season as you do at the end of the season with exception of

Duck Creek or areas with flooded timber. They do understand that the practice of slowly raising the water levels throughout the year but this diminishes the number of parties that can go out.

Have pumps readily available in case one goes down. This appears to be an ongoing issue with pumps in the conservation areas of when a pump goes down. IE Eagle Bluffs.

Bring back the river blinds

Safety was the biggest reason for this, along with a long and standing heritage of hunting the river.

Hunters are going to try and hunt the Mississippi in any size boat.

Hunting from a stable platform is much safer.

Heritage which has been handed down for years.

The draw process, the building of the blinds, the anticipation of the years to come. I could go on and on.

Quick Draw Modifications

Various responses about quick draw

Get rid of it entirely (Not very likely).

Only have Quick Draw for pre-season and give out two reservations. During the season quick draw will not be available and only be poor man drawing

Put a validation into the existing application of when hunters are entering for quick draw that they are the actual hunter. I have seen personally where a hunter will have non waterfowlers, family members or hunters that do not hunt public MDC areas to provide the hunter with their conservation number and birth date in order to game the system making it unfair for the average hunter. With a

validation, sending the hunter an email with a validation number to enter, would prevent this, mostly.

Hunting areas

Add conservation areas in the Southwest region for duck hunting, very few in that area.

Conservation areas upkeep, IE Columbia Bottoms, Marais Temp Claire.

Either maintain them are sell them. Have you seen Columbia Bottoms?

Add more hunting areas for the public

When taking areas away from hunting, for example Columbia Bottoms was managed for waterfowl and it is no longer, add an additional hunting areas.

In your smaller conservation areas, have a small marsh management program to allow hunting in order to spread out pressure from the quick draw areas. Cooey Lake, Truman lake, Busch to name a few areas to consider.

Change the refuge areas and the hunt areas every five years to break up waterfowl patterning.

Manage areas for hunters not Agriculture profits

Need more flooded corn.

Complete infrastructure projects and maintenance of areas in a timely manner within 3 to 5 years instead of no ending.

Continue transparency on projects

The public does not know what is going on with ongoing projects or timelines.

Manage all areas similar to the more popular ones

Do not remove existing blinds in the areas, it is difficult for older

folks or hunters with kids to get them out to introduce them to waterfowl hunting.

Morning Draw at the Conservation Areas

Have you personally attended a morning draw, to see the anticipation of the hunters, wondering if they will get a low enough pill to be able to hunt that day, to listen to the hunters of their chatter of successful hunts or failures of the past. To see how the MDC employees treat or respect the hunters. If you have not, I highly recommend it.

Implement nonresident fee for morning draws, restrict nonresident hunting in conservation areas.

Standardize on one draw process and standardize on the hotline information. Getting mixed information from the different conservation areas on where to get info and then that info is not kept up to date.

Waterfowl Zones

Waterfowl zones need to be geographical and common sense, not based on random whims. Only have two zones with I70 as the split line.

Plans, Goals and Projections

What are your short term, mid-range and long term projections for the intensively managed multiple wetland areas?

What should waterfowl hunters that depend on these areas expect from the department as we experience these short, mid and long term plans?

NATIONAL WILDLIFE

From Delta

January 14, 2026

Delta Waterfowl Applauds Secretary Burgum’s Order on Increased Access at National Wildlife Refuges

Action establishes an “open unless closed” stance for hunting and fishing

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA — Doug Burgum, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, released Secretarial Order 3447 on Tuesday, a measure to significantly enhance hunting and fishing opportunities on the 573 national wildlife refuges throughout the United States.

The order adopts an “open unless closed” policy toward creating new hunting opportunities on refuges.

The order contains language similar to the 2019 Dingell Act, which states real and practicable reasons must be shown for closures to hunting and recreational shooting on Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service Lands.

While Burgum’s order should create significant and meaningful access improvements for duck hunters across the National Wildlife Refuge System, nothing in the order supersedes inviolate sanctuary requirements of migratory bird refuges.

Jason Tharpe, Delta’s chief executive officer, applauded the news Tuesday during his testimony before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries during a special oversight hearing titled, “Hunting and Fishing Access in the Great American Outdoors.”

“We greatly appreciate Secretary Burgum and USFWS Director Brian Nesvik’s continued commitment to enhancing and expanding access to waterfowl hunting on our National Wildlife Refuges and other public lands and waters,” Tharpe said. “The Refuge System is the duck hunter’s greatest lega-

cy asset. We welcome the Secretary’s commitment and stand ready to work to see his vision positively impact these incredibly important habitats for both waterfowl and waterfowl hunters.” During his Senate confirmation hearing in March 2025, Nesvik stated that the Refuge system would be one of his highest priorities, a position he reaffirmed Tuesday during the House Subcommittee hearing.

Burgum’s Secretarial Order is a continuance of President Trump’s “Making America Beautiful Again Initiative.”

“We are eager to harness this good news from the Administration to translate their vision for new, incremental hunting opportunities for waterfowl hunters,” said John Devney, Delta’s chief policy officer. “Delta has long understood that access and opportunity are at the forefront of the needs of duck hunters. We have consistently prioritized refuge access through the annual USFWS ‘Hunt Fish Rule’ for the past decade. We look forward to working with the USFWS not only to enhance hunting access as the order outlines, but to increase infrastructure investments and habitat management.”

SEASONS

2025-2026 WATERFOWL HUNTING

Light Goose Conservation

Season: Feb. 7 — April 30, 2026

Up Coming Events

Feb 11 : Movie Night

Mar 11 : Decoy Carving

General Information

This newsletter is distributed to our active members. For non-active members check the website for the current newsletter. We have our general meeting the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM and our Board of Directors' Meeting every fourth Monday at 7 PM. Members meetings are held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. Board Meetings are also held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. In case of bad weather call Ken Liebel at 314-822-8030 or Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548.

Visit YOUR web site at <https://mvdha.com> to get the most recent news, events and updates. There you will find this newsletter and other helpful information concerning conservation and the great outdoors that we love. If you would like to be added to the email listing of important news and updates you can do that through the web site through the contact us link, fill out the form and make sure you add your email address.

Any comments or suggestions concerning the newsletter or the website can be sent to mvdha@mvdha.com. I am always looking forwards to suggestions concerning content and what you would like to see or be presented in these publications.

Next members meeting: February 11, 2026

Next Board Meeting: February 23, 2026

Members are invited to the Board Meeting

Member's meeting start at 7:30, Board meeting starts at 7:00

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSN. INC.

"A Nonprofit Association of, by, and for the Duck Hunters"

"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

P.O. BOX 6, VALLEY PARK, MO 63088

