



JUNE 3, 2024

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SUCKER PUNCHED

Trying to decide on what to write about this month of Widgeon, I decided to put him up on the proverbial shelf, which ironically is where he is at, but I digress, to write about a different subject that has been nagging at me since 24 May, the date where history was made in Missouri and for waterfowling on the Mississippi.

In my 50+ years of waterfowling in this country I have mostly hunted on public grounds. From California, Michigan, South and North Carolina, Illinois to Missouri I have had a high respect for the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) on how they have balanced the great outdoor opportunities for hunters, bird watchers and environmentalists alike. This great state of ours imposed a tax many years ago to ensure our great state's wildlife, environment and heritage will be managed and maintained for future generations to enjoy and appreciate. I no longer feel that way. On 24 May the decision that the MDC commissioners and the department decided to take away the ability to have the blind draw on the Mississippi river and to be able to build permanent blinds was like a sucker punch to me.

The Commissioners meeting was being streamed live and I watched it to hear firsthand. If you recall in our March meeting we had a huge turnout to discuss this very item. Craig Sondker led the campaign on this issue to get the word out of what was happening. He was able to get over 1000 inputs to the MDC to tell them that Missourians disagreed with this proposal and about only 40 agreed with this idea.

During the meeting, three individuals gave arguments for and against this proposal, Craig was one of them who was against this proposal who I applaud, only one person was for this proposal. After the arguments, one commissioner wanted to go straight to vote without any discussion about this, until another stated this warranted some discussion. When that discussion was completed, which in my mind was very uneducated and showed me that our very own commission has no clue on what it is to be a waterfowler on public lands, decided to accept this proposal even though there were over 1000 inputs on people against this proposal, I was dumbfounded.

After the meeting I began to think about this to figure out why MDC even came up with this proposal. Granted, the majority of us waterfowlers are getting old and cannot build these blinds out on the Mississippi like we were able to in our younger days, this effort is a younger man's work. However, recently Illinois had their blind drawing and after seeing pictures of long lines of young men looking forward to the opportunity of being able to draw, my thought process was misguided. (Continued on Page 5)

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MEMBERS MEETING

The June meeting will take place on 11 June BETWEEN 5 AND 5:30 PM out at Jay Henges. We are fortunate to be able to have the Trap Night again this year on Tuesday, June 11th at Jay Henges Conservation Area. The scenario is the same as last year. The MDC will furnish the clay targets while members need to bring their own ammo (size 7 1/2 or smaller lead shot). MVDHA will furnish hot dogs, chips, and water for members and their significant other. Plan on arriving BETWEEN 5 AND 5:30 pm to enjoy a dog and listen to the safety rules. We should get in a good two to three rounds of shooting before darkness. While there, please tell the MDC staff how much we enjoy this event.

BILL HILGEMAN

Bill had a stroke this past month and is doing quite well after that recent incident with all the health issues he has been having, but when investigating his stroke during x-rays they found out he has a broken neck! This was received when he had his ATV accident. He is now wearing a neck brace and doing well enough to take a cruise to Alaska with family!

MAY MEMBERS MEETING

If you missed Dr. Brian Reiter very informative talk about taking care of your waterfowl dog you missed a great opportunity to ask a fellow waterfowler what you need to look for in regards to your dog.

Some of the things to bring out that he mentioned if you have a waterfowl dog.

- A Vet needs to know your dog is a waterfowl dog, it will lead the Vet to the correct treatment and shots the dog needs.
- Bordetella vaccine or Kennel Cough vaccine is not just for

dogs going into the kennel but for dogs who get around other dogs.

- Is your dog constantly licking their feet or get ear infections? You might want your Vet to look into allergies and the Vet might recommend Apoquel which is an allergy vaccination.
- Hepatitis vaccination. Granted, your dog gets this vaccination when they are about six weeks old but your dog is swimming in some of the most awful water imaginable and might need boosters, your Vet should know this.
- First Aid kit. One thing he brought up to me which was interesting was wound treatment. In the case of lacerations, in your first aid kit you should have at least two items for lacerations. One, some sort of wound cleaning solution to get all the dirt and bacteria out of the wound and two, a wound stapler to close the laceration, which you can get from Amazon for under \$10.
- One thing he did state was to not put any triple anti bacteria ointment on the wound, just keep it clean and let nature take its course. A dog will lick off the ointment and it could be harmful to the animal.

FAMILY FUN

We are planning for a family fun day out at the Perry Community Lake in Perry County on 29 June. Come when you want to, enjoy the great outdoors with your family, kids, grandkids and friends! Your MVDHA will provide some easy up shelters, hotdogs, chips and water. We are planning on eating at noon. So bring your lawn chairs, any other beverages (NO ALCHOHOL), fishing poles, bait etc. to enjoy a wonderful day!

MVDHA BOARD

- President:** Ken Liebel
- First V. Pres.:** Scott Thoele
- Fin. Secretary:** Rob Mueller
- Rec. Secretary:** Bill Hilgeman
- Correspondence Secretary:** Bill Hilgeman
- Membership Chairman:** Erik Liebel
- 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



The lake has great banks from fishing from but if you want to bring a boat you can! There are a couple of ramps to be used but it is a no wake lake, but a boat is really not needed. This lake is great for kids to catch lots of fish, it will be great fun for them! Make sure you bring mosquito spray and sunscreen since the bugs will be out, along with tics! There is also an archery range nearby with tree stand targets to practice for the upcoming season. From the MDC site: Perry County Community Lake is located about two miles west of Perryville and can be accessed from Route T and from the Interstate 55 west outer road. The Conservation Department, in cooperation with the citizens of Perry County who passed a bond issue to purchase 310 acres from private landowners to create the public area, developed the site and constructed a 103-acre impoundment, which was opened to fishing in 1971. The area now includes two access roads, four parking lots, two boat launching ramps, a fishing access trail for bank anglers, and two small picnic areas. The area also features a disabled accessible fishing pier, where

fish cover structures have been placed to improve fish habitat. Disabled-accessible restrooms are located near the fishing pier.

2024 FUND RAISER



Our coffers are running low and we need to raise money. For a fund raiser this year, Kenny Liebel has created a custom made hunting knife.

- Made out of 496 Staret Tool Steel



- 5 to 7 inch blade length
- The blade will be buffed out to mirror finish
- It will have a Brass Hilt
- Laminated handle made out of wood that is similar to golf driver handles



- Leather Sheath that will is hand stitched
- The value of the knife is about \$600.00

There will only be 200 tickets and the cost is only \$5 a ticket, so your odds of winning this beautiful knife are really great!!

Excellent job Kenny! Very nicely done and thanks!

See Jerry or Kenny for tickets.

JULY OCT MEETINGS

We are looking for ideas for our July and October members meetings. If you have any ideas, interests or topics to be discussed you can either email or tell one of your board members of what you would like. No idea is totally out of the question. So lets hear your ideas of what you would like to see or hear at YOUR MVDHA meetings!

COLUMBIA BOTTOMS

MDC recently bought 100 plus acres adjacent to Columbia Bottoms. With the advent of Columbia Bottoms being taken off of the managed waterfowl areas and being turned over to an open waterfowling area we were wondering why this occurred and the costs, after all, this is your tax dollars at work. Tony Wolf put in a freedom of information request to MDC regarding this purchase and after a long time of messages from MDC stating they are working on it finally got a response which is below, along with the request :

The Missouri Department of Conservation received a public records request from you on March 25, 2024. Your request mentioned:

According to Gateway Greenway, they have said the 100 plus acres adjacent to Columbia Bottom has been purchased by MDC.

Please provide purchase price, fees, and all agreements that are part of the sale such as right of ways for future trails, etc granted to seller.

The Missouri Department of Conservation has reviewed its files and have located the infor-

mation you requested. Please see below.

Purchase price - \$695,000.00

Closing fees - \$1,304.12

There were no agreements between the parties regarding future use of the property.

For questions or additional information, please reply to this email.

Sincerely,

Custodian of Records

Missouri Department of Conservation

573-751-4115

Thanks Tony for this and it still begs the question of what is MDC going to do with this land.

USFWS CHANGES

From Outdoor Life website By Andrew McKean which can be read in its entirety at:

<https://www.outdoorlife.com/conservation/wildlife-refuge-predator-control-rule/>

Proposed Rule Could Curb Predator Control and Planting Grains for Waterfowl in Refuges. Hunting Orgs Now Wonder, Is USFWS Turning Against Duck Hunters?

The proposed regulations are a step toward minimizing the critical role hunters have played in establishing and maintaining refuges across the country

In the pantheon of federal agencies, where acronyms massacre clarity and where layers of bureaucracy disguise intent, BIDEH seems especially sleepy and unremarkable.

Those letters stand for Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health of the National Wildlife Refuge System, but what they represent is anything

but sleepy. The federal rules, proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have whipped hook-and-bullet conservation groups into a froth during the past weeks. That's because, depending on how you interpret the application of BIDEH to the nation's nearly 600 national wildlife refuges, it's a first step to minimizing the role of hunters on these public properties.

But for the federal wildlife managers who oversee refuges, the blowback to BIDEH's intent is itself surprising, because they claim it simply emphasizes management tools that have guided the refuge system for decades but which are being revisited in the context of climate change and human-caused habitat stress. Besides, they say, the goals of BIDEH should be widely shared by groups committed to healthy wildlife habitat since federal refuges are specifically managed for wildlife above all other purposes.

If BIDEH is a loose concept that most conservationists can support, a set of specific regulations being proposed by the USFWS is worrisome to organizations and their members who have deep connections to federal refuges in general — and in particular to those that play a critical role in producing waterfowl and sustaining their migration. Refuge practices that would be curtailed under the draft rule include most predator hunting and trapping, traditional agricultural activities, use of genetically modified organisms, and mosquito control.

The BIDEH rule was proposed in February to little fanfare, but soon caught the attention of conservation groups and Congress's House Natural Resources Committee, whose Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries held

an oversight hearing last month in which the underlying rationale for the rule was hotly questioned. The hearing's title, "The National Wildlife Refuge System at Risk: Impacts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Proposed BIDEH Rule" gets at the tenor of the topic.

Ranking members of the committee blasted the USFWS's draft rules as a "drastic and dramatic change" to refuge management. Subcommittee Chair Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-Ore.) noted that the rules create a default position "prohibiting the use of management tools essential to protect the use of our refuge system," including "normal and historical" agricultural practices and native predator control that puts "at risk the very purpose of individual refuges." Bentz' Oregon congressional district includes Lower Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt as the nation's first waterfowl refuge.

The Service, for its part, says the proposal "will support conservation throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System and equip wildlife refuge managers with a framework to better tackle the dual threats of climate change and biodiversity loss."

Last week a group of 29 conservation and sportsmen's organizations, including Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the NRA, Ducks Unlimited, and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, signed a letter to the Service urging "rescission of the BIDEH draft policy and manual chapter to initiate a new, more thoughtful, inclusive discussion about the management objectives and conservation challenges" of the refuge system.

Why Hunting Groups Oppose the Rule

What's so incendiary about the USFWS's proposed rules, and why is it bothering traditional conservation groups so deeply?

Partly, it's because of the way the rules are framed. While another land-management agency in the Department of Interior, the Bureau of Land Management, says in its recent proposed rules that most recreational activities are allowed unless explicitly prohibited, the USFWS refuge rule casts blanket prohibitions that allows specific activities only if they are explicitly approved. That's a major shift in traditional uses on the federal properties, say critics.

A piece of national wildlife refuge that was purchased with funds from the duck stamp.

A sign posted at a national wildlife refuge that reads "Waterfowl production area ... Purchased with Duck Stamp Dollars." Photo by USFWS

But a deeper angst among hunters and anglers is that the rules could change their relationship with refuges that, in many cases, were purchased with funds contributed by duck hunters. The Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp, more commonly known as the federal Duck Stamp, was created in the 1930s to establish a funding mechanism that could be used to purchase critical migratory-bird habitat. According to the USFWS's own narrative, "ninety-eight cents of every duck stamp dollar goes directly into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to purchase or lease wetlands and wildlife habitat for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System."

Of the 580 federal wildlife refuges, more than 300 were purchased in full or partially with Duck Stamp funds and were established specifically for conservation of migratory birds, which includes shorebirds as well as waterfowl. Other refuges, especially those in central California's rice-growing region, were established to minimize crop depredation by waterfowl by setting aside areas specifically for birds. On some of these refuges, which include conservation easements on private property, cooperative agricultural practices are an established management activity. Those practices could be prohibited or curtailed under BIDEH.

Please go to Outdoor Life to finish reading the entire article.

CHANGE TO FEDERAL DUCK STAMP

Per the Federal Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023, the Federal Duck Stamp has been converted to a digital version and hunters are no longer required to carry a paper copy. Hunters must have a digital version in their possession.

SUCKER PUNCH CONT.

I remember when Missouri had their in person blind draws where I participated, it was an exciting event, one where I had never had the opportunity to have, the ability to pick a blind or build one on the fabled Mississippi river! The heart of the Central fly way, a duck hunters dream! A person goes through a complete set of thought processes for this great event, making your pick list, figuring out who or what group to join, what design your blind will be. Will a blind even exist at the location you decide upon, what will that blind need to get it up to speed? The night before the blind draw you barely slept, it was almost like you were a kid again the night before

Christmas. On the day of the draw you get up early to arrive at the draw on time and to pick your favorite spot. You join other fellow duck hunters and share the excitement of the draw, telling war stories of previous draws and if your friends are close, share your picks on what you are looking for. When and IF your name is drawn, high fives are everywhere and you go and make your pick, you made it! You have a spot for the next two years to hunt! It was a time of passage, the season was upon us to start getting ready. In my mind our MDC and our MDC Commissioners have lost sight on that rite of passage and our heritage in hunting in Missouri and had no clue on how that feeling of a blind draw felt. Beginning 15 June will be your last time to be able to draw for a blind on the great Mississippi River. Even though the blind draw is electronic now, the same thought process occurs to an individual but that is being taken away. Granted, we can still hunt the great Mississippi, but it will be open hunting, meaning, no reserved spots, no permanent blinds and you will have to hunt out of a boat if on open water. To me, this is a very dangerous situation that MDC is doing. People are people, and will try anything to go out and hunt. The Mississippi is very unforgiving and will kill you without thinking twice. Without permanent blind structures on the Mississippi waterfowlers will try to hunt on the river in less than desirable boats that are not suited for that river and will die from that decision.

Up Coming Events

June 11: Trap Shoot

July 10: TBD

Aug 14: NO MEETING

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 held at various locations, contact Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548 for this month's location. 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: **JUNE 11, 2024 at JAY HENGES**

Next Board Meeting: **JUNE 24, 2024**

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"

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