Missouri River Waterfowl Refuge Review
Missouri River Refuge Review

- Guidance from the Department’s Strategic Plan under *Strategy 1.*, Simplify and increase recreational opportunities by 2020.
  - Examples include: removing regulatory burdens, increasing the number of acres open to public hunting and fishing and applying consistency to current rules and regulations.
  - The sustainability of our hunting and fishing heritage relies on future participation. We must focus on recruiting the next generation!

- Process:
  - Back in March 2018, a petition was received by the Commission to remove/modify a waterfowl refuge on the Missouri River
    - The Commission asked the Department to form a work group and review all waterfowl refuges on the Missouri River System
    - 12 member internal work group was formed
      - Numerous meetings were held from August – Current, to discuss available data, and formulate draft criteria
      - Internal email was sent to all Department Staff the end of November that did include *draft* recommendations for each refuge based on the *draft* criteria document
      - A public meeting was held in Pierre on December 4th to review the draft criteria
Missouri River Refuge Review

• Review survey data and hunter trends.
  • Provide data on shifts in migratory patterns, hunter participation, and waterfowl populations.

• Review the history and status of refuges on the Missouri River.
  • How are/were refuges created?
  • What are the differences in refuges?

• Review Draft Criteria.
Canada Goose Populations

In South Dakota we have Western Prairie/Great Plains large, temperate breeding Canada geese and arctic breeding Central Flyway Arctic Nesting Canada Geese (CFAN) that migrate down the Missouri River each fall.

Temperate breeding Canada goose populations have been increasing across the continent.
Large Canada Goose Breeding Populations

- Breeding indices for WP/GP Canada geese increasing by 4% a year since 2008 overall.
- Similar trends for temperate breeding Canada geese across the Continent.

Figure 13. Estimated numbers (and 95% confidence intervals) of Western Prairie/Great Plains Population Canada geese (spring index).
Mallard Breeding Population
South Dakota Resident Goose Hunter Number Trends

- 60% decline since 2001
- Duck hunters show a similar trend
Missouri River Goose Harvest

SD resident hunter CAGO harvest 1996-2017

- MO harvest
- SD Harvest
Percentage Missouri River Harvest 1996-2017

Missouri River Harvest as a Percentage of Total Harvest

- % MO Harvest

- 1996
- 1998
- 2000
- 2002
- 2004
- 2006
- 2008
- 2010
- 2012
- 2014
- 2016
Mid-Winter Survey Trends

### ND MWS 1980-2016
- **ND MWS numbers Mallard**
- **ND MWS numbers CAGO**
- Linear (ND MWS numbers Mallard)
- Linear (ND MWS numbers CAGO)

### SD MWS 1980-2018
- **SD MWS numbers Mallard**
- **SD MWS numbers CAGO**
- Linear (SD MWS numbers Mallard)
- Linear (SD MWS numbers CAGO)
Refuge Review

- SDCL 41-2-18(6) gives the Commission authority to adopt rules to create, modify, or vacate state refuges. 
- Currently there are 21 refuges on the Missouri River system listed in ARSD 41:05:02:68. 
- 14 are open to duck hunting after the Canada goose season closes.
- 7 are closed to all waterfowl hunting during all waterfowl seasons.
- 11% of Missouri River in SD in Refuge status
- History.
Lake Oahe

- 12 Refuges
- 231 river miles (Oahe dam to Bismark); 160 miles within SD
- 2 tribal reservations
  - Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
  - Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
Lake Sharpe
- 3 Refuges
- 85 River Miles
- 2 Reservations – Lower Brule Sioux Tribe and Crow Creek Sioux Tribe
Lake Francis Case

- 6 refuges
- 107 river miles
- Borders 3 reservations
  - LBST
  - CCST
  - YST
What will criteria be used for?

- The criteria could be used by the Commission when any proposed modifications to the refuge system are brought to them.

- Proposals can originate from GFP staff or the public through the petition process.

- Proposals to modify a waterfowl refuge fall under three basic options:
  - Modify a refuge. This can be changing the overall size; changing from a take line to a waterline; altering effective dates; etc.
  - Remove a refuge.
  - Add a refuge.

- The Commission always has the option of not accepting any change proposed.
What criteria have been identified?

- Current waterfowl use – Low/Medium/High
- Does the refuge contribute to local hunting/viewing opportunities?
- How many miles of shoreline that provide protection from prevailing winds are included in the refuge?
What criteria have been identified?

• How accessible is the area?

• Are there any non-game benefits?

• Are there any agreements with outside entities involved?

• Are there any safety concerns to consider?
What criteria have been identified?

• What input have we received from the public?
  • Criteria Review Public Meeting Results
    • 80-90 people attended
    • 30 minute presentation
    • Tried to keep the meeting focused on the Draft Criteria
    • Very active meeting with a lot of back and forth dialogue
    • Some attendees did express their concerns regarding decisions to remove some refuges were already made
      • The timeline to make changes was too aggressive
      • Upset about the lack of geese utilizing the MO River
      • Expressed frustration about how refuges need to be closed off to other/all forms of recreational use/activities
    • Some attendees requested the need for more public meetings
    • Did receive some feedback on the draft criteria and received additional criteria topics to consider:
      • What other authorized outdoor activities occur within the refuge boundary that could potentially harass staging waterfowl?
      • Benefits of the Refuge to surrounding landowners?
      • Public vs. private hunting opportunities available in the area?
      • Harvest Limits?
Assessment tools.

- Data spreadsheets
  - Highest Waterfowl Counts by MR Refuge & Year.xlsx
  - MR Waterfowl Refuge Review Table.xlsx

- Database Dashboard
  - http://sdgfp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bd8d2de939074642b2cdf5117ee59d00
Refuge GIS Dashboard
Tentative Timeline

- December 6th & 7th
  - Present Draft Criteria to the GFP Commission
- December 7th – January 10th
  - Receive additional public input on draft criteria
- January 10th & 11th
  - Provide Department Recommendations to GFP Commission
- January 11th – February 28th
  - Receive public input on proposed changes
  - Public hearing: February 28th
- March 1
  - Commission action on proposed changes
- Questions?