

2404 E. Broadway, Alton, IL 62002

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Rosi Franke, Editor

Tel: 618-396-2509

e-mail: rgfranke@frontiernet.net

ALERT

**3-Year Blind Allocation Drawing
Mississippi River Fish & Wildlife Area, Pools 25 and 26**

Change in administrative rules:

Illinois residents must have a valid Firearm Owner Identification Card (FOID).
One that has expired within the past 12 months will NO LONGER be accepted.
Registrants will have to have cards in their possession to register.

MWHI OFFICERS

President

Scott Bryant
217-983-2025 (home)
618-535-0151 (cell)

Vice-President

Bob Jones
Area Projects Chairman
618-498-4724
618-578-9547 (cell)

Treasurer

Larry Franklin
618-465-5686

Membership Secretary

Mike Devening
618-791-1692

Correspondence Secretary

Jeremy Maggart
618-535-4997

Recording Secretary

Jeremy Arnold
618-779-8313

MWHI DIRECTORS

John Gineris
Banquet Chairman
618-786-2596

Eric Rhuede
Golf Tournament Chairman
618-410-9853

Duane Hahnenkamp
Wood Duck Nest Box Chairman
Refuge Chairman
618-786-2053

Greg Franke
COE Chairman
618-396-2509

Chance Funk
618-917-4137

Dave Geisler
618-576-9845

Justin Wolfe
Carlyle Lake Area Projects Chairman
Catfish Tournament Chairman
618-377-0397

Josh Schneider
618-974-4328

Matt Grassle
618-550-3124

Nathan Wilson
618-535-8325

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, April 5, 2008

MWHI 8th ANNUAL

WETLAND CONSERVATION BANQUET

at K.C. Banquet Hall, Godfrey, IL

Monday, April 7, 2008

MWHI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

at 2404 E. Broadway, Alton at 6:15 p.m

Monday, May 5, 2008

MWHI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

at 2404 E. Broadway, Alton at 6:15 p.m

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

MWHI GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

at Alton-Wood River Sportsmen Club
in Godfrey, IL at 7:00 pm

REMEMBER!

MWHI 2008 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE RAFFLE

Craig Sondker, Membership Drive Chairman

Prizes will include:

Duck/Goose Hunting Trips

Catfish Fishing Trip

Benelli Nova

Raffle starts October 2007 - ends October 2008

See upcoming Sentry for more details.

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Say Goodbye to CRP

Duane Hahnenkamp

Last year I wrote an article about Corn vs. CRP and the possible problems in the future. I wrote about the effects this could have on wildlife and especially the ducks that are hatched in the CRP fields of the Dakotas. Well, it looks like the future is coming fast. In the name of going 'green,' lawmakers and scientists decided to make alcohol fuel out of corn a high priority. So, last year the farmers planted more corn instead of wheat and soy-beans, which caused the price of both of these to sky rocket. My friend in North Dakota told me that wheat has gone from \$4.00 a bushel last summer to \$22.00 a bushel and soy-beans to around \$16.00 a bushel today. As you know, the price of our food is now going through the roof. So to keep up with the demand for food grains, guess where all the extra crops will now be grown?

You got it! CRP lands will take a big hit this summer and soon will disappear across most of the Midwest in the next few years. Now you can't blame the farmers for planting crops instead of going with CRP. Not when CRP pays \$100.00 an acre compared to \$1,000.00 for planting wheat. Granted, I also would like to see food prices get half way back to normal, but it seems that in the name of looking for cleaner and cheaper fuel, we have opened a very big Pandora's Box. With no CRP, the prairie ducks we have seen the last ten years will mostly move to Canada to find nesting cover, only they don't have CRP there either. With grain prices this high, how long before Canada starts destroying their own potholes and grass lands. Where in the world are all of these so-called 'green people' who want to save the planet and all of God's little creatures? The lost CRP land will cause the Dakotas to loose between 1 and 2 million pheasants alone. The number of all types of birds and other animals that will disappear across the country will be in the ten's of millions. Then there is the new soil erosion that will be putting millions of tons of topsoil into our rivers again. What about the extra chemicals and fertilizers that will, along with that topsoil, find its way into the water? What kind of damage are they going to do to all the fish and animals, including us?

All of these problems were reasons for starting the CRP program 20 years ago, yet the environmentalists seem to have forgotten and say nothing now. Yes, the farmer will have a lot more money to spend in his area, but what about the ten's of millions of dollars the hunters have brought to those states? Millions of tourists and hunters drive to these states to look at grass lands and wildlife, not at picked bean fields and bare dirt. We as duck hunters may have seen the last good years of hunting on the prairies. How long will it be before this type of intense farming will affect what hunting we have left in our own states?

I just can't understand why the 'green' movement is so willing to loose so much in the name of a cleaner fuel. Is a slightly cleaner fuel worth more than clean water, cheaper food, or the untold numbers of birds and animals? After 20 years of seeing what good things CRP has done for the country, I can't believe they are so willing to throw it all away. These new 'green' people may call themselves the guardians of the planet, but they are not. I believe hunters have a far better appreciation for the outdoors than this new green movement does.

Submitted by George Hamilton, March 2008

Legislature mulls several

2008 Riverbend Catfish Tournament Trail Begins

1. Tournament to be held April 12, 2008

Alton, IL – Alton Marina 6 a.m. to 3 p.m.

New for 2008 – a points division will determine the winner of this year's classic boat
\$80.00 entry fee per team. 90% payback of entry fees.

Please contact Justin Wolfe or visit www.mwhi.org for more information and tournament rules.

gun-related bills

BY MIKE RIOPELL, The Southern Springfield Bureau

Legislation intended to help solve gun-violence crimes that opponents said could have shut down a major ammunition plant in Alton was defeated Wednesday.

It was among a handful of gun-related legislation acted on by lawmakers in a House committee.

One plan, proposed by state Rep. Will Davis, D-Homewood, would have required ammunition in Illinois to carry a laser-inscribed code on both the casing and bullet.

Davis said the matching codes could help identify killers at crime scenes.

But opponents said that the process of etching the codes would cost the ammunition industry millions and all but force the Winchester Ammunition plant in Alton to close. They also argued that using high-powered lasers near the explosive materials found in bullets could be dangerous.

Davis said he just wanted preliminary approval of a House panel so he could work out issues with the legislation later, but the committee rejected the plan by a 5-4 vote.

The legislation is House Bill 4259.

While the bullet-coding plan failed, other gun-related legislation was approved Wednesday.

One would allow the state to revoke a parent's Firearms Owner Identification card if their child is caught with guns or ammunition more than twice, provided the child suffers from a mental illness.

The idea stems from a case where a clinically depressed 14-year-old shot his friend in the chest with one of his parent's guns. The incident came after the child also was caught taking ammunition to school and once slept with a gun under his pillow.

Illinois State Rifle Association spokesman Todd Vandermyde said gun owners shouldn't be penalized for a situation that isn't criminal.

"Now, you're going to start removing somebody's rights because of a third party's action," he said.

Lawmakers in a House panel approved the legislation, House Bill 5191, by an 8-5 vote. It now goes to the full House. The same panel also approved a plan that would require private citizens to provide trigger locks or a similar security device when selling a gun. Now, gun retailers have to provide trigger locks when selling guns, but private people selling to each other don't.

The legislation, House Bill 5227, was approved by an 8-4 vote. It, too, moves to the full House.

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IMPORTANT CONTACTS

NRA Update on Gun Bills **1-800-392-8683**

Federal Senate Office **1-202-224-3121**

Federal House Offices **1-202-225-3121**

Illinois State Rifle Association **1-815-635-3198** www.isra.org

Illinois Senate Information **1-217-782-4517**

Illinois House Information **1-217-782-8223**

Sen. Deana Demuzio – 49th District
Tel: 217-854-4441 Fax: 217-854-5311

Sen. Frank Watson – 51st District
Tel: 618-664-9108 E-mail: frank_watson51@sbcglobal.net

Sen. John O. Jones – 54th District
Tel: 618-242-9511 E-mail: jojones@mvn.net

Sen. William R. Haine – 56th District
Tel: 618-465-4764 E-mail: haine@senatedem.state.il.us

Sen. James F. Clayborne – 57th District
Tel: 618-875-1212 E-mail: clayborne@senatedem.il.us

Sen. David Luechtfeld – 58th District
Tel: 618-243-9014 E-mail: sendavel@midwest.com

Rep. Jim Watson – 97th District
Tel: 217-243-6221 E-mail: jimwatson@localnetco.com

Rep. Gary Hannig – 98th District
Tel: 217-839-2859 E-Mail: hannig@hdsmail.state.il.us

Rep. Ron Stephens – 102nd District
Tel: 618-667-8669 E-mail: stephens@apci.net

Rep. Kurt Granberg – 107th District
Tel: 618-533-2153 E-mail: kgranberg@hdsmail.state.il.us

Rep. Jay Hoffman – 112 District
Tel: 618-345-2176 E-mail: jayhoffman@charter.net

Rep. Thomas Holbrook – 113th District
Tel: 618-394-2211 tholbrook@housedems.state.il.us

Rep. Wyvetter Younge – 114th District
Tel: 618-875-1691

Rep. Mike Bost – 115th District
Tel: 618-457-5787 mikebost@midwestmail.com

Rep. Dan Reitz – 116th District
Tel: 618-443-5757 E-mail: dreizt@egyptian.net

Costello - jfc.il12@mail.house.gov

Durbin - dick@durbin.senate.gov

Barack Obama – <http://obama.senate.gov>

Shimkus - <http://www.house.gov/shimkus>

MISSISSIPPI RIVER AREA
2007 WATERFOWL SEASON REPORT – IDNR, Neil Booth

2007 Season Information

The 2007 central zone waterfowl season was 60 days in length. Opening day was Saturday, October 27, and ended on Tuesday, December 25, 2007. Shooting hours were one half hour before sunrise to sunset statewide. There was a special 2-day youth hunt on Saturday and Sunday, October 20th and 21st.

Bag limit for the 2007 season was a six bird daily limit including all species. In Illinois, the daily limit allowed only one black duck and pintail. There was a daily limit of two redheads, wood ducks, canvasback and scaup. The daily limit for all mergansers was 5, only 2 of which may be a hooded merganser. The Mallard limit was four, with no more than 2 hen mallards.

2007 Weather Conditions

During the winter of 2007, the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers experienced a roller coaster of ups and downs. By March all the local recording stations, Hardin, Grafton and Mosier, were above flood level. Batchtown had been a full draw down and was coming up on a head raise. In April all of the levels increased slightly but nothing severe. On the Illinois River, by mid-May, levels were back to normal, allowing water level management to begin on several of the areas. The Mississippi River continued to run just below flood levels, with Batchtown in full draw down. In August the Illinois River once again flooded. Hardin ran bank full but did not reach flood level and allowed us to gravity flow water into several of the areas. Grafton exceeded flood stage, causing problems at Calhoun Point. The Mississippi River went above flood at Mosier and remained above flood level into September. By October the Illinois River was back to normal; however, the Mississippi River remained problematic. The river didn't settle down until mid-November when Batchtown was brought back to full pool on November 11th.

Precipitation levels were normal in winter, spring and early summer. Then like someone threw the switch, it went dry. It actually seemed to be even drier than the last two years. It was very frustrating that the river was flooding while the crops were wilting. It was truly a roller coaster ride.

Aerial Census – 2007 Aerial Inventories

Date	Illinois River	Mississippi River
9/4/07	6,590	1,580
9/10/07	22,545	8,570
9/26/07	31,880	18,945
10/12/07	31,290	9,020
10/23/07	83,680	118,850
10/29/07	174,745	144,250
11/13/07	190,210	199,490
11/23/07	138,290	276,265
11/27/07	151,620	305,665
12/4/07	174,795	424,170
12/18/07	58,355	255,100
12/26/07	20,230	116,525
1/9/08	18,370	72,340

Peak population level on the Illinois River was 190,210, observed on November 13th. On the Mississippi River the peak of 424,170 was counted during the December 4th census.

Population Status

In the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey traditional survey areas, the total duck population estimate was 41.2 million birds. This was 14% greater than last year's estimate of 36.2 million birds and 24 above the 1955-2006 long-term average.

Mallard abundance was 8.3 million birds, which was 14% above last year's estimate of 7.3 million birds and 11% above the long-term average.

Blue-winged teal abundance was 6.7 million birds, which is the third highest since 1955, and 14% greater than last year's estimate of 5.9 million birds and 48% above the long-term average.

Estimated abundances of gadwall, 3.4 million, and Northern shovelers 4.6 million, were also higher than those of last year, plus 19% and plus 24%, respectively, and well above their long term averages, plus 96% and plus 106%, respectively.

Estimated abundance of American widgeon, 2.8 million, was 29% greater than last year but similar to the long term average. Estimate abundances of

Continued on page 11

green-winged teal, 2.9 million, redheads 1.0 million, and canvasback .0 million were similar to last year's but were each 50% above their long-term averages.

Abundances of Northern shovelers, redheads and canvasbacks were highest ever estimated in this survey area, and the abundance of green-winged teal was the second highest estimated in this region. Estimates for Northern pintails, 3.3 million, and scaup, 3.5 million, were unchanged from those of 2006 and remained below the long-term averages, down 19% and down 33%, respectively. Overall, habitat conditions for breeding waterfowl in 2007 were similar or slightly improved relative to 2006. The total pond estimate was 7.0 million ponds, 15% greater than last year's estimate of 6.1 million ponds and 44% higher than the long-term average of 4.9 million ponds.

The projected mallard fall flight index was 11.4 million, similar to the 2006 estimate of 9.9 million birds.

MRA Habitat Condition

The overall habitat conditions were good for the entire area. There were some areas where the conditions were excellent while others only rated fair to good. The habitat conditions were very diverse with excellent moist soils in some areas and excellent submersed aquatics in several other locations. The planted grain crops were less successful. Drier conditions in late summer hurt the late planted small grains while the deer ravaged the corn plots. For detailed area by area description of conditions, please see April 2008 Sentry on MWHI website: www.mwhi.org

HARVEST INFORMATION FOR THE COMBINED CHECK STATION AREAS

The opening day harvest was 1,066 birds, which represented 6% of the total season harvest.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER AREA 2007 HARVEST BY WEEK								
Weekly Dates	Total Hunters	Daily Avg. Hunter	Total Ducks	Daily Avg. Ducks	Birds per Man Avg.	Date Aerial Survey	Illinois River	Mississippi River
10/27 to 10/28	1,230	615.0	1,599	799.5	1.27	10/23	83,680	118,850
10/29 to 11/4	1,736	248.0	1,731	247.3	1.07	10/29	174,745	144,250
11/5 to 11/11	1,807	258.1	1,380	197.1	0.84			
11/12 to 11/18	1,797	256.7	1,757	251.0	0.97	11/13	190,210	199,490
11/19 to 11/25	2,468	352.6	2,567	366.7	1.05	11/23	138,290	276,265
11/26 to 12/2	2,042	291.7	2,216	316.6	1.11	11/27	151,620	305,665
12/3 to 12/9	1,621	231.6	1,976	282.3	1.25	12/4	174,795	424,170
12/10 to 12/16	1,324	189.1	1,921	274.4	1.46			
12/17 to 12/23	1,092	156.0	1,060	151.4	1.01	12/18	58,355	255,100
12/24 to 12/25	249	124.5	160	80.0	0.71	12/26	20,230	116,525

The best daily harvest occurred on opening weekend with an average of 799.5 ducks per day. Second best was the week of 11/19 to 11/25 with a 366.7 duck per day average, followed by the week of 11/26 to 12/2 that averaged 316.6 ducks per day. The week of 12/10 to 12/16 had the best bird per man average of 1.46 or better.

The combined check station areas hosted 15,366 hunters, which was a 7% decrease from 2006 and 1% above the long-term average. They harvested 16,424 ducks, which was a 32% decrease from last year and a 14% increase from the average. Hours hunted 87,224 were down 11% from 2006 and met the long term. The bird per man average of 1.07 was considerably lower than the 1.47 from last season and above the .93 long term average. The bird harvested per hour hunted was substantially higher than the previous season but remained below the average.

Mississippi River Area Combined Areas				
	2005	2006	2007	1966-2007 average
Hours	87,512.5	98,165	87,224	87,178
Ducks	17,157	24,266	16,424	14,048
Hunters	15,049	16,559	15,366	15,154
D/H Ratio	1.14	1.47	1.07	.93
Hrs/Duck	5.10	4.05	5.31	6.21

List of Species Representing over 5% of Harvest						
	Batchtown	Calhoun Point	Glades 12 Mile	Godar Diamond	Stump Lake	MRA
Mallard	48.79%	48.44%	59.17%	62.65%	51.26%	54.05
Gadwall	7.19%	15.48%	5.42%	7.66%	17.19%	10.89%
GWT	5.73%	7.07%	8.26%		5.90%	6.14%
Shoveler	5.18%	5.55%		5.12%		
Ringneck	5.81%		9.19%	5.36%	6.12%	6.13%
Scaup	12.42%					
Canvasback	5.57%					
Wood Duck		5.16%			5.01%	

There are a couple of interesting aspects from this year's list of species representing over 5% of the harvest. This is the first time that the canvasback harvest was large enough to reach these levels, but this year the bag limit was increased to two (2). Meanwhile, while the scaup bag limit has been lowered to two (2), the harvest level is increasing. On the combined check station areas, 9,878 mallards were harvested, which represented 54.05% of the total harvest. Gadwall were second with 1,789 for 10.89%. Green-winged teal with 1,008 at 6.14% was third. Ringneck made fourth with 1,007, which was 6.13%. These were the only species that made up more than 5% of the harvest.

HARVEST INFORMATION BY AREA

Batchtown				
	2005	2006	2007	1966-2007 ave.
Hours	21,338	23,930	16,640	26,741
Ducks	4,421	6,720	3,646	4,413
Hunters	3,305	3,734	2,699	4,434
D/H Ratio	1.34	1.80	1.35	1.00
Hrs/Duck	4.83	3.56	4.56	6.06

During the 2007 season at Batchtown 2,699 hunters harvested 3,646 birds, with a bird per man average of 1.35. Hunter numbers were down 28% and harvest was down 46% from 2006. This was a reduction of 39% in hunters and a 17% decrease in harvest over the long term. The 1.35 bird per man average was down from 2006 but exceeded the long term average. Hours hunted was 30% below last season and was 38% below the long term. The 4.56 hours hunted per bird harvested was up from last year by one hour and still below the average.

Calhoun Point				
	2005	2006	2007	1966-2007 ave.
Hours	12,915	12,577	13,337	10,288
Ducks	2,004	2,927	2,306	1,428
Hunters	2,193	2,442	2,692	1,946
D/H Ratio	0.91	1.20	0.86	.73
Hrs/Duck	6.44	4.30	5.78	7.21

During the 2007 season, Calhoun Point hosted 2,692 hunters who spent 13,337 hours hunting, resulting in a harvest of 2,306 ducks, which is the sixth (6) best single year harvest. The bird per man average of .86 was below last season's 1.20, but is better than the .73 long term. Hunter numbers and hours were up by 9% and 6%, respectively, while harvest decreased 21% from the 2006 season. When comparing the 2007 season to the long term average, hunter numbers were up 28%, hours were up 23% and harvest was increased by 38%. The bird harvest per hour hunted increased from last year but was still below the average.

Glades 12-Mile				
	2005	2006	2007	1966-2007 ave.
Hours	12,915	14,350	14,99	11,511
Ducks	2,004	3,157	2,253	1,608
Hunters	2,193	2,386	2,374	2,087
D/H Ratio	.91	1.32	.95	.77
Hrs/Duck	6.44	4.55	6.30	7.16

The season harvest at the Glades of 2,253 was a 29% decrease from 2006 and a 29% increase over the long term average and this is the 9th best harvest on record. The .95 bird per man average is a decrease from 2006 but still exceeds the average. Hunter numbers were similar to last year and up 12% over the long term. Hours were similar to last year and up 19% from the long term average. The hours hunted per bird harvested increased from 2006 and was still below the long term average.

Godar Diamond				
	2005	2006	2007	1966-2007 ave.
Hours	17,107	21,113	21,086.5	18,093
Ducks	4,714	4,907	3,826	3,392
Hunters	2,969	3,160	3,273	3,027
D/H Ratio	1.59	1.55	1.17	1.12
Hrs/Duck	3.63	4.30	5.51	5.33

During the 2007 season, the harvest of 3,826 was a 22% decrease from last year and 11% above the long term. Hunter numbers were up 3% and hours hunted were similar to the 2006 season. In comparison to the long term average, hunter numbers were up 8% and hours were up 14%. The 1.17 bird per man average in 2007 was well below the previous season and similar to the average. The hours hunted per bird harvested increased from 2006 and the long term.

Stump Lake				
	2005	2006	2007	1966-2007 ave.
Hours	22,512	26,196	21,962	20,442
Ducks	4,166	6,554	4,393	3,171
Hunters	4,250	4,837	4,328	3,657
D/H Ratio	0.98	1.36	1.02	.87
Hrs/Duck	5.40	4.00	5.00	6.45

The harvest was down 33%; hunter numbers decreased 11% and hours hunted were 16% lower than 2006. The 1.02 bird per man average was well below last season but well above the long term. In comparison to the long term averages, 2007 saw an across the board increase for ducks up 28%, hunters up 16% and hours up 7%. The hours hunted per bird harvested increased from 2006 and was still almost 2.0 hours below the long term. The 4,393 bird harvest is the 7th best on record.

2007 Goose Season

The following chart reflects the goose harvest as recorded at the check station areas during the duck season:

Goose Harvest at Check Station Areas October 27th to December 25th, 2007						
Species	Batchtown	Calhoun Point	Glades	Godar Diamond	Stump Lake	Totals
Canada	83	64	62	132	93	434
Snow/Blue	12	2	4	12	11	41
White Front	2	3	2	2	1	10
Totals	97	69	68	146	105	485

Godar Diamond had the highest harvest of both Canada geese and geese overall. The total goose harvest on the MRA was similar to last season.

Special Seasons for 2007

There was a special early Canada goose season, fifteen (15) days, from September 1st to September 15th. Shooting hours were one half hour before sunrise till sunset. Daily bag limit was two (2) with a possession limit of four (4).

The early teal season was sixteen (16) days this year. Opening day was September 8th with a closing date of September 23rd. Shooting hours were sunrise till sunset, with a daily bag limit of four (4) and a possession limit of eight (8).

A youth waterfowl hunting weekend was offered once again. In the central zone the youth hunt was held October 20th and 21st. Hours of hunting were one half hour before sunrise till sunset. Bag limits were the same as during regular waterfowl season this year.

The special conservation order light goose season was offered again this year. Immediately following the close of the Canada goose season (January 31, 2008) the conservation order begins. Season will run through March 31, 2008 with shooting hours one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset. Unplugged shotguns and electronic calling devices are allowed. There are no daily bag or possession limits during the conservation order.

The following chart reflects the record harvest during the youth hunt this year:

2007 Youth Waterfowl Hunt Days									
	Stump Lake	Glades	Godar	Rip Rap	Red's	Fuller	Batchtown	Calh. Point	Total
TOTAL Ducks		62	80	35	11	105		17	310
TOTAL Hunters		59	66	20	15	47		10	217
Ducks/Hunter		1.05	1.21	1.75	0.73	2.23		1.70	1.42
Cripples		4	15			5			24
Coots			43			1			44
Geese									

There was no data for Stump Lake. The signs were missing. It is thought that high winds blew them off the sign-up clip board. There was also no data from Batchtown, but that was a function of the pool being on full draw down.

Season Summary

After the record setting year in 2006 and the production reports from the breeding grounds, the 2007 season was disappointing. Considering the overall habitat conditions on the MRA, the anticipation exceeded the outcome, but that is not unusual in the world of waterfowl hunting. A late summer flood destroyed much of the habitat on the Illinois River north of the MRA. While the river reached bank full in this location, the majority of the habitat on the MRA was preserved, On the Mississippi River a late summer and then an early fall flood was hard on Batchtown. What made these floods even more frustrating was that they were occurring while locally the area was experiencing rather severe drought conditions. At Batchtown the pool was low during the first part of teal season. Then, later in the fall, pool was on full draw down for the first two weeks of regular duck season. The aerial census of the Illinois River reflected the damage done by the late summer floods. On the Mississippi River, on the other hand, there were some almost record numbers of birds. When compared to the harvest levels during the same time period, things didn't match up. In all probability this is a reflection of hunting pressure these birds had experienced during migration. In the end 16,400 plus dead duck is pretty good pile of feathers. Combined with a bird per man average of just over 1.0, the 2007 season would not fall into the category of a "bad" season. The expectation can now shift to the upcoming three year blind allocation for a "good" spot for the next three years.

**ACOE (Carlyle)
2007-08 Waterfowl Harvest**

Totals for the 2007-08 waterfowl season are as follows:

1,535 hunters harvested: 1,195 ducks
 34 Canada geese
 7 Snow geese
 7 White-fronted geese

Average of .81 ducks per hunter.

Mallards consisted of 40% of the harvest, gadwall 20% and green-winged teal 15% of the harvest.

The following were the top harvest areas in descending order:

1. Dam West Boat Ramp
2. North Fork Boat Ramp
3. Coles Creek/Maple Grove
4. Saddle Dam 3
5. Jim Hawn Access

The total ducks harvested during the 2006-07 season were 536 ducks by 1,138 hunters.

**Winchester Trap & Skeet Facility
“Spring AA 150” – Open to the Public**

Where: Winchester Trap & Skeet Facility, East Alton, IL

When: April 19 and 20, 2008, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Cost: \$50.00 entry fee, includes shells and Lewis Class

Trap 16-Yard	50 rounds
Trap Handicap	50 rounds
Doubles Trap	50 rounds

To be eligible you must participate in all events listed above.

High Overall Individual – 3 cases Winchester AA ammunition

High Event Individual – 2 cases Winchester AA ammunition

Long run will break ties (based on singles, then handicap and doubles, if needed)

Lewis Class monies awarded based on total score

High School students (age 13 – 18) special awards

MRA Habitat Condition 2007

The overall habitat conditions were good for the entire area. There were some areas where the conditions were excellent while others only rated fair to good. The habitat conditions were very diverse with excellent moist soils in some areas and excellent submersed aquatics in several other locations. The planted grain crops were less successful. Drier conditions in late summer hurt the late planted small grains while the deer ravaged the corn plots. The following is an area by area description of conditions:

Michael Bottoms – was gravity drained by “others” ahead of a normal draw down schedule. Fortunately, we escaped a multitude of potentially negative impacts. Overall moist soil production was good and composed of smart weed, wild millet, spragle top and a small amount of nut sedge. The fields along the river were disced and planted with milo plots. Conditions were good to very good.

Hurricane Island – was gravity drained, and beginning June 19th there was a mixture of wild millet and nut sedge. This site does not rely on food production, so conditions would be considered good to very good. The “hump” is gone. If it was as much of a hindrance as portrayed, conditions would rate excellent.

Diamond Island – was gravity drained. Beginning the 19th of June, the gate was closed for approximately a week and reopened on the 26th to complete the draw down. The majority of the moist soils were barnyard grass. 100 plus acres of cocklebur was sprayed aerially. Conditions were good.

Godar Refuge – Early efforts to gravity drain (April) were delayed when the river began to rise once again. Pumps were set on June 4th and planting of corn plots began on June 13th in the pool and planted corn in the river field (phase 2) on June 11th. Jap millet was planted in the river field and buckwheat in the field at pump site 2. The deer just totally ravaged the corn plots. It was not uncommon to see 20 plus deer feeding on the young corn at noon each day. Between 60% and 70% of the corn plots were totally destroyed. The barnyard grass was once again excellent. There was also a very good pig weed and spragle top. Overall conditions were good to very good.

Helmbold Slough – was gravity drained beginning June 19th. On approximately 50% of the area cottonwood seedlings were encroaching. The area was slow to drain, which drastically reduced moist soil production. There were large patches of creeping water primrose and just a fringe of barnyard grass. The cottonwood seedlings and primrose was sprayed. After the spray had a chance to work and before the river flooded the area in August, the seedlings were mowed. While there was little to no food production this year, the woody encroachment was controlled and removed. The habitat conditions would rate as poor, but the encroachment control was a very positive gain.

Glades – in late April and throughout May, water was drained to remove the water from the adjacent fields and out of the timber. The drains were opened on June 23rd for the final draw down. It was apparent that the efforts to control cocklebur were largely successful. Once again surviving patches of cocklebur were treated. There was excellent barnyard grass and spragle top with smart weed and nut sedge interspersed. Habitat conditions ranked very good to excellent. The August flood came within inches of flooding the Glades; however, we were able to hold it off by building up the spillway. The drain tubes were both rusted through, so patches were bolted to the tubes and dirt was piled on top. When the river flooded, the tubes were left open to get free water for the Fall recharge. However, when the gates were closed, the pressure caused a leaking through the patches and blew one of the gates off the pipe. To prevent the total flooding and loss of the food production, a dirt levee was built across the channel running to the lake. Replacement tubes and gates will be needed before we can once again manage water levels.

Fuller Lake – once again attempts were made to drain water during the winter and very early Spring. The desired result was to keep the water levels low through late winter so the lake could fill with clear run off for enhanced clarity and stimulate the submersed aquatic plants. While the river did not overtop the levee, the refuge had their gates open, which raised Swan Lake high enough to overtop the spillway in the levee between the refuge and the hunting area. In mid-May, when the river receded, the lake was drained to 421.0. On the 5th of June a vegetation survey was conducted to determine a course of action - manage for submersed aquatics, or drain for moist soil production. Along the shorelines there were excellent beds of coon tail and some southern naiad. Along the shorelines there were excellent beds of coon tail and some southern naiad. Creeping water primrose covered approximately 75% of the surface, but there were beds of sago pond weed under the primrose which were robust and expanding. The deeper water was very turbid and large numbers of silver carp were evident throughout the deeper areas. A rake was used to drag the lake bottom along the west bank of Upper Swan Lake and young green, actively growing coon tail and sago plants were present. Six to seven inches of water were drained to enhance sunlight penetration to boost aquatic growth. On July 6th another vegetation survey was conducted, which showed that the lowered water levels had worked. The entire shoreline was rank stands of coon tail. Fuller Lake had 75% to 80% coverage. Upper Swan Lake shoreline had rank beds of coon tail with large beds of sago pond weed spreading through the deeper portions of the lake. In Beaver Pond much of the area was dry, but even with the primrose covering much of the area was solid moist soil vegetation,

mostly barnyard grass. In late July, the pump was set up to periodically pump to maintain water levels to support the aquatic vegetation. The habitat conditions ranked excellent.

Stump Lake Complex – in 2006, the Crull Impoundment was planted with full season corn, and the resulting crop was tremendous. But, 35% of the ears were too far above the water and unavailable to feeding waterfowl. The impoundment dried out enough to allow discing May 21st. The stalks had to be knocked down and then cross disced to promote germination of the waste grain. The field was allowed to set for 10 days and the waste grain sprouted, creating a solid lawn of waste grain sprouts. The sprouted corn was sprayed with round up and the new seed corn (round up ready) was no tilled starting June 7th. Production was good. We used a new product, N Pact, nitrogen fertilizer, which was sprayed on the corn. Deer were hard on the corn crop. Approximately 20% of the crop was damaged. Jap millet seed was broadcast in the open areas created by the deer browsing and sufficient rain fell to germinate the millet seed, producing a usable crop. The winter wheat, which had been planted in 2006, was left standing until mid-September when it was mowed and disced to provide this year's crop. At the same time, the area between the corn and wheat was planted to buckwheat. Overall, conditions ranked very good.

The winter wheat at Dan Hudgin's area, which was planted in 2006, was left standing. In mid-September the wheat was mowed and disced to provide the seed for this year's crop. At that time the rest of the area, which was dry enough, was disced and seeded to buckwheat. Conditions ranked good.

Attempts to draw down Upper and Lower Stump Lakes during the winter, after goose season, were unsuccessful due to high river levels. Although the river reached flood stage at both Hardin and Grafton, the water did not get high enough to overtop the Stump Lake spillway. River levels allowed draining to begin in mid-May. A vegetation survey conducted on May 15th of the Upper and Lower Stump Lake revealed developing beds of sago pond weed and coon tail. On June 18th, the stop logs were installed between Long Lake and Upper and Lower Stump Lakes. The stop logs were removed from Long Lake fish passage structure and allowed to drain Flat, Fowler and Long Lake to river levels. On June 25th pumps were set at both Flat and Fowler Lakes to complete the draw down of both lakes. The draw downs were completed by July 16th and the stop logs to Upper and Lower Stump were removed. Upper and Lower Stump once again had beds of sago pondweed, but the predominant species was huge beds of coon tail. Habitat conditions on Upper and Lower Stump ranked very good to excellent.

Moist soil production on both Flat and Fowler Lake was tremendous. Spragle top, barnyard grass and Walter's millet were all present and robust. Fowler Lake dried through evaporation to a level I had never seen before. The west banks of both Flat and Fowler Lake had a rank band of cocklebur. An aerial application of 2 4 D prior to seed production on the cocklebur was applied. Overall, the habitat conditions ranked very good to excellent on both lakes.

Calhoun Point – On June 12th the stop logs were installed between Royal Lake and Pohlman Slough and the drain tubes at Silver Lake were opened to begin draw down. The discharge pump was set up and pumping began on June 26th. This was the first attempt for a total draw down since the late '80's. The response was as expected: tremendous moist soil production. It was as good a mixture of moist soils as could be expected - Spragle top, barnyard grass, arrow head and huge rank stands of nut sedge. The late August flood inundated the majority of the vegetation before it could mature. Royal Lake survived the best and overall the habitat conditions on the lakes ranked good to very good.

In mid-July the moist soil area in the goose pit fields was disced and planted with buckwheat. By that time, the weather patterns had returned to drought-like conditions, which delayed germination and production. Conditions were fair to good.

Rip Rap Landing – In 2006, approximately 90% of Waverly was dry, which eliminated the rough fish population and firmed the bottom material. In May, while checking Rip Rap, it was apparent that there were beds of submersed aquatic vegetation present. On the June 5th vegetation survey, Rip Rap was added to the list. Near the launch site, there were several beds of curly leaf pond weed. The water was turbid but there was no evidence of rough fish. In the deeper areas, which had not drained last year, there were huge beds of coon tail. In the shallow fingers water clarity was excellent and bottom was visible in 24 to 30 inches of water. There were small beds of Southern naiad, brittle naiad, very little sago pond weed and several beds of coon tail. Habitat ranked good to very good.

DNR staff met with NRCS to discuss and develop a management plan for the WRP project. It was agreed that DNR staff would prepare the management plan for NRCS approval. District staff prepared a complete management plan, and NRCS supported the majority of the proposed plan. NRCS had funds left in the project, which they were willing to let DNR spend to meet the goals of the proposed plan. Also, the State Duck Stamp Committee approved \$50,000.00 to alter the water control system presently in place.

Rip Rap Landing is also a proposed EMP project. The fact sheet was reviewed, updated and sent to Division for approval. Division approval was received with minor adjustments and now it is a matter of funding.

Red's Landing – the walk-in area went dry with good moist soil production. However, the August and September high water flooded the entire site. Even though much of the vegetation was overtopped, conditions remained good.

Batchtown – The Titus Hollow dredge spoil area was planted with round up ready corn on May 16th. There was some crop damage from the deer, but overall there was good production. Pre-plant nitrogen was applied. On the grass land restoration sites, where there were poor to no stands of grasses, the areas were mowed and warm season grasses were planted. This restoration effort has been highly successful. This year, there was a tremendous expansion of the various species and a huge seed production.

Pool levels were very volatile this year. There were draw downs in February, March, April, May, June, September, October and November. The St. Louis District, Corps of Engineers, water control folks worked very, very hard to try and have a successful environmental pool management draw down. The best the river would give up was a 24-inch draw down for 40 consecutive days. The majority of the moist soil plant production was barnyard grass and spragle top. There was a mixture of smart weed but nothing like what Batchtown is capable of producing.

It was one of those years that made the case to have the EMP project completed as soon as possible. The pool was on maximum draw down for the first two weeks of duck season this year. Then, to add insult to injury, when the pool was down it was impossible to flood the Titus Hollow spoil area, so the planted corn was dry until the 4th week of season. However, once the pool returned and the impoundment was pumped near the end of the season, there was excellent waterfowl use of the rest area. Overall, the conditions ranked good.

DU says CRP losses astounding ***National trend for habitat loss concerning***

BISMARCK, ND, January 4, 2008 – The conservation organization Ducks Unlimited says it's as if someone plowed up a three-mile swath of wildlife habitat across North Dakota, from its southern border to Canada. That's how many Conservation Reserve Program grassland acres were lost in just this one state this past fall.

New federal figures show almost 420,000 acres of North Dakota CRP were converted to cropland in 2007. That's more than 12 percent of all CRP acres in the state.

"If this trend holds for CRP contracts across the country, we won't have many acres of CRP left in a few years and wildlife populations will suffer serious declines," said Scott McLeod, Farm Bill specialist with DU's Great Plains Regional Office.

US Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency statistics compiled by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department shows 16 North Dakota counties have CRP losses greater than 15 percent. Stutsman County had the highest loss with 65.3 square miles.

"We expected extensive losses, but this is about double what FSA originally indicated would be lost this year," McLeod said.

With today's high commodity prices and focus on crop-based biofuels, Ducks Unlimited and other conservation groups have been concerned that restored wildlife habitat would go back into crop production when CRP contracts expired in 2007. CRP offers producers payments through 10 to 15 year contracts to convert highly erodible cropland to grass.

"The rental rates paid for enrolling in CRP simply do not compete with what producers can get today by renting out the land for cropping or by farming it themselves," McLeod said.

The US Fish and Wildlife Services credits CRP with producing more than 2 million ducks a year. This steady stream of lost habitat will mean significantly lower production of ducks that migrate through or winter in all of the contiguous 48 states and provide an important part of the hunters' bags in those states.

DU's director of conservation programs in the Prairie Pothole Region says conservation-minded people are concerned the country's new energy policy will wipe out billions of federal dollars invested in natural resources. "Conservation is in for a long swim against a strong current when trying to fight the tide of land rolling out of CRP," Jim Ringelman said.

McLeod says the number of CRP acres going back into crop production further emphasizes the need for a strong Sodsaver in the 2007 Farm Bill. "The loss of CRP is certainly a severe blow to waterfowl and other grassland-dependent wildlife, but native prairie cannot be replaced," he said. "Native prairie and wetland complexes are critical habitats for nesting waterfowl and ranchers alike."

CRP encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to grass. Annual rental payments based on the agriculture rental value of the land are paid to the landowner under 10 to 15 year contracts.