## 2020 Proceedings

### 44th Annual Meeting

**Midwest Deer & Wild Turkey Study Group Meeting August 18th, 2020**

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Submitted by:

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Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife October 2020

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**Background**

The Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group (MDWTSG) meeting is an annual gathering of wildlife managers sanctioned by and affiliated with the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Primary objectives of the meeting include dissemination of deer and wild turkey management strategies, discussion of emerging or existing issues associated with deer and wild turkey management, and coordination of regional deer and wild turkey management or research efforts. The meeting location rotates among the Midwestern states that are active within the group.

Forums such as the MDWTSG meeting provide valuable opportunities for state deer and turkey biologists to become acquainted with emerging issues and exchange information and ideas related to deer and turkey research and management. The need for state fish and wildlife agencies to establish and maintain deer and turkey biologist positions and support travel of these biologists to the annual MDWTSG meeting is imperative for exchanging information to promote quality wildlife management and research in each state. It is more important than ever that state agencies are at the forefront of issues related to deer and turkey management in order to protect the heritage and recreational opportunities of hunting for future sportsmen and sportswomen.

**Meeting Summary**

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife organized and moderated the 2020 MDWTSG meeting via Zoom on August 18, 2020. Thanks to Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for agreeing to host the meeting using their Zoom account. A total of 37 state deer and wild turkey biologists from all 14 Midwest member states/provinces, as well as two invited speakers, joined the virtual meeting. Due to the unusual circumstances of 2020, the schedule was shortened to include only a business meeting and separate deer/turkey breakout discussions.

**Business Meeting**

The business meeting was called to order by M. Tonkovich (OH) at approximately 10:00 ET on Tuesday, August 18. The following items were discussed:

1. Host state for 2021 meeting
   1. Since OH was supposed to host the 2020 meeting that was ultimately conducted virtually, they have volunteered to try again for an in-person meeting at Maumee Bay State Park on Lake Erie in August 2021.
2. Meeting timing
   1. The Deer and Turkey committee is the only MAFWA committee that meets after the

Director’s meeting in June. The committee discussed the history of the meeting that led to a late-summer meeting window and potential options for moving the meeting to a more traditional time period (March). However, the group cited multiple conflicts at that time of year including: sharpshooting in CWD zones, preparing regulation packages, interference with breeding surveys, insufficient time to analyze harvest and survey data to prepare a state report given that many deer seasons run through January, and competition with other meetings. It was decided to table the discussion at this time and gather more information, potentially via a survey to the group to identify a time window that would fall more in line with other MAFWA committees.

1. Use of a “banker” to handle funds for hosting annual meetings
   1. Most state have seemed to have few if any issues using their state Wildlife Society chapter to act as the banker for meetings, but OH ran into issues. During their search for a banker, OH was approached by the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) who offered to be banker not only for OH this year, but for all MDWTSG meetings moving forward. After a bit of discussion within the group, rather than have a single banker for every meeting, it was decided that responsibility to secure a banker for the meeting will fall upon the host state each year. Most states have good working relationships with their TWS state chapter, so in most cases this is a non-issue.
2. Minnesota DNR staff update
   1. B. Keller (MN) suggested that the MDWTSG, in conjunction with the Midwest Wildlife Health Committee, send a letter of appreciation to Lou Cornicelli for his many years of dedication to the profession and countless contributions to these MAFWA committees.

A. Stewart (MI) motioned to move forward with a letter from the committee, seconded by B. Jensen (ND). Motioned passed with no one opposed.

Business meeting adjourned at 11:33 ET.

**Breakout Group Discussions**

Following the business meeting and a lunch break, deer and turkey biologists discussed species-specific issues in their own virtual breakout rooms.

* Deer Group
  + Emily McCallen, a biometrician with the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife, presented an idea for a CWD risk assessment model that could potentially be used across the Midwest. She, along with other biologists in IN and OH, plan to use various risk factors (to be identified by the Midwest deer biologists) to create a model that would help prioritize CWD sampling to areas with the greatest risk of spread or introduction. Biologists in other states then could plug in their own data to evaluate risk in their respective state, thus targeting specific areas for disease sampling.
  + Kelley Meyers with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided an update on the CWD Value Stream Mapping project being conducted by the Midwest Landscape Initiative.
  + Biologists took turns updating the group on some of the more relevant and pressing matters happening in their respective states.
* Turkey Group
  + Biologists provided updates on recent turkey management or research issues in their respective states.
  + Luke Garver with the Illinois Dept. of Natural resources summarized results of the Illinois Turkey Hunter Satisfaction Survey.

**Director Action Items**

The MDWTSG does not have any action items for directors to report from this meeting.

**Director Information Items**

The MDWTSG does not have any information items for directors to report from this meeting.

##### Appendix 1: Attendance List

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **First Name** | **Last Name** | **Agency** | **Email** |
| Luke | Garver | Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources | [luke.garver@illinois.gov](mailto:luke.garver@illinois.gov) |
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