

# Managed Waterfowl Areas “Not Just for Waterfowl”

By:

Southeast Regional Supervisor,

Joe Robison



# Michigan's Seven Wetland Wonders Managed Waterfowl Areas



# Honoring Yesterday

- Michigan once had 11 million acres of wetlands, more than 50% gone today
- Sportsmen first to support conservation:
  - Formation of conservation organizations
    - Ducks Unlimited 1937
    - MUCC 1937
    - The Nature Conservancy 1950
    - MDHA 1972
    - Pheasants Forever 1982
    - Waterfowl USA 1983
  - Federal Duck Stamp 1934
  - Pittman-Robertson Act 1937
- Waterfowl hunting heritage is strong in Michigan
- Canada geese, wood ducks, trumpeter swans and sandhill cranes are all management successes along with many other wetland dependent species at these Managed waterfowl areas.



## Wetland Loss

Over 95% of Detroit River wetlands and over 90% of Western Lake Erie's wetlands have been lost due to development and farming.

75-80% of Lake St. Clair coastal wetlands have been lost with much of what remains being altered or degraded

The St. Clair Delta is the largest freshwater delta in the world – 148 mi<sup>2</sup> or about 95,000 acres (Mich.=33,000 acres; Ont.=62,000 acres)

Saginaw Bay Dominant land use activities have contributed to the 22 county watershed losing 62% of its original wetlands, with some coastal counties losing upwards of 90%.



**The key to wildlife abundance is habitat. Habitat without management is not realistic in a world dominated by people, and wildlife interests must have input into that management.**



# Why Build Infrastructure?

- Loss and degradation of wetland habitat
- Development of wetlands for agriculture
- Coastal marshes degraded by storms, run-off
- Maintain productivity of the remaining wetland habitat in order to offset the dramatic and continued loss
- Hydrology and natural processes impaired because of degradation and change
- Provide waterfowl habitat and wetland dependent species
- Provide high quality waterfowl hunting along with many other types of hunting and trapping and other recreational opportunities.



# Economics, Tourism and Local Businesses







# Local Management in a Larger Context

- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Upper Mississippi River Great Lakes Region Joint Venture Implementation Plan and Conservation Strategies
- Michigan's NAWMP Implementation Strategy
- Pittman Robertson
- State Laws
- Department Evergreen Goals
- Wildlife Division Strategic Plan (GPS)
- Regional Operational Plans
- Featured Species
- Master Plans
- State Game Area Operational Plans





*1 Manage for sustainable populations of wildlife species*





***2. Manage habitat for sustainable wildlife populations in a changing environment***

*2.1 Develop coordinated statewide and regional approaches to managing habitat*





## *2. Manage habitat for sustainable wildlife populations in a changing environment*

*2.1.3 Manage habitat on wildlife areas to support featured species management targets and to demonstrate habitat techniques to conservation partners*

2014/03/26



## ***2. Manage habitat for sustainable wildlife populations in a changing environment***

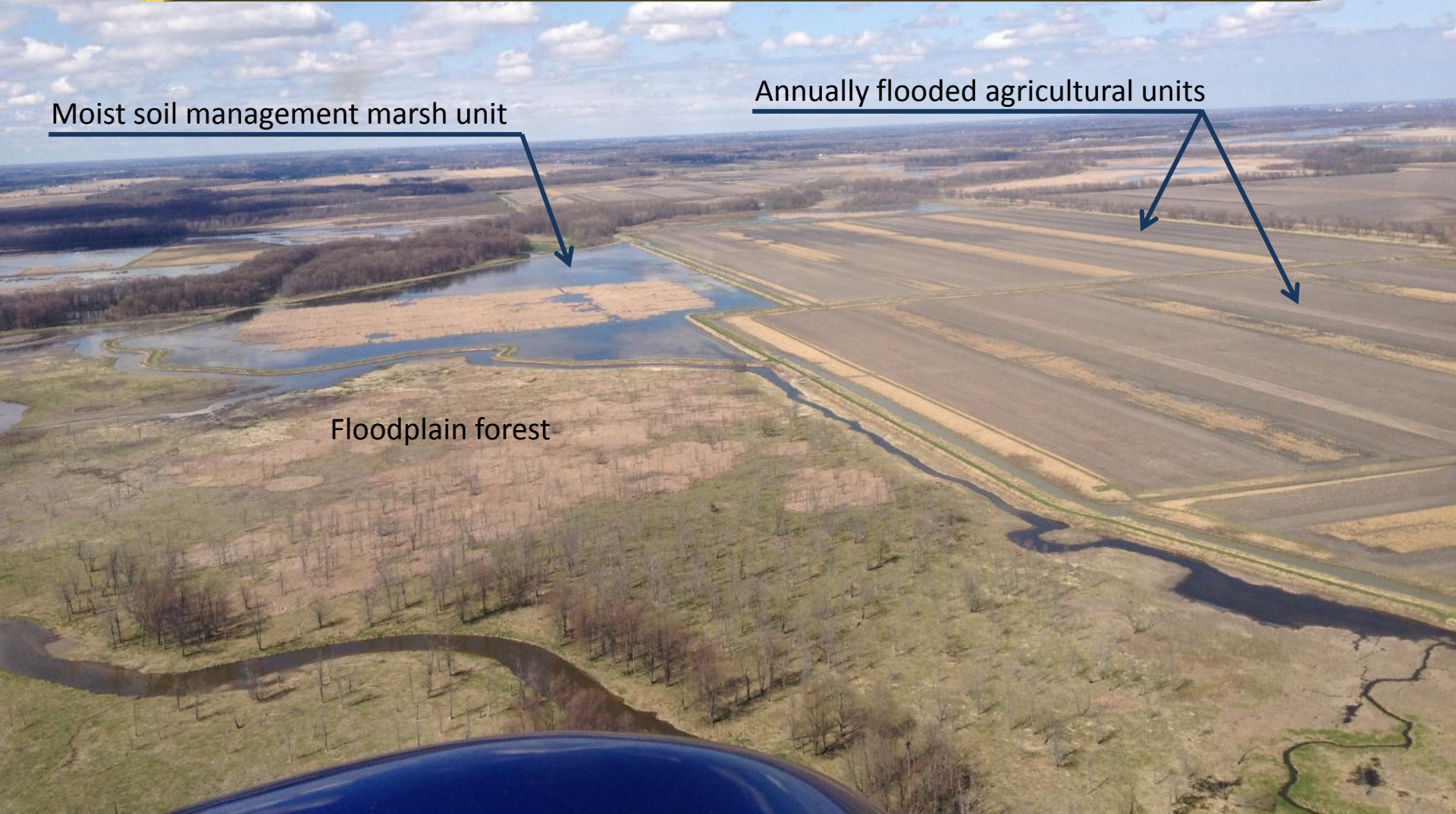
### *2.1.4 Address priority invasive species management needs*





## ***2.2 Determine and prioritize needs to support biodiversity conservation at ecologically appropriate scales***

### *2.2.1. Assess adequate ecological representation of habitats to support diverse wildlife populations*



Moist soil management marsh unit

Annually flooded agricultural units

Floodplain forest

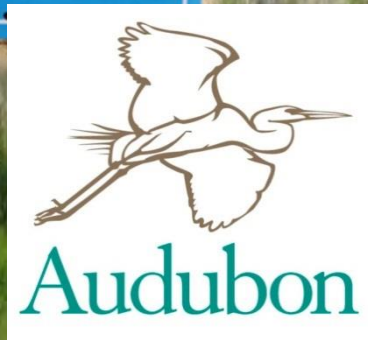


***3 Mitigate the negative impacts of human land use on wildlife habitats***

***3.2 Protect Department-owned lands and infrastructure acquired and managed for wildlife purposes from uses that interfere with wildlife management***



# State Wildlife Area - Partnerships



## Saginaw Bay Blueways Trail



*4. Increase public participation, acceptance, and support of hunting and trapping and increase participation in non-consumptive wildlife-related recreation*





*4 Increase participation, acceptance and support of hunting and trapping and increase participation in non-consumptive wildlife related recreation*

*4.3 Increase retention rate of hunting and trapping license purchasers by 25%*



# Managed Hunting Concept



## 1970's

- The number of hunters for each designated area is determined by a daily draw and permit system
- Planting food plots for food and cover
- Tall corn for cover and adequate water depths became critical
- Demands placed on manager
- Two draws were held each day, one for the morning hunt period and one for the afternoon
- User fee of \$10 annual or \$3 daily beginning in 1986
- License restructuring in 2013 eliminated annual/daily fee

# Managed Waterfowl Area Goals

- Improve and preserve vital wetland habitat
- Provide a refuge and food supply for migrating waterfowl
- Provide a managed hunting opportunity for waterfowl hunters
- Provide hunting opportunities for other wildlife species when possible
- Provide opportunity for non-hunting related recreation



# **Benefits of MWA/Infrastructure**

- **T/E/SC species use of managed wetlands**
- **Manage vegetation (desirable and undesirable)**
- **Maintain wetland quality and productivity**
- **Climate change adaptation given predicted lower Great Lakes water levels**

# Wetland Wonders Challenge

- Promoting the seven premier Managed Waterfowl Hunt Areas (MWWHA).
- First-class waterfowl hunting opportunities
- Various recreational activities that many outdoor enthusiasts enjoy.
- Benefits that they provide for the ecosystem are irreplaceable.



# 2013 MWA Statistics

21,443 hunter trips

27,278 duck/goose harvest

2,245 total acres cropped

17,515 total acres

73,000 total @ waterfowl peak migration

MWA annual reports



**Nayanquing Point**

**Fish Point**

**Shiawasse River**

**Harsens Island**

**Pointe Mouillee**

# Premier Birding Hotspots

- Top 5 birding destinations
- Oldest and largest colonies of yellow headed blackbirds
- Unique species include king rail, American and Least Bittern, Black Tern, Black-crowned night heron, Common Moorhen, Marsh and Sedge Wrens





***6.1 Increase collaborations with conservation partners and volunteers to implement wildlife goals***

*6.1.1. Develop and enhance partner and stakeholder coalitions to engage in Division planning efforts and support management programs*







## 6.1 Increase collaborations with conservation partners and volunteers to implement wildlife goals

6.1.1. Develop and enhance partner and stakeholder coalitions to engage in Division planning efforts and support management programs





# 1 Manage for sustainable populations of wildlife species

## 1.1.1. Monitor and assess game populations annually





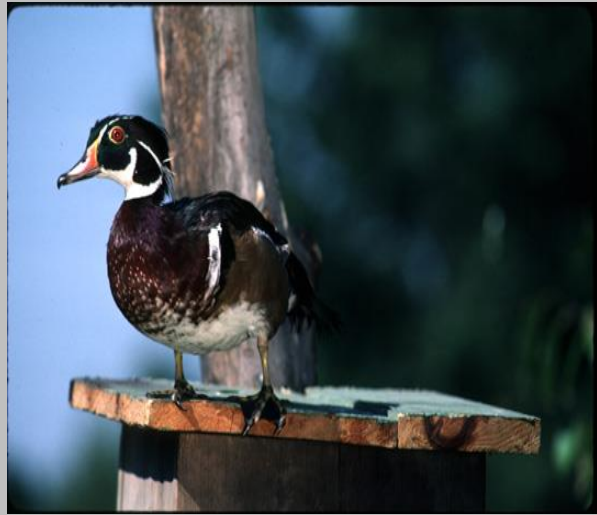


## 5 Improve communication and engagement with the public regarding wildlife issues

### 5.1 Increase public understanding and awareness of wildlife management and Division program



# Building Tomorrow



- Celebrate our waterfowl heritage
  - **Michigan Waterfowl Legacy**
- More hunters pursuing waterfowl
- Increasingly engaged hunters and non-hunters who enjoy and actively support waterfowl and wetlands conservation
- Secure funding for waterfowl and wetlands conservation
- Diverse and outstanding waterfowl hunting and viewing opportunities
- Restore public showpieces: state managed waterfowl areas and national wildlife refuges
- Limited impacts by invasive species
- Increased conservation on private lands
- A shared responsibility for preserving Michigan's Waterfowl Legacy





**9.3 Annually, ensure habitat and public access infrastructure is maintained for its wildlife management purposes**

9.3.1 Ensure all infrastructure supporting habitat projects is maintained in a safe and operable condition



# Habitat Management Tools

- Mechanical Work
  - ASV Mowers
  - Mowing
  - Disking
  - Dozer and excavator work
- Herbicide Application
  - Control invasive and unwanted species
- Prescribed Burning
  - Control invasive and unwanted species
  - Regenerates new growth
- Water Level Management
  - Promote favorable over unwanted species



# Replacing water control structures

- Replacing tubes for managing water control
- Replacing crossovers for access to fields
- Deepening ditches to allow water to flow out of units through tiles and for hunter access





# Dike Maintenance

- Dike integrity
- Consistent water levels
- Maintain infrastructure
- Separation of habitat types
- Maintain different impoundment in different ways as needed



# • Habitat Work

## Grassland Restoration Work

- Willow, Cottonwood, as well as invasive species control
- Creating openings, successional and edge habitat
- Restoring grasslands for nesting waterfowl as well as other wildlife species
- Winter cover for upland birds and other wildlife



- **Habitat Work**

- **Agricultural Work**

- **Food plots**

- Winter food for wildlife
      - Spring brood rearing habitat

- **Flooded Agricultural Units**

- Staging and resting areas
      - High energy food sources



# Pump Stations



- Control water levels in our agricultural units
  - Remove water for spring planting and maintenance work
  - Flood agricultural units for fall hunting
- Control water levels in our moist soil and wetland units
  - Allows us to draw down for moist soil management
    - Encourages beneficial plants and keeps unwanted species out



# Deer Check Stations

## Data Collection

- Allows us to communicate with hunters.
  - Get input from local hunters
- Biological Data Collection
  - Age
  - Sex
  - Overall deer health
- Disease monitoring
  - Tuberculosis
  - Chronic Wasting Disease



# Furbearer check

## Importance of Trapping on Managed Waterfowl Areas.

- Alleviate stress of dikes from muskrat burrowing
- Continue trapping traditions
- Provides use to more than just waterfowl users and deer hunters
- Allows trappers to communicate concerns they have on areas



# 2017 Rare Birds

- **Pointe Mouillee**
- ***Fairly rare – only a few sightings statewide each year:*** American White Pelican, Snowy Egret, Hudsonian Godwit, Red Knot, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Willet, American Avocet, Red-necked Phalarope, Little Gull, Whimbrel, Eared Grebe, Short-eared owl, Blue Grosbeak, Ruff, Black tern, Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Little Blue Heron.
- ***Uber rare – only a few sightings ever in MI:*** Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
- **Harsens Island/St. Clair Flats**
- ***Fairly rare – only a few sightings each year:*** Snowy Owl, Black tern
- **Nayanquing Point**
- ***Fairly rare – only a few sightings statewide each year:*** Eurasian Wigeon, Laughing Gull, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Willet, Little Gull, Marbled Godwit, Snowy Egret, Red Knot, Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt,
- **Fish Point**
- ***Fairly rare – only a few sightings each year:*** Ruff, Black Tern, Golden Eagle, Snowy Owl, Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose.
- **Shiawassee River**
- ***Fairly rare – only a few sightings each year:*** Golden Eagle, Whooping Crane,
- **Crow Island**
- ***Fairly rare – only a few sightings each year:*** White-faced Ibis, Glossy Ibis



# Questions?

