

Maryland Wood Duck Initiative

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ACTIVITY REPORT # 9

June 3, 2005 - Updates April 28, 2005 report

1. Organizational Status

With MD DNR approval of multi-year Partnering proposal, formal organization launch will occur. 501 (c) 3 status, website, standardized nest box profile & monitoring forms will be finalized this summer / early fall. Priorities will focus on finalizing implementation of the 2005 Kent Co programs, MD WMA nest box inspections & 2006 box programs. Admin of formal launch, website etc will occur in parallel as possible at a “measured” pace.

2. MWDI / DNR Partnering Agreement

A 5 year agreement has been concluded w/ the MD DNR Wildlife & Heritage Division whereby MWDI has agreed to arrange volunteers to examine existing nest boxes in Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) and repair, GPS & profile them. MWDI will build new boxes each year & erect them as agreed in various WMA's. A monitoring & maintenance capability will be arranged as a key component to this agreement. Results reporting and other aspects are involved.

DNR will arrange & coordinate access / cooperation within the WMA network. WMA Mgr's will provide an inventory of existing boxes and know external maintenance activities as well as their recommendations on new box numbers / locations. DNR's Game Bird Section & MWDI will provide advice in this regard as appropriate. Annual repair and new build programs will be established by DNR annually relative to MWDI's defined volunteer capabilities involving specific WMA's.

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2. MWDI / DNR Partnering Agreement continued

Migratory Bird Funds will be spent to on materials for approximately 565 boxes and repair items during the 2005-2009 period. MWDI will arrange to have the boxes built and installed. MWDI will also facilitate & document new box installations on private or other public lands such that a 2:1 leveraging of DNR funded box materials will provide an increase of 1,700 +/- new boxes and an unknown number of newly functioning boxes as a result of MWDI's inspection & repair efforts. Bill Harvey is the DNR liaison w/ MWDI. More details will be forthcoming later this summer when the specific work program is defined.

This new box level will not fully develop the MD public habitat opportunity by a long shot. If successful, however, the program will become a "best practices" model and establish how long term maintenance and monitoring (M&M) might be sustained through a series of cooperative and coordinated volunteer endeavors. M&M is the key ingredient to maximizing WD production. The emphasis on increasing WD numbers and the associated data reporting is also expected to encourage a series of private programs throughout Maryland. In time, this will facilitate extensive state-wide data collection, productivity analyses and more informed resource management.

3. State wide data base

Contact efforts with private programs have not moved forward much since last Report. Numerous leads have been identified. Followup on nest result reporting of existing participants will occur and moderate contact work is likely over the summer. These efforts are secondary to the implementation of the WMA program and recruitment of volunteers linked to this program.

4. Kent County Initiative

This "Initiative" is MWDI's field template to use in other MD counties where statistically significant nest data can be obtained, analyzed and resource management altered to maximize productivity. Final nest monitoring will occur by early July involving 230 boxes at Millington WMA (110+), Chesapeake Farms (50), East Neck Refuge (32), Drum Point (20) and Napley Green (17). Other private program data will also be incorporated into a Kent Co overall summary. As you folks may have nest result data, please report it!

Specific field activity is reported below:

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3. Kent County Initiative continued

MD DNR – Millington WMA

Predator guards delivered, most installed in late May. 81 boxes GPS, numbered & access routes/ groupings conceptually developed. 30+ boxes left to inspect plus re-visit certain still active nests. Results very encouraging. Program was essentially non-existent last year. Roughly 30 boxes were salvaged, 20 new / refurbished ones donated and 65 new ones built. Of the 78 functional boxes inspected, 41 had eggs or hens on them, a 53% utilization. The remaining boxes are in prime areas so this figure may be low - an excellent response to “new housing”.

Of the 41 used nests, 10 are still active with 71 eggs in 6 and 4 w/ hens on them, uncertain egg count. Of the 31 final result nests, 20 hatched successfully, 65%. 278 total eggs laid and 184 ducklings emerged, 66%. In the 20 success nests, 219 eggs were laid, 84% hatch rate. Dumping was low at 3 nests (> 15 eggs). Predators / competitors were to blame for 6 bad nests (2 coons, 1 starling, 3 pecking birds). Coons on old boxes where wood weak, guards too low. Peckers in 3 clustered boxes surrounded by other excellent snag pecking habitat. Starling in open area box.

Kudos to Josh Homyack, Bill Martin and Edmund Cook of DNR whose support has been Great. They even got even more motivated, building & erecting 50 bluebird boxes!

Chesapeake Farms (Dupont conservation property)

No complete box review since April 28th review.

East Neck Refuge

Increased use and productivity noticed on May 26th inspection from Apr 27th. 14 active nests vs. 12. 214 eggs vs. 160+. 10 of 14 nest results final indicate 143 eggs, 119 hatch, 83%. 8 of the 10 nets were successes, 80%. 2 were abandoned – drop nest & unknown reason. 4 active nests have 56 down covered eggs.

14 active nests out of 32 is moderately low use at 43% but 6 of 10 new nests were used (60%) while 36% of old nests were used. New box placement in water seemed to be useful versus a “woods only” scenario where owls are nesting in 9 of 13.

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Kent County – East Neck, Chesapeake Farms pending development

In late June, the Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition (CWE) Board of Directors will finalize consideration of an MWDI proposal to fund ongoing WD program material needs for Eastern Neck Refuge and Chesapeake Farms. MWDI will arrange ongoing repair, monitoring, box construction and installation. The host entities will also assist in these areas as defined and will allow CWE to place a sign depicting their support along their respective tour routes while financial support continues.

4. Research

Field testing on the acceptability of recycled freon canisters has been very successful. 5 of 6 canisters have WD use, 3 have hatched 36 ducklings (6 eggs unhatched, 86% hatch) and 2 others have 22 down covered eggs. Canister locations are in Harford (Rain River Farm) and in Kent (Millington -2, Chesapeake Farms & Eastern Neck). Eastern Neck probably had the first Freon clutch hatch for Maryland bragging rights. Heat testing has been difficult as we have had no heat! There has not been a significant difference recorded thus far. Placement of additional canisters in shaded areas w/ air vents will occur nest season.

Please continue to provide referrals of nest box programs and nest results !! For those of you who have indicated an interest in volunteering; we have not forgotten you and will be circulating a wish list in due course. We can customize any level of help to meet your profile!

Cliff Brown