

ISSUES SUBMITTAL FORM

Date: 06/08/2020

ISSUE: Should the limited waterfowl hunting opportunities at Sweitzer Lake State Park be managed through the Hunting Reservation System?

DISCUSSION (FACTS AND FIGURES, EXPLANATION OF ISSUE):

Waterfowl hunting at Sweitzer Lake is currently limited to six areas or "Hunt Zones." Hunting is allowed from the shoreline only in park-placed blinds or blinds that people bring with them. These areas are very popular and are used every weekend and almost every Wednesday until the lake ices up in January and then continue to be used at more moderate levels through the end of waterfowl season.

Zone 1: South side day use area of lake, west point. Would accommodate 1 group of up to 4 hunters.

Zone 2: South side day use area of lake, east point. Would accommodate 1 group of up to 4 hunters.

Zone 3: South side of lake. Would accommodate 1 group of up to 4 hunters.

Zone 4: Southeast corner of lake. Would accommodate 1 group of up to 4 hunters.

Zone 5: East end of lake. Would accommodate 1 group of up to 4 hunters.

Zone 6: North side of lake. Would accommodate 1 group of up to 4 hunters.

There are several existing problems that reservations would resolve:

- 1) During busy waterfowl times, there are hunters showing up as early as 8 pm the night before to "hold" a spot for the next morning and/or camping in the parking lots. This is in violation of park regulations.
2) Hunters put their decoys out the night before and then leave them.
3) Hunters do not know if there is a hunting spot available, so they drive into the park without a park pass to check on availability. Alternatively, the hunters buy a park pass only to find out that there is no room to hunt.
4) There have been conflicts between hunters as they "work out" who was there first.

The preferred alternative makes each Sweitzer Lake hunting zone "hunt by reservation" during the morning time slot. This would eliminate many of the conflicts between users. It will increase the quality of the hunts by reducing the stress on the resource of having too many hunters in a small area and the stress on the hunters vying for a good spot in the middle of the night. It will give beginning hunters an opportunity to hunt without the high pressure of having other hunters trying to shoot the same birds. Hunting will still only be allowed on Saturdays, Sundays, Wednesdays and holidays, per regulation #100(D)(39).

Hunting will be available in two time slots for each day in each zone. For access during the morning time slot, from 5 am to noon, hunters can make a reservation through IPAWS/Aspira up until 12 pm the day before. Zones will still be able to be used first-come, first-served basis if not reserved. Hunters will be able to check reservations from home or the front gate and for availability without having to enter the park.

From 1 pm to sunset, each zone is first-come, first-serve. This arrangement is particularly desired because very few people hunt both the morning and the afternoon/evening at Sweitzer Lake.

STATE LAW REQUIRES CPW TO SOLICIT INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS THAT MAY BE

AFFECTED POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY BY THE PROPOSED RULES. THE FOLLOWING STAKEHOLDERS HAVE BEEN ADVISED OF AND INVITED TO PROVIDE INPUT ON THE REGULATORY CHANGES PROPOSED IN THIS ISSUE PAPER:

***IT IS ASSUMED THAT ALL NECESSARY INTERNAL PARTIES HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED*.**

- 1) Waterfowl hunters often complain about not knowing if they will have an area, having to show up the night before to get a hunting spot, or having last-minute hunters set up next to them creating conflicts which need to be refereed by park rangers. No formal survey was conducted, but generally, hunters are receptive to the idea of a reservation system as long as they have the option to come in at the last minute and use unused zones.
- 2) Other park users have complained that hunters are “allowed” to hang out in the parking lots all night, while other users are kicked out at 10 pm. The reality is we have not had the resources to prevent this, not that we have actually allowed it to happen.

ALTERNATIVES: (POSSIBLE OUTCOMES or POSSIBLE REGULATIONS):

1. ***Preferred Alternative*:** Establish reservations through the hunting reservation system.
Proposed Regulations:
 - 1) Waterfowl hunting allowed only in the six designated hunt zones at Sweitzer Lake.
 - 2) From 5 am until noon, hunting will be by reservation. (There will be no lottery.) From 1 pm until sunset, hunting will be on a first-come, first-served basis.
 - 3) There is no check-in process at the park (Everything is handled through the call center or online.) Hunters that fail to show up at their reserved time may have future reservations denied/cancelled.
 - 4) It is illegal to leave decoys out overnight at Sweitzer Lake State Park.
 - 5) Hunting areas not reserved will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis after 5 am. Reserved areas unoccupied by 7 am will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis. However, any hunt area must be yielded at any time upon request of a hunter holding a valid and active reservation for that area.
2. Continue the first-come, first-served “non-management” of hunting area use at Sweitzer State Park.

Issue Raised by:	Scott Rist – Senior Ranger Sweitzer Lake State Park
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REQUIRES NEW SPACE IN THE BROCHURE?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
ARE ADEQUATE STAFF AND FUNDING RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO IMPLEMENT?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
REGION, BRANCH, OR SECTION LEADING IMPLEMENTATION	SW Region
RECOMMENDED FOR CONSENT AGENDA?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO