

**POINTE MOUILLEE STATE GAME AREA  
SEMU**

**2008 ANNUAL REPORT**

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INDEX

A. Introduction .....	1
B. Area Goals and Management Emphasis.....	1
C. Wildlife Production and Use Estimates.....	1-2
D. Significant Habitat Management .....	2
E. Land Acquisition Update .....	2
F. Area Maintenance .....	2-3
G. Equipment.....	3
H. Special Projects .....	4
I. Recreational and Education Activities .....	4
J. Trapping.....	4
K. Waterfowl Banding .....	4-5
L. Waterfowl Hunting Season.....	7-12
M. Prominent Clientele/Influence Groups.....	12
N. Problems or Opportunities.....	12
O. Appendices, Maps, Rules, Etc. ....	13-15

## A. INTRODUCTION

The Pointe Mouillee State Game Area is 4,040 acres of emergent marsh, shallow open water, diked cropland, lake plain prairie and lowland hardwood communities. The project is located about 30 miles southwest of Detroit at the confluence of the Detroit River, Huron River and Lake Erie. The state game area has three permanent full time employees (one biologist, one technician, one wildlife assistant, along with one half-time wildlife assistant and one part-time secretary).

## B. AREA GOALS AND MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS

The management goal for Pointe Mouillee State Game Area is to restore and maintain biotic communities and public use opportunities through practices and improvements that do not disturb existing unique features and which complement natural processes and local area ecology. Management of this area will focus on restoring sustainable, naturally functioning systems where possible, and actively manage those systems that cannot be restored to function naturally. Hunting, trapping, fishing, viewing and other wildlife recreational opportunities will be available in a diversity of settings as a result of area management.

### Land Management Strategies

The Master Plan sets the direction for management within the game area. Through successful implementation of these strategies there will be an increase in the diversity, quantity, and quality of the habitats that will produce a greater variety of wildlife species. Waterfowl use during migration, diversified public uses, habitat and hunting will be increased, as well as production of waterfowl and small game. Nesting habitat will be increased for waterfowl by restoring and maintaining open areas adjacent to brood rearing habitat and restoring some of the historical prairie that once existed. The wildlife and fish produced and maintained on the game area will be the basis for increased recreation by hunters and non-hunters.

Deleted: habitat and hunting will be increased

## C. WILDLIFE USE AND ESTIMATES

1. 150 pairs breeding ducks  
400 ducklings produced
2. 85 pairs breeding Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*)  
340 goslings produced
3. 45 White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) on September 1<sup>st</sup>
4. 125 Ring-necked pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) on September 1<sup>st</sup>
5. Other game:
  - a. 50 Fox Squirrels (*Sciurus niger*)
  - b. 1,000 Eastern Cottontail Rabbits (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)
  - c. 500 Woodchucks (*Marmota monax*)
  - d. 15,000 Muskrats (*Ondatra zibethica*)
  - e. 0 Bobwhite Quail (*Colinus virginianus*)

6. Unique wildlife species:
  - a. 5 Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) pairs nesting within 20 miles of PMSGGA
  - b. 0 nesting pairs of Great Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*)
  - c. 75 Black-Crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)
  - d. 15 nesting pairs of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*)
  - e. 10 nesting pairs of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*), 100 non-breeding individuals, and 20 cygnets produced
  - f. 75 Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*)
  - g. 1 pair of Osprey (*Pandion Haliaeetus*). The pair had 2 osprey chicks. The platform is located in the Lead Unit.

#### D. SIGNIFICANT HABITAT MANAGEMENT

During 2008 110 acres of phragmites (*Phragmites sp.*) was sprayed via aerial spraying in the Vermet and Nelson Units. This was the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that phragmites was sprayed in the Vermet Unit. In addition 2 miles of the dike system was sprayed via skid sprayer. Another 100 + acres are scheduled to be sprayed during 2009 and a draw down will be conducted during 2009 to burn areas that were sprayed during previous years. The Long Pond Unit was drawn down to 4" to promote the growth of moist soil vegetation.

#### E. LAND ACQUISITION

On April 29<sup>th</sup> 2008 the State acquired 33.87 acres in Erie Twp from John C. McKinley. The McKinley tract is now part of the Erie State Game Area. The parcel consists of wooded wetland, mature lowland hardwoods, and level topography. There is an approximately five acre opening that will be managed and maintained. The acquisition of this tract will prevent the further fractionalization of the Erie State Game Area and preserve wetland wildlife habitat in the heavily populated Southeast Michigan.

#### F. AREA MAINTENANCE

- Average to below average water levels in Southeast Michigan created no problems with the area dikes and seawall systems.
- Fourth year with expanded refuge (i.e., Bloody Run and Lautenschlager Units).
- Improved parking lots at Pte. Mouillee, Petersburg, Erie and Pte. Aux Peaux State Game Areas by adding gravel and maintaining signs, barricades, and gates.
- Dikes and road maintenance continued with gravel placement in low spots and holes. Sides of dikes were sprayed for brush, mowed and cleared to set back encroaching brush and woody vegetation.
- Planted and flooded 110 acres of corn, buckwheat, and millet at PMSGGA.

- Aerial herbicide application on 110 acres of Phragmites in the Vermet Unit. Prescribed fire should occur August/September 2009.
- Planted 18 acres of upland food plots (i.e., corn and Pheasant's Forever mix) to be seeded and converted to lake plain prairie in 2009 at PMSGA.
- Continued wood duck nest box maintenance program with Southwestern Lake Erie Chapter of Waterfowl USA and Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association.
- Maintained equipment, parking lots, dikes, pumps, barriers and several buildings.
- We continued a hen house project with South Carolina Waterfowl Association and Delta. They supplied the hen houses, hardware and poles to erect them. We agreed to put them up, monitor them and maintain them. Some use by mallards and wood ducks was observed.
- The 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Michigan Duck Hunters' Tournament took place this year. An estimated 8,000 people attended the two day event September 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>.
- Area personnel assisted in goose banding, duck banding, collecting deer heads from various field offices and state parks.
- An additional deer check station was held at Cabela's and a new deer check station was held at Kim's Kountry Smokehouse. 370 deer were checked during the 5 days at Cabela's, 58 deer were checked during the 2 days at Kim's and 731 deer at the Pte. Mouillee office during the 2008 deer season.
- Flooded the Bloody Run and Nelson Units (agricultural units) one week prior to duck season.
- Stained the headquarters and garage and painted all the doors and trim green. Painted the concrete surrounding the office.
- Repaired the small pump (2008). It is now in good working order.
- Cut down the dead ash trees around the headquarters area.
- Between July and August 2008, 356 Karner Blue Butterflies were released at the Petersburg State Game Area.
- Replaced four gates at the Erie SGA and two gates at the Pte. Mouillee SGA.

#### G. EQUIPMENT

The Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival and Waterfowl USA helped purchase a 16-foot wide Bat Wing mower. The Bat Wing is being used to help maintain openings; we also added duals to the John Deere tractor that the festival bought last year. The game area acquired a used 4-wheeler from the Law Division - it will be used for chemical spraying and spreading fertilizer and will be used extensively at Erie and Petersburg. We also acquired a 16-foot utility trailer so that we can transport equipment to and from Erie and Petersburg. Finally, we acquired three different sprayers: a boomless sprayer, a skid sprayer, and a quad sprayer. The majority of the equipment at Pte. Mouillee is outdated and needs to be replaced.

## H. SPECIAL PROJECTS

1. The 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Michigan Duck Hunters' Tournament took place this year. An estimated 8,000 people attended the two day event September 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>.
2. Area personnel assisted in Canada goose banding, duck banding, transporting and relocating Canada geese to various locations throughout Michigan and Kentucky.
3. Karner Blue Butterfly reintroduction at the Petersburg State Game Area.

## I. RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Bird watching is the major recreational activity at Pte. Mouillee. Thousands of people from all over the United States and Canada visited the game area throughout the year to view a diverse group of bird species. Wildlife watching, hiking, dog training, and boating are also activities enjoyed by the public.

Table 1. Estimated User Trips and Harvest at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area 2008

<u>Activity</u>	<u>User Trips</u>	<u>Harvest</u>
Waterfowl hunting	6,000	4,000
Deer hunting	300	20
Small game hunting	3,000	500
Trapping	N/A	N/A
Fishing	30,000	
Wildlife viewing	6,000	
Tournament	8,000	
Educational tours	500	
Other (boating, etc.)	3,000	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>56,800</b>	<b>4,520</b>

## J. TRAPPING

Trapping season is still under way at the time this report was due. A separate report will be written for the trapping season.

## K. WATERFOWL BANDING

Waterfowl banding was down this year with only 384 Canada geese, and 222 re-captures. Duck banding was up with 171 mallards and 3 wood ducks banded (Table 2). There were 225 Canada geese released at Pte. Mouillee State Game Area from other parts of southern Michigan.

Table 2. Waterfowl Banding Results for Pte. Mouillee State Game Area 2002-2008

Year	C. Geese	Mallards	Wood ducks	Blue-winged Teal	Other Ducks	Totals
2008	384	171	3	0	0	558
2007	778	118	0	0	1	897
2006	480	0	3	0	0	483
2005	507	0	0	0	0	507
2004	805*	0	0	0	0	805
2003	450	0	0	0	0	450
2002	220	0	0	0	0	220
Totals	3624	189	3	0	1	3920

\* 200 Translocated geese with bands went to Erie SGA.

**MANAGED WATERFOWL AREA**  
**HUNTING SEASON REPORT**  
**10/11/08 - 12/7/08**

INDEX

1. Introduction .....	7
2. Weather and Habitat Conditions .....	7
3. Migration and Waterfowl Numbers.....	8
4. Season Dates and Area Regulations .....	8
5. Hunting Season Results .....	8-11
A. Pre-registration .....	8
B. Harvest and Hunter Use (Standardized 5-year Summary And Current Year Biological Data.).....	8-9
C. Participation in Drawing .....	9
D. Hunters' Residence .....	10
E. Daily & Annual Permits and Revenue Generated .....	10
6. Cropland, Marshland, and Water Level Management.....	11
7. Recommendations .....	11-12

## L. WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON

### 1. Introduction

The 2008 managed waterfowl season saw a total of 625 hunter trips. Usage decreased in 2008 compared to 774 trips made in 2007.

Department check station personnel inspected harvested species from morning hunts only and took avian influenza samples at various times throughout the season.

### 2. Weather and Habitat Conditions

The water levels in Lake Erie were similar to the long term average during 2008. An average water depth of 570.9 was recorded throughout the fall. Shores of Lake Erie and shallow spots outside the game area along the Huron River were exposed mud flats because of the lower water levels. Desirable wetland vegetation grew in some of these areas, and if the water levels stay low over the next few years, significant natural habitat improvements could take place. If the water levels increase, this situation will reverse and we may lose some newly redeveloping marsh habitats outside the protective dike walls of the game area.

Much of the autumn's weather across Southeast Lower Michigan was mainly warm, with average precipitation and tranquil conditions. Some of the nicest weather seen in these parts prevailed from September right through much of October with normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. Temperatures spiked October 8th – 15th reaching highs of 75° and 79° on opening weekend October 11th and 12th. Temperatures averaged 6.5 degrees above normal during the second week of October.

Weather overall during the month of October was cooler than average with an average temperature of 50.6 °F at Detroit Metro Airport, which was 1.3°F below normal. Precipitation during the month of October averaged 1.15" which was 1.08" below the average for the month. According to NOAA, the first official freezing temperatures observed at Detroit Metro Airport occurred on October 19<sup>th</sup> with a temperature of 31°F.

Even the first couple of weeks of November were pleasant enough with above normal temperatures and the continuation of rather dry conditions. That quickly changed by the end of week two. Everyday from the 16th of November on averaged below normal temperatures. The coldest stretch of November 18th to the 23rd brought average temperatures in the mid 20's. For the month of November 3.31 inches of precipitation fell. Snow made an appearance by the middle of the month. The mean temperature for November was 39.0°F.

### 3. Migration and Waterfowl Numbers

**Table 1. 2008 Waterfowl Population Estimates Pointe Mouillee State Game Area**

Date	Ducks	Geese	Swans
Sept. 15 - 20	977	55	15
Sept. 22 - 27	736	46	9
Sept. 29 - Oct. 4	2005	134	4
Oct. 6 - 11	9606	122	10
Oct. 13 - 18	1373	137	2
Oct. 20 - 25	2185	122	10
Oct. 27 - Nov. 1	5156	521	16
Nov. 3 - 8	5604	277	69
Nov. 10 - 15	5444	250	88
Nov. 17 - 22	6138	197	386
Nov. 24 - 29	3330	480	790
Dec. 1 - 6	913	341	559
Dec. 8 - 13	200	350	20

### 4. Season Dates and Area Regulations

Managed hunting was offered twice daily on a regular Sunday/Wednesday schedule in the Long Pond and Nelson Units during the 2008 season. The season ran continuously from October 11<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and January 3<sup>rd</sup> and January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in the southern zone. Managed hunt drawings were discontinued for January 3<sup>rd</sup> and January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

### 5. Hunting Season Results

#### A. Pre-registration

2008 was the seventh year without a pre-registered hunt. The opening day afternoon hunt was a non-registered youth hunt, and received good youth hunter participation.

#### B. Harvest and Hunter Use

Bag limits remained the same as last year with a 6 bird daily limit. Harvest decreased from 925 ducks and 9 geese in 2007 to 640 ducks and 14 geese in 2008. Hunter trips decreased from 774 in 2007 to 625 in 2008. Hunter success decreased from 1.19 birds per hunter trip in 2007 to 1.02 birds per hunter trip in 2008. Crippling losses increased slightly from 18% to 19%.

**Table 2. Five Year Harvest Data at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area  
2004 - 2008**

<u>Species</u>	<u>Number Harvested (Percentage)</u>				
	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Male Mallard ( <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> )	120 (32)	191 (32)	423 (39)	232 (24)	266 (42)
Female Mallard	122 (33)	133 (22)	252 (23)	167 (18)	164 (26)
Am. Black Duck ( <i>Anas rubripes</i> )	7 TR	8TR	23 TR	27 TR	19 TR
Northern Pintail ( <i>Anas acuta</i> )	10 TR	3TR	20 TR	26 TR	19 TR
Gadwall ( <i>Anas strepera</i> )	5 TR	10 TR	21 TR	36 TR	3 TR
Am. Wigeon ( <i>Anas Americana</i> )	3 TR	1 TR	9 TR	3 TR	1 TR
Green-winged Teal ( <i>Anas crecca</i> )	40 (11)	57 (9)	94 (9)	114 (12)	43 (7)
Blue-winged Teal ( <i>Anas discors</i> )	10 TR	20 TR	34 TR	32 TR	12 TR
N. Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> )	6 TR	14 TR	33 TR	85 TR	25 TR
Wood Duck ( <i>Aix sponsa</i> )	38 (10)	144 (24)	152 (14)	189 (20)	70 (11)
Redhead ( <i>Aythya Americana</i> )	0	3TR	4 TR	6 TR	2 TR
Scaup Sp. ( <i>Aythya sp.</i> )	0	1TR	1 TR	8 TR	1 TR
Ring-necked ( <i>Aythya collaris</i> )	4TR	5 TR	11 TR	3 TR	3 TR
C. Goldeneye ( <i>Bucephala clangula</i> )	0	0	0	0	0
Bufflehead ( <i>Bucephala albeola</i> )	0	0	1TR	0	1 TR
Ruddy Duck ( <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i> )	0	3TR	2 TR	2 TR	1 TR
Merganser Sp. ( <i>Mergus sp.</i> )	0	2TR	3 TR	5 TR	6 TR
Canvasback ( <i>Aythya valisineria</i> )	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	2 TR	1 TR	10 TR	4 TR	4 TR
American Coot ( <i>Fulica americana</i> )	2 TR	0	6TR	0	2 TR
Canada geese ( <i>Branta Canadensis</i> )	0	0	7	9	16
Snow geese ( <i>Anser caerulescens</i> )	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>1093</b>	<b>929</b>	<b>640</b>
Hunter Trips	531	593	756	772	638
Cripples	105	149	249	164	121
% Cripples	28	25	23	18	19
<b>Birds/Hunter</b>	<b>.69</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.00</b>

TR denotes < 5%

**C. Participation in Drawing**

Hunter participation in the drawings was less than that of 2007. An average of 13 parties entered the drawings for the 12 zones available. The highest attendance for a drawing was 34 parties for the a.m. hunt on October 11<sup>th</sup>. (opening day) and the lowest was 4 parties for the a.m. and p.m. hunts on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Youth hunts were held on October 11<sup>th</sup> p.m. with 6 parties participating and November 2<sup>nd</sup> a.m. with 12 parties participating. Drawings were held through November 23<sup>rd</sup> - the last four days of managed hunting at Pte. Mouillee was self-registration. During the last two days of the season, January 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, there was no managed hunt drawing offered.

D. Hunters Residence

Table 3. Residence of Hunters Using Pointe Mouillee State Game Area  
2004 -2008

<u>State/County</u>	<u>Hunter Trips (Percentage)</u>				
	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Michigan					
Wayne	258 (49)	354 (60)	440 (58)	515 (67)	375 (60)
Monroe	160 (30)	130 (22)	165 (22)	165 (21)	163 (26)
Washtenaw	27 (5)	22 TR	32 TR	17 TR	11 TR
Oakland	28 (5)	20 TR	35 (5)	15 TR	9 TR
Livingston	8 TR	0 TR	7 TR	6 TR	7 TR
Other Michigan	9 TR	34 (6)	15 TR	22 TR	29 TR
Ohio	41 (8)	31 (5)	61 (8)	29 (4)	23 TR
NC,TN,VA,CT,FL,PA,TX,IL	0 TR	2 TR	1 TR	3 TR	8 TR
	531	593	756	772	625

TR denotes < 5%

E. Daily & Annual Permits and Revenue Generated

Table 4. Number of Daily and Annual Permits Sold and Total Revenue Generated  
2004 – 2008

<u>Stamp</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Daily*	330	338	409	275	196
Annual**	Na***	10	27	54	72
Total Revenue	\$1320	\$1482	\$1987	\$1802	\$1720

Daily\* @ \$3.00, '94; \$3.50 '95, '96; \$4.00 '97; \$4.00 in '99-07

Annual\* @ \$10.00 '94; \$10.50 '95, '96; \$13.00 '97-08

NA\*\*\*-No annual permits sold through DNR field office terminals these years.

Table 5. Weekly Waterfowl Hunter Trips 2008

<u>Pointe Mouillee - 2008</u>			
<u>Week</u>	<u>Hunter trips</u>	<u>Ducks shot</u>	<u>Ducks/trip</u>
Oct. 11 – 17	164	149	.91
Oct. 18 – 24	87	110	1.26
Oct. 25 – 31	97	108	1.11
Nov. 1 – Nov. 7	91	77	.85
Nov. 8 – 14	85	117	1.37
Nov. 15– 21	62	39	.63
Nov. 22 – 28	16	18	1.13
Nov. 29 – Dec. 5	19	19	1.0
Dec. 6 - 12	4	3	0.75
Total	625	640	1.02

## **6. Cropland, Marshland and Water Level Management**

During 2008 we continued to show some re-growth in areas where we had large die-offs of vegetation on 2006.

Crop production was good in the Bloody Run Refuge and Nelson managed hunting units. A total of 90 acres of corn, millet, and buckwheat were planted. Conditions for farming were average for most of the growing season. We were hit with heavy rains in early to mid July that stunted the corn growth. After drying out, the corn bounced back and produced a better than average crop.

2008 was the fourth waterfowl season with the expanded refuge (i.e., Bloody Run and Lautenschlager Units) totaling 217 acres. The goal of expanding the refuge was to provide needed resources to wintering, staging, and migrating waterfowl and other avian species. In particular; provide a large enough area that is free from auditory and visual disturbance of hunting, provide food, roosting and loafing habitat. Throughout the 2008 season there were good numbers of waterfowl and other species of dabbling ducks recorded using the refuge. In addition, the refuge held more birds for a longer period of time than the refuge had historically held.

The Walpatich Unit was allowed to evaporate naturally over the summer, but rainfall kept the water level static. Waterfowl use in the Walpatich Unit prior to the waterfowl season was considered normal with the majority of the birds being wood ducks.

The Vermet Unit was drawn down to about one foot during 2008. An additional 110 acres of phragmites was sprayed via aerial spraying. The Vermet Unit will be completely drawn down during summer 2009 and all areas sprayed since 2006 will be burned. By conducting one large burn of all areas sprayed this will be more cost effective than drawing down the unit every year, and it will help ensure that new phragmites does not become established in areas that were previously burned.

## **7. Recommendations**

Continue experimental methods to control Phragmites. Without intensive management practices phragmites will out-compete native vegetation in the marsh ecosystem, resulting in a monoculture of phragmites.

Continue row crop planting on drier sites to help control brush invasion, and prepare site for conversion to a native plant community.

Maintain existing program of flooding cropland in the Bloody Run Refuge to attract, feed, and hold migrating waterfowl.

Develop new nesting meadow and prairie grassland site along the Long Pond Unit, particularly in zone 4.

Continue with no pre-registered hunts at Pte. Mouillee, hunter's lack of participation does not warrant pre-registration. Continue two youth hunts conducted in the managed areas. Begin experimenting with a self-registration system that allows hunters to register themselves on Sundays and Wednesday's.

Continue prescribed burn rotation on the game area to combat encroaching brush.

Update current management plan and work from a 5-year operational plan.

#### M. PROMINENT CLIENTELE/INFLUENCE GROUPS

2008 was the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Michigan Duck Hunters' Tournament that is held at the game area headquarters each September.

The Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival donated \$1500 towards a new bat wing mower.

Southwestern Lake Erie Chapter of Waterfowl USA donated \$1,500 towards a new bat wing mower and \$1,850 for a roto-tilller.

Pheasants Forever donated \$1,500 of corn seed and prairie grass seed to help create and restore native prairie grass fields.

Other groups or individuals include; Detroit Audubon Society and Adam Byrne.

#### N. PROBLEMS OR OPPORTUNITIES

Phragmites continues to be a problem, requiring constant and intensive management.

Continue relationships with local wildlife conservation organizations and non-profit organizations, as well as developing new relationships to increase donations and volunteerism.