

## Dove Hunt Concerns

- Concerns raised about preparation for the event were first brought to my attention on or about Oct 16<sup>th</sup> by an individual that was told there were game violations. The individual was not directly involved and did not have first-hand knowledge.
  - I inquired with the member that organized the event to get more information.
    - He informed me the details of what was done, when it was done in preparation for the youth hunt, and who was involved. (work records matched what I was told)
    - The hunt took place in early September, so there was not an immediate concern over that, however I was concerned that there could be an issue with the area as the Waterfowl season was now open and the rules were not consistent between Dove and Waterfowl.
    - I went to the Dove field the following day with my dogs and walked the field to inspect and found no signs of remaining Sunflower Seeds on the site (which would be a concern for waterfowl) so I felt we were not in any situation that would create a violation.
- At the Oct 28<sup>th</sup> Darr meeting, a different member voiced concerns about the Dove Hunt.
  - Although most of his displeasure seemed to be about when the hunt was held.
  - He also stated that the mowing of the Sunflower seeds prior to the hunt were a violation and that the youth that hunted the hunt could have gotten in trouble.
    - This was verified to not be correct during the investigation.
  - Several key points to his complaints include:
    - The Regulations for Waterfowl and Doves are not consistent, and the Dove hunt was well prior to the opening of Waterfowl season.
    - He stated that he was not there at the time the preparation was done but had learned of it while attending the Hunter Safety Course.
      - The attendance records of the Hunter Safety Course do not include any names that were consistent with those on the work sheets for the field work, so there is now third-party information involved.
    - The three key phases in the regulations are:
      - Crop Manipulation
      - Normal Agricultural Practices
      - Baiting
    - We also not only need to adhere to the regulations of the ODNR but also to the USDA which holds the WRP contract which don't exactly align either.
- Mr. Rudes requested that I do a more in-depth investigation into the events and provide a report as to the findings of that investigation. I am providing this as my report.
  - I met with each person that was named as I went through the investigation.
    - Each reported basically the same information with some small variations but nothing I felt was a "red flag"
    - I verified the information I was given and compared it to the sign in sheets to determine the timelines were consistent and found they were.
    - I determined that to the best of my ability there were no waterfowl violations that had occurred as I believe the seeds were gone well prior to the opening of waterfowl season.
    - Hunting Doves over manipulated crops is also not a violation.
    - At this point I was confident that there weren't game violations committed.
    - During this time, I also determined there were numerous misinterpretations of the regulations involved, and many were not entirely correct (mine included)

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- I contacted the ODNR and met with a representative with the following goals:
  - Ensure my thoughts were on track and that we were not violating regulations.
    - I am confident that my interpretations were correct and there are not violations on our property.
  - Get clarity on the regulations for us to stay compliant.
    - There is a lot to this but to Simplify it and put in common terms:
      - “Normal agricultural practices” are fields or areas that have been harvested or prepared for planting.
        - All Hunting Is LEGAL in this scenario.
          - Points to note ODNR follows Soil and water conservations timelines on what is “Normal” time for these activities.
      - “Crop Manipulation is Mowing or flattening of crops for the purpose of attracting wildlife rather than re-planting or harvesting, i.e. mowing sunflowers and scattering seeds without intending to harvest them.”
        - Dove Hunting is LEGAL in this scenario.
        - Deer Hunting is LEGAL in this scenario.
        - Waterfowl hunting is ILLEGAL in this scenario.
      - Baiting is placing grain or other common food or attractant materials in a manner to attract wildlife to a specific location i.e. a pile of grain, apples, or minerals near a stand.
        - Deer Hunting is LEGAL in this scenario.
  - It is my recommendation that we update at our Darr Rules and ensure we simplify and write them so that this section provides better defined practices so there is less confusion in the future.
  - I also believe this is a case of someone getting secondhand information they were unhappy about and drawing conclusions that were not accurate.
  - Moving forward, we should implement a practice of verifying there is no remaining food source left in the areas around the marshes that was put there by means (other than nature) PRIOR to the Opening Waterfowl Hunt.
    - Waterfowl hunting is the true concern here and if the status is confirmed prior to our first hunt annually, we can easily reflect on those findings if needed. If anyone does anything that changes that status after the inspection, that would be an easily definable violation.
  - My goal at this time is to reach out to Soil and Water Conservation and get the Timelines that the ODNR references so that we can finish updates to our rules before January meeting.
- In conclusion I do not believe anything was done by anyone in this situation that committed State or Federal (Waterfowl-related) violations. I have met with the people involved and we have resolved the current event and do not feel any further action is needed on this event.
  - We now will work to simplify and clarify what will be done moving forward.

Regards,

Bud Baringer Darr Chair 12/5/25

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