



# MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

*“A Total Wetlands Experience “*

## *February, 2017 Activity Report*

*2016 Hatch Now Expected to Approximate 2014-2015 Levels*

Preliminary indications based on ~75% data collection from ~1,800 boxes suggest Maryland public lands wood duck production will now be comparable to recent years in the 7,500-7,600 instead of exceeding 8,000 ducklings. Several of the larger sites appear to be down moderately instead of modestly and the extent of the gain at Jug Bay may not be as high as thought. Some unexpected predation occurred at another site where the results of active nests were effectively overrated initially – high water permitted a surge in snake predation.

With a renewed effort on administration, reporting and volunteer recruitment as time now allows, I have also reconciled prior year's production reports while still chasing 2016 nesting results. In some cases, where we estimated the hatch on partial data or by extrapolating prior year data, the actual results have come in lower than projected. There may be overly conservative net result but I'm trying to honor the actual data in hand despite knowing that these results are probably somewhat understated. A full assessment will be available by the end of March when 4-5 larger projects will be finished.

Field activity on new sites is and has been robust. Box numbers are not large by site but MWDI expects to have more than 120 sites in 2017 up from 90 just a couple of years ago. Several Eagle Scout projects have been completed. Calvert County has seen a surge in dedicated volunteerism and a commitment by the County Parks office (more on these project specifics in the annual report). PG Park Rangers have added a few new sites. The Maryland DNR office responsible for wetland restoration of certain forest properties has added a few projects. Certain environmental remediation sites across the state have included modest box programs (6) and the Wellington DNR field office has initiated 3 projects. Functional box totals will be up but not materially given the limited nature of these new sites although project diversity is way up!

There is a continuing issue with certain sites getting them managed. Recently, the list has been significantly reduced but MWDI will begin to drop sites this season from ongoing reporting. Use of some type of index may be more relevant to assessing annual statewide production and more analysis will be conducted once this year's report is concluded.

The annual lumber order and box cut day have been completed with more than 170 boxes for both public and private use involved. Continuing kudos to the Safari Club Chesapeake Chapter, Patuxent State Park, Dupont's Chesapeake Farms and the Discovery Channel for funding this year's wood needs. DNR's Wildlife & Heritage Service continues with their critical predator guard funding support among other supplies provided and website services.

Private program interest has not abated and the contribution to the Maryland population continues to rise. Once again, the Akridge program managed by Clay Robinson in Talbot Co. took top honors generating over 800 ducklings!! Only Prince George's Patuxent Park - Jug Bay beat them for statewide honors. The competition and bragging rights are certainly "duckling productive" as Jug Bay added 25 boxes this past year.

Contact us to participate – either as a volunteer on an existing site or bring us a new public site. Thank you for your consideration. And thank you to the volunteers who make these results possible!

*Cliff Brown*