

FRIENDS OF HULLETT

MINUTES FROM BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

August 25, 2026 @ 7:30PM – West Perth Municipal Office, Mitchell

Present: Mat Shetler, Ryan Bayne, Mark Penhale, Duane Inkpen (Chair, remote), Steve Dalrymple, Donna Taylor, Craig McDonald, Doug Gordon, Mario Coniglio

Guests: Justin Johnson, Ben Elliot, Emily Dearing, Ally Gibson

Regrets:

Meeting was called to order at 7:33PM.

- Mat chaired the meeting.

1. Review minutes from previous meeting, July 28, 2026

- Minutes of the July 28, 2026 meeting were approved (unanimous)

New actions from this meeting to be reported on at the September meeting

- **ACTION 1:** Doug to report on developments(!) related to the planned photo contest.
- **ACTION 2:** Justin indicated holes in the fields (tile washouts?) will be looked after as time permits.

Actions from July 28, 2026 meeting

- **ACTION:** Justin to look into getting bollards installed near privy.
COMPLETED: steel was purchased and is on site, will be done before duck opener in September.
- **ACTION:** Justin or Ben will get \$200 gift certificates from appropriate retailers.
COMPLETED

Actions carried from earlier meetings for reporting at this meeting:

- **ACTION:** Justin to look into thinning out pine and firs in the identified plantations – STILL IN PROGRESS, ONGOING DISCUSSION – Justin will follow-up with David in planned operations meeting on April 23, 2026.
UPDATE: File passed on to a new person at MNR, there is a new pathway for approvals – need to apply for a forestry licence.
ONGOING DISCUSSION – Justin will report at September meeting

For October meeting

- **ACTION 4:** Membership sub-committee has talked to Scott and will finalize the proposal prior to Jan.
ONGOING: Sub-committee will develop an implementation plan for this Fall.

2. Treasurer's report – Ryan Bayne.

Prior to the meeting, Ryan emailed the board on August 25 and reported the following: "We are in the stage of year where our checking account will get multiple infusions of cash from our savings account and will have a balance below \$50,000, likely closer to \$15,000. We will also start to see larger expense payments starting next month. Finishing in July our assets and income are ahead of last year's pace."

Other issues raised in discussion:

- There are only marginal changes from July. In August, we are expecting large expenditures – more than ½ of capital expenditures will show up (e.g., excavator work, mulching).
- We are seeing the typical pattern of expenditures for this time of year.
- We are still trying to figure out the equipment piece in consultation with Janice.

3. Report from the Marsh – Justin Johnson

August 20, 2026 – August Marsh Report



Designates points of clarification/amplification related to submitted Marsh Report

Stewardship

1. Grassland Conversion

- Flynn has cut the tallgrass fields, will remove for hay shortly.
- Flynn is prepared to complete the spraying and ripping, spray mix has been determined.
- Other fields have been prepared, Ben to do some mulching in the field behind Homestead.
- Project currently on track for fall sowing with Ontario Nativescapes.

2. ISAF (Invasive Species Action Fund) Grant

- Materials have been purchased for all the kilns, Caelen to complete fabrication.
- Ally has been preparing the workshop, planned for September 5th.
- Signage required for the grant has been ordered.



Signage is in office and will be deployed later

3. Phragmites Control

- Drone Application completed by Janice Gilbert and her team on August 12th, 2026.
 - Still waiting to hear exactly how much was controlled.
 - Control came at no cost to FoH.
- ABCA intends to purchase a drone of their own, open to future aerial control at Hullett.
- Ben and Justin will need to complete additional control in areas the drone could not reach.



This is a big win for FoH – the drone can get into places otherwise inaccessible.

4. ~~1-20 Parking Lot~~ Compass Meadow Management

- 1-20 Meadow renamed; reflects the goals of the project/species present on site.
- Burn breaks have been established; Nick Peat was on hand for final design
- Meadow split into three cells
 - shape/area of cells balances habitat quality and future management needs.

- Justin in discussion with MNR / AFFES (Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services) to identify path forward on burning.
- Nick to provide concepts for the project infrastructure at October BoD meeting.



If we can get something sorted out with MNR in time (in the next month and a half), we might be able to burn next Spring.

5. Forestry Mulching

- Ben has been clearing out a lot of shrubs, currently ~18.5 ac.
- Given contractor costs are ~ \$1000 / ac, we will come out ahead by renting.
- The mulcher requires a lot of fuel (~120 L **per day**), still ahead of contractor rates.
- Mulcher will be picked up on September 4th.



UPDATE: Mulching is probably at the 20 acre mark at this time.

- Total cost of mulching is \$12,600, estimated to be \$20,000 when done.
- Approach taken has been valuable. 56 hours is the break-even point – if work takes more than 56 hours, it is more cost effective for us to do the work rather than to hire a contractor.

Hunt Management

6. Youth Waterfowl Clinic

- 5 spots are reserved for this year's Clinic.
 - We have posted on social a couple of times to attract attendees.
 - Items for kits have been purchased.
 - Delta Waterfowl stepped up with more swag for the kids this year.



Clinic is now full (10 participants), 7 are on the waitlist.

Financials

7. Current Financial Summary

- General Donations to Date - \$3,560.60
- Membership Donations to Date - \$6,565.51
- Donations to Pheasant Release Program to Date - \$65
- Hat and FOH Merchandise Sales to Date - \$74.30
- Youth Waterfowl Clinic to Date - \$100
- Pheasant Challenge Ticket Sales: \$2,163.76 (219 tickets; 18.25% sold)

Maintenance

8. Butterball Dredge

- VanDriels have completed the dredge work for the year.
- The mulching has been complete and half of the channel has been dredged.
- Paddlers have already been seen out enjoying the dredged area.
- Waiting for final invoice, expected final cost ~\$32,500

9. Duck Baiting Platforms

- VanDriels have placed the I-beam supports in for the duck baiting platform.
- Scott Dale to complete placement of the dock shortly, some costs offset by OFAH.



Baiting will begin as soon as Ben is done with the mulching, should be able to start feeding in mid-September.

10. General Maintenance

- Habitat and roadside mowing underway.
- Parking lots are being cleaned up, new parking barriers have been numbered.

Outreach/Communications

11. Hullett User Guide (HUG)

- Ally has sent the final version of the HUG to Blyth Printing; proofs to be provided soon.

12. Ontario Out of Doors (OOD)

- Ben is famous, check out pg.50 of the current edition of OOD!
- Hullett duck hunting and our work with OFAH is highlighted!

➔ see last two pages of these minutes

13. Global News Radio Interview

- Justin to interview with Peggy O'Neil of Global News to discuss grasslands at Hullett.
- Justin invited Marisa Roefs of Maitland Valley Conservation Authority to attend as well.
- Interview to be broadcast on September 12th, expected to reach over 50,000 listeners!

Miscellaneous

14. Summerhill Privy Door

- Door has been purchased; will be installed along with bollards ahead of waterfowl opener.

➔ Door needs to be painted

15. DUC Updates

- Ducks will be working on the Woodie Dyke later this fall; details have not been shared.
- Water Structure locks will be brought to Hullett when the work begins.

16. MNR Updates

- MNR is working internally on the process for forestry approvals; David Denyes to follow up with more information when it becomes available.

➔ Matthew Shakespeare will be handling our case.

4. Reports from the OMNRF/Ducks Unlimited

- Nothing new to report.

5. Website, Newsletter & User Guide & Draw for Waterfowl

- Draw will be on Sept. 26.

6. Pheasant Challenge, Youth Waterfowl Clinic

- Sold ~20% of tickets
- Steve submitted proposed pheasant release schedule to Justin and Ben for review

7. New Business

Craig: Discussed NAVHDA training sessions – participants noticed field improvements.

Donna: Mentioned that she was aware that individuals (from Clinton?) were dumping stray cats in the marsh.

Doug: Indicated that the planned photo contest is still being fine-tuned. No response from Henrys. Process of judging still under discussion.

ACTION 1: Doug to report on developments(!) related to the planned photo contest.

Mark: mentioned a safety concern related to where shooting can occur on the property. It can be done anywhere in Zone B as long as individuals are shooting safely.

Steve: Mentioned that there are holes in the field that should be marked to prevent injury. These are probably tile washouts

ACTION 2: Justin indicated holes in the fields (tile washouts?) will be looked after as time permits.

Emily: Thanked the board for the opportunity to work at FoH for the last 4 years.

Duane: Expressed appreciation to and thanked Emily, Ally and Caelen for their work at FoH.

9. In camera if needed

- There was no in camera meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:44pm

Next meeting is at the Hullett Office on Thursday, September 24, 2026, 7:30pm



A wheelchair-accessible blind

Ducks on deck

Hullett Marsh offers accessible waterfowl opportunity

SCOTT MCGUIGAN

For years, I'd been meaning to venture to Hullett Provincial Wildlife Area, yet somehow a day of hunting there always escaped me. That changed last fall when I made a point of visiting during what I figured would be peak migration. Mallards were the target, and when the sun crested the horizon, it was their plaintive quacks and calls that greeted us.

Hullett is within easy reach of most southern hunters, located along the Lake Huron shoreline, near Goderich. Home for me is about two hours away and I headed out in the wee hours of the

morning. I packed a modest spread of decoys and a couple of spinning-wing decoys — two calf sleds full. Hullett does not allow motorized vehicles.

Hunting stakes at Hullett are governed by a parking-lot system. Each parking space corresponds to a stake that is available to anyone. It would be unheard of for all 52 spaces to be occupied, so hunters can arrive with a reasonable expectation of finding a spot. Best of all, hunting there is free.

I had the privilege of hunting with Ben Elliott, a wildlife technician at Hullett, who had done a little bird-dogging to identify a productive blind. I followed Elliott down a well-maintained trail to a canoe he had left for us, then we paddled to our blind on a small island.

We set the decoys and were ready when legal shooting light arrived. As the sun rose, more and more mallards decided it was time to stretch their wings. The first bird circled out in front of us. I let out a few soft calls, and with one big swing, he turned and committed to the spread. I dropped him with a single shot at about 20 yards. The next few mallards followed a similar script, and Elliott and I dumped a pair of greenheads shortly after.



GETTING THERE

Hullett Provincial Wildlife Area is near Goderich, about an hour from London, or two hours from Toronto.

For info on parking lot/duck blind correlation, visit www.hullett-marsh.com.

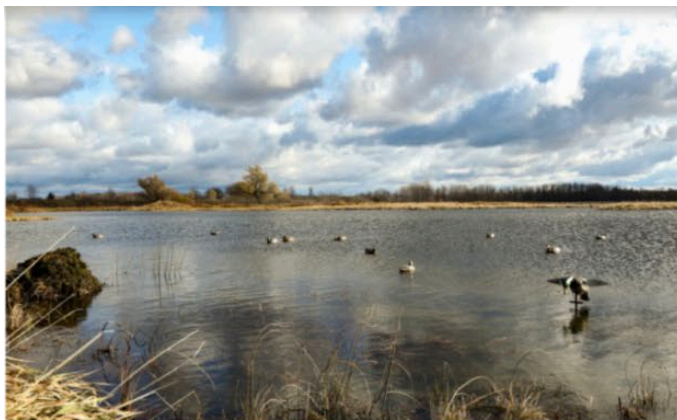
COST

Free

WHERE TO STAY

While there are no proper hotels nearby, you can find a number of B&Bs online. If you're into something bougie check out the Benmiller Inn and Spa (benmiller.ca).

PHOTOS: SCOTT MCGUIGAN



“ Hullett demonstrates what can be accomplished with vision, funding, and a few bulldozers. ”



By the end of the hunt, we had half of a two-man limit, but every bird was a mallard, and every one decoyed beautifully.

Where ducks act like ducks

I hunt all across the country, often in highly pressured areas. I also venture to the American Deep South enough to remind myself what truly pressured birds look like. I always enjoy hunting new places, but I especially enjoy hunting places where ducks act like ducks. What I mean by that is there are places where even a couple of notes on a duck call send birds racing for the heavens. In other places, it can take eight, nine, or even 15 passes before a duck “sort of” commits. And if you’re hunting an area like that, there’s a good chance a nearby gunshot will flare them for good on the sixth or seventh pass.

At Hullett, our ducks did it right. They decoyed like it was their job. For someone like me, who places more emphasis on fooling a bird than simply felling it, that made hunting an absolute joy.

The property

The Hullett property encompasses roughly 5,400 acres, of which 1,100 acres are marsh. Interestingly, the marsh itself was man-made in the 1960s. It demonstrates what can be accomplished with vision, funding, and a few bulldozers. Hullett is now recognized as a provincially significant wetland.

The property is overseen and managed by the Friends of Hullett (FoH), a local conservation organization. In recent years, the Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters (OFAH) has partnered on projects to improve hunting and access.

The OFAH helped improve canoe and kayak access for visitors and hunters, as well as the dredging of a small pond with walk-in hunting access. The OFAH has also helped purchase a tractor for controlling invasive plants. In 2024 and 2025, efforts focused on wheelchair-accessible blinds.

I think it’s critically important to have places like Hullett that provide hunting access for everyone. I commend FoH volunteers, as well as organizations like the OFAH that champion access.

Hunting notes

While I had a great day hunting, the walk back was long. If I were to do it again, I’d pack a little less gear or choose a closer blind. Although motorized boat access isn’t permitted, canoes offer a shorter route to many blinds.

I’d advise against bringing many decoys. If you love wild places as much as I do, grab a dozen, maybe a spinner, and a buddy, then head out and experience Hullett for yourself. ●