



February 29, 2024

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing the interests of hundreds of thousands of sportsmen and women, we are writing in support of sound, science-based management of sandhill cranes in the state of Wisconsin.

The population of sandhill cranes that call Wisconsin home has:

- Doubled in last decade,
- Exceeded the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) upper population goal by nearly 100%, and
- Averaged a 4.4% annual growth and 30% overall growth since 2017.

While this rapidly growing sandhill crane population thrills wildlife viewers, it has also brought expanding agricultural impacts and other negative interactions with humans.

To that end, we respectfully request that a Legislative Council Study Committee be formed to review the current population dynamics and potential associated management strategies of the species.

Wisconsin represents the largest breeding state for sandhill cranes in the eastern part of the country, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) should have the best available data and full suite of options available to properly manage this iconic species.

Per the USFWS, there are more than 1.4 million sandhill cranes in North America with an expanding population of roughly 58,000 within Wisconsin, which are considered part of the eastern population. This wildlife success story is the result of sound management of the populations, and investments in habitat important to the lifecycle of the crane. But it is not without ramifications.

For example, crop depredation claims by farmers in Wisconsin in 2022 totaled over \$1.6 million while treating seed corn with repellents was a farmer self-funded expense of over \$2 million in 2022. The number of associated birds killed through crop depredation permits increased over 200% within the last decade, with 1,200 sandhill cranes removed in 2022 alone. These killed birds, per United States Department of Agriculture guidelines, must be left in the field and not used in any way.

Sandhill cranes are a conservation success story, and their resurgence has been enjoyed by myriad of user groups across the country. Sportsmen and women have continually paid the way for conservation, benefiting both game and non-game species. We respectfully ask for further review of the management of sandhill cranes in Wisconsin through a Legislative Council Study Committee.

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
Delta Waterfowl
National Rifle Association
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance
Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation