

**Meeting Date:** March 20, 2024

**Agenda Item No. 9**

**Agenda Item:** Migratory Game Bird Seasons Preview    **Bureau Chief Approval:** SR

**Prepared by:** Jeffrey Knetter, Migratory Game Bird Program Coordinator

**Background:**

Idaho's migratory game bird seasons are set within a framework established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), after consulting with state fish and wildlife agencies. Regulatory decisions are made using biological data observed the previous year. This process and schedule allow for final season frameworks (e.g., outside dates, season lengths, bag limits) to be finalized early enough for state agencies to select and publish season dates well in advance of fall seasons. Furthermore, this process allows the Commission to set seasons for all migratory game birds concurrently.

The Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) process determines the general duck season framework. This process was adopted by the USFWS in 1996 and is used annually to evaluate duck habitat and populations. The AHM process informs the optimal season framework for U.S. duck seasons. Special harvest strategies are used for some of the less common ducks.

Goose seasons are determined by flyway management plans for each goose population.

American crow seasons are set by states as per the hunting regulations defined in the Federal Register (50 CFR 20.133).

Dove seasons are determined by the mourning dove harvest strategy for doves in the Western Management Unit, which is based on band returns.

Sandhill crane seasons are directed by the Pacific Flyway Council Rocky Mountain Population Crane Plan.

Staff will review the regulatory process at the meeting. Staff will also outline the frameworks finalized by the USFWS in October 2023 and review season proposals scoped with the public. The Commission will set Idaho's migratory game bird seasons during their April 17 conference call.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**

Idaho Code 36-104(2) grants authority to the Commission to determine when an open season may be declared for take of wildlife. IDAPA 13.01.09.301 establishes rules regarding the take of migratory game birds.

**Public Involvement Process:**

N/A. This agenda item is for Commission information.

**Justification:**

This agenda item is for Commission information.

**Staff Recommendation:**

No action required. Staff recommendations for migratory game bird seasons will be presented in April.