



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

April 9th, 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item No.: 1

Agenda Item: 2026 Swan Controlled Hunt Tags (Action)

Supervisor Approval: SR

Presented by: Jeff Knetter

Position/Title: Program Coordinator – Upland Game & Migratory Game Birds

Background:

Idaho's waterfowl seasons are set within frameworks established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) after they consult with all state fish and wildlife agencies. Regulatory decisions are made using biological data observed the previous year. This process is intended to finalize season frameworks (e.g., outside dates, season lengths, bag limits) early enough for state agencies to select and publish season dates in advance of fall seasons.

However, due to a combination of the USFWS shifting to a new rulemaking process, that should be more efficient in future years, and delays associated with federal staff vacancies and federal government process interruptions over the past year, federal frameworks for the 2026–2027 migratory bird seasons have not been finalized and may revert to the 2025–2026 frameworks (in one of two possible forms).

To ensure hunters are able to apply for swan controlled hunt tags during the application period from May 1 to June 5, as we wait for additional clarity on frameworks, the Department requests the Commission approve the swan controlled hunt tag number and bag limit now, with the understanding that Department staff will bring hunt dates for those tags before the Commission for approval at a future Commission meeting. Hunters will not know the exact start and end dates of the controlled hunt when they apply, (i.e., they will know +/- 1 week of when it will be) but the Department will communicate that information to successful applicants once the Commission acts on dates, prior to the hunt.

Additionally, the Department will bring the remaining migratory game bird seasons before the Commission at a future meeting, hopefully once additional clarity is provided on the federal framework.

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 the taking of wildlife. IDAPA 13.01.09.301 establishes rules regarding the take of migratory game birds.

Idaho's migratory game bird seasons are set within a framework established by the USFWS after meeting with all state fish and wildlife agencies.



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

Public Involvement Process:

The 2026–2027 migratory game bird season proposals, including swans, were available for public comment on the Department’s website from February 27–March 15, and open houses were held in most regions. Staff will provide a summary of public comments received on swans during the meeting.

Justification:

Commission action is required to set the number of swan controlled hunt tags available for 2026.

Staff Recommendation:

The Department recommends 50 swan tags for controlled hunt number 9301, with a daily and season limit of 1 swan per tag, for the 2026 season. The proposed dates for these swan tags will be brought before the Commission for approval at a future meeting, once the Department has received additional detail on the federal frameworks for the 2026–2027 migratory game bird seasons.

Suggested Motion:

I move the Commission approve 50 controlled hunt swan tags for hunt number 9301, with a daily and season bag limit of 1 swan per tag, for the 2026 season.



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

Swans

Current season structure was scoped. There were 15 online comments on the swan season proposal. Common themes included hunt area expansion, a later season, general support, and a waiting period for successful applicants.

The proposed season structure for swans is:

Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, and Kootenai counties:

Season Dates TBD

All tags (50) will be offered through a Controlled Hunt application process.

Proposed daily/season bag limit is 1 swan.

