

## IDFG Commission Meeting – April 11, 2017

### 2016 Migratory Game Bird Season-setting

Idaho's migratory game bird seasons are set within frameworks established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), after they consult with all state fish and wildlife agencies.

Beginning with the 2016-17 hunting seasons, a new process and schedule were used for setting annual migratory game bird hunting regulations.

- the traditional process for setting regulations became untenable.
- Service addressed this situation with implementation of the 2013 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for issuance of annual regulations permitting the hunting of migratory birds (SEIS13).
- currently, combined early and late season regulatory decisions.
- regulatory decisions will now be made using biological data observed the previous year.

This single process and new schedule mean the season frameworks (e.g., outside dates, season lengths, bag limits) will be finalized earlier, and will enable state agencies to select and publish their season dates well in advance of fall seasons.

- this process will allow the Commission to set seasons for all migratory game at the same time; consequently, all migratory game bird regulations will be published in the same brochure.

The Adaptive Harvest Management process determines the general duck season framework.

- process adopted by Service in 1996; used to evaluate duck habitat and populations annually to select 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.

IDFG conducted a hunter opinion survey in 2016 to assess hunter preferences on how to structure waterfowl seasons and zones, within the confines of the federal framework. This information will be used to guide Idaho waterfowl season proposals for the next five years; 2016-2020.

Important results from the 2016 waterfowl hunter preference survey are:

- ✓ Most Idaho waterfowl hunters said they prefer continuous seasons, rather than split seasons.
- ✓ Hunters in most of north and southwest Idaho preferred waterfowl seasons that start and end later, to allow for hunting opportunities as close as possible to the end of the Federal Framework (as late in January as possible).
- ✓ Hunters in much of east Idaho preferred waterfowl seasons that start as early as possible in October to allow for hunting opportunities prior to wetlands freezing.

Recommendations presented today reflect hunter desires within the current Federal Framework.

## WATERFOWL

### Youth Waterfowl Season:

Proposed season structure:

Statewide: September 30-October 1

### Ducks:

The proposed season structure for ducks is:

Zone 1: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018; Scaup: October 7, 2017 – December 29, 2017

Zone 2: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018; Scaup: October 7, 2017 – December 29, 2017

Zone 3: October 14, 2017 – January 26, 2018; Scaup: November 4, 2017 – January 26, 2018

Zone 4: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018; Scaup: October 7, 2017 – December 29, 2017

Proposed daily bag limit would be 7 ducks; but not more than 2 female mallards, 2 redheads, 3 scaup, 1 pintail, and 2 canvasbacks.



### Canada geese:

The proposed season structure for Canada geese is:

Zone 1: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018

Zone 2: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018

Zone 3: October 14, 2017 – January 26, 2018

Zone 4: September 1, 2017 – September 15, 2017 & October 7, 2017 – January 4, 2018

Zone 5: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018

Proposed daily bag limit would be 4 Canada geese, except in Zone 4 during September 1-15, when the daily bag limit would be 5 Canada geese.



### Light Geese (Snow and Ross's Geese):

The proposed season structure for light geese is:

Zone 1: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018

Zone 2: November 5, 2017 – January 19, 2018 & February 10, 2018 – March 10, 2018

Zone 3: November 26, 2017 – March 10, 2018

Zone 4: October 14, 2017 – January 26, 2018

Zone 5: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018

Zone 6: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018

Proposed daily bag limit would be 20 light geese.



**White-fronted Geese:**

The proposed season structure for white-fronted geese is:

- Zone 1: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018
- Zone 2: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018
- Zone 3: October 14, 2017 – January 26, 2018
- Zone 4: November 6, 2017 – February 18, 2018
- Zone 5: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018

Proposed daily bag limit would be 10 white-fronted geese.



**Sandhill Cranes:**

The Pacific and Central Flyway Management Plan for the Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) of sandhill cranes allows for the regulated harvest of cranes when the population exceeds 15,000, as estimated by the average of the three most recent reliable surveys. Based on the allowable harvest for this population, 2,362 sandhill cranes may be harvested from the RMP during the 2017 hunting season.

Idaho’s 2017 crane harvest allocation, as provided by the Flyway Management Plan, is 337 cranes, up from 287 in 2016.

There are five hunt areas in Idaho. To accommodate the increased harvest allocation, the Department proposes the following actions:

- Increase the number of tags available in each hunt area. See table below.

All tags (550) will be offered on a first-come first-served basis at any vendor as per the allocation below.

Hunt Area	Season	Tags
1 - Bear Lake	9/1-9/15	238
1 - Bear Lake	9/16-9/30	119
2 - Teton	9/1-9/15	35
3 - Fremont	9/1-9/15	41
3 - Fremont	9/16-9/30	41
4 - Jefferson	9/1-9/15	23
4 - Jefferson	9/16-9/30	24
5 - Swan Lake	9/1-9/15	29

The daily limit is 2 cranes for all hunts. The season limit is 2 cranes.

**Doves:**

Dove seasons are guided by the mourning dove harvest strategy for doves in the Western Management Unit, which is based on band returns. The USFWS approved the STANDARD (60 days; 15-bird bag) regulatory alternative for the 2016 season, which allows for a maximum season of 60 days, occurring between September 1 and January 15.

The proposed season structure for doves is:

Statewide: September 1 – October 30

Proposed daily bag limit: 15 mourning and white-winged doves in the aggregate.

**American Crow:**

American crow seasons are set by states following guidance provided for in the Federal Register (i.e., 50 CFR 20.133). The season shall not exceed 124 days during a calendar year, and shall not be permitted during the peak crow nesting period within a State.

The proposed season structure for American crows is:

Statewide: October 1 – January 31

Proposed daily bag limit: no limit.