

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, Coots, and Wilson Snipe:

The proposed season structure for ducks (Scaup listed separately), **coots, and Wilson's snipe** is:

Zone 1: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018; Scaup: October 7, 2017 –December **29 31**, 2017

Zone 2: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018; Scaup: October 7, 2017 –December **29 31**, 2017

Zone 3: October 14, 2017 – January 26, 2018; Scaup: November **4-2**, 2017 – January 26, 2018

Zone 4: October 7, 2017 – January 19, 2018; Scaup: October 7, 2017 –December **29 31**, 2017

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

Proposed daily bag limit would be 25 coots and eight Wilson's snipe.

