

Meeting Date: July 14, 2021

Agenda Item No. 5E

Agenda Item: Goose Zone Selections (ACTION)

Bureau Chief Approval: TB

Prepared by: Jeffrey Knetter, Upland Game and Migratory Game Bird Program Coordinator

Background:

Zones and split seasons are special regulations designed to distribute hunting opportunities and harvest according to temporal, geographic, and demographic variability in waterfowl populations. There are established guidelines to provide a framework for zones and splits.

For geese,

- A zone is a geographic area or portion of a state, with a contiguous boundary, for which independent dates may be selected for the goose season.
- Zone and split options selected by a state may be changed annually.

Any state may continue the configuration used in the previous year. If changes are made, the zone and split-season configuration must conform to the following:

- No restriction on number of zones,
- Seasons may be split into 3 segments, and
- Three-segment seasons for Canada geese and white-fronted geese require Pacific Flyway Council and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval and a 3-year evaluation by each participating state.

The deadline for states to announce changes to goose zones occurs at the annual fall Pacific Flyway Study Committee meeting August 23-27, 2021.

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 take 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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service after they meet with all state fish and wildlife agencies.

Public Involvement Process:

In 2019, the Department conducted web-based surveys to obtain input from hunters on their preferences on how to structure goose seasons and zones, within the confines of the federal framework. There were over 4,100 respondents to the 2019 goose hunter opinion survey. The Department proposes to use responses from the hunter opinion survey and input received during the 2021 migratory game bird public input period (March 2021) to inform recommendations for changes to goose zones for the 2022–2023 seasons, and to guide Department recommendations for goose seasons through 2025.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend changes to goose zone configurations in the Panhandle Region to align with changes to duck zones approved by the Commission in May 2021. Staff also recommend changes to Canada goose zones in eastern Idaho to better align with hunter preferences.

This update is provided for Commission information and input before the Department announces any changes to goose zones at the August Pacific Flyway meeting. These goose zone configurations would be in effect and apply to the Commission's season-setting action

for the 2022-2023 waterfowl seasons (action scheduled spring 2022). Although goose zone configurations may be changed annually by notifying the Pacific Flyway, configurations would remain in place until changed.

Action Requested:

Adopt staff recommendations for goose zone configurations for the 2022-23 hunting seasons.

Suggested Motion: Commission adopt staff recommendations for goose zone configurations to take effect for the 2022-23 hunting seasons.