

Meeting Date: July 14, 2021

Agenda Item No. 5.H.

Agenda Item: Hunt Structure for Swans: Controlled or General Hunt. **(Action)** **Bureau Chief Approval:** TB

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

Background:

The federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act regulates the hunting of migratory game birds, including swans and other waterfowl. The Commission previously endorsed seeking federal agency approval for a swan hunting season in the Panhandle Region. The Pacific Flyway Council recommended a change to the swan season framework for the Pacific Flyway to allow a swan season in northern Idaho with up to 50 tags and a one-bird bag limit. This change was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in October 2019.

The Commission received approval for agency-sponsored legislation that included creation of a game tag for swans that the 2020 legislature approved. The Commission later adopted rules for tag requirements, and Idaho's first swan hunt was held during fall 2020. Tags (50) were offered on a first-come, first-served basis at 10 a.m. MDT on August 1, at any vendor. These tags sold out very quickly, which caused frustration with some constituents.

Under existing controlled hunt frameworks applications for controlled hunts may be submitted electronically through the automated licensing system at any vendor location, including Department offices, through the Internet, or via telephone, not later than the date specified by the Commission. For consistency with nonresident limits for big game controlled hunts, the Commission adopted a temporary rule to apply the 10% nonresident limit to game birds controlled hunts as part of the omnibus/zero-based rulemaking package for IDAPA 13.01.09.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

IDAPA 13.01.09 contains the rules governing the taking of game birds.

Public Involvement Process:

The Department sought public input on a potential controlled hunt for swan tags via the Department website. Interested stakeholders were able to comment on this topic from April 12-23. There were 127 individuals who participated in the public comment period; 28 of the comments were outside the scope of the question and were not relevant (i.e., opposition to any kind of swan hunting). Of the remaining 99 comments relevant to the proposal, 77% (76) supported a controlled hunt framework. Eleven (11) 2020 swan tag holders provided comment; 3 supported a CH framework while 8 opposed it.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Commission adopt a Controlled Hunt framework to distribute swan tags for the 2021 season. Because the initial fall controlled hunt application period for game birds (turkey) has already occurred, staff recommend an application period to coincide with the second big game controlled hunt application period from August 5-15.

Action Requested:

Adopt staff recommendation for swan tag distribution.

Suggested Motion: Commission adopt staff recommendation to implement a Controlled Hunt framework to distribute swan tags for the 2021 season.