

Goose Zones and Season Splits, 2021-2022 – July 23, 2020

Zones and splits are Federal regulatory options that allow states some flexibility to manage goose hunting opportunity when geese are most available to hunters or align with hunter preferences. A state may establish zones (geographic areas with a contiguous boundary) where independent seasons may be established within Federal goose season frameworks. State established goose zones and season splits follow guidelines established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. States have the option to review and modify zones and splits each year. The following considerations are for the 2021-2022 goose seasons. The deadline for states to announce changes to goose zones occurs at the annual fall Pacific Flyway Study Committee meeting August 24-28, 2020.

Since 2012, the Department has conducted annual mail and web-based waterfowl hunter surveys to obtain input from hunters on season preferences and, when appropriate, how to structure zones and splits within the confines of the federal framework.

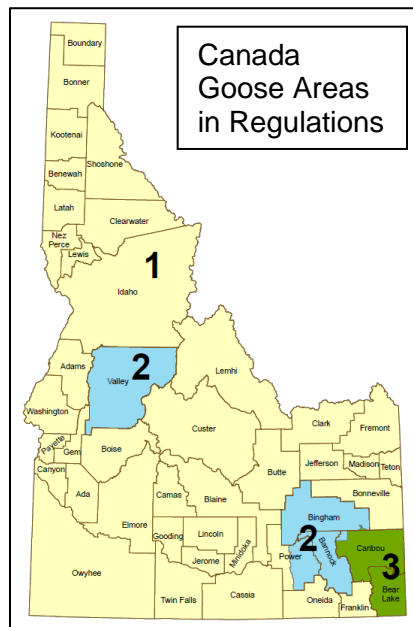
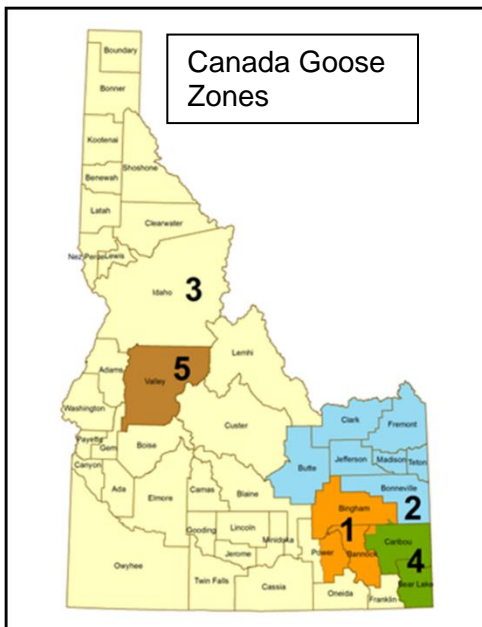
Survey response summaries from the 2019 goose hunter opinion surveys were reviewed with regional staff the week of July 6. Important results from this survey include:

Canada Goose (n = 4,138)

- ✓ Most (>70%) respondents said they prefer continuous seasons.
- ✓ Most (>70%) respondents said they prefer seasons held at the same time as duck seasons.
- ✓ Hunters in much of Idaho preferred Canada goose seasons that start and end later, to allow for hunting opportunities as close as possible to the end of the Federal Framework; hunters in Zone 4 prefer seasons to start as early as possible.
- ✓ Hunters in Zone 1 and Bonneville County preferred goose seasons that start and end as late as possible.

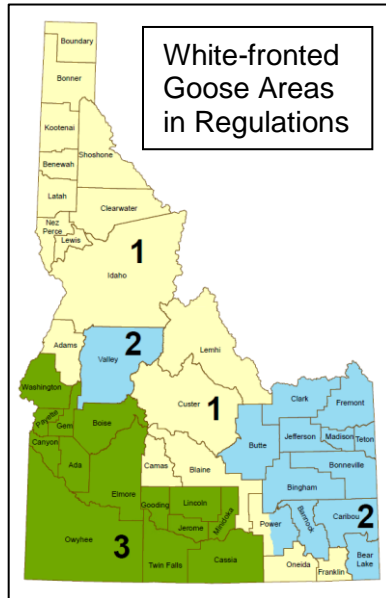
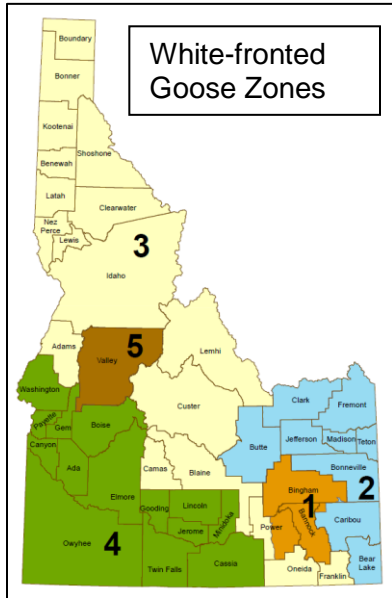
Although hunters in Zone 1 prefer Canada goose seasons that end as late as possible, the Department recognizes that, to a large degree, access to waterfowl hunting in Zone 1 is controlled by the Shoshone-Bannock tribes who manage their access consistent with earlier season framework dates. Setting a later season in Zone 1 at this time would not result in later hunting, as access would likely be denied.

Similar to duck seasons, both the Southeast and Upper Snake regions believe it is in waterfowl hunters' best interest for the Department to improve our working relationship with the tribes and address concerns related to establishing a later season framework before proposing changes.



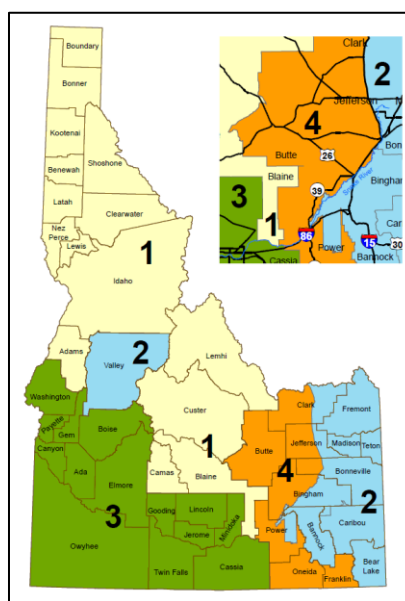
White-fronted Goose (n = 497)

- ✓ Most (nearly 70%) respondents said it was not important for the season to occur at the same time as duck seasons.
- ✓ Most (>75%) respondents said they prefer continuous seasons.
- ✓ Hunters in much of Idaho preferred white-fronted goose seasons that start and end later; however, white-fronted geese are only present in a small portion of the state (i.e., southwestern Idaho) during the time when hunting is allowed by Federal Framework.



Light Goose; snow and Ross's geese (n = 945)

- ✓ Most (nearly 70%) respondents said it was not important for the season to occur at the same time as duck seasons.
- ✓ Most (nearly 70%) respondents said they prefer continuous seasons; however, a lower percentage (56%) of hunters in Zone 2 favor a continuous season, given they already experience a split light goose season.
- ✓ Hunters in much of Idaho preferred light goose seasons that start and end later; however, light geese are only present in southern Idaho during the time when hunting is allowed by Federal Framework.



Light Goose Areas in Regulations

All regions recommended no changes to current goose zone boundaries for the 2021-2022 season. The Commission set all waterfowl seasons in April for the 2020-2021 season. Because seasons and bag limits in some goose zones are identical, we can represent seasons more simply by displaying fewer areas in the regulations.