

**Meeting Date:** April 13, 2018

**Agenda Item No. 1. A.**

**Agenda Item:** 2018-2019 Migratory Game Bird  
Season-setting

**Bureau Chief Approval:** SR

**Prepared by:** Jeffrey Knetter

**Background:**

Beginning with the 2016-17 hunting seasons, a new process and schedule are now used for setting annual migratory bird hunting regulations. Legal, administrative, and analytical burdens associated with establishing migratory game bird hunting regulations intensified during the last decade and the process became untenable. As a result, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service adopted an alternative process that combines early and late season meeting schedules with modifications to Adaptive Harvest Management frameworks. Regulatory decisions will be made using biological data observed the previous year.

This single process and new schedule mean federal season frameworks (e.g., outside dates, season lengths, bag limits) are finalized earlier, and enable state agencies to select and publish their migratory game bird season dates well in advance of fall seasons. Furthermore, this process allows the Commission to set seasons for all migratory game birds at the same time; consequently, all migratory game bird regulations will be published in the same brochure.

Staff recommendations for changes for the 2018-2019 Migratory Game Bird seasons include the following proposals:

Light Geese

- Remove the closure in Fremont and Teton counties in Zone 5.

Sandhill Cranes

- Create a new hunt area (Hunt Area 6 – Malad Valley) in Oneida County, Idaho, and allow crane hunting within the annual harvest allocation for Idaho.

**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 taking 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 meeting with all state fish and wildlife agencies.

**Public Involvement Process:**

In 2016 the Department conducted mail and web-based surveys to obtain input from hunters on how to structure the waterfowl seasons and zones, within the confines of the federal framework, which includes flexibility in the start and end dates between the Saturday nearest September 24 and the last Sunday in January. This information will be used to guide Idaho waterfowl seasons for the 2016-2020 seasons, rather than re-defining the seasons each year.

**Justification:**

The Adaptive Harvest Management process determines the general duck season framework. This process was adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1996 and is used to evaluate duck habitat and populations annually and 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. Data collected in 2017 indicate breeding habitat conditions and populations are at levels that can support a 107-day season for all waterfowl, except scaup (86 days). The maximum number of hunting days and bag limits allowed by the federal framework can be taken with no long-term impacts on Idaho's waterfowl resource.

The federal framework for light geese (snow and Ross's) was expanded in 2008-09 to March 10 for interior states within the Pacific Flyway. Idaho has implemented late-winter seasons since 2010.

In 2013, the federal framework for white-fronted geese was separated from Canada geese, and expanded to March 10 within the Pacific Flyway. Idaho has implemented a late-winter season for white-fronted geese since 2014.

American crow seasons are set by states as per the hunting regulations defined in the Federal Register (i.e., 50 CFR 20.133).

Dove seasons are determined by the mourning dove harvest strategy, which is based on leg band returns, for doves in the Western Management Unit.

Sandhill crane seasons are directed by the Pacific Flyway Council Rocky Mountain Population Crane Plan.

**Staff Recommendation:**

The Department's recommendation is to take the maximum allowed hunting days and bag limits allowed by federal framework. The proposed daily duck bag limit would be seven ducks, but not more than 2 female mallards, 3 scaup, 2 redheads, 2 pintail, and 2 canvasbacks. The proposed daily bag limit for Wilson's snipe would be 8 and the proposed daily bag limit for coots would be 25. The proposed daily bag limit for Canada geese would be 4, the proposed daily bag limit for white-fronted geese would be 10, and the proposed daily bag limit for snow and Ross's geese would be 20. The proposed possession limit would be three times the daily bag limit.

There is no daily bag limit for American crows.

The proposed daily bag limit for doves would be 15 mourning and white-winged doves in the aggregate.

The proposed daily and season limit for sandhill cranes is 2 cranes.

Final recommendations (attached) will be presented at the Commission meeting.

**Action Requested:**

Approve 2018-2019 migratory game bird seasons.

**Suggested Motion:**

The Commission adopt staff recommendations for the 2018-2019 migratory game bird seasons.

## WATERFOWL

### Youth Waterfowl Season:

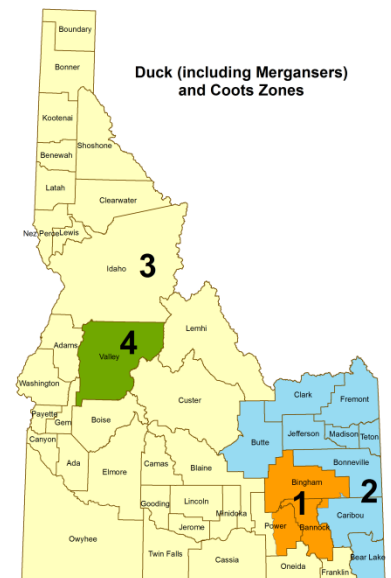
Proposed season structure:  
Statewide: September 29-30

### Ducks, Wilson's Snipe, & Coots:

The proposed season structure for ducks is:

- Zone 1: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019; Scaup: October 6, 2018 – December 29, 2018  
Zone 2: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019; Scaup: October 6, 2018 – December 29, 2018  
Zone 3: October 13, 2018 – January 25, 2019; Scaup: November 3, 2018 – January 25, 2019  
Zone 4: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019; Scaup: October 6, 2018 – December 29, 2018

Proposed daily bag limit for ducks would be 7; but not more than 2 female mallards, 2 redheads, 3 scaup, 2 pintail, and 2 canvasbacks. The proposed daily bag limit for Wilson's snipe would be 8 and the proposed daily bag limit for coots would be 25.

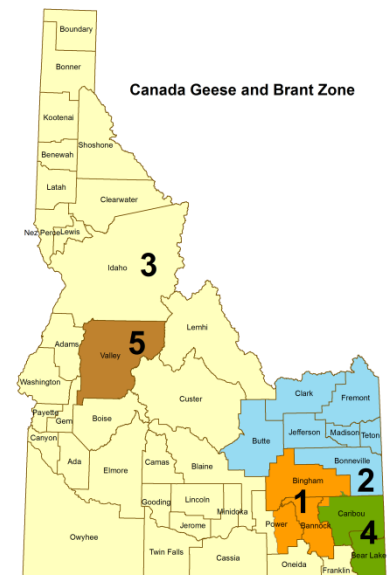


### Canada geese:

The proposed season structure for Canada geese is:

- Zone 1: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019  
Zone 2: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019  
Zone 3: October 13, 2018 – January 25, 2019  
Zone 4: September 1, 2018 – September 15, 2018 & October 6, 2018 – January 3, 2019  
Zone 5: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019

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 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019  
Zone 2: November 5, 2018 – January 18, 2019 & February 9, 2019 – March 10, 2019  
Zone 3: November 26, 2018 – March 10, 2019  
Zone 4: October 13, 2018 – January 25, 2019  
Zone 5: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019\*  
Zone 6: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019

Proposed daily bag limit would be 20 light geese.

\*[The Department proposes to remove the closure in Fremont and Teton counties.](#)

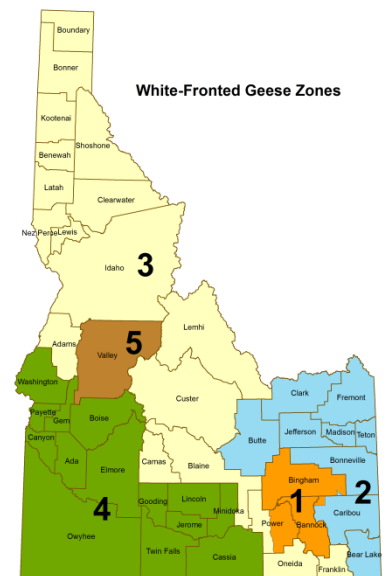


## White-fronted Geese:

The proposed season structure for white-fronted geese is:

- Zone 1: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019
- Zone 2: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019
- Zone 3: October 13, 2018 – January 25, 2019
- Zone 4: November 5, 2018 – February 17, 2019
- Zone 5: October 6, 2018 – January 18, 2019

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, 2,168 sandhill cranes may be harvested from the RMP during the 2018 hunting season.

Idaho's 2018 crane harvest allocation, as provided by the Flyway Management Plan, is 306 cranes, down from 337 in 2017.

The Department proposes the following actions:

- create a new hunt area (Hunt Area 6 – Malad Valley) in Oneida County, Idaho, and allow crane hunting within the annual harvest allocation for Idaho. The proposed Hunt Area would include that portion of Oneida County within the following boundary: beginning at the Idaho/Utah border on Old Highway 191, then north along Old Highway 191, then west on 1500 S, then west on Highway 38 to 5400 S, then south to Pocatello Valley Road, then west and south on Pocatello Valley Road to 10000 W, then south on 10000 W to the Utah/Idaho border, then east to the beginning point.

All tags (575) 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
6 - Malad	9/1-9/15	25

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 2018 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.