Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Special Meeting – April 13, 2023
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Boise, Idaho

A meeting of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission was held by telephone conference, attended by Commissioners Dave Bobbit, Don Ebert, Greg Cameron, Jordan Cheirrett, Derick Attebury and Ron Davies. Commissioner Tim Murphy was excused.

IDFG staff present: Acting Director Jim Fredericks, Deputy Director Jon Rachael, Kathleen Trever Deputy Attorney General; Lance Hebdon, Jon Rachael, Crystal Moerles, Rick Ward, Mary Boyer, Adam Park, Tricia Hebdon, Greg Wooten, Roger Phillips, and Michael Pearson.

Participating via phone: Kathleen Trever, Deputy Attorney General; and IDFG staff Carson Watkins, J.J. Teare, Craig White, Dan Garren, and Tom Curet.

Acting Chairman Don Ebert called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. MDT.

MISCELLANEOUS

Amendment to Agenda

Acting Chairman Don Ebert noted that the agenda will need to be amended to add agenda item # 4. Director Performance Rating (Action) item as posted by staff. Because the posting of this amendment occurred before the meeting started, but fewer than 24 hours in advance, a motion to amend the agenda is required.

23-24 Commissioner Bobbitt moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion to amend the agenda as posted by staff prior to the start of the meeting. Voice vote, motion carries.

Season Setting and Rules

Jeff Knetter, Upland Game & Migratory Coordinator presented background information and the 2023-2024 Migratory Game Bird Seasons proposals (Appendix 56, Exhibit 26).

Idaho's waterfowl seasons are set within a framework established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) after they consult with all state fish and wildlife agencies. Regulatory decisions are made using biological data observed the previous year. This process and schedule mean season frameworks (e.g., outside dates, season lengths, bag limits) are finalized early enough for state agencies to select and publish 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.

The Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) process determines the general duck season framework. This process was adopted by the USFWS in 1996 and is used annually to evaluate

duck habitat and populations. The AHM process informs 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.

The USFWS and its partners were able to resume survey operations and successfully complete the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey (WBPHS) during spring 2022 after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, typical AHM protocols resumed with observations of key state variables and annual updates from monitoring programs; AHM decision frameworks were developed to inform duck hunting regulations based on the observed 2022 breeding population size and the regulatory alternatives selected for the 2022 hunting season.

Based on the liberal regulatory alternative selected for the 2022-2023 hunting season, and an observed 2022 breeding population size of 1.04 million mallards - 610,000 mallards observed in Alaska, and 430,000 predicted in the southern Pacific Flyway - the optimal choice for the 2023-2024 hunting season in the Pacific Flyway is the liberal regulatory alternative: 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 ducks and dark geese was expanded in 2019-2020 to January 31.

The federal framework for light geese (snow and Ross's) was expanded in 2008-2009 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.

Sandhill crane seasons are directed by the Pacific and Central flyways management plan for the Rocky Mountain Population of greater sandhill cranes.

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

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

In 2019 and 2020 the Department conducted mail and web-based surveys to obtain input from hunters on how to structure migratory game bird (i.e., ducks, geese, and doves) seasons and zones within the confines of the federal framework. This information will be used to guide Idaho waterfowl seasons and zone configurations for the 2020-2025 seasons and was used to develop proposals for 2023-2024 migratory game bird seasons and 2022-2025 duck zone configurations.

In 2019 and 2020 the Department conducted mail and web-based surveys to obtain input from hunters on how to structure the migratory game bird (i.e., ducks, geese, and doves) seasons and zones, within the confines of the federal framework, which includes flexibility in the start and end dates. This information is intended to guide Idaho waterfowl seasons for the 2020-2025 seasons, rather than re-defining seasons each year. There were over 4,100 respondents to the 2019 goose hunter opinion survey, and over 6,300 respondents to the 2020 duck and dove survey.

The 2023-2024 migratory game bird season proposals were available for public comment on the Department's website from March 10–22, and regional open houses were held statewide.

The Department recommends taking the maximum allowed number of hunting days and bag limits allowed by federal framework. The proposed daily duck bag limit is 7 ducks and mergansers, but not more than 2 female mallards, 2 scaup, 2 redheads, 1 pintail, and 2 canvasbacks. The proposed daily bag limit for Wilson's snipe is 8 and the proposed daily bag limit for coots is 25. The proposed daily bag limit for Canada geese is 5, the proposed daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is 10, and the proposed daily bag limit for snow and Ross's geese is 20. The proposed possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

There is no daily bag limit for American crows.

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

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

23-25 Commissioner Cameron moved and Commissioner Attebury seconded a motion to adopt staff recommendations for the 2023-2024 migratory game bird seasons. Voice vote, motion carries.

MISCELLANEOUS

Executive Session

23-26 Commissioner Cameron moved and Commissioner Attebury seconded a motion to enter into executive session under Idaho Code 74-206 subsection 1 b.
Roll Call Vote: Dave Bobbitt, Don Ebert, Greg Cameron, Jordan Cheirrett, Derick Attebury and Ron Davies.

23-27 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion to come out of executive session with the record to reflect no final action was taken. Voice vote, motion carries.
Commissioners discussed personnel regarding director performance rating.

Director Performance Rating

23-28 Commissioner Cameron moved and Commissioner Bobbitt seconded a motion to give Director Fredericks a Solid Sustained Performance rating. Voice vote, motion carries.

Adjourn

Don Ebert
Chairman

Jim Fredericks
Secretary