

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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SECRETARY MORTON ANNOUNCES LOCATIONS AND CONDITIONS OF IRON SHOT USE FOR COMING WATERFOWL SEASON

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton announced today seven Federal hunting areas where pilot programs will be conducted this fall using iron shot as a substitute for lead in waterfowl hunting.

The areas are Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware and Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in New York for the Atlantic Flyway, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan and Sabine National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana for the Mississippi Flyway, Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge in Colorado and Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico for the Central Flyway, and Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah for the Pacific Flyway.

The pilot studies are necessary this year, Morton said, because lead poisoning, caused when waterfowl pick up spent lead shot while feeding, is taking a serious toll of birds annually. Solutions for stopping this unnecessary waterfowl loss must be pursued without delay, he added.

At these areas hunters who wish to assist in the studies will use iron shot on certain days in selected sites. Hunters taking part in the pilot program will be limited to 12 gauge guns because ammunition is available only in that gauge. When iron shot is not being used, areas will be open to hunters using lead shot and any gauge guns.

Cooperating hunters need make no application in advance. All they need do is check in at refuge headquarters, obtain free iron shot shells,

and receive a questionnaire to be returned at the end of the hunting day. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel will also conduct field observations during the hunting. The object of the questionnaire and observations is to evaluate the performance of iron shot in regard to number of birds killed and crippled, to judge hunter reaction to the new shells, and to enable the Fish and Wildlife Service to work out the necessary field regulations for a possible substitute for lead shot.

"Sportsmen clubs across the country and several State fish and game departments have already indicated their interest in solving the lead poisoning problem," Morton said. "American hunters have made a great contribution to the protection and management of wildlife. I'm sure they will support us fully in our attempts to find a solution to lead shot poisoning."

Because of some previously experienced problems with earlier iron shot in barrel scratching and choke deformation the Service is recommending that American made guns of post-1945 manufacture be used this year until all technical problems have been worked out. The arms and ammunition industry will continue to work on perfecting shot shells to assure prevention of barrel damage.

The pilot program will be evaluated by a committee of Fish and Wildlife Service biologists, technicians from arms companies, State fish and game agencies, and private conservation organizations.

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