

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release May 26, 1975

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## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SETTING UP 1975 MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING SEASONS SOUGHT

This year the public is being invited to comment on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposals for regulating migratory bird hunting. General guidelines are proposed for seasons, shooting hours, and bag and possession limits.

In the past, general guidelines such as these were established after consultation with the States involved and several national conservation organizations. Individual States then issued their own regulations on the basis of the federally established guidelines.

This year, however, the public is being given an added opportunity to comment on the Federal guidelines in the preparatory stage as they are issued to the States for their comments. All comments should be addressed to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: MBM, Washington, D.C. 20240. All relevant comments received by June 7, 1975, will be considered.

This proposal, as published recently in the Federal Register, proposed the earliest opening and latest closing dates and shooting hours for hunting migratory game birds. Daily bag and possession limits for sea ducks, cranes, coots, and gallinules and some other waterfowl, rails, snipe, and band-tailed pigeons, were proposed.

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The earliest proposed season opening date for ducks and geese nationwide is October 1, 1975. The latest proposed season closing date is January 20, 1976. Exceptions to this are proposed for sea duck, teal, and scaup because of their different migratory periods. Sea duck and teal seasons may open as early as September 1. Scaup seasons may extend to January 31, 1976.

Shooting hours are proposed to begin one-half hour before sunrise and to end at sunset.

No changes from last year's waterfowl limits are being proposed now except for mergansers and white geese.

Mergansers are proposed for inclusion in the regular duck bag limit instead of a separate bag limit as was done in the past because few people hunt solely for mergansers.

The proposed bag limit for white geese along the Pacific Flyway is lowered to three a day to reduce the kill rate. Pacific Flyway lesser snow geese come from two breeding locations--Wrangel Island off the Siberian Arctic Coast of Russia and the islands and coast of the Canadian Arctic. Last year marked the fourth in a row of poor production on Wrangel Island, and birds from the Canadian Arctic bird colonies raised fewer young than normal last year.

There are no changes proposed for the season framework dates and bag limits for whistling swans, lesser sandhill cranes, coots, gallinules, rails, common snipes, woodcocks, and band-tailed pigeons, mourning doves, or white-wing doves.

The Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends that finally adopted rules be as responsive as possible to all concerned interests.

Last November the Fish and Wildlife Service announced it would prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the 1975-76 hunting season, after an out-of-court settlement of a suit filed against the Service by private organizations. The draft EIS, titled "The Issuance of Annual Regulations Permitting the Sport Hunting of Migratory Birds," has been available to the public since February 11, 1975, with a comment period ending April 14, 1975. Public hearings for comments on the draft EIS were also held during March. The EIS is scheduled to be published in final form on or about June 1, 1975.

The out-of-court settlement made no mention of the public comment on hunting guidelines but the Fish and Wildlife Service decided to take this additional action to achieve greater public involvement in the decision-making process.

The final promulgation of migratory bird hunting regulations for the continental United States and Hawaii for the 1975-76 season will take into consideration the comments and testimony received. Comments, testimony, and any additional information received may lead to the adoption of final regulations that differ from the proposals contained in the recent Federal Register publication.