

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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STEEL SHOT PROPOSED FOR WATERFOWL HUNTING IN ALL FOUR FLYWAYS;
32 STATES AFFECTED IN 1978

Thirty-two States and parts of all four migratory waterfowl flyways would be affected by steel shot proposals for the 1978-79 waterfowl hunting season, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced.

The proposed regulation was published in the Federal Register November 23. Public comments on the proposed ruling will be accepted until December 31, 1977.

Still to come, probably before January 1, are proposals to govern which shotgun gauges must use the steel shot instead of the lead-loaded shells.

The proposed regulations to designate zones in the 32 States represents the third year of a phased implementation of nontoxic steel shot for waterfowl hunting. The zones proposed for nontoxic shot use are areas in which the deposits of lead shot by waterfowl hunters are highest, and the ingestion of spent lead pellets by waterfowl occurs most frequently. Lead pellets are toxic to waterfowl when mistaken for seeds or grit, and the ingestion of spent lead pellets is estimated to cause the deaths of 2 million waterfowl each year.

In 1976 zones where steel shot was required were established in portions of nine States in the Atlantic Flyway. In 1977 zones were established in portions of 24 States in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways.

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The current proposal adds the Pacific and Central Flyways to include all four, and makes the implementation of the regulation national in scope for the first time.

In 1976 and 1977 steel shot was manufactured in 12 gauge shells only. As a result, the Service published regulations permitting those using guns of gauges other than 12 gauge to continue to hunt in the zones with toxic shotshell loads. This amendment to the regulation is being considered for 1978, and it will be published for public comment in the next few weeks.

Detailed breakdowns on the specific designated zones will be listed in press releases to be issued by the Service's six regional offices. The States where the ban will be in effect are:

Atlantic Flyway--Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Mississippi Flyway--Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

Central Flyway--Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas.

Pacific Flyway--Alaska, California, Idaho, Nevada, and Washington.

Comments should be submitted to the Director (FWS/MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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