



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ADDITIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING REGULATIONS PROPOSED; FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AVAILABLE

With severe drought striking prime duck nesting areas of prairie Canada and the north central United States, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced it will consider tightening hunting restrictions for the 1988-89 season if results of waterfowl surveys indicate duck populations need additional protection.

In a June 7 Federal Register notice proposing supplemental migratory bird hunting regulations for 1988-89, the Service said it will consider changes in duck season lengths, opening and closing dates, and bag limits, and would also review special seasons and options if aerial and ground surveys of duck populations indicate decreased numbers and poor production as a result of the drought. Preliminary results of breeding-ground surveys indicate that habitat conditions are the poorest observed in many years.

Estimates of duck breeding populations will be completed and made public in early July. Specific proposals for most duck and goose hunting seasons will be made in early August after completion of additional July surveys of duck habitat and production. Some waterfowl seasons, such as September duck seasons, will be addressed in late June during consideration of regulations for early hunting seasons (seasons beginning before October 1).

In other actions described in the June 7 document, the Service announced its intent to establish regulations for Louisiana that are consistent with other states in the Mississippi Flyway beginning with the 1988-89 hunting season. This action is being taken because of depressed duck populations, poor conditions on the breeding grounds, and an increase in the overall duck harvest in Louisiana. This action would mean that season lengths in the west zone of Louisiana would be the same as in the rest of the Mississippi Flyway, rather than 5 days longer as in the recent past.

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The Service also announced that it has received proposals for experimental special-permit tundra swan hunts in Virginia and New Jersey. In New Jersey, the season would be limited to Salem, Cumberland, and Burlington Counties, and 200 permits would be issued with an anticipated harvest of fewer than 60 swans. Virginia proposes a 90-day season concurrent with its snow goose season; 600 permits would be issued with an expected harvest of 300 swans. The Fish and Wildlife Service will consider these proposals along with other waterfowl seasons in early August.

The June 7 Federal Register notice also contains several other supplemental proposals concerning migratory bird hunting regulations. Interested persons should consult this document as well as proposals published earlier in the March 9 Federal Register. Public comments on these proposals should be sent to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Matomic Building, Room 536, Washington, DC 20240. In addition, a public hearing on early season migratory bird hunting regulations will be held at 9 a.m., June 22, in the auditorium of the Department of the Interior, 18th and C Streets NW., Washington, DC 20240. A public hearing on late season regulations (seasons beginning October 1 or later) will be held at the same location on August 3.

Final Environmental Impact Statement on Migratory Bird Hunting Available

The Fish and Wildlife Service has published a final environmental impact statement on migratory bird hunting and copies are now available for public review. The document, titled "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Issuance of Annual Regulations Permitting the Sport Hunting of Migratory Birds," may be obtained by writing to the Director (FWS/MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Room 536 Matomic Building, Washington, DC 20240. Comments may be sent to the same address and will be received until July 17, 1988.

This document supplements the Service's 1975 final environmental impact statement on migratory bird hunting regulations. A draft of the supplemental environmental impact statement was issued to the public on September 22, 1987. Public comments on the draft have been received and considered in preparation of the final supplemental environmental impact statement now available to the public. The Fish and Wildlife Service will publish its record of decision on the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement as soon as possible, but not sooner than 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency's formal notice of availability of the document is published in the Federal Register. The anticipated publication date for that notice is June 17, 1988.