



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

### Fish and Wildlife Service

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#### AMERICANS AND CANADIANS WORK TOGETHER ON MIGRATORY BIRD SUBSISTENCE HUNTING ISSUES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking public comment on a draft environmental assessment aimed at resolving conflicts arising from the subsistence hunting of migratory birds in Alaska.

Subsistence hunters in far northern areas traditionally harvest ducks, geese, cranes, and sea birds. In Alaska, this subsistence activity occurs mainly during the spring and summer. In the northern and western portions of the state few waterfowl are available at any other time of the year. In northern Canada a comparable situation exists.

According to the Service's Alaska Regional Director Walter O. Stieglitz, spring/summer hunting conflicts with the closed season provisions of the 1916 Migratory Bird Convention between the United States and Canada.

Currently, the Convention calls for a period closed to all migratory bird hunting between March 10 and September 1, with a few exceptions. Subsistence hunters say restricting their activities during spring denies them fair access and traditional and customary use of the migratory bird resource. Many of these

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subsistence hunters are Native Alaskans who contend their traditional harvest violates a law they had no voice in developing.

Other waterfowl users fear subsistence hunters may deplete the resource, which they say could result in reduced opportunities for sport hunters. Subsistence hunting in Alaska currently accounts for about 5.5 percent of the total sport harvest of ducks and geese in North America.

The Service is inviting comments from the public on the draft document which outlines five options for addressing the subsistence issue, ranging from no action to modifying the Treaty to allow subsistence hunting. The Service's recommended alternative suggests amending the Convention to allow a carefully regulated subsistence hunt during part of the currently closed period.

Requests for copies of the document and comments regarding its content should be directed to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Director, 634 ARLSQ, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Director, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99503. Comments should be received by October 12, 1993.