



NEWS RELEASE

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NEW RULES FOR ARTISTS HUNTING DUCK STAMP HONORS

New entry dates, new entry fees, and new contest dates have been added to the challenges wildlife artists face in the contest for the top prize in their field--the annual Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest sponsored by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Rule changes released by the Duck Stamp Office set the entry postmark deadline at midnight, Friday, August 30, 1996, 16 days earlier than last year's deadline. The rules also raised contest entry fees to \$100. This increase in entry fees should cover all of the expenses of running the annual competition, according to Robert Lesino, Chief of the Service's Federal Duck Stamp Program.

The species eligible for portrayal this year are green-winged teal, black duck, Canada goose, greater scaup, and northern pintail. The new rules also clarify permissible subject matter. "Designs may include, but are not limited to, hunting dogs, hunting scenes, use of waterfowl decoys, national wildlife refuges as the background of habitat scenes, and other designs that depict the sporting, conservation, stamp collecting, and other uses of the stamp," Lesino said.

Another rule change sets a minimum age requirement of 18 for contest participation. The Service encourages younger wildlife artists to participate through their schools in the nationwide Junior Duck Stamp Design Program, Lesino said. The new rules also incorporate minor changes to the scoring system used in the contest's second round.

Traditionally held in the beginning of November, this year's contest will be held October 15-17, 1996, to coincide with the Service's annual National Wildlife Refuge Week observance. The contest will be held in the Department of the Interior Building Auditorium, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC. The public may view the 1996 Federal Duck Stamp Contest entries Tuesday, October 15, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Judging begins Wednesday, October 16, at 10:30 a.m. and continues until about noon the following day when the winner is announced.

The dates for the annual Duck Stamp First Day of Sale celebrations have also changed. These celebrations, hosted to honor the winning artist and announce the availability of the new

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Duck Stamp, have traditionally been held June 30 in Washington, DC, and July 1 in the artist's hometown. This year, however, the Washington, DC, First Day of Sale ceremony will be held June 27 at the National Postal Museum, where a new Duck Stamp exhibit will be unveiled. The artist's ceremony will be held June 29 in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, to honor last year's contest winner, Wilhelm Goebel.

Federal Duck Stamps must be purchased annually by all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older; however, they are also purchased by a growing number of stamp collectors and other conservationists as a way to contribute to wildlife and habitat conservation. Federal Duck Stamps are on sale for \$15 at most U.S. Post Offices, national wildlife refuges, and sporting goods stores.

From every Duck Stamp dollar, 98 cents is used for wetlands acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since 1934 when the Federal Duck Stamp was created, the stamps have raised more than \$500 million and helped purchase more than 4 million acres of habitat for the refuge system, which now includes 508 refuges. This vital refuge habitat benefits a wide range of wildlife, not just waterfowl. About one-third of our Nation's endangered species find food and shelter in wildlife refuges.

The Service commissioned artists to design the Federal Duck Stamp until 1949. Since then, annual contests have been held in which wildlife artists compete to have their design featured on the next year's stamp. The species eligible for portrayal change each year to ensure all species of North American waterfowl will eventually appear on a Federal Duck Stamp.

Although the winner of the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest receives no cash award from the Federal Government, winning artists stand to make hundreds of thousands of dollars from the sale of limited edition prints of their Duck Stamp design, as well as realize increased value in their other paintings.

For a copy of the 1996 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest rules and entry procedures, write: Federal Duck Stamp Program, 1849 C Street, NW., Room 2058, Washington, DC 20240; or telephone 202-208-4354.