



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: April 23, 2020

Agenda Item: 2020-21 All Migratory Bird Regulations

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background: Migratory bird hunting regulations pertain to cranes, snipe, doves, ducks, geese, swans, and coots, which are managed on a flyway basis. The eastern half of Montana is in the Central Flyway, whereas the western half is in the Pacific Flyway. We must follow federal season frameworks established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other than normal calendar rotation and the exception noted below, all aspects of prior seasons remain.

- The daily scaup bag limit would decrease from 3 to 2 in the Pacific Flyway and from 3 to 1 in the Central Flyway in accordance with the federal framework.
- To provide additional opportunity, Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) sandhill crane licenses would increase as follows: Wheatland/Sweetgrass Unit, 50 licenses to 70; Broadwater Unit, 20 licenses to 25, limit from 1 to 2. RMP crane season to go from 57 to 60 days to use the full framework allowed.

Proposed season dates for ducks, coots, geese, and swans:

- Pacific Flyway (PF) - Ducks, coots, and geese: Oct 3 - Jan 10 and Jan 16-20 (closed 5 days, Jan 11-15) (except scaup season closing Dec 27); swans: Oct 10 - Dec 1
- Central Flyway (CF) - Ducks and coots: Zone 1 - Oct 3 - Jan 7; Zone 2 – Oct 3 – Oct 11 and Oct 24 – Jan 19 (closed 12 days, Oct 12 – 23). A bonus teal season Oct 3 – Oct 11 in the CF will allow hunters to take 2 additional blue-winged teal.
- Central Flyway - Geese - Zone 1 - Oct 3 – Jan 10 and Jan 16 – 20 (closed 5 days, Jan 11 – 15); Zone 2 - Oct 3 – Oct 11 and Oct 24 – Jan 27 (closed 12 days, Oct 12 – 23); CF tundra swans: Oct 3 – Jan 7 (both zones, no split season).
- Duck, coot, and goose daily and possession limits for both flyways are proposed to be the same as in 2019-20, except for the changes noted above. The special two-day Youth Waterfowl Season will be Sept 26 – 27 in both flyway parts of the state (PF and CF).

Proposed season dates for “webless” migratory birds:

- Mourning doves: Sept 1 – Oct 30. Common snipe: Sept 1 – Dec 16
- RMP sandhill cranes (all special drawing licenses): Sept 1 – Oct 30
- Mid-continent sandhill cranes in CF (over the counter license): Oct 3 – Nov 29

Public Involvement Process & Results: FWP received 20 comments on migratory bird seasons. Twelve addressed extending waterfowl season end dates. Remaining comments dealt with increasing bag limits (3), establishing a spring season (3), zone boundaries (1), and to Montana’s wanton waste rule for waterfowl (1).

Alternatives and Analysis: Waterfowl season end date extension would require reducing days earlier to meet federal framework season lengths, but no consensus was specified. Waterfowl presence and hunting sites are influenced by late season weather. Federal bag limits, zones, and wanton waste are not under consideration.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends that the commission approve the proposed 2020-21 migratory bird regulations as presented by FWP.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission adopt final 2020-21 migratory bird regulations as presented by FWP, and that all other aspects of the previous season except for normal calendar rotation date changes are adopted.