



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: April 1, 2021

Agenda Item: 2021–2022 All Migratory Bird Regulations

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 Minutes

Background: Migratory bird hunting regulations pertain to cranes, snipe, doves, ducks, geese, swans, and coots, which are managed on a flyway basis. Two flyways occur within Montana, with roughly the eastern half of the state in the Central Flyway and the western half in the Pacific Flyway. Federal season and bag limit frameworks are established by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but the Fish and Wildlife Commission retains the authority to establish seasons for migratory birds within those frameworks. Other than normal calendar rotation and the exceptions noted below, all aspects of the previous season are recommended to remain in place.

- A new Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) sandhill crane hunting unit encompassing all of Cascade and Teton counties is recommended, with 20 licenses available by drawing.
- The Central Flyway tundra swan season is recommended as a general swan season, with trumpeter swans legal.
- At the request of the commission, the department conducted an opinion survey of Montana resident waterfowl hunters. The department presented the two most popular options for public comment, which concluded on March 15, 2021, at 5 p.m. See the attached sheet for the department's recommended season dates and structures.

Public Involvement Process and Results: A survey asking about preferences for duck and goose season dates was sent to 3,000 randomly selected Montana waterfowl hunters. In addition, public comment on the proposed season dates and options was solicited from Feb. 24 through March 15, and the department received 394 comments. Additional comment will be heard during this meeting.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends that the commission approve the department's recommendation. Analyses of the survey and public comment show substantial support for eliminating splits mid-season. There remains more support for maintaining split seasons within the Central Flyway in Zone 2, where river systems tend to hold waterfowl later into the winter.

Proposed Motion: I move that the commission vote to adopt as final the 2021–2022 migratory game bird seasons as presented by the department with all other aspects regarding previous season adopted, except for those influenced by routine calendar rotations.