



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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**Meeting Date:** December 14, 2021

**Agenda Item:** 2022 Spring Light Goose Conservation Order Regulations

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 Minutes

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**Background:** Montana is split between the Central and Pacific Flyways and complies with the corresponding U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) frameworks to establish waterfowl seasons. Within the Central Flyway (but not the Pacific Flyway), the federal framework allows for a Light Goose Conservation Order, which enables the take of snow geese and Ross's geese in the spring when other waterfowl seasons have closed. The conservation order has been implemented within some states to reduce or stabilize the populations of light geese that were damaging their northern nesting areas. A conservation order is a special management action that is necessary to control certain wildlife populations when traditional management programs are unsuccessful in preventing overabundance of the population. This is not defined as a spring hunting season because doing so would exceed the 107 days of hunting allowed under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The conservation order, for light geese (snow and Ross's) only, differs somewhat from regular hunting seasons.

Proposed dates and open area: March 1–May 15, 2022, for the entire Central Flyway within eastern Montana

No daily bag or possession limits

Shooting hours: half-hour before sunrise to half-hour after sunset

Shotguns are not required to be plugged to a 3-shot capacity

Electronic calls are not permitted (precluded by state law)

Baiting is not permitted (precluded by federal regulation and state law)

Lead shot is not permitted (precluded by federal regulation)

License requirements: A special, free light goose conservation order license will be required and available to residents and nonresidents so that the number of participating hunters and harvest can be determined and reported to the USFWS as required. No migratory bird license, prerequisite licenses, or federal duck stamp will be required.

**Public Involvement Process and Results:** Public comment was accepted through 5 p.m. November 22, 2021. Most comments were in favor of implementing the conservation order, although some of those that commented did not seem to understand that the Pacific Flyway portion (to include Freezout Lake) of Montana was not included in this order.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** The commission may consider foregoing authorizing a conservation order. Surveys of state and federal biologists in 2015 and again in 2021 indicate that there are very few opportunities to harvest light geese in the spring due to very few birds being present or available. The department does not anticipate any negative biological consequences associated with authorization of the conservation order

**Agency Recommendation and Rationale:** The department recommends the commission approve the proposed 2022 Light Goose Conservation Order for the Central Flyway in Montana.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the commission vote to approve the Light Goose Conservation Order for 2022 for the Central Flyway (and not the Pacific Flyway) in Montana as presented by the department and described in the appended draft 2022 Light Goose Conservation Order for the Central Flyway.