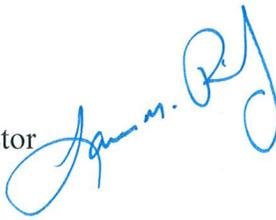


TO: Larry D Voyles, Director

FROM: Lawrence M. Riley, Assistant Director
Wildlife Management Division 

PRESENTER: Johnathan C. O'Dell, Small Game Biologist

TITLE: Consideration of Proposed Commission Order 21 and 22 for the 2013–2014 Hunting Season.

DESCRIPTION: The Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Order 21 (waterfowl) and Commission Order 22 (snipe), establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, and open areas for 2013–2014. A detailed description of proposals is available for public review at Department offices.

DATE: July 15, 2013

Summary:

Commission Order 21 – Waterfowl

Status – Arizona

During the 2012–2013 waterfowl season, 5,457 Arizona duck stamps were sold, which is a decrease of 6.6% from the 5,845 duck stamps sold the previous season.

The 2013 Arizona midwinter waterfowl survey counted 11,101 ducks (a 7.5% increase from the 2012 count), whereas the goose count was 1,031 (a 76% decrease from the 2012 count). Wide variations in these counts are common, and the midwinter survey is a 1-week snapshot of waterfowl in select areas of the state. Nationally, 2013 was a favorable year for waterfowl on the breeding grounds.

Although Arizona does not have many breeding geese, we do have small breeding populations in Units 1, 22, 23, and 27. The annual spring goose production surveys conducted in Units 1 and 27 counted 26 pairs.

Ducks

Robust waterfowl populations are forecast this year due to good carryover from last year, favorable water conditions on the prairies, and favorable conditions in most of the Intermountain West. Production of mallards in the coastal regions of the Pacific Flyway remains strong. Because of this, the prescription for the Pacific Flyway is a Liberal season for the flyway and Arizona.

Season frameworks for the Pacific Flyway are:

1. Liberal, 107 day season, 7 bird bag limit;
2. Moderate, 86 day season, 7 bird bag limit;
3. Restrictive, 86 day season, 4 bird bag limit.

Management plans for pintail, scaup, and canvasback prescribe bag limits and seasons for those species separate from the above frameworks. Despite good conditions overall for ducks, the long-term average population size for pintail and canvasback remains below the goals outlined in their management plans. This year's season for pintail has a 2 bird daily bag, scaup has a 7 bird daily bag, and canvasback has a 1 bird daily bag. Redheads will be the same as last year, 2 birds per day.

Geese

In 2002, the Pacific Flyway Council requested that the Service include geese in the duck framework extension as well. This was approved, allowing duck and goose seasons to run the same number of days. Goose seasons within Units 1, 22, 23, and 27 open later than goose seasons in the rest of the state due to stipulations within their management plans.

Coots and Common Moorhens

Commission Order 21 includes bag and possession limits and season structure for coots and common moorhens within the general duck season frameworks. The Department will continue to recommend the full Federal framework and bag limit on coots and moorhens which is 25 per day, either singly or in the aggregate. Possession for coots and moorhens is 25 in possession, either singly or in the aggregate. Although an Arizona State Waterfowl Stamp is not required for harvest of these species, hunters taking coots or moorhens must have in their possession an Arizona Migratory Bird Stamp that registers them for the Harvest Information Program. Harvest of these species is typically incidental to waterfowl hunting.

Possession Limit Changes

In March 2013, the Pacific Flyway recommended changing the possession limit of waterfowl from the current twice daily bag number to three times the daily bag limit. This is viewed as a positive change to increase hunter opportunity by allowing more days to be spent afield.

Justification

The Department recommends continuation of the Liberal package. The use of mountain and desert zones is intended to offer mountain hunters the opportunity to hunt ducks and geese when the birds are in those areas. Birds arrive earlier in the mountain areas of the state and leave as the waters freeze. In desert areas, many birds arrive later than in the northern areas and stay throughout the winter. Both zones receive the maximum allowance hunt days under both the Liberal and Moderate packages.

Under the Liberal package, there are 107 total hunt days allowed. In the Liberal recommendation above, 101 days are devoted to general waterfowl, 4 days to a Falconry-Only season, and 1

weekend to a Juniors-Only season in each zone. Federal frameworks require that the youth hunt be on weekend days within 14 days of the General season, but may be outside the General season frameworks. The bag limit recommendations for the Juniors-Only hunts will be the same as during the General season.

Arizona and California are required to coordinate seasons along the lower Colorado River area. California is required to match their season along the Colorado River with the Arizona season dates.

Department Recommendation

The Department recommends a Liberal package for Arizona, with restricted bags for pintail, canvasback, redhead, and hen mallard ducks. There is no recommendation for partial seasons this year, which simplifies regulations considerably. The waterfowl season has different season opening and closing dates for the mountain and desert zones. Federal frameworks do not allow the general waterfowl season to extend beyond January 26. However, junior hunts may occur into February.

Liberal Package

	<u>Mountain Zone</u>	<u>Desert Zone</u>
Juniors-Only	Sep 28– Sep 29, 2013	Feb 1 – Feb 2, 2014
Falconry-Only	Sep 30 – Oct. 3, 2013	Jan 27 – Jan 30, 2014
General Duck	Oct. 4, 2013 – Jan. 12, 2014	Oct. 18, 2013 – Jan. 26, 2014
General Goose	Oct. 4, 2013 – Jan. 12, 2014	Oct. 18, 2013 – Jan. 26, 2014
Restricted Goose Hunts	Nov 15, 2013 – Jan. 12, 2014 (Units 1 and 27) Nov. 15, 2013 – Jan. 26, 2014 (Units 22 and 23)	

The Mountain and Desert Zones in Arizona are defined by unit within the Federal Register as follows: Desert (South) Zone: Those portions of Units 6 and 8 in Yavapai County, and Units 10 and 12B–45. Mountain (North) Zone: Units 1–5, those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Coconino County, and Units 7, 9, and 12A. Essentially, the North Zone is in the mountainous, high elevation areas of Arizona; the South Zone is in the lowland, desert areas.

The Department is recommending adoption of the federal bag limit of seven ducks (including mergansers) per day, with no more than 7 scaup, 2 female mallards, 2 redheads, 2 pintails, and 1 canvasback taken in any single day. Recommended possession limits for ducks are 21 after opening day, with no more than 6 redheads, 6 pintails, and 3 canvasbacks. Recommended goose bag limits are no more than 6 white geese (snow, including blue and Ross' geese) and 3 dark geese (Canada and white-fronted). Recommended goose possession limits are no more than 18 white geese and 9 dark geese. The Department recommends that the Commission adopt the species bag limits as prescribed by the Service for the 2013–2014 waterfowl season

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Commission Order 22 – Common Snipe

The Department recommends that the Commission approve a general snipe season with the 101 days and limits of 8 snipe per day and 24 in possession as allowed by the Service for Pacific Flyway states. Seasons for snipe are recommended to run concurrent with the general waterfowl seasons in each of the state's zones.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE, SUBJECT TO FINAL FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS, COMMISSION ORDER 21 – WATERFOWL AND COMMISSION ORDER 22 – SNIPE AS PRESENTED.**

LMR:JCO:jco