

For the 2003–04 migratory game bird hunting season, we will propose regulations for certain designated members of the avian families Anatidae (ducks, geese, and swans); Columbidae (doves and pigeons); Gruidae (cranes); Rallidae (rails, coots, moorhens, and gallinules); and Scolopacidae (woodcock and snipe). We describe these proposals under Proposed 2003–04 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations (Preliminary) in this document.

We published definitions of waterfowl flyways and mourning dove management units, as well as a description of the data used in and the factors affecting the regulatory process in the March 14, 1990, **Federal Register** (55 FR 9618).

### Regulatory Schedule for 2003–04

This document is the first in a series of proposed, supplemental, and final rulemaking documents for migratory game bird hunting regulations. We will publish additional supplemental proposals for public comment in the **Federal Register** as population, habitat, harvest, and other information become available. Because of the late dates when certain portions of these data become available, we anticipate abbreviated comment periods on some proposals. Special circumstances limit the amount of time we can allow for public comment on these regulations.

Specifically, two considerations compress the time for the rulemaking process: the need, on one hand, to establish final rules early enough in the summer to allow resource agencies to select and publish season dates and bag limits prior to the beginning of hunting seasons and, on the other hand, the lack of current status data on most migratory game birds until later in the summer. Because the regulatory process is strongly influenced by the times when information is available for consideration, we divide the regulatory process into two segments: early seasons and late seasons (further described and discussed under the Background and Overview section).

Major steps in the 2003–04 regulatory cycle relating to open public meetings and **Federal Register** notifications are illustrated in the diagram at the end of this proposed rule. All publication dates of **Federal Register** documents are target dates.

All sections of this and subsequent documents outlining hunting frameworks and guidelines are organized under numbered headings. These headings are:

1. Ducks

- A. General Harvest Strategy
- B. Regulatory Alternatives
- C. Zones and Split Seasons
- D. Special Seasons/Species Management
  - i. September Teal Seasons
  - ii. September Teal/Wood Duck Seasons
  - iii. Black ducks
  - iv. Canvasbacks
  - v. Pintails
  - vi. Scaup
  - vii. Youth Hunt
2. Sea Ducks
3. Mergansers
4. Canada Geese
  - A. Special Seasons
  - B. Regular Seasons
  - C. Special Late Seasons
5. White-fronted Geese
6. Brant
7. Snow and Ross's (Light) Geese
8. Swans
9. Sandhill Cranes
10. Coots
11. Moorhens and Gallinules
12. Rails
13. Snipe
14. Woodcock
15. Band-tailed Pigeons
16. Mourning Doves
17. White-winged and White-tipped Doves
18. Alaska
19. Hawaii
20. Puerto Rico
21. Virgin Islands
22. Falconry
23. Other

Later sections of this and subsequent documents will refer only to numbered items requiring your attention. Therefore, it is important to note that we will omit those items requiring no attention and remaining numbered items will be discontinuous and appear incomplete.

We will publish final regulatory alternatives for the 2003–04 duck hunting seasons in early June. We will publish proposed early season frameworks in mid-July and late season frameworks in mid-August. We will publish final regulatory frameworks for early seasons on or about August 20, 2003, and those for late seasons on or about September 15, 2003.

### Review of Public Comments

This proposed rulemaking contains the proposed regulatory alternatives for the 2003–04 duck hunting seasons. This proposed rulemaking also describes other recommended changes or specific preliminary proposals that vary from the 2002–03 final frameworks (*see* August 23, 2003 **Federal Register** (67 FR 54702) for early seasons and September 19, 2003 **Federal Register** (67 FR 59110) for late seasons) and issues requiring early discussion, action, or the attention of the States or tribes. We will publish responses to all proposals and written comments when we develop final frameworks for the 2003–04 season. We

seek additional information and comments on the recommendations in this proposed rule.

### Consolidation of Notices

For administrative purposes, this document consolidates the notice of intent to establish open migratory game bird hunting seasons and the request for tribal proposals with the preliminary proposals for the annual hunting regulations-development process. We will publish the remaining proposed and final rulemaking documents separately. For inquiries on tribal guidelines and proposals, tribes should contact the following personnel:

Region 1 (California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands)—Brad Bortner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97232–4181; (503) 231–6164.

Region 2 (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas)—Jeff Haskins, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103; (505) 248–7885.

Region 3 (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin)—Steve Wilds, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Building, One Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111–4056; (612) 713–5432.

Region 4 (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico/Virgin Islands, South Carolina and Tennessee)—Frank Bowers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1875 Century Boulevard, Room 324, Atlanta, Georgia 30345; (404) 679–4000.

Region 5 (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia)—George Haas, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, Massachusetts 01035–9589; (413) 253–8576.

Region 6 (Colorado, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming)—John Cornely, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal Building, Denver, Colorado 80225; (303) 236–8145.

Region 7 (Alaska)—Robert Leedy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99503; (907) 786–3423.

### Requests for Tribal Proposals

#### Background

Beginning with the 1985–86 hunting season, we have employed guidelines