

dates for Rhode Island's September resident Canada goose season be made operational.

The Upper- and Lower-Region Regulations Committees of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended a 1-year extension to the experimental early Canada goose season in Huron, Tuscola, and Saginaw counties in Michigan. Further, the Committees recommended that we grant operational status to Minnesota's Special September Canada Goose Season extension (16–22 September).

The Central Flyway Council recommended that South Dakota's 3-year experimental September Canada goose season (September 16–30) become operational for all of eastern South Dakota (east of the Missouri River), beginning in 2003.

The Pacific Flyway Council recommended that Wyoming's special-season framework for the Rocky Mountain population of western Canada geese consist of an 8-day season during September 1–15 in Bear River, Salt River, Farson-Eden Area, Bridger Valley, and Teton Counties, and the Little Snake River drainage portion of Carbon County. All participants must have a valid State permit for the special season. The number of permits may not exceed 240 in the Bear River, Salt River, Farson-Eden Area, and Bridger Valley area, and 20 permits in the Little Snake River drainage portion of Carbon County. The daily bag limit would be 3, with season and possession limits of 6. Where applicable, the season must be concurrent with the September portion of the sandhill crane season.

Service Response: We concur with the recommendations from the Upper- and Lower-Region Regulations Committees of the Mississippi Flyway Council and the Pacific Flyway Council. We also concur with the Atlantic Flyway Council's request regarding North Carolina and Rhode Island. Regarding the recommendation to increase the daily bag limit in the September Canada goose seasons from 5 to 8, we concur, but believe that the possession limit should be 16.

Regarding South Dakota's experimental September Canada goose season, we believe the season should remain experimental until a final report is prepared, approved by the Flyway Council, and transmitted to us. This is consistent with the normal procedures experimental season approval. We do not concur with the recommendation for operational status of any areas outside the current experimental area. Special seasons after September 15 in other portions of the State initially must be experimental.

B. Regular Seasons

Council Recommendations: The Upper- and Lower-Region Regulations Committees of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended that the framework opening date for all species of geese for the regular goose seasons in Michigan and Wisconsin be September 16, 2003.

Service Response: We concur.

9. Sandhill Cranes

Council Recommendations: The Central Flyway Council recommended the 2002 Rocky Mountain population of sandhill cranes harvest allocation be 668 birds as proposed by the Pacific Flyway.

Service Response: We concur.

20. Puerto Rico

Written Comments: The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources requested increasing the aggregate dove daily bag limit from 10 to 15, including no more than 3 mourning doves.

Service Response: We concur.

NEPA Consideration

NEPA considerations are covered by the programmatic document, "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Issuance of Annual Regulations Permitting the Sport Hunting of Migratory Birds (FSSES 88–14)," filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on June 9, 1988. We published a Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register** on June 16, 1988 (53 FR 22582) and our Record of Decision on August 18, 1988 (53 FR 31341).

Copies are available from the address indicated under **ADDRESSES**. Additionally, in a proposed rule published in the April 30, 2001, **Federal Register** (66 FR 21298), we expressed our intent to begin the process of developing a new EIS for the migratory bird hunting program. We plan to begin the public scoping process in 2005.

Endangered Species Act Consideration

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531–1543; 87 Stat. 884), provides that, "The Secretary shall review other programs administered by him and utilize such programs in furtherance of the purposes of this Act" (and) shall "insure that any action authorized, funded or carried out * * * is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of [critical] habitat * * *." Consequently, we conducted formal consultations to ensure that actions resulting from these regulations would

not likely jeopardize the continued existence of endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat. Findings from these consultations are included in a biological opinion, which concluded that the regulations are not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species. Additionally, these findings may have caused modification of some regulatory measures previously proposed, and the final frameworks reflect any such modifications. Our biological opinions resulting from this Section 7 consultation are public documents available for public inspection at the address indicated under **ADDRESSES**.

Executive Order 12866

The migratory bird hunting regulations are economically significant and were reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under Executive Order 12866. As such, a cost/benefit analysis was initially prepared in 1981. This analysis was subsequently revised annually from 1990–96, and then updated in 1998. We will update again in 2004. It is further discussed below under the heading Regulatory Flexibility Act. Results from the 1998 analysis indicate that the expected welfare benefit of the annual migratory bird hunting frameworks is on the order of \$50 to \$192 million. Copies of the cost/benefit analysis are available upon request from the address indicated under **ADDRESSES**.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

These regulations have a significant economic impact on substantial numbers of small entities under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*). We analyzed the economic impacts of the annual hunting regulations on small business entities in detail as part of the 1981 cost-benefit analysis discussed under Executive Order 12866. This analysis was revised annually from 1990–95. In 1995, the Service issued a Small Entity Flexibility Analysis (Analysis), which was subsequently updated in 1996 and 1998 and will be updated in 2004. The primary source of information about hunter expenditures for migratory game bird hunting is the National Hunting and Fishing Survey, which is conducted at 5-year intervals. The 1998 Analysis was based on the 1996 National Hunting and Fishing Survey and the U.S. Department of Commerce's County Business Patterns, from which it was estimated that migratory bird hunters would spend between \$429 million and \$1.084 billion at small businesses in