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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



KEITH CREAGH
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: June 15, 2015

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Waterfowl and Other Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations for 2015 - 2016
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 8 of 2015
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and the Commission to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.

Discussion and Background:

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) annually prescribes migratory bird hunting season frameworks, or outer limits, for dates and times when hunting may occur, and the maximum number of birds that may be taken and possessed. Federal frameworks are negotiated with states via the Flyway Councils, with this process being partitioned into early and late season selections. Late seasons generally open following the Saturday closest to September 24. Late season selections are submitted to the USFWS by August 30 each year. In Michigan, late seasons currently include the regular Canada goose season, duck seasons, the late Canada goose season, and seasons on mergansers, and coots. The falconry season is also among the late seasons.

The Department's submission for the late waterfowl regulations will be finalized in early August after Federal frameworks are established. The Department's recommendations and options will be based on State and Federal assessments of waterfowl population status, habitat conditions, and public input, including discussion with the Citizen Waterfowl Advisory Committee (CWAC), at their August 1, 2015, meeting.

The Department has included appropriate sections from the Wildlife Conservation Order, as amended during 2014, to identify those sections likely requiring amendment in 2015. Dates listed in these sections are used as placeholders only; the final dates will be provided as soon as they become available.

In 2016, the process will transition from partitioned early and late season selections to a single selection process. Frameworks will be established using the previous year's data of waterfowl populations and habitat conditions instead of current year conditions. This will promote positive benefits such as a more simplified and efficient process. Waterfowl hunters will also know waterfowl season dates early in the year instead of right before seasons open which will allow the hunters to plan better for hunting trips. Over the coming months, the Department will be developing a communication strategy to make hunters aware of this change and how the new process will work beginning in January 2016.

Biological

Since 1991, Michigan has cooperated with other states, the USFWS, and Canadian agencies in conducting aerial surveys of breeding ducks and geese. Spring mallard population estimates from Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin are included in estimates of mid-continent mallard abundance and additionally are needed for establishing annual waterfowl hunting season frameworks for the Mississippi, Central, and Pacific Flyways. The spring 2015 breeding waterfowl survey was conducted in mid-May, however population estimates and wetland counts will not be available until early July.

Flyway Councils are advised by flyway technical committees consisting of State and Provincial biologists. These technical committees evaluate species and population status, harvest, and hunter-participation data during the development of the Council recommendations. The USFWS then evaluates the Flyway Councils recommendations, considering species status and biology, cumulative effects of regulations, and existing regulatory policy. Likewise, the Department's Waterfowl Workgroup and the CWAC review information on species status and habitat conditions when developing recommendations for waterfowl hunting seasons.

Social

The Department will develop recommendations based on Waterfowl Workgroup discussions with the CWAC. The CWAC will meet on August 1 to make recommendations for the late waterfowl seasons.

The Department's Waterfowl Workgroup has established goals for duck hunting seasons that include maintaining Michigan's waterfowl hunting heritage by increasing hunter recruitment and retention, balancing regulations simplicity with maximum hunting opportunity, and ensuring that seasons encompass maximum duck numbers and abundant species.

Biannually, the Department mails Waterfowl Harvest Surveys to a sample of waterfowl hunters to estimate hunting activity and determine opinions and satisfaction with hunting regulations.

Economic

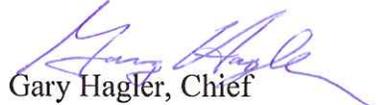
In 2012, waterfowl hunters took about 371,000 waterfowl hunting trips and spent an average of \$463 per hunter annually on waterfowl hunting trips. Collectively, waterfowl hunters spent an estimated \$22.7 million on hunting trips primarily to hunt waterfowl in Michigan (2012 Waterfowl Harvest Report). Businesses located in communities near well-known waterfowl hunting areas receive economic benefits from these waterfowl hunting trips.

Recommendation:

This order is being submitted for information and consideration. This item appeared on the Department's June 2015 calendar and may be eligible for approval on August 13, 2015.



Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division



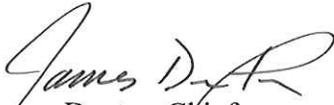
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William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
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WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 8 of 2015

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources by sections 40107 and 40113a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40107 and 324.40113a, it is ordered that effective August 14, 2015, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

3.415 Migratory birds open seasons, possession limit defined, exceptions

Sec. 3.415. The migratory bird possession limit shall be three times the daily limit. The migratory bird hunting open seasons and exceptions are as shown in table 10:

TABLE 10
Migratory Bird Open Seasons

Season and Species	Zone or Management Unit	Open Season
Ducks (regular season)	North Zone	September 27 to November 23 and November 29 to November 30
	Middle Zone	October 4 to November 30 and December 13 to December 14
	South Zone	October 11 to December 7 and December 27 to December 28
Merganser		Same dates as ducks in the respective zones
Coots		Same dates as ducks in the respective zones
Common Moorhens (Gallinules)	Statewide	September 1 to November 9
Canada Goose (regular season)	North Zone	September 11 to December 11
	Middle Zone	September 20 to September 28 and October 4 to December 25
	South Zone, excluding GMUs listed below in the table	September 20 to September 22, October 11 to December 7, and December 27 to December 28
	Tuscola/Huron GMU	September 20 to September 28, October 11 to December 7, and December 27 to January 20, 2015 2016
	Saginaw County GMU	September 20 to September 22, October 11 to December 7, and December 27 to January 26, 2015 2016
	Allegan County GMU	November 1 to January 31, 2015 2016
	Muskegon W.W. GMU	October 15 to November 12 and December 3 to December 21
Canada Goose (special late season)	Southern Michigan Goose Management Unit as defined in section 12.700 of this order	January 17 to February 14, 2015 2016
Snow and Ross' Geese and Brant	North Zone	September 11 to December 11

	Middle Zone	September 20 to September 28 and October 4 to December 25
	South Zone, excluding GMUs listed below in the table	October 11 to December 7, December 27 to December 28, and January 17 to February 14, 2015 2016
	Tuscola/Huron GMU	September 20 to September 28, October 11 to December 7, and December 27 to January 20, 2015 2016
	Saginaw County GMU	September 20 to September 22, October 11 to December 7, and December 27 to January 26, 2015 2016
	Allegan County GMU	November 1 to January 31, 2015 2016
	Muskegon W.W. GMU	October 15 to November 12 and December 3 to December 21
White-fronted Geese	North Zone	September 11 to December 7
	Middle Zone	October 4 to December 25
	South Zone, excluding GMUs listed below in the table	October 11 to December 7, December 27 to December 28 and January 17 to February 13, 2015 2016
	Tuscola/Huron GMU	October 11 to December 7 and December 27 to January 20, 2015 2016
	Saginaw County GMU	October 11 to December 7 and December 27 to January 25, 2015 2016
	Allegan County GMU	November 1 to January 27, 2015 2016
	Muskegon W.W. GMU	October 15 to November 12 and December 3 to December 21

3.416 Migratory game birds; daily limit.

Sec. 3.416. The daily limit of migratory game birds for the seasons specified in section 3.415 shall be as follows:

(1) **Ducks, daily limit.** The daily limit shall be 6 ducks of which no more than 4 may be mallards, no more than 2 may be a hen mallard, no more than 1 may be a black duck, no more than 3 may be wood ducks, no more than 2 may be pintails, no more than 2 may be redheads, no more than 3 may be scaup, and no more than 1 may be a canvasback.

(2) **Merganser, daily limit.** The merganser daily limit shall be 5 mergansers of which no more than 2 may be a hooded merganser.

(3) **Canada goose, north, middle, and south zones, including GMUs, daily limit.** In the north, middle, and south zones as described in sections 1.7, 1.8, and 1.9, respectively, and all GMUs as described in sections 12.701, 12.702, 12.703, and 12.705 the daily limit shall be 2 Canada geese.

(4) **Canada goose, daily limit, exceptions.**

(a) The Canada goose daily limit during the early September season shall be 5.

(b) The Canada goose daily limit during the special late season shall be 5.

(5) **Other geese, daily limit.** The daily limit on light geese (snow, blue, and Ross) shall be 20. The daily limit on Brant and white-fronted geese shall be 1.

(6) **Coot, daily limit.** The daily limit of coot shall be 15.

(7) **Common moorhen (gallinule), daily limit.** The daily limit of moorhen shall be 1.

3.422 Migratory birds, falconry, open seasons; daily limit, possession limit.

Sec. 3.422. (1) The open season for taking common snipe (jacksnipe), woodcock, and Virginia and Sora rails by falconry shall be the same dates as the firearm seasons in the respective zones for these species as described in sections 3.415 and 3.420.

(2) The open season for taking geese shall be the same dates as the firearm seasons in the respective zones and goose management units.

(3) The open season for taking duck, merganser, coot and common moorhen (gallinule) shall be the same dates as the firearm seasons in the respective zones for these species, plus the season shall be open statewide December 29 to January 22, ~~2015~~ 2016 and March 1 through March 10, ~~2015~~ 2016.

(4) The daily limit for migratory game birds taken by falconry shall be 3 birds combined, and the possession limit shall be 9 birds combined.

Issued on this 13th day of August, 2015.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

John Matonich, Chairman
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Keith Creagh
Director