

# GAME, FISH AND PARKS COMMISSION ACTION PROPOSAL

## Duck Hunting Season Chapter 41:06:16; 41:06:02

Commission Meeting Dates:	Proposal	July 16-17, 2020	Teleconference
	Public Hearing	September 2, 2020	Teleconference
	Finalization	September 2-3, 2020	Teleconference

### DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

**Duration of Recommendation:** 2021-2024 hunting seasons

#### **Recommended changes from last year:**

1. Implementation of an experimental 2-tiered duck regulation in South Dakota with a 3-splash option.
2. Modify the special nonresident waterfowl hunting license by reducing the cost from \$115 to \$110 and by removing the inclusion of the migratory bird certification permit.

### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION

- **Duck hunter trends:** Duck hunter participation in South Dakota and the Central Flyway is declining (Figure 1). Historically, duck hunter numbers rose and fell with duck numbers. Unfortunately, since the mid 1990's this trend as not held with declining hunter numbers and abundant waterfowl (Figure 2).
- **Current duck regulations:** maximize harvest potential, complex system of species-specific regulations. Challenge for inexperienced hunters.
  - The ability to identify ducks on the wing has been identified as a potential barrier to duck hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3).
- **Potential future regulations:** increase participation in duck hunting by providing two options for all hunters to choose from. Duck hunters would register themselves under one of two different regulatory options
  - **Tier 1:** The current regulatory package: would maximize harvest potential with current species-specific regulations (i.e., current daily bag limits with all species-specific daily bag restrictions).
  - **Tier 2:** A new "3-splash" regulatory package: available only to those who desire it. Simplified regulations (i.e., 3-splash daily bag limit).
- **Regulation development:** Working cooperatively with the all flyways and the USFWS, a study design and evaluation plan has been developed and approved by the Service Regulations Committee (SRC) for the states of Nebraska and South Dakota.
  - If approved by both commissions, beginning in the 2021-2022 duck hunting season both states will implement and evaluate a pilot two-tier system of duck hunting regulations for a minimum of 4 years.
- **GOAL:** To see if experimental regulations can flatten the decline, if not increase participation in waterfowl hunting.
- **License fee adjustment:** Currently the special nonresident waterfowl license includes the migratory bird certification permit. With the 2-tiered license option, applicants will select a migratory bird certification permit to reflect their choice of the traditional or 3-splash license option.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ MODIFY \_\_\_\_\_ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ NO ACTION \_\_\_\_\_

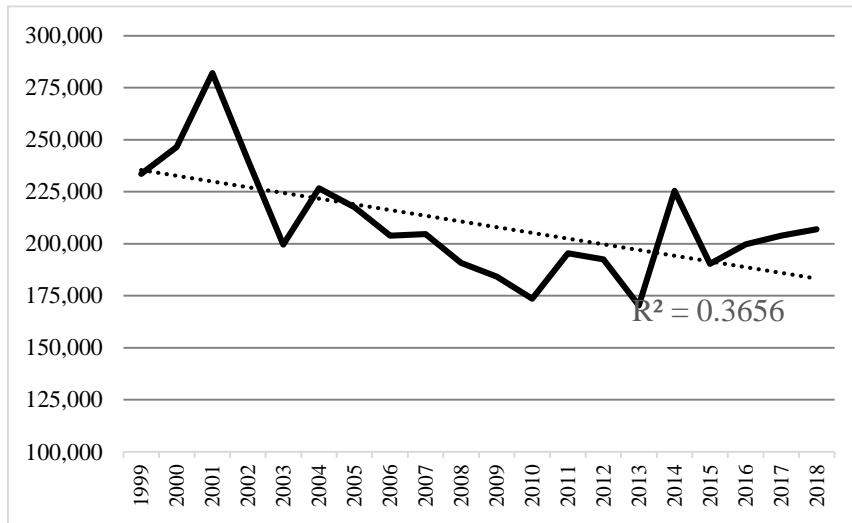


Figure 1. The number of active duck hunters in the Central Flyway, 1999-2018 (Dubovsky 2019).

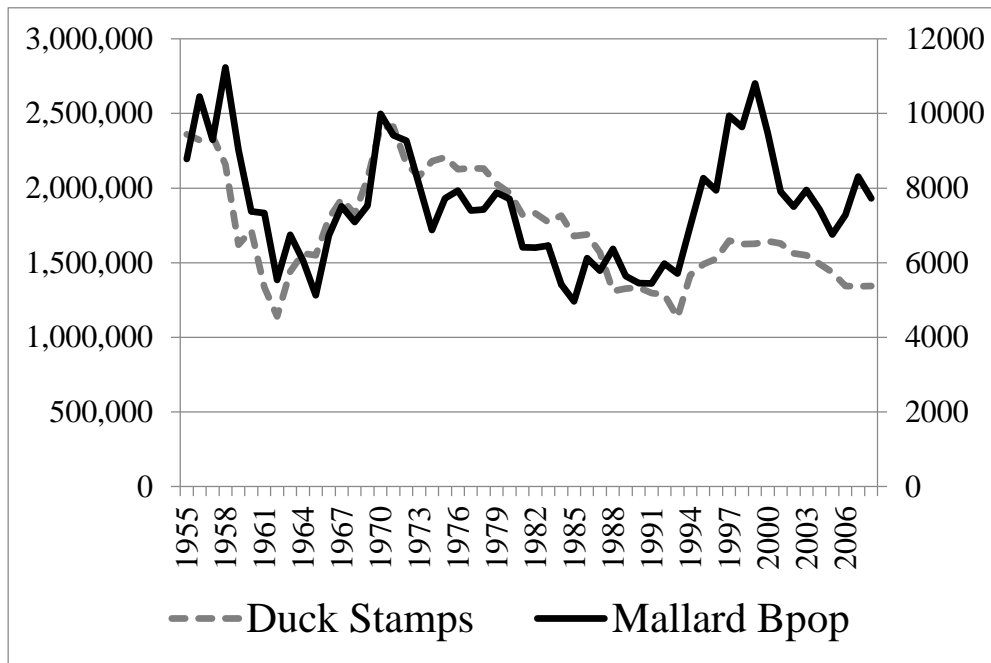


Figure 2. Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Federal Duck Stamp) and mallard breeding populations (Bpop), 1955-2008.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ MODIFY \_\_\_\_\_ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ NO ACTION \_\_\_\_\_

## RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT CRITERIA

1. The Issue
  - Duck hunter numbers in SD have been falling 3% per year on average since the mid 1990's. This loss of waterfowl hunters means an erosion of waterfowl hunting traditions and less support for waterfowl conservation and management. Through purchases of licenses, stamps and gear, waterfowl hunters contribute to perpetuating waterfowl by conserving their habitats. The goal of this experiment is to see if removing the barrier of having to identify ducks in flight can assist R3 efforts. Direct engagement of stakeholder's groups is planned, and a standard public comment process is anticipated. A comprehensive evaluation plan has been developed in cooperation with the National Flyway Council, USFWS, and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.
2. Historical Considerations – Not Applicable
3. Biological Considerations
  - Because the experiment is limited to two states (SD/NE), and because the bag associated with the simplified license option is smaller than allowed under a regular limit, impact to species with reduced bags (e.g. pintail, scaup, canvasbacks) will be minimal. Cooperative monitoring efforts on harvest will continue throughout the experiment to assess whether negative impacts occur during the experiment.
4. Social Considerations
  - SDGFP and NGPC, and the University of Nebraska Lincoln recently completed a human dimensions survey of current and past duck hunters in each state. Highlights included 40% of respondents felt duck ID was difficult for them, 2/3 did not oppose the regulation experiment, and 25% would consider taking a mentee duck hunting if they could use the 3-splash option. Rigorous communications efforts are expected to garner support and promote the 3-splash opportunity. The main concerns from current hunters involved concern for species with reduced bags and the idea that in order to be a duck hunter you needed to know duck identification.
5. Financial considerations
  - If successful, increased revenue from both license sales and Federal Duck stamps would be realized. These funds could then be used to help sustain the North American Model for wildlife conservation.

## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, REACTIVATION (R3) CRITERIA

1. Does the regulation or fee inhibit a user's ability to participate? Not applicable.
2. Does the regulation increase the opportunity for new and existing users?
  - Yes
3. How does the regulation impact the next generation of hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor recreationists?
  - The goal of these experimental hunting regulations is to support R3 efforts for duck hunting in South Dakota, the Central Flyway, and perhaps nationwide.
4. Does the regulation enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by getting families outdoors?
  - If successful, participation in duck hunting will increase and allow novice hunters a chance to participate without fear of violation. Sustaining waterfowl hunting traditions will contribute to an enhanced quality of life and encourage families to recreate outside.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ MODIFY \_\_\_\_\_ REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ NO ACTION \_\_\_\_\_