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**GAME BIRD PROGRAM  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR 2010-2011 GAME BIRD  
SEASONS – UPLAND  
GAME BIRDS AND  
WATERFOWL**



**SUPPLEMENTAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
MIGRATORY GAME BIRD SEASONS**

FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION  
AUGUST 6, 2010

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*The recommendations in this packet are based on public correspondence (including telephone and e-mail communications), Pacific Flyway Study Committee and Council discussions, discussions with ODFW field personnel, federal regulatory requirements and past Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission direction concerning hunting seasons.*

# INTRODUCTION

This is a supplemental package provided to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission), which outlines recommendations for most waterfowl seasons. The lateness of the federal regulatory process in 2010 precluded developing many season recommendations until this time. Season recommendations for upland game birds and some migratory game birds were included in an earlier Commission packet and are not repeated here. New or updated information on population status and harvest surveys is included. Detailed information on the status of waterfowl and Adaptive Harvest Management, including the western mallard model, is provided in two reports provided in the appendices. Many regulatory proposals related to goose hunting are based on recommendations received from the Oregon Goose Control Task Force that was established by the Oregon Legislature.

These proposals have been communicated to various hunting interests, including members of the Oregon Hunters Association, Ducks Unlimited, and Oregon Duck Hunters Association. Final federal regulatory decisions as well as public comment between now and the August 6 Commission meeting may modify recommendations but most proposals are anticipated to have majority support from hunters, based on past public comment and seasons adopted by the Commission in recent years.

# MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

## POPULATION STATUS

### **Pacific Flyway Populations**

**Ducks:** In general, total ducks from major breeding areas in Alaska, Canada, Montana and the Dakotas were similar to numbers from the previous year and up 21% compared to the 1955-2009 average. Mallard numbers were similar to the previous year, as were pintails, although they remain 13% below the long-term average. Redheads, green-winged teal and northern shovelers continue to be at or near record high population levels. Total pond numbers in these areas were similar to the previous year. Although continental populations were similar to last year, in general, surveyed areas which contribute significant portions of their breeding population to Pacific Flyway states experienced increases compared to last year. Oregon breeding waterfowl surveys were conducted from late April through mid-May. Statewide, the breeding mallard population was down 6% compared to last year and down 28% compared to the 1994-2009 long-term average. Total duck numbers were up 11% from last year and down 23% from the long term average. Breeding waterfowl habitat was similar to last year in southeast Oregon, where the majority of the state's waterfowl are produced. However, above normal late-spring precipitation may have bolstered production for breeding waterfowl.

**Geese and Swans:** Most goose and swan populations in North America remain healthy and the size of many fall flights should be larger compared to those of last year. However, the long term trend for dusky Canada geese continues to be negative and the harvest management actions called for under management plan level 2 continue to apply throughout their range. Habitat conditions for nesting geese were good in Alaska with very good to excellent production noted for dusky, Taverner's, cackling, Aleutian, and white-fronted geese. Production was very poor this spring for Wrangel Island snow geese and Ross's geese but large fall flights are expected due to the large number of adult geese in both populations. In Oregon, statewide, the breeding resident Canada goose population was down 12% from last year and the long-term average.

# MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS HARVEST SURVEYS

The Harvest Information Program (HIP), a cooperative harvest survey between the USFWS and states, was implemented in Oregon during 1995. Harvest is calculated by the USFWS from databases provided by the Oregon licensing system. This cooperative survey will continue to be refined annually by department and USFWS personnel.

**Stamp Sales:** State of Oregon waterfowl validation (stamp) sales to resident hunters in 2009 totaled 51,636, a 3.4% increase from 2008, however these sales include 29,200 Sports Pac license purchasers of which 15,016 did not claim their validations. Total 2009 nonresident game bird stamps (valid for both waterfowl and upland game bird hunting) sales were 6818, up 6.5% from 2008.

**Ducks:** Preliminary results from the HIP suggest during the 2009/10 hunting season, 18,700 Oregon hunters spent 147,600 days hunting and they harvested 361,000 ducks. Mallards composed 41% of the harvest while other heavily harvested species were; wigeon (17%), green-winged teal (15%), and pintail (11%).

**Geese:** Preliminary results from HIP suggest during the 2009/10 hunting season, 10,100 Oregon hunters spent 66,700 days hunting and harvested 61,000 geese. Canada geese composed 89% of the harvest while white and greater-white-fronted geese composed 7% and 4%, respectively. It is estimated that 100 black brant were harvested.

**American Coots:** Preliminary results from the HIP suggest during the 2009/10 hunting season, 200 Oregon hunters spent 400 days hunting coots and they harvested 2,100 coots.

**Mourning Doves:** Preliminary results from the HIP suggest during the 2009 hunting season, 4,300 Oregon hunters spent 16,400 days hunting mourning doves and they harvested 38,600 doves.

**Band-tailed Pigeons:** Preliminary results from the HIP suggest during the 2009 hunting season, 600 Oregon hunters spent 1,800 days hunting band-tailed pigeons and they harvested 1,900 pigeons.

**Wilson's Snipe:** Preliminary results from the HIP suggest during the 2009/10 hunting season, 500 Oregon hunters spent 900 days hunting snipe and they harvested 1,800 snipe.

# MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

## 2010-11 SEASON PROPOSALS

*Please note: All seasons for migratory game birds are established under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) frameworks. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife works through the Pacific Flyway Council process and the USFWS regulatory process to make recommendations on these federal frameworks. All recommendations must meet established framework guidelines and all season selections by the Fish and Wildlife Commission are subject to approval by the USFWS.*

### ➤ DUCK AND MERGANSER

#### **Tentative Framework**

A maximum season length of 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 and the last Sunday in January; a daily bag limit of 7 birds to include no more than 2 hen mallards, 2 pintail, 3 Scaup, 1 Canvasback, and 2 redheads. The scaup season may only be a maximum of 86 days. For all species the possession limit is twice the daily bag limit. Shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Zoning options approved by the USFWS may be retained. One split in season dates may occur in each zone. The extra 7 days in the Columbia Basin are not offered because of the liberal season package. Two federal youth waterfowl days are allowed for ducks, mergansers, coots and geese. The two youth days must be consecutive. Youths 15 years of age and under may participate.

#### **Recommendation**

Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. Maintain traditional shooting hours. Adoption of a federal youth waterfowl weekend. The adoption of a youth waterfowl hunt weekend requires a reduction in regular waterfowl seasons by two days.

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**PROPOSED DUCK AND MERGANSER SEASON**

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**Zone 1:** October 16, 2010 – October 24, 2010 and  
October 27, 2010 – January 30, 2011\*

Scaup: November 6, 2010 – January 30, 2011

*Zone 1 is western Oregon and Columbia Basin counties.*

**Zone 2:** October 9, 2010 – November 28, 2010 and  
December 1, 2010 – January 23, 2011\*

Scaup: October 9, 2010 – November 28, 2010 and  
December 1, 2010 – January 4, 2011

*Zone 2 is the remainder of eastern Oregon.*

**\* A federal waterfowl youth hunt weekend is proposed for September 25 and 26.**

Allowed frameworks were developed cooperatively with the USFWS, states and all Flyway Councils under the Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) program. AHM is a process that increases objectivity and efficiency in the annual process of setting duck hunting regulations. AHM improves upon past approaches by using clearly defined harvest-management objectives, a limited set of regulatory options, and data assessment procedures. It is important to note the AHM process is dynamic, and as new information is obtained decision criteria will be modified. This represents the third year of implementation of the Western Mallard Model under AHM.

The proposed season framework is identical to last year and flyway biologists believe continued liberal harvest regulations are justified based on population information. Many duck populations have remained relatively abundant throughout the state and Flyway in recent years, especially the mallard, which is the most commonly harvested species. Recently adopted national harvest strategies are implemented for northern pintail, scaup and canvasback.

Adoption of a 105-day duck season will accommodate the federal youth waterfowl hunting weekend (105 + 2 = 107 day maximum) and should minimize conflicts with season date selections encountered in past years. Waterfowlers in all parts of the state will have opportunities to hunt ducks in preferred times of the year under many different types of conditions (early and late hunting). It is recommended to retain duck zones implemented in 1996, with differential season dates (season splits) proposed.

## Public Comment

The majority of comments received support the seasons as outlined. The department supports the adoption of the full frameworks based on the rationale provided, including the implementation of the western mallard model under AHM. With an overall 107 day duck season in Oregon there will be many opportunities for public recreation. One hunter suggests removing the two day split in the middle of the duck season and ending hunting on a Friday. This concept has had very minimal support by hunters in the past with weekends receiving most hunter participation. Director Elicker has received comments from some hunters that early October hunting in western Oregon is better than late hunting. In western Oregon numerous hunters and landowners have voiced strong opposition to early hunting and support late hunting. Staff looked at long-term data bases for Sauvie Island Wildlife Area and data supports improved hunter success in later season hunting days (see Appendix D).

### ➤ FALL GEESE

*Please Note: There are three separate frameworks regarding geese; general fall, NW Oregon Permit Goose, and black brant seasons. In addition, due to deliberations of the Goose Control Task Force which were not completed prior to submission of the previous Commission Packet, September Canada goose seasons proposals will also be presented at this time.*

### **September Canada Goose Season**

Resident western Canada goose populations are established in nearly all areas of suitable habitat in Oregon, including northwest Oregon. Goose harvest regulations have been severely restrictive in that portion of the state since 1984 because of the status of several subspecies of wintering Canada geese, especially the dusky. Since identification of goose subspecies is difficult for the average hunter, harvest restrictions essentially have limited the take of the more abundant subspecies wintering in Oregon. These restrictions, combined with high productivity for resident western Canada geese, have contributed to a widely distributed goose population, which includes populations established in many urban areas.

A September Canada goose season, designed to focus harvest on resident western Canada geese, was initiated in 1990 to assist in the alleviation of agricultural crop depredation and provide a recreational opportunity on a growing resident goose population occurring in the lower Columbia River area. By 1993, the September season was expanded into all northwest Oregon counties. The season occurs before the fall migration of other Canada geese into the state, thus minimizing concern about the taking of other subspecies of Canada geese. In later years the September season was expanded statewide.



Population monitoring of resident goose populations continue to be used to evaluate September and general fall goose season impacts. Most resident goose populations throughout the Pacific Flyway are at levels that warrant continuation of current seasons. However, the 2007 population estimate for eastern Oregon was slightly below the level which calls for harvest restrictions in the flyway management plan. In response, the bag limit was lowered to 3 geese during the September season in all of eastern Oregon beginning in 2007. The 2008, 2009 and 2010 population estimates for eastern Oregon were at levels which have increased the 3-year average to slightly above the Flyway's restriction level. However, because of year to year variability in population estimates, the harvest restrictions for this population still warrant consideration.

The Pacific Flyway Council in March 1998 adopted a goose depredation plan for northwest Oregon and southwest Washington. This plan recognizes the need to focus on increasing harvest rates on populations in northwest Oregon. Since western Canada goose populations still remain at viable levels, staff proposes to retain last season's bag limits and season length. This is an ongoing process to assist landowners with depredation control and is alignment with recommendations prepared by the Oregon Goose Control Task Force (see Appendix C).

In addition, goose populations are established throughout all suitable habitats in southwestern Oregon. Complaints have been received from landowners in many areas. Even with liberal fall seasons, breeding populations of Canada geese continue to maintain themselves at viable population levels.

### **Framework**

The current federal framework for Oregon allows outside dates of September 1 – 20 in N.W. Oregon and September 1- 15 in the remainder of the state. Daily bag and possession limits are 5 and 10 Canada geese, respectively, excluding cackling and/or Aleutian geese. Shooting hours for the September Canada goose hunt are sunrise to sunset.

### **Recommendation**

September Canada goose seasons are proposed statewide except in the Klamath County and South Coast goose zones, which have been closed since 2006. Seasons are relatively short but cannot be longer because of requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. No major law enforcement problems with this season have been noted and minimal conflicts observed between goose hunters and other non-hunting recreational activity during this earlier than usual time frame for waterfowl hunting. A bag limit of 5 Canada geese with 10 geese in possession is recommended for western Oregon and a bag limit of 3 Canada geese with 6 in possession is recommended for Eastern Oregon. The more traditional opener after the Labor Day weekend is recommended.

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**PROPOSED SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE SEASONS**

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**Northwestern Oregon:**

**Lane, Lincoln, Tillamook, Clatsop, Columbia, Multnomah, Clackamas, Marion, Linn, Benton, Polk, Yamhill, and Washington counties:**

September 11, 2010 – September 20, 2010

Bag limit of 5 Canada geese per day

**Southwestern Oregon:**

**Josephine, Jackson and those portions of Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties east of Hwy 101:**

September 11, 2010 – September 15, 2010

Bag limit of 5 Canada geese per day

**Eastern Oregon:**

**Lake, Harney, Malheur, Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Baker, Grant, Crook, Wheeler, Jefferson, and Deschutes:**

September 11, 2010 – September 15, 2010

Bag limit of 3 Canada geese per day

**Public Comment**

Past hunter polls show mixed hunter opinions on the best time to open the season, but many support the opening dates as proposed. Some hunters would like to see Klamath County reopened during this season. Hunters continue to support the one half hour before sunrise opening shooting time adopted by the Commission last year. Some user conflicts on river systems reported last year should be minimized with the opening occurring after the Labor Day weekend. Although shorter September seasons are proposed this year, the days not used in September have been added to the proposed fall seasons.

**General Fall Goose Season Framework (except NW Oregon Permit Goose Zone)**

**Frameworks**

In general, a 100-day season between the Saturday closest to October 1 and the last Sunday in January (dark geese) or March 10 (white geese) is permitted. Daily bag limit: 4 dark geese and 6 white geese, except in Malheur County Zone the daily bag limit is 4

dark geese and 10 white geese. Possession limit is twice the daily bag. The dark goose limit may not include more than 1 cackling or 1 Aleutian Canada goose, statewide, except in the Southwest and South Coast zones where the daily limit may include up to 4 cackling or 4 Aleutian Canada Geese. In the South Coast Zone and the Klamath County Zone the season length may be 107-days. White-fronted goose restrictions occur in Lake County. Shooting hours are one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Past goose hunt zones may be retained including the adoption of a new Malheur County Zone. One split in season dates may occur in all zones except two splits may occur in the South Coast and Klamath County zones. Dark goose season date selections may extend to March 10 in the South Coast and Klamath County zones; however in Klamath County the take of Canada geese must end on or before the last Sunday in January. Bag limits in Klamath County after the last Sunday in January include a daily bag limit of 4 white-fronted geese and 6 white geese, possession limit is double the daily bag limit. Some goose hunting days occurring after the last Sunday in January must be concurrent with similar seasons in California and Idaho. Two federal youth waterfowl hunt days for ducks, mergansers, coots and geese are offered. The two youth days must be consecutive. Youths 15 years of age and younger may participate.

## **Recommendations**

Adoption of maximum days and bag limits, plus adoption of federal waterfowl youth weekend.

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### **PROPOSED FALL GOOSE SEASONS**

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**Western Oregon, excluding closed and permit only areas:**

**Lincoln and those portions of Multnomah, Clackamas, Marion, Linn and Lane counties outside the NW Oregon Permit Goose Zone**

**(Northwest Oregon General Zone):**

October 16, 2010 – October 24, 2010 and

November 4, 2010 – January 30, 2011\*

**Josephine, Jackson and those portions of Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties east of Hwy 101 (Southwest Oregon General Zone):**

October 16, 2010 – December 3, 2010 and

December 11, 2010 – January 30, 2011\*

**Those portions of Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties west of Hwy 101 (South Coast Zone):**

October 2, 2010 – October 31, 2010 and

November 24, 2010 – January 17, 2011 and

February 19, 2011 – March 10, 2011\* (dark goose hunting only)

**Eastern Oregon**, except as listed:

October 16, 2010 – October 24, 2010 and  
November 1, 2010 – January 30, 2011\*

**Lake and Harney Counties:**

October 9, 2010 – November 28, 2010 and  
December 13, 2010 – January 30, 2011\*

**Klamath County:**

October 9, 2010 – November 28, 2010 and  
December 18, 2010 – January 20, 2011 and  
February 19, 2011 – March 10, 2011\* (white-fronted and white goose  
hunting only)

**Malheur County:**

Dark Geese – October 9, 2010 – November 28, 2010 and  
December 13, 2010 – January 30, 2011  
White Geese – October 9, 2010 – November 28, 2010 and  
December 28, 2010 – January 30, 2010 and  
February 19, 2011 – March 10, 2011

**\* A federal waterfowl youth hunt weekend is proposed statewide for September 25 and 26. However, goose hunting by youths is not allowed within the counties encompassed by the NW Oregon Permit and NW Oregon General Goose Zones. White-fronted goose limit restrictions for Lake County also apply.**

Most goose populations, especially Canada geese, have remained robust in recent years, increasing recreational opportunity throughout the state. Other goose populations are expected to be similar to last year or increased. White and Pacific white-fronted goose populations in the Pacific Flyway are at or significantly above management goals. Numerous population and harvest surveys are in place to monitor any impacts from current season structures. In some counties, due to boundary differences between duck and goose zones and a 107-day duck season, hunting days for duck and goose hunting will not always coincide. Establishment of September seasons also influence overall dates for fall seasons. However, in order to optimize opportunity, it is critical to utilize the full frameworks allowed. Extended frameworks allow later hunting opportunity, which is a common request by hunters. In order to utilize this opportunity, split seasons will be fully utilized similar to previous years.

In 2006, the Department recommended and the Commission approved the discontinuation of the September Canada goose season in Klamath County. Resident goose populations have been declining in recent years in portions of SE Oregon and are currently slightly above flyway harvest restriction levels. Evaluation of breeding population numbers has resulted in a recommendation to continue the bag limit reduction for Canada geese in the remainder of eastern Oregon during the special September

Canada goose season. Also, the reduction in days used in the September season for Klamath County augment the continued late goose season and provide more overall hunting days in the fall season.

The late-winter white-fronted and white goose hunt in Klamath County is proposed to continue this season. This season was implemented four years ago in response to increasing agricultural depredation issues in Klamath County. Overall bag limits are proposed to increase to 4 white-fronted geese and 6 white geese daily. White geese (snow and Ross) are present in large numbers along with white-fronted geese during the late winter and spring and both contribute to the agricultural depredation complaints occurring in the hunt area. Flyway biologists recognize that populations of white geese are above management plan goals as is the Pacific population of white-fronted geese. However, the tule population of white-fronted geese remains of concern because of lower population levels. Radio telemetry observations and measurements from harvested geese have shown tule geese are present in the hunt area and are occasionally harvested by hunters. However, this harvest is minimal and the increased bag limit of white-fronted geese is expected to have little impact on tule geese while providing increased goose hunting opportunity to address depredation problems caused by both white and white-fronted geese. Research into tule goose ecology will continue in cooperation with Alaska, California and the USFWS. The department has fielded concerns that this season needs to be extended past March 10 to have a significant affect on goose depredation; however the Migratory Bird Treaty Act restricts hunting beyond this date.

Similarly, because of increasing agricultural depredation issues in the south coast area, in 2006 a joint proposal was approved by the Flyway Council, the Commission, and the USFWS for increasing hunting opportunities in Oregon and California with an emphasis on harvest of Aleutian Canada geese. This population is significantly above the population objective in the Flyway Council plan. As in the Klamath County hunt, late season hunting occurs only on private lands and coincides with California season dates. For the previous four seasons during the late hunt period, Aleutian goose use of the hunt area was low and staff has not noted an increase in Aleutian goose numbers coinciding with increased hunting pressure to the south in California. Some Aleutian geese were in the area, along with numerous resident western Canada geese and both incurred varying levels of harvest. There are some indications that a small portion of the Aleutian population is still in Oregon through late October and early November on their migration to California. Proposed season dates are adjusted to allow hunting through the end of October to see if Aleutian harvest can be increased. As in Klamath County, the department has fielded concerns that this season needs to be extended past March 10 to have a significant affect on goose depredation; however, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act restricts hunting beyond this date.

Similar to Klamath County, the department did not propose a September Canada goose season in the South Coast Zone. However, unlike the Klamath County late hunt, any dark goose may be taken during the South Coast Zone late hunt. Resident Canada geese are commonly taken during this hunt, and late season harvest likely compensates for harvest which previously occurred during the September season.

A new goose zone is proposed for Malheur County to allow for a late white goose season, similar to hunts structured for the South Coast Zone and Klamath County Zone. White goose and white-fronted goose numbers have increased in recent years and more birds are arriving in the Snake River area in late winter/early spring. Agricultural depredation complaints have increased significantly. Last year Idaho implemented a late white goose season and Oregon landowners and hunters have requested a similar season. The proposed season is concurrent with dates in Idaho with the same bag limit.

## **Public Comment**

Most comments received have supported seasons as proposed and many proposals address specific recommendations outlined by the Oregon Goose Control Task Force. The increase in the bag limit in the late season Klamath hunt will likely be well received by the hunting public and landowners. But some hunters maintain that public access to private lands during this depredation hunt is not desirable and support its discontinuation. These same hunters would prefer to have Canada goose season open more in early December. Other hunters maintain there are few white geese in the Klamath basin during the hunt period and they are losing hunting opportunity. However, white and white-fronted geese do occur in the area during the hunt period and the overall increased bag limit should provide increased hunting opportunities. Hunters have also expressed support for later October hunting along the south coast. The Oregon Farm Bureau and numerous landowners are very supportive of continuation of special late seasons for Klamath County and the south coast, plus the formation of a new goose zone for Malheur County.

## **NW Oregon Permit Goose Season**

### **Framework**

A 107-day season is allowed between the Saturday closest to October 1 and March 10. Daily bag limit: 4 dark geese (including no more than 2 Aleutian Canada geese or 2 cackling Canada geese) and 4 white geese. Possession limit is twice the daily bag. The state retains options to determine open hunt areas and allocate quotas not to exceed 90 dusky Canada geese. The hunting of geese during federal waterfowl youth days is not allowed. Mandatory hunter check stations are required in order to select this hunt.

### **Background**

This season changed significantly 13 years ago as a result of receiving congressional funding to assist with goose depredation issues in NW Oregon. Hunting restrictions were lifted on all private lands, many of which had been closed to goose hunting for nearly 16 years, new check stations established, and additional law enforcement personnel hired to monitor the permit zone. However, last year, as during most years, no federal funding

was received and Congress has again not supported funding for the upcoming hunting season. In the past, \$90-100,000 was received from Congress to cost share administration of this hunt. Most of the costs related to this season are personnel costs related to check stations and law enforcement. With the loss of those funds, state waterfowl stamp funds have been used to maintain the hunt program. The department feels this season is an important management tool to assist private landowners dealing with depredation issues. The primary purpose of this season is the use of hunters to assist landowners with depredation control. Congressional funds were also used to fund Wildlife Services programs for direct assistance to landowners but those programs are now cut, emphasizing the importance of the continuation of this hunt. Much of the focus of the Oregon Goose Control Task Force was on issues related to goose management in NW Oregon and the permit zone.

## **Recommendations**

The following summarizes proposals for the permit goose hunt in 2010-11:

- Maintain the dusky Canada goose quota at 90. The dusky Canada goose population has fallen to a level identified in the Pacific Flyway's management plan which mandates lower quotas in northwest Oregon and southwest Washington in addition to assignment of a quota to portions of Alaska where dusky geese are harvested. Allocate dusky harvest quotas throughout the permit goose zone by county groupings and period allocations. Unused quota would be transferred from period to period but not from area to area. If a quota were exceeded for one period, the following period's quota for that area would be reduced accordingly. This is no change from last year. A minimal hunt on public lands on Sauvie Island Wildlife Area would be closed and that dusky quota would be allocated to an expanded hunt on private lands in Tillamook County.
- Retention of all private lands being open for goose hunting with the exception of Tillamook County, where a small closure is in place on private lands to protect Semidi Island Aleutian geese.
- In all areas except Tillamook County, split the season in three segments to allow some earlier hunting. This is in an attempt to encourage cackling Canada geese to continue migration to traditional wintering grounds in California or at a minimum distribute goose flocks over a wider geographical range in the Willamette Valley. This early season has strong support from the Oregon Farm Bureau to assist landowners along the lower Columbia River. While there are no specific ways to measure the success of redistribution, landowners perceive it as a means to assist in hazing and reducing agricultural depredation. The season structure is no change from last year. Ten to 15% of the overall harvest occurs in Period 1. However, this first period segment is proposed to be altered in order to expand late season hunting up to March 10. This late season time period has been

identified as another crunch period for goose depredation by landowners and at a time when harvest of geese is greater.

- Proposed season dates are as follows for all areas and Tillamook County:
  - Period 1: October 30-November 8, 2010;
  - Period 2: November 20, 2010-January 12, 2011;
  - Period 3: February 5-March 9, 2011.
  - For Tillamook County: December 4, 2010-March 9, 2011.
- In Tillamook County, hunting days would be 3 days a week on Saturday, Sunday and Wednesdays. This is an increase of one day hunting per week.
- In the remainder of the permit zone outside of Tillamook County, hunt days would be expanded to 5 days a week on Saturday through Wednesday. Current hunt days are Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday.
- Beginning shooting hours (8 a.m. or 7:30 a.m.) remain unchanged but ending shooting hours would be reduced by 1 hour (end at 3 p.m.). Check station hours would also be reduced. Hunters need to be aware of the responsibility to travel to check stations in a timely manner based on the circumstances of their daily hunt.
- Similar to last year, because Tillamook County does not contain a split season, differential shooting hours will be defined by dates instead of periods. In December and January shooting hours will begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. on hunt days and in February and March shooting hours will begin at 7:30 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. on hunt days.
- Maintain the daily bag limit of four dark geese and four white geese (three dark geese in Tillamook County). However, to assist in meeting population objectives of the Y-K Delta Goose Management Plan the bag limit for cackling Canada geese remains at no more than 2 cackling or Aleutian geese per day. The cackling and Aleutian Canada goose populations are both expected to increase this year. However, there is no support from flyway partners to increase cackling Canada goose bag limits at this time. Expanded hunting days will increase harvest to an unknown degree.
- Because of the importance of checking out all geese in the permit zone, whether dusky or non-dusky, it is also recommended the Commission maintain the rule that any hunter who fails to check out geese will not only lose their hunting privileges in the permit zone for the remainder of the season but would lose their hunting privileges for the next season also. Continued concerns by the USFWS and continued reports by hunters of non-compliance with checking geese,



warrants a strong message to hunters that harvest monitoring is of utmost importance if this season is to be maintained in the future. This is particular true with current dusky Canada goose management issues and in maintaining cooperative agreements with native Alaskans regarding cackling Canada geese.

- Maintain check station locations the same as last year.

The number of dusky Canada geese on the Copper River Delta increased slightly this year but remained below 10,000 birds. Good production was observed which may bolster the population further. The Middleton Island segment of this population (where predation of adults, nests, and goslings is low) has remained relatively stable in recent years at approximately 1,500 adults and the island appears to have reached carrying capacity for dusky geese.

Over a decade ago the Commission supported significant changes for goose hunting in northwest Oregon to assist with agricultural depredation problems. Changes included new mandatory testing for hunters and greatly expanded hunt areas. This season worked fairly well, though hunter participation in some areas was not as high as hoped. Positive steps have been taken while still promoting conservation of dusky Canada geese.

In March 1997, under direction from the Pacific Flyway Council, the USFWS began development of a goose depredation control plan for northwest Oregon and southwest Washington. State personnel in both Oregon and Washington spent considerable time providing input into this plan. The Council adopted the plan in March 1998. The department continues to strongly encourage Flyway-wide participation because actions taken in Oregon will have impacts on populations shared by many states. Oregon and Washington Farm Bureau representatives also provided input to the development of the depredation control plan. During the 2009 session, the Oregon legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law, Senate Bill 622. This bill created a task force to study issues raised by the increasing numbers of various species of geese in Oregon and to make recommendations regarding opportunities to control the goose population pursuant to applicable state and federal laws. See Appendix C.

The department recommends maintaining the permit goose hunting season in NW Oregon and keeping the program as consistent as possible. The following will assist managers in achieving goals:

- ✓ The current hunter education program is proposed for continuation. This will continue to improve knowledge of goose management issues and the role hunters play in this process. After Commission approval in 2005 the hunter education program was implemented in the NW Oregon General Zone in 2006 to assist with management of cackling and dusky Canada geese. Online internet testing for the goose permit was made available to hunters for the first time in September 2006 and was very well received by permit test takers. This is the third year in which only online testing will be offered except by special appointment.

- ✓ Past law enforcement efforts have shown minimal problems with dusky Canada geese not being checked at stations. There is speculation that some duskys are being left in the field. Last year the Department used waterfowl stamp dollars to fund OSP troopers to work overtime to patrol this season and intends to do the same this season. The high cost of this enforcement may reduce the number of hours devoted to law enforcement during this season compared to when retirees were utilized during past seasons.
- ✓ Population monitoring has indicated high winter survival rates for adult dusky Canada geese. ODFW check station personnel have assisted in goose monitoring programs in the past but this effort will be scaled back due to the extended hunting days being proposed this year.
- ✓ All hunting will be by permit only and under a hunt period quota system. Dusky harvest has been minimal compared to the take of other species.
- ✓ The Pacific Flyway Dusky Canada Goose Management Plan includes various one additional threshold to cut back harvest if the population should further decrease. All states with hunting – Oregon, Washington, and Alaska – will be implementing similar requirements for hunters this year.

In addition the expanded hunt schedule will provide additional opportunities for hunters and assist with goose depredation issues identified by landowners. The shifts in hunting hours and check station operations will allow extra hunting days but at no additional costs to the department.

### **Public Comment**

This season continues to be heavily debated, especially in light of high numbers of wintering geese in northwest Oregon and the new focus on goose management by the Oregon Goose Control Task Force. Public opinion varies tremendously on how this season should be administered and whether or not the dusky Canada goose population should be maintained at any cost. With little or no assistance from federal agencies, primarily because of USDA - Wildlife Services budgetary constraints, landowner tolerance towards wintering geese is low.

Many hunters have expressed concerns about the reduction in the daily bag limit of cackling Canada geese that took effect in 2005 which did reduce harvest of cackling geese from prior levels. It is uncertain if the reduction has reduced overall hunter participation, however the number of individual hunters bringing geese to check stations has not declined and cackling goose harvest has increased since 2005, although not to the levels seen in 2004 when 4 cacklers were allowed in the bag. Oregon did seek an increased bag limit on cackling Canada geese this year based on population status, but no other flyway entity supported this increase because Oregon has also asked for a review of

population objectives associated with this population. But the flyway will begin a review of population objectives and discussion with Alaskan natives this year.

There are also requests to classify the dusky Canada goose as a protected species, eliminate all permit goose restrictions, and cite any hunter who shoots a dusky. The department, as in past years, does not support this concept. This season is complicated, but its integrity must be maintained to ensure protection for depressed goose populations and avoid any federal listing potential. Many hunters have been concerned with further cutbacks in the permit seasons due to lack of federal funds. The proposed season is overall expanded from last year. Some individuals are also promoting the Commission to consider an additional fee to maintain this hunting season in the future. The current estimate for operational costs of this hunt are approximately \$190,000, per season, funded by waterfowl stamp funds. These costs include \$40-50,000 of funds needed for additional law enforcement support. Costs have increased with the inclusion of hunting in Tillamook County. The proposed changes this year, with the cutback in hunting hours and check station operations, maintain similar budgets to past years.

Hunter opinions on additional hunt days are greatly varied. Some hunters are saying they do not want additional hunt days and as this will make geese harder to hunt. Opinion of which days to hunt seems rather split between a Saturday through Wednesday schedule versus a Wednesday through Sunday schedule. Some hunters have complained about losing hunting late in the day but many are supportive in order to see further hunt days open. Many complaints come from hunters who are duck hunting late in the day and do not want to give up duck hunting to meet goose check station schedules.

In summary, this season remains complex and issues with goose depredation are not declining. Proposals are based on the need to try to further utilize hunting as a management tool for goose depredation but there are limitations both in federal frameworks and funding. The proposed season is just a first step in trying new programs to work within existing federal regulations and state budgets to assist landowners until other solutions are developed.

## **Black Brant**

### **Framework**

Oregon may select 16 consecutive days between the Saturday closest to October 1 and December 15. Bag limit is 2 per day, 4 in possession. Shooting hours are one half hour before sunrise to sunset.

### **Recommendation**

Adoption of a 16-day season and 2 brant daily bag limit, 4 in possession.

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#### **PROPOSED BLACK BRANT SEASON**

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**Statewide:** November 20, 2010 – December 5, 2010

The brant season in Oregon is short in duration with restrictive bag limits. Oregon coastal bays are a minor wintering site for brant in the Flyway and likely provide more migration than wintering habitat. Human disturbance has been documented to have detrimental effects on brant populations in other areas of the Flyway. Expanding acres of oyster flats, which can destroy eelgrass beds, and other non-hunting recreational activities in Oregon are of concern. Brant hunter numbers in Oregon are small with minimal harvest. The proposed season is later than in recent history, which is in concert with a more stable brant population and consistent with past hunter requests. This could improve hunter success. If the brant population in the future should begin to decline, timing of the season is one of the factors that would be reconsidered.

The department continues to support a conservative approach to brant hunting adopted by the Commission nine years ago. Two objectives of the strategy were to overlap Oregon and California seasons whenever possible and reduce overall brant harvest in Oregon in an attempt to increase wintering numbers. The proposed season coincides with California's brant season. The department supports harvest limitations through regulation of days and bag limits, rather than method of take. Also, the department continues to support Flyway policies on managing populations based on breeding derivation rather than winter distribution of individual flocks.

### **Public Comment**

No comments have been received.

➤ WILSON'S SNIPE

**Framework**

Oregon is allowed a 107-day season between September 1 and February 28, with a daily bag limit and possession limit of 8 and 16, respectively. A two-way or three-way season split can be selected. Hunting zones may be selected by established duck hunting zones.

**Recommendation**

Adoption of maximum days and bag limits.

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**PROPOSED WISLON'S SNIPE SEASON**

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**Zone 1:** Concurrent with proposed duck season.

**Zone 2:** Concurrent with proposed duck season.

**Public Comment**

One hunter has repeatedly requested a split season for snipe which would allow later hunting in western Oregon and last year provided a petition signed by other hunters supporting a late split season. The same request was submitted again this year. However, the proposed season could not be adopted as requested as snipe can only be zoned by duck zones. Western Oregon and portions of eastern Oregon are included in Zone 1. There are differences of opinions on this proposal and not all hunters support it. This type of season has been adopted in past years and received little support after a three year experiment. At that time, many hunters recommended going back to the concurrent seasons with duck hunting. The department believes the majority of hunters support a season concurrent with duck seasons for simplicity of regulations and that many snipe are hunted incidental to being in the field hunting for ducks.

➤ AMERICAN COOT

**Framework**

Concurrent with duck season with a daily and possession limit of 25.

**Recommendation**

Adoption of maximum days and bag limits.

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**PROPOSED AMERICAN COOT SEASON**

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**Zone 1:** Concurrent with proposed duck season.

**Zone 2:** Concurrent with proposed duck season.

**\* A federal waterfowl youth hunt weekend is proposed for September 25 and 26.** Coot population levels remain above the long-term average. Numbers in Oregon increased substantially as recorded during spring surveys. Current harvest strategies seem to have minimal impact on coots, which are not highly sought by most hunters.

**Public Comment**

No comments have been received.

➤ FALCONRY

**Framework**

No migratory bird species can be hunted by any method (gun + falconry) for more than 107 days in a geographic area. Falconry daily bag and possession limits for all permitted migratory game birds shall not exceed three and six, respectively, singly or in the aggregate. During that time when the season for dove, pigeons, crow and/or snipe, overlaps that for waterfowl, the falconer's bag may contain not more than three of all the federally regulated species.

**Recommendation**

Adoption of maximum days and bag limits allowed.

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**PROPOSED MIGRATORY GAME BIRD FALCONRY SEASONS**

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**Duck, Coot, Merganser, Crow and Snipe:** Concurrent with all listed gun seasons. Maximum falconry bag limits allowed.

**Geese:** Concurrent with all listed gun seasons except that no falconry hunting is allowed in the NW Oregon Permit Goose Zone or during any September Canada goose season. Only one goose, excluding brant, is allowed per day.

**Dove and Band-tailed Pigeon:** September 1, 2010 - December 16, 2010.  
Pigeon limit remains at one.

There are approximately 105 licensed falconers in the state, not all of who fly their raptors after game. Their collective harvest of birds is small. Most migratory game bird season proposals are concurrent with gun seasons. Liberalization of general duck and goose seasons denies opportunities for falconers to hunt outside of normal gun seasons.

**Public Comment**

No comments have been received.

# PUBLIC HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

**Columbia Basin Regulated Hunt Area Program:** Programs along the Columbia River near Boardman and other public access programs in Umatilla County are proposed to remain the same as in past years. In December of 2005 the Port of Morrow opened up approximately 500 acres of its land near Boardman to public hunting access. Access to this land will again be available to hunters this season.

**John Day River Refuge:** The department is recommending a change in hunting for the current John Day River Refuge. While this refuge is legislatively created the Commission has authority to regulate hunting within its boundaries. The Commission took similar actions in the Columbia River Refuge several years ago.

This refuge has been in place for decades and was primarily formed due to the desire to hold more wintering waterfowl in the area. This was at a time before the massive agricultural developments occurred throughout much of the Columbia Basin. The intent of the refuge is for the most part mute at this point. Lands within the refuge are a mix of both private and public lands and many landowners do not want additional hunting because of trespass concerns. However, some landowners have contacted the department and have asked for additional hunting opportunities.

The following summarizes the proposed change in hunting:

John Day River Wildlife Refuge (Sherman and Gilliam cos.) – Includes all public and private land and water within ¼ mile of the John Day River mean high water line from the Columbia River upstream to Thirtymile Creek. Within this area, from the Columbia River upstream to Rock Creek, the hunting of upland game birds is open during authorized seasons only between Sept. 1 and Oct. 31, but closed to all waterfowl hunting. The remaining area from Rock Creek upstream to Thirtymile Creek is open to hunting of all game birds during authorized seasons. Hunting of big game is allowed during authorized seasons. Hunting on private lands within this refuge requires landowner permission.

The proposed rule basically lifts the current hunting restrictions upstream from Rock Creek while below that area the refuge rules remain status quo. The area with increased hunting opportunity includes much of the public lands found within the refuge as well as some private landowners who support the change. Landowners within the refuge were asked to voice their opinion prior to the development of this rule and follow up letters asking for comment on the proposed rule have been sent to landowners previously contacted.



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**APPENDIX A**  
**ADAPTIVE HARVEST MANAGEMENT REPORT,**  
**2010**

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**APPENDIX B**

**USFWS WATERFOWL STATUS, 2010**

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**APPENDIX C**

**OREGON GOOSE CONTROL TASK FORCE**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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## **Goose Depredation Task Force – SB 622**

### **Final Recommendations**

Migratory waterfowl management is a joint responsibility of the federal and state governments. Management actions are governed by International Treaty through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Oregon is an integral part of the Pacific Flyway and serves as either a stopping ground or primary wintering ground for several species of geese that breed in and migrate south from Russia, Alaska and Canada. During the last three decades, thousands of migratory Canada geese have moved into Oregon that had not been present historically. This is in addition to an increased resident goose population that is present year round. These increased populations of resident and migratory geese have lead to conflicts in many parts of the state. Of primary concern are the white-fronted, snow and Ross' geese in the Klamath Basin, Aleutian Canada geese on the south and north coast and dusky and cackling Canada geese in the Willamette Valley.

Many of these goose populations have recovered from record lows, which have lead to increased conflicts and economic impacts on private agricultural lands. Historically cackling Canada geese wintered exclusively in the central valley of California, but since the late 1980's, for unknown reasons, shifted north to winter in the Willamette Valley. Farmers throughout Oregon began experiencing depredation in the early 1980's from various species and from cacklers by the late 1980's. Depredation has been increasing throughout the state since then. The cackling Canada goose population has continued to increase over that last decade with management objectives set prior to the population wintering in Oregon. Historically, the only migratory goose population that wintered in northwest Oregon (primarily in the Willamette Valley) in any numbers was the dusky Canada goose. Dusky Canada geese have been negatively impacted due to the 1964 earthquake in Alaska which raised the Copper River Delta altering habitat. Survival of juvenile geese has declined substantially since that time raising concerns over long-term viability of the population.

Traditionally the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) working through the Pacific Flyway Council (PFC) and USFWS regulatory processes has used hunting seasons to control goose populations. Season structure and bag limits have been maximized where possible to provide recreational opportunities and where appropriate to try to stem population growth. However, these traditional methods of controlling goose populations face several challenges, including: (1) mandates within the MBTA on season length and timing; (2) concerns over impacts to subsistence harvest by Native Alaskans; and (3) the concern of over harvesting the declining dusky population.

As a result of concerns over the increasing numbers of geese and the impacts these increasing populations are having on agricultural crops and possibly human health as well, the 2009 Legislature passed Senate Bill 622 which established a Goose Control Task Force. The intent of the task force was to identify problems caused by the increasing number of various species of geese in Oregon and to make recommendations regarding

opportunities to control goose populations and their impacts to Oregon farmers pursuant to applicable state and federal laws. Two members of the legislature were assigned to the task force and the ODFW Director appointed nine members representing state and federal, aviation, agricultural, conservationist and academic interests. The Task Force met four times and concluded discussions on July 13, 2010.

Based on discussions, which included input from the public, the Oregon Goose Control Task Force recommends the following actions, which are not listed by priority, to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and other state and federal management authorities:

1. It is specifically recommended that a working group comprised of affected state and federal wildlife agencies, landowners and hunters be formed to begin discussions with Native Alaskans on reducing the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Goose Management Plan's population objective for cackling Canada geese. Discussions with Native Alaskans should begin by the end of 2010.
2. ODFW and USFWS should immediately engage flyway entities on a review of population objectives with the aim of reducing priority problem goose populations in Oregon. Problem goose populations include but are not limited to cackling Canada geese, white-fronted geese and snow/Ross' geese.
3. ODFW and USFWS work with Pacific Flyway entities on increasing goose harvest opportunities that can provide assistance to agricultural operators throughout Oregon. Priority areas include the Willamette Valley, coastal areas, Snake River area of Malheur County and the Klamath Basin. Harvest regulations should focus on maximizing hunting days and bag limits and regulations should be simplified to promote hunter participation and harvest. Specifically, in the Northwest Oregon Permit Goose Zone hunting should be allowed to occur seven days per week during the authorized season. Additionally, state wildlife areas and federal refuges should be open for September Canada goose hunting to target the resident population.
4. ODFW and USFWS review hunting regulations pertaining to the Northwest Oregon Permit Goose Season and look at ways to streamline process, eliminate unnecessary regulations, and promote more hunter participation to assist landowners with goose depredation. This includes a review of high concentration use areas by dusky Canada geese and the scientific determination used to classify types of Canada geese. This review should be completed so that any potential changes could be incorporated in the 2011 hunting season or as soon thereafter as possible.

5. ODFW and stakeholders discuss options to improve hunter access on private lands that are experiencing agricultural depredation. A review of the past Access and Habitat Program for goose hunter access should be undertaken. Any recommendations for increasing hunter access should be finalized by the end of 2010.
6. ODFW and the USFWS should use agricultural practices on lands under their control, which are similar to those used on private agricultural land in the area where geese are causing agricultural depredations. This includes the planting of goose forage crops, which are available to geese during multiple seasons. Agencies should consult with the OSU agricultural extension service to determine effective farming practices. Supplemental feeding of geese on state and federal areas should be utilized when needed to reduce goose depredation on private farmlands.
7. The USFWS should issue Migratory Bird Depredation Permits (a.k.a. goose kill permits) to private landowners, or their designees, for the purpose of relieving agricultural depredation caused by geese. These kill permits are targeted to alleviate depredation when hunting seasons are closed and reduce both resident and migratory populations. The reason that these permits would not be issued during hunting season should be explained to the public. The application procedure for the permits should be user friendly, any permit costs should be waived and permit issuance should be completed in a timely manner. The issuance of permits for cackling Canada and other geese is a priority, statewide. A permitting system should be in place by 2011.
8. State legislation should be drafted which directly compensates Oregon landowners for goose depredation losses on agricultural lands.
9. The PFC's NW Oregon/SW Washington Canada Goose Agricultural Depredation Control Plan (1998) should be updated by a subcommittee of the PFC's Technical Committee comprised of representatives from at least ODFW, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, The Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the USFWS (Regions 1, 7 and 9). The update should be completed by early 2011. The subcommittee should solicit public comments regarding the update through meetings and also make provisions to accept written comments. Through its membership in the subcommittee, ODFW should, to the best of its ability, craft the update of the plan to provide maximum agricultural depredation relief to Oregon landowners.
10. ODFW, in coordination with the OFB, should continue to seek federal Congressional funding for the current NW Oregon/SW Washington Canada Goose Agricultural Depredation Control Plan (approximately \$2

million/year) and any subsequent updates. In the event of partial funds being secured priority should be first for plan actions which can be implemented by the Wildlife Services branch of the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Additionally, the Oregon Legislature should explore all options for state funding of Wildlife Services.

11. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) should work aggressively with the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies on authorization and use of chemical agents that could assist with goose depredations on agricultural crops. ODA should also streamline and simplify the permit process for applying pesticides. In addition, ODA should work closely with Oregon State University researchers on new research on products that could assist with depredation issues.
12. USFWS and ODFW should begin discussions with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to incorporate food plots that would benefit geese in any federal wetland projects on private lands. These food plots would be designed to attract geese away from agricultural croplands. No future publicly funded wetland projects should be implemented without provisions to provide food resources to help reduce agricultural depredations by geese.
13. Numerous educational and informational needs were identified including –
  - a. ODFW and USFWS develop web links and other public communication on public health risks related to goose populations.
  - b. ODFW and USFWS develop web links and other public communication on available aversion control methods for geese on agricultural lands.
  - c. Develop public information on control methods related to resident Canada geese on agricultural lands and in urban areas.
  - d. In conjunction with the Oregon Department of Aviation develop web links and public communication on the aviation risks related to goose populations.
14. State legislative, ODFW, USFWS, OFB and ODA representatives continue to work for proactive solutions with the Congressional delegation on the severity of goose depredation, including the monetary damages incurred by farmers and the resulting loss in tax revenue to the state and federal governments.

Task Force Members - Concurrence

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Senator Betsy Johnson

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Representative Mike Shaufler

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Mike Borman, Oregon State University

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Robert Trost, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Marie Gadotti, Farmer

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Ron Dobbins, Farmer

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Bob Flowers, Farmer



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Donald Coon, Farmer

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Dave Smith, Hunter

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Mark Knaupp, Farmer

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Ron Anglin, Oregon Dept. Fish and Wildlife

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**APPENDIX D**

**DUCK HUNTER SUCCESS ANALYSIS**

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## **Introduction**

The Department has received comments from some hunters that their early season duck hunting trips are more successful than their late season trips and therefore the season should be opened earlier so more early days are available to hunt. This is contrary to what the majority of hunters have requested in the past. Wildlife Division staff examined monthly duck hunter success statistics from Sauvie Island Wildlife Area to determine if hunter success differed between October and January. The objective of this exercise was to determine if hunter success rates justified opening the duck season earlier at the expense of hunting days in January. Note: USFWS frameworks allow the season to open as early as the Saturday nearest to September 24. Oregon typically opens its season in western Oregon on the third Saturday in October and extends the season to the latest day allowed under federal frameworks (last Sunday in January)

## **Methods**

The Department analyzed duck harvest per hunter by month from check station data recorded at Sauvie Island Wildlife Area from the 1997/98 season through the 2009/10 season. Although the data is specific to the wildlife area, the Department feels it is representative of duck harvest per hunter in most areas of western Oregon.

## **Results and Discussion**

The mean ducks bagged per hunter (Figure 1) in January (1.73) is greater than October (1.54) although the difference is not statistically significant. We also examined the data set to see if hunter success has changed over time. Using all years of data it appears duck hunter success, as measured by the ducks bagged per hunter, has increased during October and stayed consistent during January and that hunting success during October is now similar to January (Figure 2). However, the average birds per hunter during January 2010 appeared to be an outlier in the data set. Duck hunter success in western Oregon last January was likely reduced due to the persistent below average temperatures which occurred in late December in western Oregon which likely pushed wintering birds further south where open water was available. When conditions moderated hunter success likely fell due to the lower number of birds available to harvest. When the same data set is analyzed, minus data from last season, it appears duck harvest per hunter has been increasing over time for both October and January at nearly the same rate, with the harvest per hunter during January being higher (Figure 3).

The Department feels that these data justify keeping the current duck season structure in place in western Oregon. In most seasons duck hunter success, as measured by the duck bagged per hunter per day is greater later in the season compared to early in the season. Although duck hunting last January appears to have been poor, it was likely due to exceptional weather events and was not an indication that October hunting is generally better than January hunting. The Department also continues to receive requests seasons be allowed to end as late as allowed under federal frameworks.

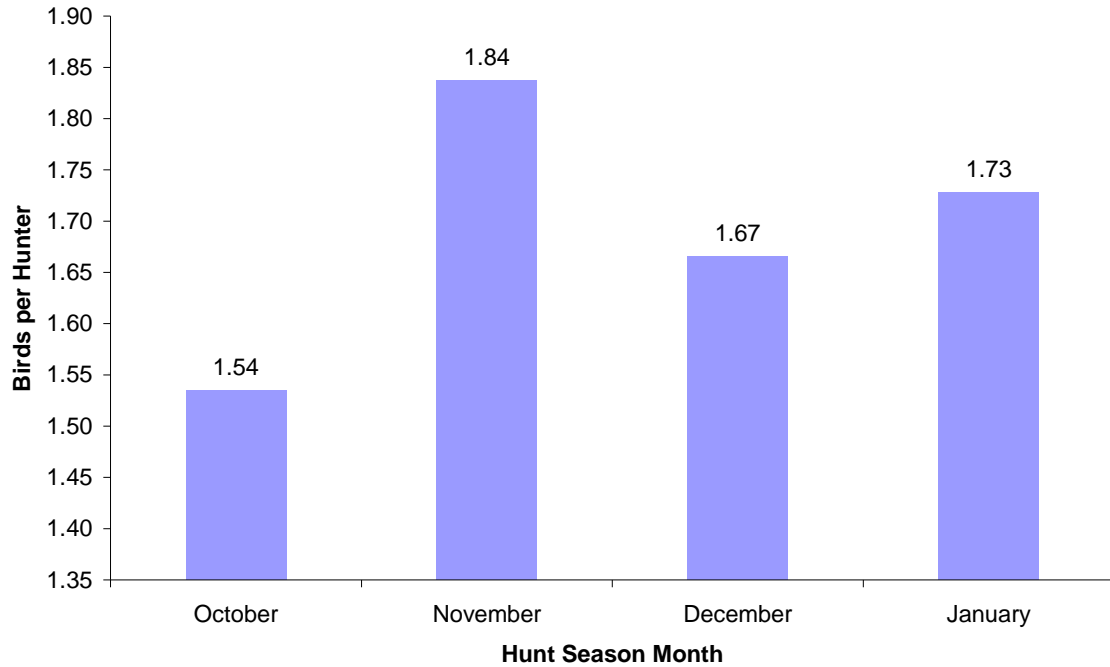


Figure 1. Mean duck bagged per hunter day, by month, at Sauvie Island Wildlife Area. 1007/98 – 2009/10.

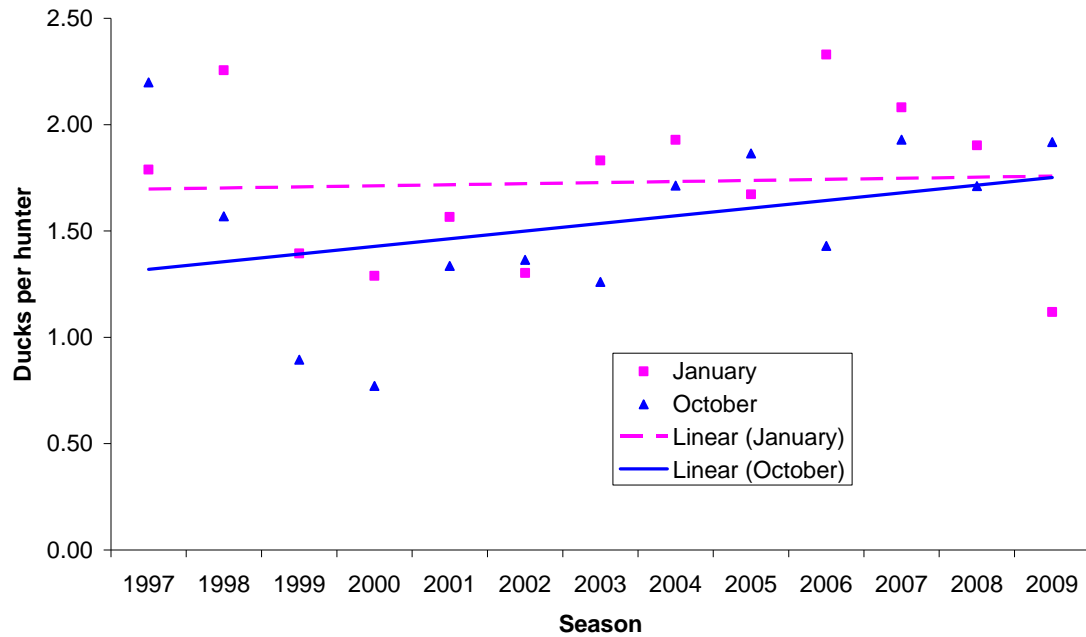


Figure 2. Ducks bagged per hunter day in October and January at Sauvie Island Wildlife Area. 1997/98 – 2009/10.

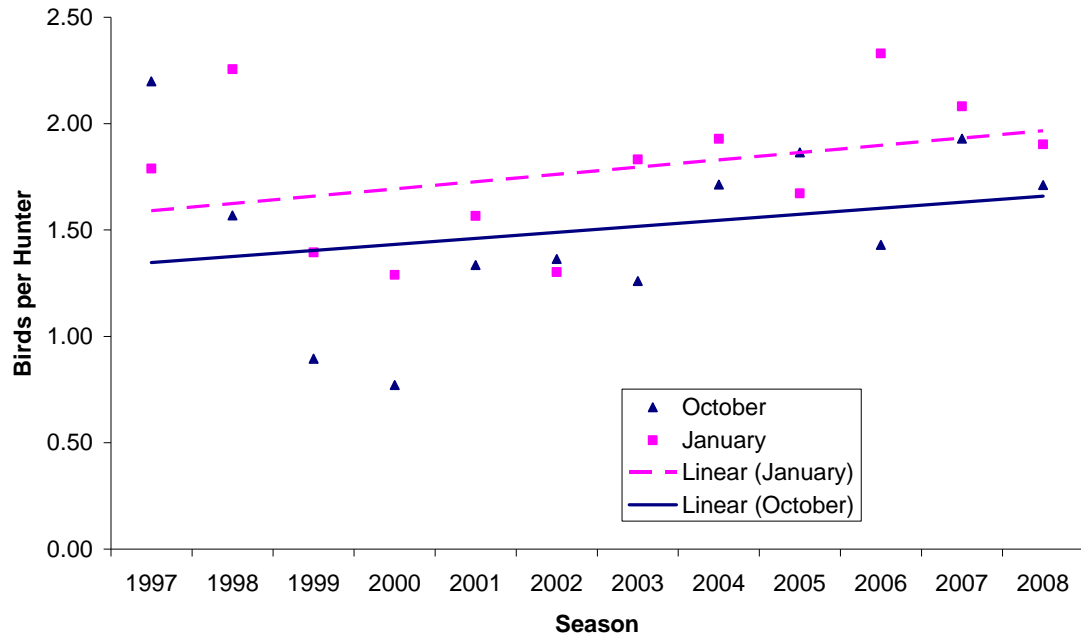


Figure 3. Ducks bagged per hunter day in October and January at Sauvie Island Wildlife Area. 1997/98 – 2008/09.

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**APPENDIX E**

**PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE**

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