



Locally Grown
and
GROWING STRONG

April 20, 2018

Chair Michael Finley
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302

Re: 2018-2019 Oregon Game Bird Regulations

Chair Finley,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. As a reference, the Oregon Farm Bureau Federation (OFB) is the state's largest general agriculture association, representing over 7,000 farming and ranching families in Oregon. For decades, OFB has been actively engaged in discussions concerning Canada goose management and the need to address goose damage to crops.

Canada geese are voracious grazers, causing millions of dollars of crop damage each year to Oregon's family farmers. In 2016, OFB participated in the review of the Pacific Flyway Council Management Plan for the Cackling Canada Goose together with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). We advocated for the maintenance of a statewide hunting season for Canadian geese in Oregon to bolster avian hazing efforts on the farm and reduce depredation.

Today, we urge the Fish and Wildlife Commission to take up necessary population control measures amid at the Cackling Goose and support Pacific Flyway Council in funding a robust collaring survey to more accurately calculate the Canada goose population.

Goose Population Control

OFB supports four measures to help control the migratory goose population:

- (1) An uninterrupted hunting season from October 1 thru March 10 for White-Fronted Geese and White Geese. The populations of both species have dramatically increased in geographical regions not traditionally visited. These geese are increasing the depredation on local farms, and OFB supports a continual hunting season.

- (2) Opening targeted hunting areas in Tillamook County. South Tillamook County near Pacific City has a unique challenge with Aleutian Cackling Goose.
- (3) Increasing the bag limit for Canada geese from four to six. As the demographics of waterfowl hunters change, expanding the bag limit will further assist in the control of Canada geese.
- (4) Reducing the population objective from 250,000 to a number that is more sustainable for the geese, farmers, and their habitable environment.

Goose Collaring Survey

OFB supports all efforts to obtain the most accurate goose population, including innovative methods to improve the count. The 2014 large-scale goose collaring project through USFWS funds, was a step in the right direction. OFB respectfully requests that ODFW advocate for a more expansive collar survey at the next Pacific Flyway Council meeting to support a reduced population objective for the Cackling Goose.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Sandau
Oregon Farm Bureau Federation

4/20/18

ODFW Meeting

Battery Operated Waterfowl Decoys

A) Request Commission to Allow Use Of

- 1) Supported by 60-70% of Oregon waterfowl hunters. Many do not care either way!
- 2) Supported by our governing body the USFW Service in their 165 page National Duck Survey of 10,000 hunters from all states as shown on your migratory web page
- 3) Supported by 48 other states. We soon may be the only state remaining.

B) Statistical Evidence Supporting Use of

- 1) The National Duck Survey stated that over half of all duck hunters use no motorized decoys. 71% approve, 25% have no opinion (a positive in my mind). Only 7% of use them full time. It's only one tool in a hunter's tool bag.
- 2) Technology and Animation is the future of all hunting from clothing to 1,000 yard rifles to shotguns that are light and that cycle shells faster and faster. New technology may fool one duck but then they adapt quickly. Today 20 years after the introduction of some mechanical decoys they are becoming a deterrent to the bag success. That is why game wardens and hunters from other states say NO Problem. The Washington Commission member who was their swing vote back when saying "No, Not for Now" is an avid spinning wing fan these days.

C) Who Benefits?

1) Youth hunters. They love mechanical toys and especially one they can turn on and off. If the decoy helps them bag their first duck for a dinner you may hook a future waterfowler for life. Future state revenues and Pittman-Robertson equipment revenues will follow. I do compliment Oregon's youth mentor program. Statistics say 75% of youth today have no father at home. How do we reach them?. The NRA school shooting classes are a huge success. What about taking youth on a hunt with the battery operated decoy in their hand and without a gun watch the flight of birds, the dog working , maybe even hoot on a duck call? The 11-12 year olds should be a focus group. A relationship with Boy Scouts might work well to expose a kid to bird hunting.

2) What about private land owners and duck club members inviting youth thru rod and gun clubs and other organizations. What about discussing more Youth Hunts with the Pacific Flyway Council and not having them part of the 107 day season. Deregulation and progressive thinking is needed these days as the funding for public access and our sport is decreasing. Just look at the lack of public land access in Western Oregon now for the walk in hunter and his son/grandson. The Canadian Wildlife Service is proposing a family hunting license allowing them to bag one limit with one license. That is progressive thinking. Better to try something new rather to do nothing.

3) Adding a small battery for convenience will help recruit new adults and youth. It will take nothing away from those hunters who use a wind duck, a jerk string, a flag, and a pull string decoy. Motion can attract but it can also scare waterfowl away. Remember when steel replaced lead and many adult hunters put their shotgun away. That controversy has been put to bed so I don't think you'll hear any discussion about battery operated decoys after they are allowed. You

don't hear any discussion from our neighbor Idaho only the public's praise for their governor who recently made the decision to prohibit all waterfowl guiding on public lands and waters.

E) Harmful effects of pull string decoys and prototypes left out overnight on private lands and waters.

1) Permanent steel T posts erected 5-7' off the ground with steel cables anchored into the ground holding a spinning wing decoy are injuring migratory birds and other wildlife. On private duck clubs where legal baiting occurs thru the planting of cereal crops and the birds pile in for the evening these contraptions are a danger to a retriever, a hunter and waterfowl. A black lab on Sauvies Is. severed his leg tendon on 30 Lb. Tuff Line never to hunt again. Many a wounded duck has been heard spashing nearby or retrieved by a dog at first light. The use of a battery operated decoy will eliminate all of these death traps. And then there are ice eaters, again new technology, powered by electricity attracting birds to an ice opening or entirely open water only to be turned off one minute before shooting time. These are allowed now!

2)) The Hermiston-Boardman area game warden tells me his biggest complaint in not allowing a decoy battery is that manual operated decoys all contribute to too much activity in a blind and he he finding too many shotgun safetys "ON".

F) Who Do You Trust To Represent Your Interests was one of the National Duck Survey Questions.

1) The general public 1%, outdoor writers 6%, Flyway Councils 15%, Wildlife Agencies 25%, experienced duck hunters 58% and Legislators at 2%.

2) A level playing field for all hunters is our goal.



Motorized Spinning Wing Overview

Legalization Request for Oregon Fish
and Game Commission

Agenda

- Objective
- History
- Facts/data
- Public Input
- Fair Chase
- Conclusion

Objective

- Request the Oregon Fish and Game commission to reconsider the legalization and use of motorized spinning wing decoys in the State of Oregon

Decoys and Calls

No person shall:

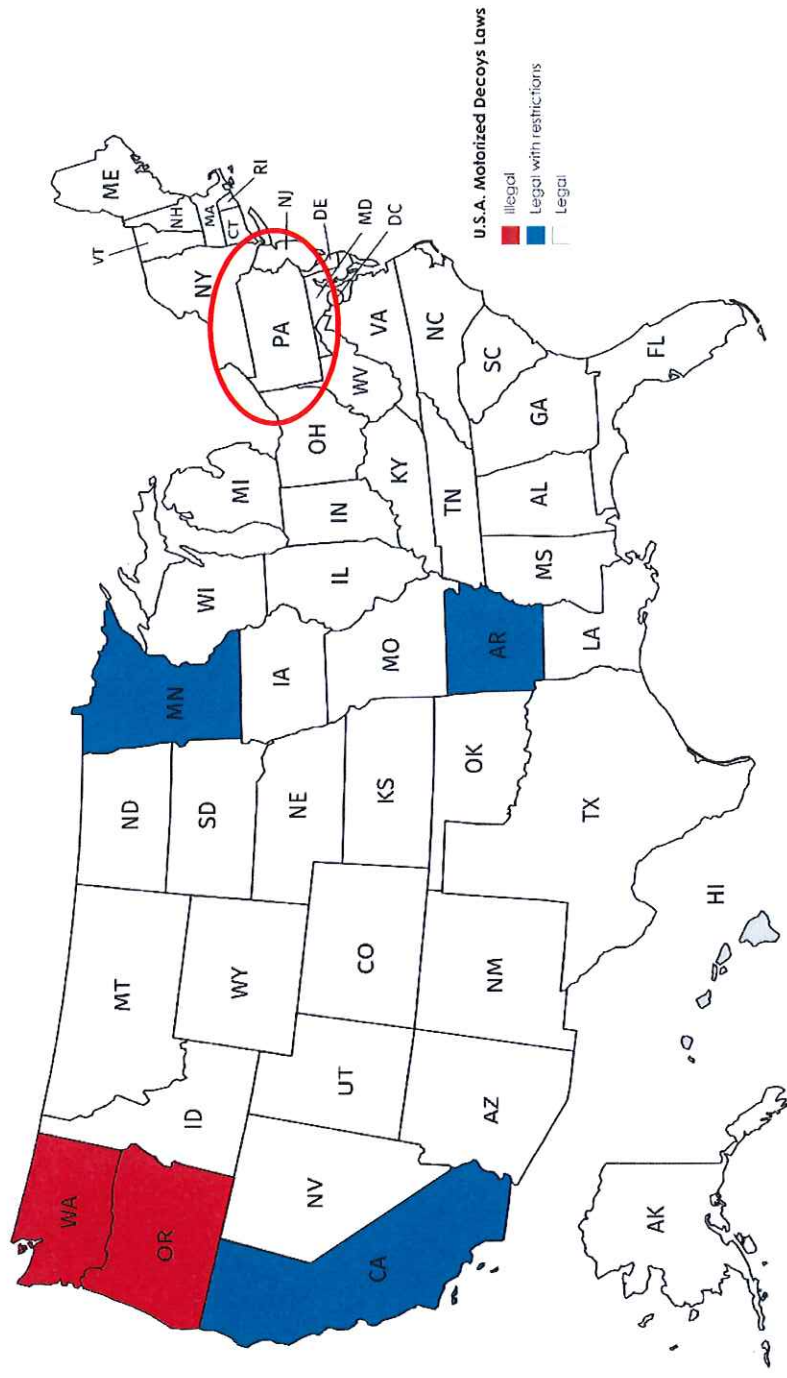
- Hunt game birds or crows by the use or aid of any live birds for decoys.
- Hunt game birds (except for crows) by the use of records or tapes of bird calls or sounds, or electrically amplified imitations of bird calls or sounds.
- Hunt game birds with the use of decoys powered by motor, battery, or other self-powered methods. Quiver magnets are also illegal. Decoys with parts that are moved solely by human actions (for example, via a cable or pull-string) or the wind are allowed.

History

- Motorized spinning wing decoys were made unlawful in Oregon at the start of the 2003-2004 waterfowl season
 - A 2002 briefing was provided to the commission titled: MECHANICAL/ELECTRONIC DECOYS FOR HUNTING
 - At the time, the commission had concerns with **new** decoy technological advances and the impacts of “fair chase”
 - The use of wind and human powered decoys were still lawful
- WA started a similar ban in 2001-2002 season
- CA started a partial season ban in 2001-2002 season
 - Motorized decoys legal starting Dec 1st
 - Law has not changed since inception
- USFW does not ban motorized decoys at the federal level so hunters rely on a patchwork of state laws

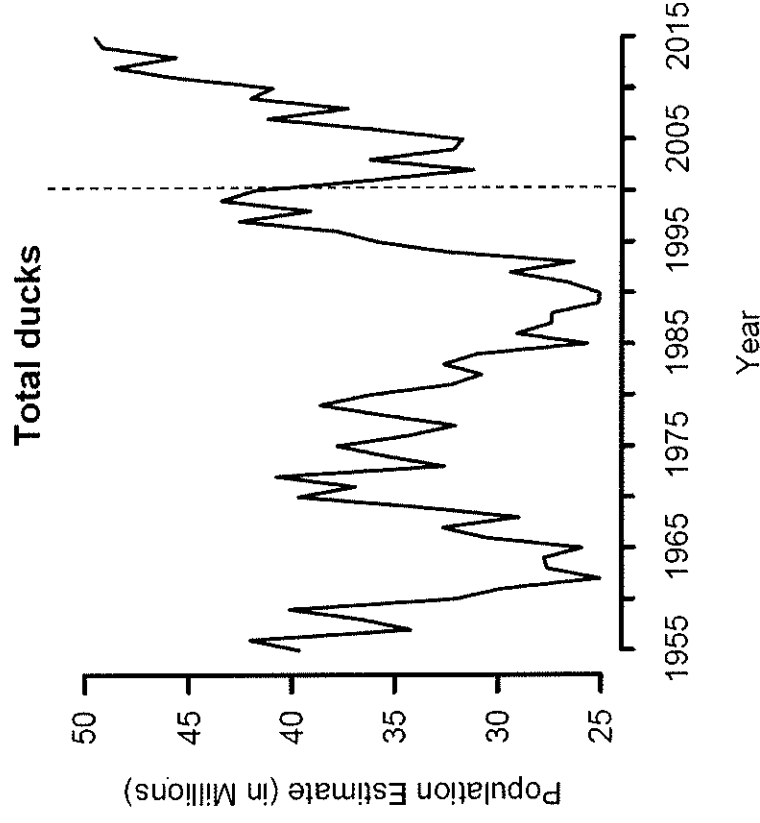
Recent Updates

- Nov 22, 2017 Pennsylvania legalizes motorized spinning wing decoys all season
- OR & WA are the only remaining states with a total ban
- MN and AR restrict use on WAs and NWRs



Facts and Data

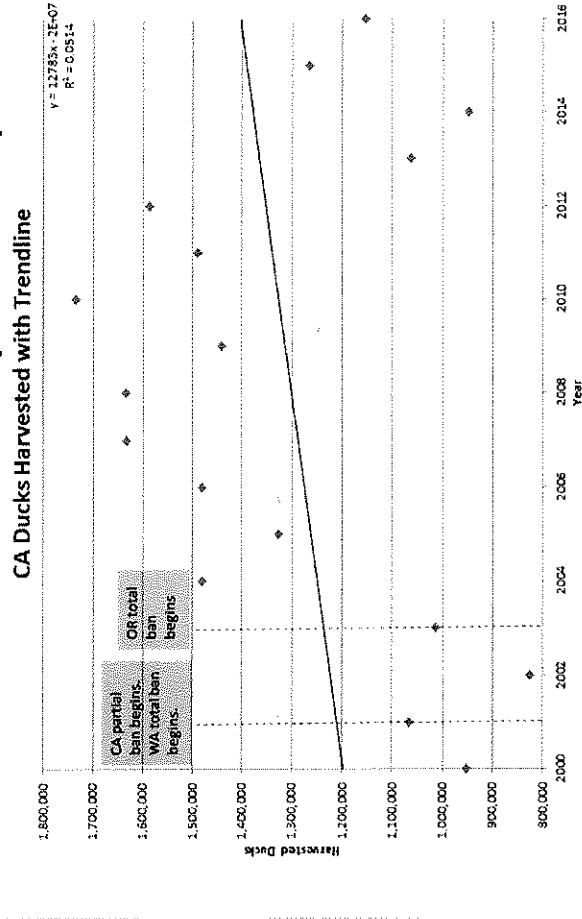
- Even with legalization in 46 of the 48 lower states, record number of waterfowl populations are surveyed year after year since surveys began in 1955
- No detrimental impact to duck populations observed since 2000. In fact populations have surged since then.



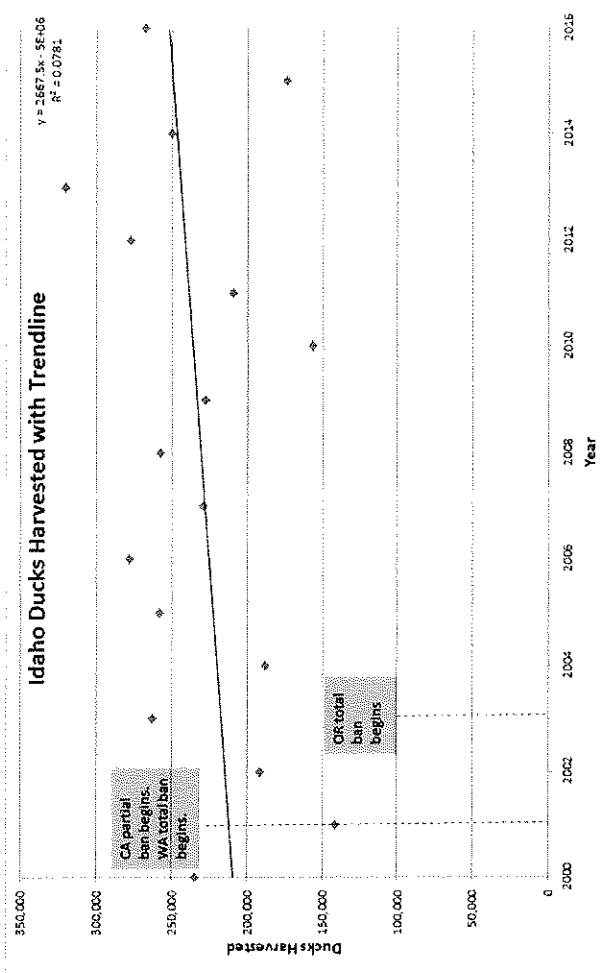
Facts and Data

- Pacific flyway states where there is no ban or partial ban, are enjoying steady populations with a flat or small positive harvest trend (CA & ID)

- Many factors in hunter harvest data:
 - Distributions of breeding birds
 - Breeding success
 - Migration patterns
 - Weather/winter habitat conditions
 - Hunter effort & efficiency



CA averages ~1.3 million ducks harvested/year



ID averages ~230,000 ducks harvested/year

Public Input

- From a random online survey of local hunters, ~62% of hunters **support** some form of legalization
- ~38% opposed
- 188 hunters participated in survey as of 4/7/2018



Personal Observations

- Spinning wing decoys more effective earlier part of season Oct - mid Dec
- Seem to work well on Gadwall & Widgeon, pintail & mallard more challenging
- >70% of hunters on public land using pull string and wind powered decoys
- Does not automatically make you a better hunter. Still requires skill to know when to use/not use/placement, etc.

It comes down to fair chase

- Ethical question for every hunter:
 - **Did the animal have a reasonable opportunity to elude the hunter?**
 - 46 of 48 lower US states believe the answer is **yes** in regards to motorized spinning wing decoys
 - Oregon believes the answer is **yes** for human and wind powered decoys
 - The decoy effect on a live duck is the same whether motorized or not
 - 63% of polled Oregon duck hunters believe the answer is **yes**
- Examples of unfair chase:
 - Killing an animal helpless in a trap, in deep snow, etc.
 - Killing from a boat under power
 - Using a spotlight to deer hunt
 - Killing an animal inside of an escape proof enclosure

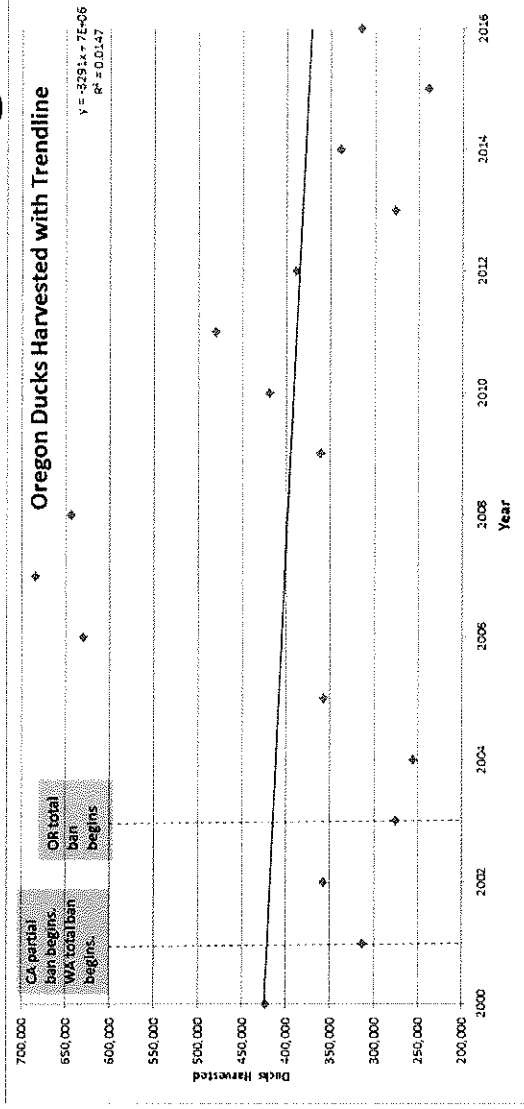
Conclusion

- 46 of the lower 48 US states believe motorized spinning wing decoys accommodate fair chase practices
- Nationally, waterfowl populations continue to thrive
- Pacific flyway states where they are legal continue to have strong waterfowl populations
- Majority of Oregon duck hunters want them legalized
- It's time for Oregon to follow suit with the rest of the country. Please reconsider legalization of motorized spinning wing decoys in Oregon
- Thank you!

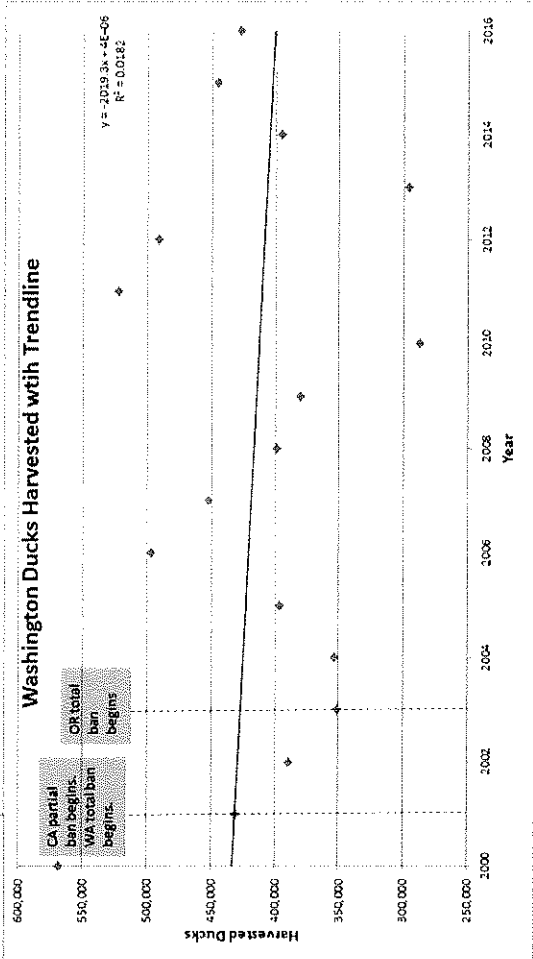
Backup Slides

Facts and Data

- OR and WA are seeing steady harvest numbers with small negative trend.



OR averages ~398,000 ducks harvested/year



WA averages ~417,000 ducks harvested/year

References

- <https://flyways.us/regulations-and-harvest/harvest-trends>
- http://read.nextbook.com/pgc/huntingtrapping/20172018/index.html#waterfowl_migratory_game_bird