

COMMISSIONER-PROPOSED AMENDMENT

FWP proposal to be amended: 2024 Migratory Bird Seasons

Commissioner: Brian Cebull

Date Received by Commission: April 9, 2024

Proposed Amendment: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the following amendment to the proposed 2024 Migratory Bird Regulations:

- Retain the restriction on waterfowl hunting on the 87-mile portion of the Yellowstone River between the confluence of the Bighorn and Yellowstone rivers to the Rosebud-Custer County line that has been in place since 1958.

Requested by FWP: No

Rationale and Background: The closure on the 87-mile portion of the Yellowstone River was put in place in 1958 due to low goose populations. While the populations have more than recovered in the past several decades, this closure to waterfowl hunting has created a historic resting ground for migrating geese that has created some of the best field hunting opportunities in southern Montana. While lifting the restriction would allow for more public access, these hunting opportunities would be limited due to lack of access points along the river and early ice-ups which can close the river to boating very early in the season. Considering that the overwhelming majority of comments from stakeholders including local hunters, local business owners, and landowners oppose the reopening, I believe the benefits of keeping this closure in place outweigh the limited benefits provided by reopening. As such, I am recommending that the Commission retains the current closure in its final 2024 Migratory Bird regulations.

Department response:

The department anticipates no adverse biological effects on waterfowl populations as a result of this amendment.