

## **FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** April 14, 2017

**Agenda Item:** 2017 Migratory Bird (Waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes, Mourning Doves and Snipe)

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed for this Presentation:** 10 Min

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### **Background**

Migratory bird hunting regulations pertain to cranes, snipe, doves, ducks, geese, swans, and coots. Montana participates in both the Central and Pacific Flyways and adheres to the federal frameworks established by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the flyway councils. States may be more conservative than these frameworks but may not exceed them. The proposals below are the same as those proposed in February with two exceptions: 1) based on public comment received by Jim Hansen, FWP Central Flyway Coordinator, FWP proposes increasing the Carbon County sandhill crane permits from 15 to 20 (highlighted below) and, 2) based on public comment FWP withdraws its proposal to shorten the closed period in Central Flyway Zone 2 and continue as per the 2016 regulations. Maintaining the longer closed period in Zone 2 also means that we cannot offer the longer 16-day “bonus teal” opportunity originally proposed in February. The bonus teal opportunity would be 9 days as per 2016.

For the 2017-18 migratory bird regulations, FWP proposes:

- Expanding sandhill crane hunting opportunities in the Rocky Mountain Population by adding 7 days to sandhill crane seasons to equal the federal framework maximum of 30 days.
- Reduce the daily pintail bag limit would from 2 to 1 in both flyways in accordance with the federal framework.
- Increase the Carbon County 599-00 sandhill crane permits from 15 to 20.

All other elements of the 2017-18 season are proposed to remain unchanged except for calendar rotation.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

Public comment was taken at the February meeting and until March 15. We received 19 comments, which are included in the Commission packet. All 10 comments on the proposed shortening of the central flyway Zone 2 closure were opposed. Other comments spoke to wanting a split season in central flyway Zone 1, an increase in the hen mallard bag limit, increasing the dark goose bag limit in the Pacific Flyway and earlier dove and crane seasons. An earlier dove season is not allowed by the federal framework.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions, or no change.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2017-18 migratory bird season as proposed.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt for public comment the 2017-18 Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations as presented by FWP, and all other portions of the previous 2016-17 migratory bird season regulations not affected by Commission action today.