

Wildlife Bureau PO Box 200701 Helena MT 59620-0701 August 2, 2012

Dear Interested Person:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is requesting public comment on proposed 2012 Late Season Migratory Bird Regulations and a proposed change to Elk Population Objectives in Hunting District (HD) 283 in the Garnet Elk Management Unit. Additional information is below. For review and comparison, hunting regulations may be found on the Hunting home page at the fwp.mt.gov website.

2012 Late Season Migratory Bird Regulations - Proposed

Below are proposed changes for 2012 Late Season Migratory Bird Regulations. The Commission adopted <u>two</u> options (option differences shaded in gray below) for the duck and goose season dates in the Central Flyway for the public to consider. All other season elements not identified below are proposed to be unchanged from the 2011 regulation booklet.

Pacific Flyway

- Youth Waterfowl Season: Sept. 22-23 (2 days limits below apply)
- General Waterfowl Season: Sept. 29–Jan. 11 (105 days)
 - o <u>Ducks:</u> Daily bag limit shall be 7 ducks or mergansers, possession limit twice daily limit. Daily bag limit shall not include more than 2 hen mallards, 2 pintails, 2 redheads, and 1 canvasback. (Note the additional restrictions on scaup bag limit and season length have been removed.)
 - o Coots: 25 daily and in possession
 - Geese: Dark 4 daily, possession limit twice the daily limit
 White 10 daily, possession limit twice the daily limit (Note the white goose bag limit has been changed from 6 to 10.)
- Swan (500 permits only) Season: Oct. 13–Dec. 1
- Falconry dates: Ducks, coots, and geese: Sept. 29 Jan. 11

Central Flyway Option 1 - No Split for Ducks and Geese (option differences shaded in gray):

- Youth Waterfowl Season: Sept. 22-23 (2 days limits below apply)
- Duck and Coot Season: Sept. 29–Jan. 3 (97 days)
- <u>Goose Season</u>: Sept. 29 Jan. 11 (105 days)
 - O Ducks: Daily bag limit shall be 6 ducks or mergansers, possession limit twice the daily limit. Daily bag limit shall not include more than 5 mallards no more than 2 of which may be hens, 2 redheads, 2 hooded mergansers, 3 wood ducks, 2 pintails, and 1 canvasback. (Note the additional restriction on scaup bag limit has been removed.)
 - o Coots: 15 daily, possession limit twice the daily limit
 - o Geese: Dark 5 daily, possession limit twice the daily limit (Note the dark goose bag limit has been changed from 4 to 5.)
 - White 20 daily, possession limit twice the daily limit (Note the white goose bag limit has been changed from 6 to 20.)
- Tundra Swan (500 permits only) Season: Sept. 29–Jan. 3 (97 days)
- Falconry dates: Ducks and Coots: Sept. 23 Jan. 3; Geese: Sept. 29 Jan. 11

Central Flyway Option 2 - Mid-season split for Ducks and Geese (option differences shaded in gray):

- Youth Waterfowl Season: Sept. 22-23 (2 days limits below apply)
- Duck and Coot Season: Sept. 29–Oct. 14, AND Oct. 31 Jan. 19 (97 days)
- Goose Season: Sept. 29 Oct.14, AND Oct. 31 Jan. 27 (105 days)
 - O Ducks: Daily bag limit shall be 6 ducks or mergansers, possession limit twice the daily limit. Daily bag limit shall not include more than 5 mallards no more than 2 of which may be hens, 2 redheads, 2 hooded mergansers, 3 wood ducks, 2 pintails, and 1 canvasback. (Note the additional restriction on scaup bag limit has been removed.)
 - o Coots: 15 daily, possession limit twice the daily limit
 - o Geese: Dark 5 daily, possession limit twice the daily limit (Note the dark goose bag limit has been changed from 4 to 5.)
 - White 20 daily, possession limit twice the daily limit (Note the white goose bag limit has been changed from 6 to 20.)
- <u>Tundra Swan (500 permits only) Season:</u> Sept. 29–Jan. 3 (97 days)
- <u>Falconry dates: Ducks and Coots:</u> Sept. 23 Oct. 14, AND Oct. 31 Jan. 19; Geese: Sept. 29 Oct. 14, AND Oct. 31 Jan. 27

Elk Population Objectives in Hunting District (HD) 283 - Proposed

FWP proposes to amend the elk population objectives for Hunting District (HD) 283 in the Garnet Elk Management Unit. HD 283 is currently managed with a district-wide objective of 500 +/- 20% (400 to 600) elk. The district-wide management scale is inappropriate given that elk numbers are increasing beyond desired levels in the North Hills herd-unit, while elk numbers on the Gold Creek herd-unit are below desired levels, and declining. The North Hills herd unit is a source of chronic game damage complaints and hunting access is hampered by land ownership and development. The Gold Creek herd- unit is largely comprised of National Forest System Lands and Plum Creek Timber Company holdings. Objectives at the herd-unit scale are necessary for effective elk population management. In addition, given changes in elk abundance and distribution, along with changing elk population performance, it is also appropriate to change the unit-wide objective. The proposed herd-unit objectives would be:

- North Hills/Evaro herd: 300 elk
- Jumbo herd: 90 elk
- Gold-Belmont-Morrison herd: 300 elk

The overall objective for HD 283 would be adjusted from 500 to 690 elk.

COMMENT PERIOD DEADLINES AND FINAL ADOPTION MEETINGS

The deadline for public comment on the proposed 2012 Late Season Migratory Bird Regulations is 5:00 PM Monday, August 27, 2012. Final adoption on these items will be made at the August 30, 2012 FWP Commission meeting.

The deadline for public comment on the proposed changes to Elk Population Objectives in Hunting District (HD) 283 is 5:00 PM Monday, September 17. Final adoption on these items will be made at the October 11, 2012 Commission meeting.

TO MAKE COMMENT

For further clarification, you may call the Wildlife Bureau office at 406-444-2612. To submit comments electronically, this letter with the imbedded links below can be found under "Opportunity for Public Comment" on the Hunting home page at the fwp.mt.gov website. Written comments can be sent to: FWP – Wildlife Bureau, Attn: Public Comment, POB 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701. **Please note different comment deadlines**.

Imbedded Links to Submit Public Comment

2012 Late Season Migratory Bird Regulations - Proposed

(The deadline for public comment on this item is 5:00 PM Monday, August 27, 2012.) http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2012proposedLateSeasonWaterfowl.html

Elk Population Objectives in Hunting District (HD) 283 - Proposed

(The deadline for public comment on this item is 5:00 PM Monday, September 17, 2012.) http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2012proposedElkObjectivesChanges