



The purpose of this presentation is to inform the Commission of the potential expansion of the dove hunting season and to summarize results of stakeholder input on this issue. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is expected to allow for an increase in the length of the dove season from 70 to 90 days and maintain a daily bag limit of 15 birds.

In anticipation of this regulatory change, FWC staff polled dove hunters to assess their preferences for adding 20 days to the dove hunting season.

Author: Andrew Fanning
Report Date: March 10, 2014

Regulatory Process

- Early in process at this point ✓
- States provide input to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) ✓
- July 2014: anticipated frameworks for early migratory bird seasons published
- August 2014: final frameworks for early migratory bird seasons published
- Implement changes to early migratory bird seasons by Executive Order

FWS regulations require the dove season to fall between September 1 and January 15



Federal regulations are amended annually to establish the maximum number of days and dates within which individual species and groups of species of migratory birds can be hunted, and the maximum bag limits for taking migratory birds. States are required to select dates and bag limits for taking migratory birds within these “frameworks.” The federal schedule for establishing the frameworks precludes the Commission from taking timely action to adapt Commission rules to changes in the frameworks. Our protocol, therefore, has been to advise the Commission of anticipated changes to federal frameworks for early migratory bird seasons (includes dove, rail, gallinule, woodcock, snipe, September Canada goose, and special September duck seasons), make recommendations, solicit Commission guidance, and, subsequently, make any necessary changes to Commission rules by executive order after federal frameworks are finalized. When changes are made by executive order, the pertinent rules are changed during a subsequent Commission meeting to codify in rule the changes established by order.

Thus far we have been working proactively to ensure a smooth transition to an anticipated change in the federal frameworks that would expand the dove season to 90 days. However, we are early in the Federal regulatory process. States have provided input to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that would allow for a 90-day season. The FWS will consider the recommendation and post the proposed dove season frameworks in July. The frameworks will become final in August, after which changes to the Florida dove season may be implemented by Executive Order.

This report presents the input we have received regarding Florida dove hunter preferences for adding 20 days to the current 70-day dove season in anticipation of this change being approved for the 2014-2015 hunting season. We do not anticipate any change in the bag limits (15/45 daily/possession) or outside dates (September 1 – January 15), within which the Florida dove season must fall. The outside dates are established to provide the states flexibility when selecting their season dates, and to protect dove populations from hunting during nesting and mating periods. The current outside dates have remained unchanged since 1958.

Public Input Process

Online Poll

- October 2013
- Email to Migratory Bird Permit holders
- Collected input on:
 - where to place additional 20 days
 - length of breaks between phases
 - importance of Saturday openings and Sunday closings



To begin the public outreach process for potentially adding 20 days to the dove season, the FWC emailed a poll to all Migratory Bird Permit holders in the previous three years that had a valid email address in the Recreational License Issuance System. The poll was conducted in October 2013 and was sent to 94,847 people. Polling was limited to one response per IP address.

The poll asked questions about where to add the 20 additional hunt days (beginning, middle, end, or equal distribution throughout the season), how early/late the season should begin/end, importance of the number and length of breaks between phases of the hunting season and preferences for starting and ending phases on a Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

Florida's dove season currently consists of 70 days divided into three phases. All three phases begin on a Saturday, and two of the phases end on a Sunday. The length of the breaks between phases varies between two and three weeks. The season opens in early October and closes in mid January.

Note: This was an open online poll and reflects opinions of individuals that have an interest in the proposals and have taken the time to participate. It was not a scientifically designed survey.

Public Input Process



Online Poll Results:

- 1,936 responses
- “Distribute days throughout the season” received the greatest number of responses
- Preference to keep breaks between phases
- Important to start phases on Saturday
- Not important to end phases on Sunday
- Preference to hunt until the end of allowable season (January 15)



The poll received 1,936 responses.

When asked where to place the 20 additional days of the dove season, the most common response was for equal distribution throughout the season (30%), followed by adding the days to the late portion of the season (25%), the beginning portion of the season (21%) and the middle portion of the season (19%).

When asked about the importance of the number and length of the breaks between phases, most respondents preferred to either maintain the number of breaks (42%) or eliminate the breaks and have one continuous 90 day season (33%).

Starting each phase on a Saturday received a significant amount of support with 45% indicating it was very important, 25% somewhat important and 30% not important. On the other hand, when asked about the importance of ending each phase on a Sunday, only 22% indicated it was very important, 24% somewhat important and 54% not important (54%).

Among the respondents who chose either add days to the late portion of the season, evenly distribute the additional days, or “other”, there was a strong preference (75%) to hunt until the end of the allowable framework (January 15).

A full summary of the poll results is available at MyFWC.com/dove.

Result of Public Input:

Conceptual 90-day Season

| 2014-15 Season Dates | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| | Current Season (70 days) | Conceptual Season (90 days) | Difference |
| Phase 1 | Oct. 4 - Oct. 27 | Sep. 27 - Oct. 28 | 8 days added |
| Phase 2 | Nov. 15 - Nov. 30 | Nov. 8 - Nov. 30 | 7 days added |
| Phase 3 | Dec. 13 - Jan. 11 | Dec. 12 - Jan. 15 | 5 days added |



Results from the poll were incorporated to draft the following conceptual 90-day dove season:

- Phase 1: Opening the fourth Saturday of September and closing 31 days thereafter
- Phase 2: Opening the second Saturday of November and closing 22 days thereafter
- Phase 3: Opening December 12th and closing January 15th

This conceptual season would:

- add days to each phase of the season
- end on the last allowable day (January 15)
- maintain a break between phases
- begin phases one and two on a Saturday, (phase three could open on any day of the week, depending on the calendar year)

In comparison to the current 70-day season:

- Phase 1: opens seven days earlier and closes one day later, resulting in eight additional days
- Phase 2: opens seven days earlier, for an additional seven days
- Phase 3: opens December 12th and is extended to January 15th, resulting in five additional days. January 15th is the last allowable day to hunt per federal frameworks.

Public Input Process

Feedback Poll

- December 2013 – January 2014
- Email to Migratory Bird Permit holders
- Collected opinion on conceptual 90-day season

Results

- 1,209 respondents
- 85% approve of the conceptual season
- 6% disapprove



FWC staff conducted an online feedback poll from December 19, 2013 – January 5, 2014 to gather input on the conceptual 90-day season. The poll was emailed to the same list of migratory bird permit holders from the initial poll, and was limited to one respondent per IP address. The poll presented the 90-day conceptual season and asked respondents to provide their opinion.

The poll received 1,209 responses. Overall results indicate strong approval of the conceptual 90-day dove season.

- 85% of respondents either “like” or “really like” the season
- 10% “neither like nor dislike” the season
- 6% either “dislike” or “really dislike” the season

A full summary of the poll results is available at MyFWC.com/dove.

Requested Action

- Approve conceptual 90-day dove season
- Provide direction or guidance for staff as we continue working with the public



Staff is requesting Commission approval of the conceptual 90-day dove season. If the Commission approves, we would make necessary changes to Commission rules by executive order after federal frameworks are finalized. The change would be in effect for the 2014-2015 dove season.

Staff will provide an update on the early migratory bird seasons at the June Commission meeting. That update will describe developments occurring between now and then on the anticipated dove season change and any other anticipated changes in federal frameworks with any proposed rule amendments needed to address them for 2014-2015 migratory bird seasons.

The following slides are considered back up material and are not anticipated to be part of the actual presentation to the Commission



Dove Season Structure

Current season: 70 days

- Phase 1: Opening the 1st Saturday of October and closing 23 days thereafter
- Phase 2: Opening 12 days prior to Thanksgiving and closing sunset on the Sunday after Thanksgiving
- Phase 3: Opening the 2nd Saturday of December and closing sunset 29 days thereafter



Placeholder for how this rule may affect WMA's, etc....

