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TO: Regional Wildlife Advisory Councils
FROM: Tom Aldrich
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SUBJECT: Waterfowl Season Recommendations

The results of this year's North American Duck Breeding Pair Survey and May Pond Survey have been released and generally indicate improved habitat conditions and similar duck breeding populations from last year.

Overall, the total pond estimate (a measure of habitat quantity) was 4% higher than last year and 34% higher than the long-term average.

The total duck breeding population estimate decreased 3% from 2009 and was 21% above the long-term average. Abundances of Mallards, Northern shovelers, gadwalls, green-winged teal, redheads and canvasbacks were all above their population objectives. Scaup, pintail and wigeon however remain well below their long-term averages and population objectives.

Canada goose breeding populations and production in Utah increased from last year and are above the long-term average. The Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) as a whole, continues to do well through out its entire range, and remains well above the population objective. The Division is not recommending any changes in Canada goose seasons.

White goose populations in the Pacific Flyway continue to do well and exceeded 900,000 geese during the December survey in 2009. In response to growing populations, and to increasing agricultural damage complaints, the Division extended the white goose season into March in 2008, and increased the daily bag to 10/day. Harvest estimates based on a post-season questionnaire suggests we harvested approximately 4,500 white geese in that season. We do not have harvest estimates yet for 2009, but hunter reports indicate harvest was well below 2008. The Division will be recommending continuation of this season in 2010 but is recommending delaying the opening date of the extended season in the Rest of State Zone to accommodate a change in the snow goose festival dates in Delta.

General season duck harvest frameworks are driven by the status of mallard breeding populations. In 2008, a Western Mallard Harvest Strategy was implemented to determine harvest regulations in the Pacific Flyway. Based on mallard population data in 2010, the "Liberal" season package is being recommended again by the Pacific Flyway Council. Pintail, canvasback, and scaup regulations are determined by species specific harvest strategies. Based on 2010 status information, I suspect that seasons and bag limits for pintail, scaup and canvasback will change from 2009 but the details are not currently available. The Division will bring a modified set of regulation proposals for these species to the RAC's once we know what they are.

Swan populations continue to do well and the Division is not recommending any changes to swan harvest regulations.

Other Changes for 2010:

The Division is recommending changing opening day shooting time for Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Salt Lake and Weber counties from 8 am to 7:30 am. The intent of the 8:00 am opener was to provide a measure of safety on the most crowded waterfowl hunting day of the year, and to provide sufficient light conditions for identifying ducks. We believe light conditions at 7:30 am will meet both of these needs and will help alleviate the early shooting problems we currently experience.

Specific season and bag recommendations for the 2010 Utah waterfowl season are as follows:

Duck Season	Oct 2-Jan 15 Statewide, Scaup Oct 2-Dec 25 (or Max) Canvasback-Suspect it to be open (or Max)
Duck Bag	7, 2 hen mallards, ? pin, 2 reds, ?can, ? scaup (or Max)
Coots	Same as duck season, 25 daily
Goose season	
Canada	Oct 2-Jan 15, Northern Zone Oct 2-Oct 14, and Oct 30- Jan 30, Rest of State
White Geese	Oct 23-Jan 15, Feb 18-March 10, Northern Zone Oct 30-Jan 30, March 5-March 10, Rest of State
Goose Daily Bag	3 dark, 10 white
Snipe Season	Oct 2-Jan 15, 8 daily
Swan Season	Oct 2-Dec 12, GSL Area, 2000 permits
Shooting Hours	½ b. sunrise-sunset, 7:30 am opener SL, Davis, Weber, BE, Cache Co's,
Youth Day	Sept. 18, ducks, coots, geese
Falconry	Season same as gun, bag 3