

Proposed Northeastern Waterfowl Hunt Zone

Purpose: Responding to a request from waterfowl hunters in northeast Nevada, proposals were developed for a potential third waterfowl hunting zone for Nevada that should enhance waterfowl hunting opportunities. A new zone would allow different season dates than the rest of the state (within the federal framework). This third zone (Northeast Zone) would allow for an earlier waterfowl opener that maximizes opportunity by having more hunt days available before freeze-up.

Proposed area: Four *proposals* are presented for consideration by the Commission, each indicating counties that could be included in the new hunt zone. Flyway requirements ask that hunt zones be clearly described (i.e., county lines) and definable on a map.

- **No action alternative:** Zones would remain unchanged.
- **Alternative 1:** New hunt zone including Elko, Eureka, Lander and White Pine Counties.
- **Alternative 2:** New hunt zone including Elko and Eureka Counties.
- **Alternative 3:** New hunt zone including Elko, Eureka, Lander, Lincoln, Nye and White Pine Counties.

Potential Seasons: A third zone would allow for flexibility in waterfowl seasons starting and ending earlier *or* starting and ending later within the federal framework. Currently the federal framework allows the waterfowl season in Nevada to be open for a total of 107 days between the Saturday nearest September 24th and the last Sunday in January.

Under the current regulatory alternative (“liberal” {107 day hunt} season), the only noticeable difference would be the opportunity for an earlier opener (a week or two) with the creation of the new zone. However, on years when the flyway has to adopt either the “restrictive” (60 day hunt) or “moderate” (86 day hunt) alternatives, having three separate zones could better facilitate management of waterfowl hunting based on local conditions and opportunities.

Restrictions: Under the current framework, if a new zone is adopted, it must be maintained for at least five years (no changing back) and no split hunts can be implemented within any of the zones during the five years. This may change because the Pacific Flyway Study Committee is reviewing a proposal to allow split hunts with zone changes this year.

Process: The Department made notice of intent at December Flyway meeting.

What we are seeking today: Recommendation from the Commission to either cease or proceed with the Pacific Flyway to make changes. This item will still need to receive appropriate Flyway approval before it can be implemented. Zone revision processes only occur every five years. If it is not changed this year (2011), it cannot be brought before the flyway again until 2016.