

## Staff Summary for February 12-13, 2025

**10. Waterfowl Hunting****Today's Item****Information** **Action** 

Discuss proposed amendments to waterfowl hunting regulations.

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions**

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| • Wildlife Resources Committee vetting | September 12, 2024; WRC     |
| • Notice hearing                       | December 11-12, 2024        |
| • <b>Today's discussion hearing</b>    | <b>February 12-13, 2025</b> |
| • Adoption hearing                     | April 16-17, 2025           |

**Background**

The Department requests changes to migratory waterfowl regulations to ensure consistency between state and federal regulations, as described in the staff summary for the December 2024 notice hearing (Exhibit 1).

***Updates since last meeting***

The notice of proposed changes in regulations was published on January 10, 2025. The federally-proposed season frameworks were published on January 21, 2025 instead of mid-December 2024 as staff originally anticipated.

At today's meeting, the Department will provide a verbal update on the black brant survey, proposed season length, and bag limit, and provide a presentation on the waterfowl season structure.

**Significant Public Comments**

1. A parent of a youth hunter advocates for the exchange of youth and veteran hunt dates for the 2025-26 season (Exhibit 6).
2. The Delta Waterfowl Foundation supports increasing the pintail daily bag limit to three in all zones (Exhibit 7).

**Recommendation (N/A)****Exhibits**

1. [Staff summary for Agenda Item 13, December 1-12, 2024 Commission meeting \(for background purposes only\)](#)
2. [Department memo, received November 22, 2024](#)
3. [Migratory waterfowl initial statement of reasons, dated December 31, 2024](#)
4. [Proposed regulatory language](#)
5. [Department presentation](#)
6. [Email from Jim Lenardon, dated January 13, 2025](#)
7. [Email from Christopher Hoon, Manager of Government Affairs – Pacific Flyway, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, dated January 22, 2025](#)

**Motion (N/A)**

Staff Summary for December 11-12, 2024  
*(for background purposes only)*

### 13. Waterfowl Hunting

#### Today's Item

Information

Action

Consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend waterfowl hunting regulations.

#### Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| • Wildlife Resources Committee vetting | September 12, 2024; WRC     |
| • <b>Today notice hearing</b>          | <b>December 11-12, 2024</b> |
| • Discussion hearing                   | February 12-13, 2025        |
| • Adoption hearing                     | April 16-17, 2025           |

#### Background

The Department requests changes to migratory waterfowl regulations, as described in the draft initial statement of reasons (ISOR) and draft proposed regulatory language (exhibits 2 and 3), to comply with proposed frameworks for the 2025-2026 hunting seasons, as approved by the four regional flyway councils in August 2024 and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Regulation Committee in November 2024. Federally-proposed season frameworks are typically published in the Federal Register by mid-December and final frameworks published by late February of the following year.

While the flyway councils and USFWS process for updating federal regulations overlaps with the Commission's state process, USFWS has provided its proposals to each state to help ensure consistency between state and federal regulations.

The proposed changes include:

- duck season lengths between 99 and 103 days for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California, and Balance of State zones
- goose regular season lengths between 99 and 103 days for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, and Southern California zones; and between 99 and 100 days for the Balance of State Zone
- increase the pintail daily bag limit to 3 in all zones
- swapping the timing of Youth Hunt Days with the Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Days (VAMP Days) for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones
- up to four days of falconry-only season for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones.

Staff Summary for December 11-12, 2024  
(for background purposes only)

**Significant Public Comments**

1. A hunter requests the Commission maintain the January 31 season end date and prioritize the regular season, then youth hunts, then veteran hunts (Exhibit 6).

**Recommendation**

**Commission staff:** Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend regulations as recommended by the Department.

**Committee:** Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend regulations as recommended by the Department.

**Department:** Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend regulations as described in the draft ISOR and draft proposed regulatory language.

**Exhibits**

1. Department memo, received November 22, 2024
2. Draft migratory waterfowl ISOR
3. Draft proposed regulatory language
4. Draft economic and fiscal impact statement (STD 399)
5. Department presentation
6. Email from Christopher Godwin, dated November 30, 2024

**Motion**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ that the Commission authorizes publication of a notice of its intent to amend Section 502 related to waterfowl hunting regulations.

# Memorandum

**Date:** November 13, 2024

**To:** Melissa Miller-Henson  
Executive Director  
Fish and Game Commission

**From:** Charlton H. Bonham  
Director

**Subject:** **Initial Statement of Reasons to Amend Section 502, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), Waterfowl, Migratory, American Coot and Common Moorhen**

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) requests that the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) authorize publishing notice of its intent to amend Section 502 of Title 14, CCR. The Department is recommending that the Commission amend the current waterfowl regulations for the 2025-26 season.

If you have any questions regarding this item, please contact Scott Gardner, Wildlife Branch Chief, at (916) 801-6257. The public notice for this rulemaking should identify Senior Environmental Scientist, Melanie Weaver as the Department's point of contact. She can be reached at (916) 502-1139 or [waterfowlmgmt@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:waterfowlmgmt@wildlife.ca.gov).

Attachments

ec: **Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Chad Dibble, Deputy Director  
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Scott Gardner, Branch Chief  
Wildlife Branch

Mario Klip, Game Conservation Manager  
Wildlife Branch

Cooper Wilce, Attorney  
Office of General Counsel

Robert Pelzman, Assistant Chief  
Law Enforcement Division

Ona Alminas, Program Manager  
Regulations Unit

Mike Randall, Analyst  
Regulations Unit

**California Fish and Game Commission**

Ari Cornman, Wildlife Advisor

David Thesell, Deputy Executive Director

Sherrie Fonbuena, Analyst

State of California  
Fish and Game Commission  
Initial Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action

Amend Section 502  
Title 14, California Code of Regulations  
Re: Waterfowl, Migratory; American Coot and Common Moorhen (Common Gallinule)

I. Date of Initial Statement of Reasons: December 31, 2024

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing

Date: December 12, 2024

Location: Sacramento, CA

(b) Discussion Hearing

Date: February 12, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

(c) Adoption Hearing

Date: April 16, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

III. Description of Regulatory Action

(a) Statement of Specific Purpose of Regulatory Change and Factual Basis for Determining that Regulation Change is Reasonably Necessary

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) annually establishes federal regulation frameworks (Frameworks) for migratory bird hunting. California sets its waterfowl hunting regulations within the Frameworks. The Frameworks describe the earliest dates that waterfowl hunting seasons may open, the maximum number of days hunting can occur, the latest dates that hunting seasons must close, and the maximum daily bag limit. The proposed hunting season Frameworks for a given year are developed in the fall of the prior year for a majority of species and populations. For example, the breeding population (including the California Breeding Population Survey) and habitat conditions observed in 2024 and the regulatory alternatives selected for the 2024 hunting season are used to develop the Frameworks for the 2025-26 season.

States may make recommendations to change the Frameworks. Recommendations are made to the four Flyway councils in late summer (August or September). Flyway councils review, and elect to approve and forward to the Service. The Service considers recommendations at the Service's Regulation Committee public meeting held in November. Proposed season Frameworks are typically published in the Federal Register by mid-December and final Frameworks published by late February.

Section 355 of the Fish and Game Code authorizes the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) to adopt annual regulations pertaining to the hunting of migratory birds that

conform with or further restrict the regulations prescribed by the Service pursuant to its authority under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Commission selects and establishes state regulations that specify hunting season dates and daily bag limits.

Current regulations in Section 502, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), provide definitions, hunting zone descriptions, and 2024-25 season opening and closing dates, and daily bag and possession limits for hunting of waterfowl. The proposed Frameworks for the 2025-26 season were approved by the Flyway councils in August and will be considered at the Service's Regulations Committee meeting in November. The Frameworks allow for a liberal duck season which includes: a 107-day season; a 7 daily duck limit including 7 mallards but only 2 hen mallards, 3 pintail, 2 canvasback, 2 redheads, and 2 scaup (during an 86-day season); and closing no later than January 31. The duck daily bag limits and season length, as well as the season lengths for geese, are provided as ranges below, to allow the Commission flexibility in determining the final regulations.

A range of season length and bag limits (zero bag limit represents a closed season) are also provided for black brant. The range is necessary, as the black brant Framework cannot be determined until the Pacific Flyway Fall Brant Survey is conducted in October 2024. The black brant regulatory package is determined by the most current Fall Brant Survey, rather than the prior year survey. The proposed season length and bag limit will be updated per the Black Brant Harvest Strategy pending results of the fall 2024 survey by the February 2025 Commission meeting. See the Summary of Proposed Waterfowl Hunting Regulations for 2025-26 table below for the range of season and bag limits.

Lastly, federal regulations provide that California's hunting regulations should conform to those of Arizona in the Colorado River Zone and those of Oregon in the North Coast Special Management Area.

The Department-recommended changes to Section 502 are:

- 1) Provide a range of duck season lengths between 99 and 103 days in subsection 502(d)(2)(B) for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone, subsection 502(d)(3)(B) for the Southern California Zone, and subsection 502(d)(5)(B) for the Balance of State Zone

The existing duck season length for the referenced zones is 98 days. This proposal provides a range of season dates for consideration. In prior rulemakings based on public input, the Commission adopted the latest possible closing date of January 31 and the traditional opening Saturday in late October, which necessitated an annual adjustment to the season length. Duck season length selection determines the available days for falconry-only seasons. A specific recommendation will be made after public input and discussion.

- 2) Provide a range of season lengths for the goose regular season between 99 and 103 days in subsection 502(d)(2)(B) for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone, and subsection 502(d)(3)(B) for the Southern California Zone; and between 99 and 100 days in subsection 502(d)(5)(B) for the Balance of State Zone.

The existing regular season length for is 98 days in the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones. See item 1 above for the justification. Goose season length selection determines the available days for falconry-only seasons.

- 3) Increase the pintail daily bag limit in all zones, subsections 502(d)(1 through 5)(C) to 3.

The existing regulation allows a daily bag limit of 1 pintail based on the prior harvest strategy, developed in 2010. The Frameworks now allow a daily bag limit of 3 based on the new pintail harvest strategy adopted in October 2024. The new strategy uses an integrated population model that considers breeding population size, banding data, and harvest estimates to calculate a fall flight. The harvest strategy seeks a balance of objectives by conserving pintail in perpetuity, providing hunting when the observed breeding population is above 1.2 millions birds; and allowing a liberal season length with a 3-bird bag limit when the population size and expected fall flight are large enough to support the estimated harvest (the prior strategy did not allow a 3-bird bag limit). Allowing a 3-bird daily bag limit as a regulatory option has been a long standing goal of both the Department and the Pacific Flyway Council.

The strategy is on an interim basis until three 3-bird seasons have been experienced, which could take five to six years. The review of the interim phase by all flyways and the Service will include evaluation of the integrated population model (ensuring parameters remained stable), harvest models, and regulatory package performance metrics.

- 4) Consider swapping the timing of Youth Hunt Days in subsections 502(e)(1)(B)2., 3., and 5. with the Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Days (VAMP Days) in subsections 502(f)(1)(B)2. through 4. for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones.

Currently, the Youth Hunting Days occur the Saturday following the close of waterfowl season and VAMP Days the following weekend. Some members of the public are concerned that when the waterfowl season closes within a few days of the Youth Hunting Days the hunting experience is reduced. Swapping the timing may allow extra hunting days for the general public while minimizing disturbance to the Youth Hunting Day experience. This option would eliminate goose hunting during the VAMP Days in the Balance of State Zone.

- 5) Allow up to four days of falconry-only season in subsections 502(g)(1)(B)2. through 4. for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones.

The existing regulation allows a five day falconry-only season. The length of the falconry-only season is contingent upon the number of days used for the general duck and goose seasons, in addition to the Youth and Veteran hunt days, as seasons cannot exceed 107 days.

#### Summary of Proposed Waterfowl Hunting Regulations for 2025-26

AREA	SPECIES	SEASONS	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Statewide	Coots & Moorhens (Gallinules)	Concurrent w/duck season	25/day. Possession limit triple the daily bag.

AREA	SPECIES	SEASONS	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Northeastern Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Ducks	No longer than 103 days	[4-7]/day, which may include: [3-7] mallards no more than [1-2] females. 3 pintail, 2 canvasback, 2 redheads.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Northeastern Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Scaup	No longer than 86 days	2 scaup.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Northeastern Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Geese	No longer than 105 days except for Canada geese which cannot exceed 100 days or beyond Jan 11	30/day, which may include: 20 white geese, 10 dark geese, no more than 2 Large Canada geese. Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Ducks	No longer than 103 days	[4-7]/day, which may include: [3-7] mallards no more than [1-2] females. 3 pintail, 2 canvasback, 2 redheads.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Scaup	No longer than 86 days	2 scaup.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone	Geese	No longer than 103 days	30/day, which may include: 20 white geese, 10 dark geese. Possession limit triple the daily bag.



AREA	SPECIES	SEASONS	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Southern California Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Ducks	No longer than 103 days	[4-7]/day, which may include: [3-7] mallards no more than [1-2] females. 3 pintail, 2 canvasback, 2 redheads.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Southern California Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Scaup	No longer than 86 days	2 scaup.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Southern California Zone	Geese	No longer than 103 days	23/day, which may include: 20 white geese, 3 dark geese.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Colorado River Zone	Ducks	From Oct. 23 for 101 days.	7/day, which may include: 7 mallards no more than 2 females or Mexican ducks. 3 pintail, 2 canvasback, 2 redheads.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Colorado River Zone	Scaup	From Nov. 7 for 86 days.	2 scaup.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
	Geese	From Oct. 23 for 101 days.	25/day, up to 20 white geese, up to 5 dark geese. Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Balance of State Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Ducks	No longer than 103 days	[4-7]/day, which may include: [3-7] mallards no more than [1-2] females. 3 pintail, 2 canvasback, 2 redheads.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.

AREA	SPECIES	SEASONS	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Balance of State Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Scaup	No longer than 86 days	2 scaup. Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Balance of State Zone <i>Season may be split</i>	Geese	Early Season: 3 days (Canada goose only) Regular Season: no longer than 100 days  Late Season: Canada geese no longer than 2 days and white-fronted and white geese no longer than 5 days	30/day, which may include: 20 white geese, 10 dark geese.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.

#### SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

AREA	SPECIES	SEASON	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
North Coast <i>Season may be split</i>	All Canada Geese	No longer than 105 days except for Large Canada geese which cannot exceed 100 days or extend beyond Jan 31	10/day, only 1 may be a Large Canada goose.  Possession limit triple the daily bag. Large Canada geese are closed during the Late Season.
Humboldt Bay South Spit (West Side)	All species	Closed during brant season	
Klamath Basin	Dark and white geese	105 days except for Canada geese which cannot exceed 100 days or extend beyond Jan 11	30/day, which may include: 20 white geese, 10 dark geese only 2 may be a Large Canada goose.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Sacramento Valley	White-fronted geese	Open concurrently with general goose season through Dec 21 and during Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	3/day.  Possession limit triple the daily bag.

AREA	SPECIES	SEASON	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Morro Bay	All species	Open in designated areas only. Waterfowl season opens concurrently with brant season.	
Martis Creek Lake	All species	Closed until Nov 16	
Northern Brant	Black Brant	No longer than 37 days and closing no later than Dec 14.	[0-2]/day. Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Balance of State Brant	Black Brant	No longer than 37 days and closing no later than Dec 15.	[0-2]/day. Possession limit triple the daily bag.
Imperial County <i>Season may be split</i>	White Geese	No longer than 105 days	20/day. Possession limit triple the daily bag.

YOUTH WATERFOWL HUNTING DAYS (Note: To participate in these Youth Waterfowl Hunts, youth must be accompanied by a non-hunting adult 18 years of age or older. Federal regulations require that hunters must be 17 years of age or younger.)

AREA	SPECIES	SEASON	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Northeastern Zone	Same as regular season	The Saturday fourteen days before the opening of waterfowl season extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season
Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone	Same as regular season	The [first or second] Saturday in February extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season
Southern California Zone	Same as regular season	The [first or second] Saturday in February extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season

AREA	SPECIES	SEASON	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Colorado River Zone	Same as regular season	The first Saturday in February extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season
Balance of State Zone	Same as regular season	The [first or second] Saturday in February extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season

Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Days (Note: Veterans (as defined in Section 101 of Title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty (other than training), may participate.

AREA	SPECIES	SEASON	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Northeastern Zone	Ducks, Coots, and Moorhens	The Saturday following the closing of the regular duck season extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season
Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone	Same as regular season	The [first or second] Saturday in February extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season
Southern California Zone	Same as regular season	The [first or second] Saturday in February extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season
Balance of State Zone	Same as regular season	The [first or second] Saturday in February extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season

## FALCONRY

AREA	SPECIES	SEASON	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Northeastern Zone	Same as regular season	No longer than 107 days.	3/day. Possession limit 9

AREA	SPECIES	SEASON	DAILY BAG & POSSESSION LIMITS
Balance of State Zone	Same as regular season	No longer than 107 days.	3/day. Possession limit 9
Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone	Ducks, Coots, and Moorhens	No longer than 107 days.	3/day. Possession limit 9
Southern California Zone	Same as regular season	No longer than 107 days.	3/day. Possession limit 9
Colorado River Zone	Ducks, Coots, and Moorhens	No longer than 107 days.	3/day. Possession limit 9

Minor editorial changes are also proposed to clarify and simplify the regulations and to comply with existing federal Frameworks.

(b) Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

The goals and benefits of the regulations are to provide for the conservation and maintenance of sufficient waterfowl populations to ensure their continued existence, while providing for balanced hunting opportunity, consistent with Commission and Department policies.

(c) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation

Authority: Sections 265 and 355, Fish and Game Code

Reference: Sections 265, 355, and 356, Fish and Game Code

(d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change: None.

(e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change: None.

(f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication

This proposal was discussed at the Commission's Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) meeting held on September 13, 2024, and a public scoping session will be held in November or December 2024.

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No other alternatives were identified by or brought to the attention of Commission staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative

The No Change Alternative would retain the 2024-25 regulations for the 2025-26 season which may place the state out of compliance with federal regulations. Calendar progression necessitates modifying allowable hunting dates in regulatory language, including for falconry-only seasons, that are adjusted annually based on general season length selection. In addition, frameworks for black brant have not been established pending results of the Fall Brant Survey.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

VI. Impact of Regulatory Action

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

(a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed 2025-26 waterfowl regulations are expected to maintain a similar level of recreational waterfowl hunting opportunity for the public and therefore the same levels of business competitiveness.

(b) Impact on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment.

The Commission does not anticipate any impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs, the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California. The proposed waterfowl regulations will set the 2025-26 waterfowl hunting season dates and bag limits within the federal Frameworks. The total hunting season length is proposed to remain the same as the current (2024-25) 107 days, with only modifications to the season types (duck, goose or falconry-only); these modifications will have little to no impacts to jobs and/or businesses that provide services to waterfowl hunters. The Commission anticipates that the proposed 2025-26 waterfowl hunting regulations will provide benefits for the health and welfare of California residents by providing opportunity for outdoor activity. The Commission expects no benefits to worker safety as that is not a subject of the proposed regulation. The Commission does expect benefits to the environment in that setting these regulations facilitates maintenance of sufficient waterfowl populations and their habitats while providing for the public's beneficial use and enjoyment.

(c) Cost Impacts on a Representative Private Person or Business

The agency is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action.

- (d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State: None.
- (e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies: None.
- (f) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts: None.
- (g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be Reimbursed Under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4, Government Code: None.
- (h) Effect on Housing Costs: None.

## VII. Economic Impact Assessment

### (a) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State

The proposed conformance to federal regulations is expected to maintain similar levels of hunting opportunity and activity as previous seasons such that little to no net impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs are anticipated within the state from the adoption of the proposed waterfowl hunting regulations for the 2025-26 season. The most recent Service National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation for California estimated that waterfowl hunters contributed about \$169,115,000 to businesses in California during the 2011 waterfowl hunting season. The proposed regulations in themselves should not affect the typical level of waterfowl hunting expenditures. Businesses within the state that provide goods and services to waterfowl hunters are generally small businesses employing few individuals and, like all small businesses, are subject to failure for a variety of causes. The long-term intent of the proposed regulations is to sustainably manage waterfowl populations, and consequently, the long-term viability of the same small businesses.

The 2011 National Survey is posted on the U.S. Census Bureau website <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/demo/fhw11-nat.pdf> and the 2011 National Survey of Fishing and Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Report for California can be found at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/fhwar/publications/2011/fhw11-ca.pdf>.

### (b) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses Within the State

The proposed regulation is not anticipated to prompt the creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses within the state. Minor variations in regulations pertaining to hunting are, by themselves, unlikely to stimulate the creation of new businesses or cause the elimination of existing businesses. The number of hunting trips and the economic contributions from the trips are not expected to change substantially.

### (c) Effects of the Regulation on the Expansion of Businesses Currently Doing Business Within the State

The proposed minor variations in season lengths are, by themselves, unlikely to stimulate substantial expansion of businesses currently doing business in the state. The long-term intent of the proposed regulations is to sustainably manage waterfowl populations, and consequently, the long-term viability of various businesses that serve recreational waterfowl hunters.

(d) Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

Hunting is an outdoor activity that can provide several health and welfare benefits to California residents. Hunters and their families benefit from fresh game to eat, and from the benefits of outdoor recreation, including exercise. People who hunt have a special connection with the outdoors and an awareness of the relationships between wildlife, habitat and humans. With that awareness comes an understanding of the role humans play in being caretakers of the environment. Hunting is a tradition that is often passed from one generation to the next, creating a special bond between family members and friends.

(e) Benefits of the Regulation to Worker Safety

The regulations will not affect worker safety because they do not address working conditions.

(f) Benefits of the Regulation to the State's Environment

As set forth in Fish and Game Code Section 1801, it is the policy of the state to encourage the preservation, conservation, and maintenance of waterfowl resources for all citizens of the state. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, maintenance of sufficient populations and their habitats, provide for beneficial use and enjoyment, perpetuate the waterfowl resource for their intrinsic and ecological values, and maintain diversified recreation use including sport hunting consistent with the status of this resource. Adoption of scientifically based waterfowl hunting regulations provides for the maintenance of sufficient waterfowl populations to ensure these objectives are met. Further, the fees that hunters pay for licenses and stamps fund wildlife conservation.

(g) Other Benefits of the Regulation

Hunting seasons provide an incentive for private landowners to maintain waterfowl habitat, mainly wetlands, that benefit waterfowl and other wetland dependent wildlife.



## Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview

Current regulations in Section 502, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), provide definitions, hunting zone descriptions, and 2024-25 season opening and closing dates, and daily bag and possession limits for hunting of waterfowl. The proposed Frameworks for the 2025-26 season were approved by the Flyway councils in August and considered at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Regulations Committee meeting in November. The Frameworks allow for a liberal duck season which includes: a 107-day season; a 7 daily duck limit including 7 mallards but only 2 hen mallards, 3 pintail, 2 canvasback, 2 redheads, and 2 scaup (during an 86-day season); and closing no later than January 31. The duck daily bag limits and season length, as well as the season lengths for geese, are provided as ranges below, to allow the Commission flexibility in determining the final regulations.

A range of season length (zero bag limit represents a closed season) is also provided for black brant. The range is necessary, as the black brant Framework cannot be determined until the Pacific Flyway Fall Brant Survey is conducted in October 2024. The black brant regulatory package is determined by the most current Fall Brant Survey, rather than the prior year survey. The proposed season length and bag limit will be updated per the Black Brant Harvest Strategy pending results of the fall 2024 survey by the February 2025 Commission meeting. See the Summary of Proposed Waterfowl Hunting Regulations for 2025-26 table in the Initial Statement of Reasons for the range of season and bag limits.

Lastly, Federal regulations provide that California's hunting regulations should conform to those of Arizona in the Colorado River Zone and those of Oregon in the North Coast Special Management Area.

The Department-recommended changes to Section 502 are:

- 1) Provide a range of duck season lengths between 99 and 103 days in subsection 502(d)(2)(B) for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone, subsection 502(d)(3)(B) for the Southern California Zone, and subsection 502(d)(5)(B) for the Balance of State Zone.
- 2) Provide a range of season lengths for the goose regular season between 99 and 103 days in subsection 502(d)(2)(B) for the Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone, and subsection 502(d)(3)(B) for the Southern California Zone; and between 99 and 100 days in subsection 502(d)(5)(B) for the Balance of State Zone.
- 3) Increase the pintail daily bag limit in all zones, subsections 502(d)(1 through 5)(C) to 3 per day.
- 4) Consider swapping the timing of Youth Hunt Days in subsections 502(e)(1)(B)2., 3., and 5. with the Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Days (VAMP Days) in subsections 502(f)(1)(B)2. through 4. for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones.
- 5) Allow up to four days of falconry-only season in subsections 502(g)(1)(B)2. through 4. for the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California and Balance of State zones.

Minor editorial changes are also proposed to clarify and simplify the regulations and to comply with existing federal Frameworks.

## Benefits of the regulations

The benefits of the proposed regulations are consistency with federal law and the sustainable management of the state's waterfowl resources. Continued benefits to jobs and/or businesses that provide services to waterfowl hunters will be realized with the continued adoption of waterfowl hunting seasons in 2025-26.

## Evaluation of incompatibility with existing regulations

The Commission has reviewed its regulations in Title 14, CCR, and conducted a search of other regulations on this topic and has concluded that the proposed amendments to Section 502 are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing state regulations. No other state agency has the authority to promulgate waterfowl hunting regulations.

## Proposed Regulatory Language

Section 502, Title 14, CCR, is amended to read:

### §502. Waterfowl, Migratory; American Coot and Common Moorhen (Common Gallinule).

. . . [No changes to subsections (a) through (b)]

#### (c) Seasons and Bag and Possession Limits for American Coots, and Common Moorhens.

(1) Statewide Provisions.

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
American Coot and Common Moorhen	Concurrent with duck season(s)	Daily bag limit: 25, either all of one species or a mixture of these species.  Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.

#### (d) Seasons and Bag and Possession Limits for Ducks and Geese by Zone.

(1) Northeastern California Zone (~~NOTE: SEE SUBSECTION 502(d)(6) BELOW FOR SPECIAL SEASONS AND CLOSURES.~~) (Note: See subsection 502(d)(6) below for special seasons and closures.)

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
Ducks (including Mergansers)	<p><del>From the first Saturday in October extending for 103 days.</del></p> <p><del>Scaup: from the first Saturday in October extending for a period of 58 days and from the third Thursday in December extending for a period of 28 days.</del></p> <p><u>[Opening no earlier than the first Saturday in October and closing no later than January 31. Season may be split into two segments and no longer than 103 days. Scaup season can be no longer than 86 days.]</u></p>	<p>Daily bag limit: <del>7</del><u>[4-7]</u></p> <p>Daily bag limit may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>7</del><u>[3-7]</u> mallards, but not more than <del>2</del><u>[1-2]</u> females.</li> <li>• <del>4</del><u>3</u> pintail (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 canvasback (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 redheads (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 scaup (either sex).</li> </ul> <p>Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.</p>

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
Geese	<p>Regular Season:</p> <p><del>Canada Geese: from the first Saturday in October extending for 100 days.</del>  <u>[Opening no earlier than the first Saturday in October and closing no later than January 11. Season will be no longer than 100 days.]</u></p> <p><del>White-fronted and white geese from the first Saturday in October extending for a period of 58 days and from January 3 extending for a period of 13 days.</del>  <u>[Opening no earlier than the first Saturday in October and closing no later than January 31. Season may be split into two segments and no longer than 100 days.]</u></p> <p>Late Season: <del>White-fronted and white geese from February 5 extending for 34 days.</del>  <u>[Season will be no longer than 5 days and closing no later than March 10.]</u></p> <p>During the Late Season, hunting is only permitted on Type C wildlife areas listed in sections <del>550-552</del><u>550 through 552</u>, navigable waters, and private lands with the permission of the landowner under provisions of Section 2016, Fish and Game Code.</p> <p><u>During the Late Season, hunting</u>  <del>Hunting</del> is prohibited on Type A and Type B wildlife areas, the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex, the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, and any waters which are on, encompassed by, bounded over, flow over, flow through, or are adjacent to any Type A and Type B wildlife areas, the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex, or the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge.</p>	<p>Daily bag limit: 30</p> <p>Daily bag limit may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 white geese.</li> <li>• 10 dark geese but not more than 2 Large Canada geese (see definitions: 502(a)).</li> </ul> <p>Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.</p>

(2) Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone (~~NOTE: SEE SUBSECTION 502(d)(6) BELOW FOR SPECIAL SEASONS AND CLOSURES.~~) (Note: See subsection 502(d)(6) below for special seasons and closures.)

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
Ducks (including Mergansers)	<p><del>From the fourth Saturday in October extending for 98 days.</del></p> <p>Scaup: <del>from November 7 extending for 86 days.</del> <u>[Opening no earlier than the third Saturday in October and closing no later than January 31. Season may be split into two segments and no longer than 103 days. Scaup season can be no longer than 86 days.]</u></p>	<p>Daily bag limit: <del>7</del> <u>[4-7]</u></p> <p>Daily bag limit may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>7</del> <u>[3-7]</u> mallards, but not more than <del>2</del> <u>[1-2]</u> females.</li> <li>• <del>4</del> <u>3</u> pintail (either sex).</li> <li>• <del>2</del> canvasback (either sex).</li> <li>• <del>2</del> redheads (either sex).</li> <li>• <del>2</del> scaup (either sex).</li> </ul> <p>Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.</p>
Geese	<p><del>From the fourth Saturday in October extending for 98 days.</del></p> <p><u>[Opening no earlier than the third Saturday in October and closing no later than January 31. Season will be no longer than 103 days.]</u></p>	<p>Daily bag limit: 30</p> <p>Daily bag limit may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 white geese.</li> <li>• 10 dark geese (see definitions: 502(a)).</li> </ul> <p>Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.</p>

(3) Southern California Zone (~~NOTE: SEE SUBSECTION 502(d)(6) BELOW FOR SPECIAL SEASONS AND CLOSURES.~~) (Note: See subsection 502(d)(6) below for special seasons and closures.)

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
Ducks (including Mergansers)	<p><del>From the fourth Saturday in October extending for 98 days.</del></p> <p>Scaup: <del>from November 7 extending for 86 days.</del></p> <p><u>[Opening no earlier than the third Saturday in October and closing no later than January 31. Season may be split into two segments and no longer than 103 days. Scaup season can be no longer than 86 days.]</u></p>	<p>Daily bag limit: <del>7</del> <u>[4-7]</u></p> <p>Daily bag limit may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>7</del> <u>[3-7]</u> mallards, but not more than <del>2</del> <u>[1-2]</u> females.</li> <li>• <del>4</del> <u>3</u> pintail (either sex).</li> <li>• <del>2</del> canvasback (either sex).</li> <li>• <del>2</del> redheads (either sex).</li> <li>• <del>2</del> scaup (either sex).</li> </ul> <p>Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.</p>

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
Geese	From the fourth Saturday in October extending for 98 days. <u>[Opening no earlier than the third Saturday in October and closing no later than January 31. Season will be no longer than 103 days.]</u>	Daily bag limit: 23 Daily bag limit may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 white geese.</li> <li>• 3 dark geese (see definitions: 502(a)).</li> </ul> Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.

(4) Colorado River Zone (~~NOTE: SEE SUBSECTION 502(d)(6) BELOW FOR SPECIAL SEASONS AND CLOSURES.~~) (Note: See subsection 502(d)(6) below for special seasons and closures.)

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
Ducks (including Mergansers).	From October 23 extending for 101 days.  Scaup: from November 7 extending for 86 days.	Daily bag limit: 7 Daily bag limit may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 mallards, but not more than 2 females or Mexican ducks.</li> <li>• 4-3 pintail (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 canvasback (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 redheads (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 scaup (either sex).</li> </ul> Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.
Geese	From October 23 extending for 101 days.	Daily bag limit: 25 Daily bag limit may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 white geese.</li> <li>• 5 dark geese (see definitions: 502(a)).</li> </ul> Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.

(5) Balance of State Zone (~~NOTE: SEE SUBSECTION 502(d)(6) BELOW FOR SPECIAL SEASONS AND CLOSURES.~~) (Note: See subsection 502(d)(6) below for special seasons and closures.)

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
Ducks (including Mergansers).	<p><del>From the fourth Saturday in October extending for 98 days.</del></p> <p><del>Scaup: from November 7 extending for 86 days.</del></p> <p><u>[Opening no earlier than the third Saturday in October and closing no later than January 31. Season may be split into two segments and no longer than 103 days. Scaup season can be no longer than 86 days.]</u></p>	<p>Daily bag limit: <del>7</del><u>[4-7]</u></p> <p>Daily bag limit may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>7</del><u>[3-7]</u> mallards, but not more than <del>2</del><u>[1-2]</u> females.</li> <li>• <del>4</del><u>3</u> pintail (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 canvasback (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 redheads (either sex).</li> <li>• 2 scaup (either sex).</li> </ul> <p>Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.</p>

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
Geese	<p>Early Season: Large Canada geese only from the Saturday closest to October 1 for a period of 3 days <del>EXCEPT</del> <u>except</u> in the North Coast Special Management Area where Large Canada geese are closed during the early season.</p> <p>Regular Season: Dark and white geese <u>[opening no earlier than the third Saturday in October and closing no later than January 31. Season will be no longer than 100 days.]</u> <del>from the fourth Saturday in October extending for 98 days</del> <del>EXCEPT</del> <u>except</u> in the Sacramento Valley Special Management Area where the white-fronted goose season will close after December 21.</p> <p>Late Season:</p> <p>Canada geese <u>[opening after January 31 and closing no later than March 10. Season will be no longer than 2 days.]</u> <del>from the second Saturday in February extending for 2 days.</del></p> <p>White-fronted and white geese <u>[opening after January 31 and closing no later than March 10. Season will be no longer than 5 days.]</u> <del>from the second Saturday in February extending for a period of 5 days</del> <del>EXCEPT</del> <u>except</u> in the Sacramento Valley Special Management Area where the white-fronted goose season is closed.</p> <p>During the Late Season, hunting is not permitted on wildlife areas listed in sections <del>550-552</del> <del>EXCEPT</del> <u>550 through 552</u> <u>except</u> on Type C wildlife areas in the North Central and Central regions.</p>	<p>Daily bag limit: 30</p> <p>Daily bag limit may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 white geese.</li> <li>• 10 dark geese <del>EXCEPT</del> <u>except</u> in the Sacramento Valley Special Management Area where only 3 may be white-fronted geese (see definitions: 502(a)).</li> </ul> <p>Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.</p>



(6) Special Management Areas (see descriptions in 502(b)(6))

	<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
1. North Coast	All Canada Geese	<del>From October 5 extending for a period of 78 days (Regular Season) and from February 12 extending for a period of 27 days (Late Season).</del> <u>[Season may be split and closing no later than March 10. Season will be no longer than 105 days.]</u> During the Late Season, hunting is only permitted on private lands with the permission of the landowner under provisions Section 2016, Fish and Game Code.	Daily bag limit: 10 Canada Geese of which only 1 may be a Large Canada goose (see definitions: 502(a)), <del>EXCEPT</del> <u>except</u> during the Late Season, the bag limit on Large Canada geese is zero.  Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.
2. Humboldt Bay South Spit (West Side)	All Species	Closed during brant season	
3. Klamath Basin	Geese	Canada Geese from the first Saturday in October extending for 100 days.  White-fronted and white geese from the first Saturday in October extending for 105 days.	Daily bag limit: 30  Daily bag limit may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 20 white geese.</li><li>• 10 dark geese but not more than 2 Large Canada geese (see definitions: 502(a)).</li></ul> Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.
4. Sacramento Valley	White-Fronted Geese	Open concurrently with the goose season through December 21, and during Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days.	Daily bag limit: 3 white-fronted geese.  Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.

	<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
5. Morro Bay	All species	Open in designated area only from the opening day of brant season through the remainder of waterfowl season.	
6. Martis Creek Lake	All species	Closed until November 16.	
7. Northern Brant	Black Brant	<del>From November 18 extending for 27 days.</del> <u>[Season will be between 0 and 37 days, closing no later than December 14.]</u>	Daily bag limit: <del>2</del> <u>[0-2]</u> Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.
8. Balance of State Brant	Black Brant	<del>From November 19 extending for 27 days.</del> <u>[Season will be between 0 and 37 days, closing no later than December 15.]</u>	Daily bag limit: <del>2</del> <u>[0-2]</u> Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.
9. Imperial County	White Geese	<del>From November 4 extending for a period of 89 days (Regular Season) and February 3-9, 2025 and February 12-20, 2025 (Late Season).</del> <u>[Season may be split and closing no later than March 10. Season will be no longer than 105 days.]</u> During the Late Season, hunting is only permitted on private lands with the permission of the landowner under provisions of Section 2016, Fish and Game Code.	Daily bag limit: 20 Possession limit: triple the daily bag limit.

**(e) Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days Regulations** (~~NOTE:~~ Note: To participate in these Youth Waterfowl Hunts, youth must be accompanied by a non-hunting adult 18 years of age or older. Federal regulations require that hunters must be 17 years of age or younger.)

(1) Statewide Provisions.

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag Limit</i>
Ducks (including Mergansers), American Coot, Common Moorhen, Black Brant, Geese	1. Northeastern California Zone: The Saturday fourteen days before the opening of waterfowl season extending for 2 days. 2. Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone: The <u>[first or second]</u> - <del>first</del> Saturday in February extending for 2 days. 3. Southern California Zone: The <u>[first or second]</u> <del>first</del> -Saturday in February extending for 2 days. 4. Colorado River Zone: The <u>first</u> <del>second</del> -Saturday in February extending for 2 days. 5. Balance of State Zone: The <u>[first or second]</u> - <del>first</del> Saturday in February extending for 2 days.	Same as regular season.

**(f) Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Days Regulations.**

**NOTE:** Note: Veterans (as defined in Section 101 of Title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty (other than training), may participate. Persons participating in this special hunt must possess and present upon demand verification of eligibility to participate in this hunt. Verification includes: Veteran’s ID Card, or Military ID Card for active duty, or a State-issued driver’s license or Identification Card with Veteran Designation.

(1) Statewide Provisions.

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag Limit</i>
Ducks (including Mergansers), Geese, American Coot, Common Moorhen	1. Northeastern California Zone: The Saturday following the closing of the regular duck season extending for 2 days. Goose hunting in this zone is not permitted during these days. 2. Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone: The <u>first or second</u> <del>second</del> Saturday in February extending for 2 days. 3. Southern California Zone: The <u>first or second</u> <del>second</del> Saturday in February extending for 2 days. 4. Balance of State Zone: The <u>first or second</u> <del>second</del> Saturday in February extending for 2 days. <u>[Goose hunting in this zone is not permitted during these days.]</u>	Same as regular season.

**(g) Falconry Take of Ducks (including Mergansers), Geese, American Coots, and Common Moorhens.**

(1) Statewide Provisions.

<i>(A) Species</i>	<i>(B) Season</i>	<i>(C) Daily Bag and Possession Limits</i>
<p>Ducks (including Mergansers), Geese, American Coot and Common Moorhen</p>	<p>1. Northeastern California Zone. <del>Open concurrently with duck season through January 15, 2025. [No longer than 107 days.]</del></p> <p>2. Balance of State Zone. <del>Open concurrently with duck season, February 1-2, 2025 and February 15-19, 2025. [No longer than 107 days.]</del> EXCEPT <u>except</u> in the North Coast Special Management Area where the falconry season for geese runs concurrently with the season for Canada geese (see 502(d)(6)).</p> <p>3. Southern San Joaquin Valley Zone. <del>Open concurrently with duck season, February 1-2, 2025 and February 15-19, 2025. [No longer than 107 days.]</del> Goose hunting in this zone by means of falconry is not permitted.</p> <p>4. Southern California Zone. <del>Open concurrently with duck season, February 1-2, 2025 and February 15-19, 2025. [No longer than 107 days.]</del> EXCEPT <u>except</u> in the Imperial County Special Management Area where the falconry season for geese runs concurrently with the season for white geese.</p>	<p>Daily bag limit: 3</p> <p>Daily bag limit makeup:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either all of 1 species or a mixture of species allowed for take.</li> </ul> <p>Possession limit: 9</p>
	<p>5. Colorado River Zone. Open concurrently with duck season and February 1-4, <del>2026-2025</del>. Goose hunting in this zone by means of falconry is not permitted. Federal regulations <u>require provide</u> that California's hunting regulations <u>should</u> conform to those of Arizona, where goose hunting by means of falconry is not permitted.</p>	

Note: Authority cited: Sections 265 and 355, Fish and Game Code.  
Reference: Sections 265, 355 and 356, Fish and Game Code.

# Regular Duck Season Options

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**99-days: 4<sup>th</sup> Sat Oct – Sat, January 31 \***

- No effect to Youth/Vet; falconry-only 4 day

**100-days: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat Oct – Sun, January 25**

- No effect to Youth/Vet; falconry-only 3 day

**102-days: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat Oct – Tues, January 27**

- No effect to Youth/Vet; falconry-only 1 day

**103-days: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat Oct – Wed, January 28**

- No effect to Youth/Vet; no falconry-only season



# Days Difference Closing Jan 31

Year	Last Sun in Jan	Jan 31 Day of Week	# Days Closing Later
2024	28th	Wed	3
2025	26th	Fri	5
2026	25th	Sat	6
2027	31st	Sun	0
2028	30th	Mon	1
2029	28th	Wed	3
2030	27th	Thurs	4





## Swapping Youth Hunt with Veterans Hunt Dates

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**From** Jim Lenardon [REDACTED]  
**Date** Mon 01/13/2025 03:46 PM  
**To** FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

Hello,

I'm not entirely sure if I'm sending this email to the correct department, so please let me know either way. I wanted to share my concerns/perspective on the Youth and Veteran Hunt dates.

For additional context, I have a 9 year old son and he got his license just before the Youth Hunt last year. I started hunting around the same age and as a kid, I looked forward to the Youth Hunt more than Christmas morning. It provided an opportunity for me as a kid to have my best chance of the season to get a duck(s). Every year, I got a little better and in some instances shot more ducks that day than I did the whole season. The ducks were less weary and far more likely to come within close shooting range. Those days are the hunt days that I remember most fondly from my childhood. I can only wish for my son to have the same opportunities.

However, last year on the Youth Hunt, with it happening with only 3 days after the regular season, the opportunities at ducks were few and far between. They were still weary from all of the hunting pressure and it wasn't an easier opportunity for my 8 year old to get a duck. I'd argue it was as hard or harder than any hunt day during the standard waterfowl season. (due to the same amount of pressure on the birds as the regular season)

I have a deep appreciation for our military and the sacrifices they've made and are still making for our country. I have family members and several friends that are either active duty or veterans. They deserve to have a great hunt experience for their sacrifices. With that said, I've spoken with many veterans about this topic and the feedback has been unanimous. All of them said that the Youth Hunt should be a week after the Veteran's Hunt. They agreed that they don't need the same advantages as our youth to harvest ducks and that the future of duck hunting lies with our youth. Those positive experiences are what excite youth hunters and will allow us to have future generations of responsible hunters to preserve the tradition of hunting in California. As a parent who purchased a lifetime CA hunting license for my son, the Youth Hunt is the number one opportunity to build their confidence and excitement around hunting. I hope that you'll consider helping to elevate the experience of the Youth Hunt for our kids by swapping the Youth Hunt and Veteran's Hunt dates for the coming 2025-2026 waterfowl season.

Thank you for your consideration and if this isn't the appropriate forum for this message, if you could point me in the right direction, I'd greatly appreciate it.

Kind Regard,  
Jim Lenardon

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**Fish and Game Waterfowl Regulations Comment Letter**

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**From** Christopher Hoon <choon@deltawaterfowl.org>  
**Date** Wed 01/22/2025 09:39 AM  
**To** FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>  
**Cc** Cyrus Baird <cbaird@deltawaterfowl.org>

📎 1 attachment (224 KB)

CA Fish and Game Waterfowl Regulations Comment Letter Delta Waterfowl .pdf;

Hello,

Please see attached for Delta Waterfowl's comment letter regarding the proposed new pintail harvest strategy.

Please let me know if you need anything else from me.

Thanks,

Chris



**Christopher Hoon**  
Manager of Government Affairs – Pacific Flyway  
c: 916-626-7160  
e: [choon@deltawaterfowl.org](mailto:choon@deltawaterfowl.org)

**Delta Waterfowl**  
The Duck Hunters Organization™  
[DeltaWaterfowl.org](http://DeltaWaterfowl.org)



January 22, 2025

California Fish and Game Commission  
715 P Street, 16th floor  
Sacramento, 95814.

RE: *New and Proposed Regulations – 2025 (Waterfowl Hunting)*

Dear President Murray and members of the California Fish and Game Commission,

I am writing to you today on behalf of Delta Waterfowl and our members, not only in the state of California but across the Pacific Flyway, to express our support for increasing the pintail daily bag limit in all zones, subsections 502(d)(1 through 5)(C) to 3.

For reference, Delta Waterfowl is a leading waterfowl conservation group founded at the famed Delta Marsh in Manitoba, with its United States Headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota. We work to produce ducks through intensive management programs and conservation of breeding duck habitats. Delta conducts vital waterfowl research and promotes and protects the continuing tradition of waterfowl hunting in North America.

California waterfowl hunters are lucky to enjoy some of the best pintail hunting in the world. Historically California has boasted record-breaking numbers of wintering pintails, this led to a 2-bird bag limit for the majority of the 2000's. This 2-bird limit was only reduced to 1 out of concern for population declines and a conservative harvest management strategy implemented by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The newly adopted interim harvest strategy for northern pintails that was approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 2025 is a marked change from the prior strategy. This update has been requested by many states, especially those in the Pacific Flyway. The primary change in the data used is driven by the further use of banding data and updated population parameters. New evaluations demonstrated that harvest rates have historically been overestimated by a factor of 2.3. Additionally, this new strategy allows harvest rates to change with population size. Other analyses, funded by Delta Waterfowl, show that harvest is relatively a small driver of population dynamics. Results from those studies show that the hazard function estimates that pintails die 19 different times for each bird that dies by a gun.

This data along with the new USFWS model proves that an increased bag limit on pintail from 1 to 3 has no significant effect on overall population numbers. Delta Waterfowl fully supports this increase, and our organization worked closely with CWA, other stakeholders and the research community to add to the general knowledge of pintail population dynamics that contributed to the USFWS to construct this new harvest model. We humbly ask that you support this regulatory



change, as it will have positive effects for all California duck hunters, while not negatively impacting pintails.

Please feel free to reach out to me at [choon@deltawaterfowl.org](mailto:choon@deltawaterfowl.org) with any questions, comments, or feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials "CH" with a horizontal line through them.

Christopher L. Hoon  
Manager of Government Affairs – Pacific Flyway  
Delta Waterfowl Foundation