

AGENDA

Board of Wildlife Resources
Wildlife and Boat Committee
7870 Villa Park Drive
Henrico, Virginia 23228

January 18, 2023
10:00 am

Committee Members: Mr. Leon Boyd, Chair, Ms. Catherine Claiborne, Mr. Michael Formica, Mr. Jon Cooper, (alternate), Mr. George Terwilliger, (alternate)

DWR Staff Liaisons: Dr. Gray Anderson and Dr. Mike Bednarski and Mr. Tom Guess

1. Call to Order and Welcome
Mr. Leon Boyd
2. Approval of the October 18, 2022 Committee Meeting Minutes **Final Action**
Mr. Leon Boyd
3. Public Comment – Non - Agenda Item
Mr. Leon Boyd
4. Migratory Bird Regulations Proposals **Action**
Dr. Gary Costanzo
5. Proposed Property Naming **Action**
Dr. Gray Anderson
6. Wildlife Public Scoping Summary
Dr. Gray Anderson
7. Wildlife Division Update
Dr. Gray Anderson

8. Fish Division Update
Dr. Mike Bednarski
9. Boating Division Update
Mr. Tom Guess
10. Director's Report
Mr. Ryan Brown
11. Chair's Report
Mr. Leon Boyd
12. Next Meeting Date: March 15, 2023
Mr. Leon Boyd
11. Additional Business/Comments
Mr. Leon Boyd
12. Adjournment
Mr. Leon Boyd

Draft Meeting Minutes
Wildlife and Boat Committee
Board of Wildlife Resources
7870 Villa Park Drive – Board Room
Henrico, VA 23228

October 18, 2022
10:00 am

Present: Mr. Leon Boyd, **Chair**, Mr. Jon Cooper, Mr. Michael Formica and Mr. George Terwilliger; **Absent:** Ms. Catherine Claiborne, **Board Members** in attendance: Mr. G. K. Washington, and Dr. Mamie Parker; **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan Brown; **Deputy Director:** Ms. Becky Gwynn; **Director's Working Group:** Mr. Darin Moore, Dr. Mike Bednarski, Dr. Gray Anderson, Mr. Bob Smet, Ms. Paige Pearson, Mr. Tom Guess, Mr. Paul Kugelman, Mr. George Braxton

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and noted for the record that a Quorum was present for today's meeting.

Approval of the August 17, 2022 Committee Meeting Minutes:

The Chair called for a motion to approve the August 17, 2022 Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Cooper made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2022 committee meeting. Mr. Terwilliger seconded the motion.

Ayes: Boyd, Cooper, Formica, and Terwilliger

Public Comment - Non Agenda Item: The Chair called for Public Comment – Non-Agenda Items, hearing none the Chair continued with the Agenda.

Proposed Property naming: The Chair called on Dr. Gray Anderson for presentation.

Dr. Anderson gave a presentation on the Proposed Property naming.

The Chair thanked Dr. Anderson for his presentation.

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Terwilliger made a motion, Mr. Chair; I move that the Wildlife and Boat Committee recommend to the Board of Wildlife Resources the proposed property name and designation as present by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Cooper. Ayes: Boyd, Cooper, Formica and Terwilliger.

Elk Hunt Report: The Chair called on Mr. Cale Godfrey for a Report and Update.

Mr. Godfrey presented the Elk Hunt Report and Update.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Godfrey for his Report.

Wildlife Regulation Cycle Schedule & Public Scoping: The Chair called on Dr. Gray Anderson for an update.

Dr. Anderson gave an update of the Wildlife Regulation Cycle schedule and public scoping.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Anderson for his update.

WMA and Boating Access sites Allowable Activities: The Chair called on Dr. Gary Anderson for an update.

Dr. Anderson gave an update on the WMA's and Boating Access sites Allowable Activities.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Anderson for his update and report.

Nature-based solutions: low cost, high yield approaches to abating the hazards of climate change: The Chair called on Mr. Clay Ferguson, Virginia Coastal and Marine Policy Fellow

Mr. Clay Ferguson gave a presentation on low cost, high yield approaches to abating the hazards of climate change.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Ferguson for his informative presentation.

Wildlife Division Update:

Dr. Anderson reported:

- Early Harvest Report on Deer – up 8% and Antlerless up 3%
- Hemorrhagic update – reported in 59 counties

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Anderson for his update.

Fish Division Update: The Chair called on Dr. Mike Bednarski for an update.

Dr. Bednarski reported:

- Trout stocking is underway across the state with million fish and 85,000 catfish

Jeff Trollinger reported on Non-Game & Endangered Species –

- Set up a turtle quarantine facility at the K&Q Hatchery to hold confiscated turtle until cases can be adjudicated
- AWCC and VFAWC have propagated over 900,000 mussel and released over 33 species back into the wild which included 1300 James Spiny mussels reintroduced into the mainstream of the James River at Scottsville for the first time since the 1960's and 75 Appalachian Monkeyface mussels released into the Clinch River in Russell County
- We confirmed Golden-winged Warblers breeding at Highland WMA after years of doing habitat work there to promote habitat for this species
- Our bats monitoring efforts are cranking up again after Covid where we couldn't go into caves. Several species of bats that have experience significantly declines have leveled off recently go there is hope White-nosed Syndrome have to be passing on, but we'll continue to monitor.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Bednarski and Mr. Trollinger for their updates.

Boating Division Update: The Chair called on Mr. Tom Guess for an update.

- Official Boating Season ends with Labor Day but some boating continues all year long
- Reminding Waterfowl and Anglers to be mindful they are on the water
- Boating accidents – 91; Injuries 40; Fatalities – 17 -the rest in property damage
- Boating Survey has been sent out to 235,000 boaters and being returned
- 22,723 boaters have taken the boating course on line and in person
- Coming on board soon will be a Waterways manager
- Met with County Administrator at Smith Mountain Lake
- Attended a boating conference in New Hampshire – received informative information
- Group met at DWR to discuss paddle boats
- Will be working on Boating Safety Management Plan
- Customer Service handles 400 phone calls a day

Director's Report: The Chair called on Executive Director Ryan Brown for his report.

The Director reported:

- There will be an Orientation session for the 3 new board members during the lunch break.

Chair's Report: The Chair thanked everyone for attending the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting.

The Chair asked if anyone had any further comments or questions, hearing none, he announced that the next meeting will be January 18, 2023 and adjourned the meeting at 12:15 pm.

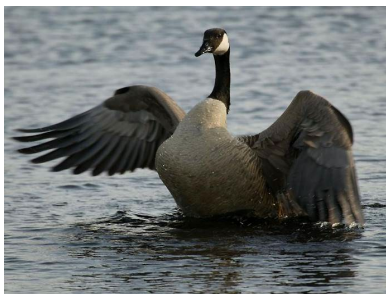
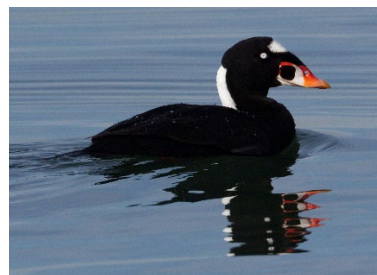
Respectfully submitted,

Frances Boswell

/s/

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

2023-24 MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS – FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS



Prepared by Wildlife Division
January 2023

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

PRELIMINARY FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF PROPOSALS FOR 2023-24
MIGRATORY GAMEBIRD SEASON DATES AND BAG LIMITS

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Notes:

- 1.) Many of the annual migratory bird surveys that were not conducted in 2020 and 2021 due to concerns about Coronavirus were reinitiated this past year. Population models were used to estimate bird numbers in those years when the surveys were not conducted, and those estimates were included in the development of appropriate harvest regulations.
- 2.) Possession Limits for Migratory Game Birds are 3 times the daily limit unless otherwise noted.
- 3.) Framework changes new this year are highlighted in **red text**.

Doves

Mourning Dove Background Information and Population Status

There are three dove management units (or flyways) across the country, including the Eastern (EMU), Central (CMU) and Western (WMU) Management Units. Virginia is in the EMU.

- Population trends in the EMU:
 - 10-yr (2013-2022): gradually declining population trend.
 - Long term (1966-2022): gradually declining population trend.
- Dove Banding Project – Annual program since 2003 to leg-band over 500 doves annually in VA, and 33,000 nationwide. Data used to provide estimates of movements, survival and harvest rates, and is the main monitoring program used to develop annual hunting regulations.
- Harvest Strategy: Revised Harvest Strategy adopted in 2014 allows for a standard dove hunting season of 90 days with a bag limit of 15 birds/day when appropriate.
- Data from HIP (past 5-yr avg.): Hunters = 15,900 Harvest = 215,060

Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days until extended to 90 days in 2014-15)</u>		
2022-2023	Sept. 3 – Oct. 23	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 23 – Jan. 21
2021-2022	Sept. 4 – Oct. 27	Nov. 20 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 17
2020-2021	Sept. 5 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 19
2019-2020	Sept. 2 – Oct. 27	Nov. 27 – Dec. 4	Dec. 24 – Jan. 18
2018-2019	Sept. 1 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 14
2017-2018	Sept. 2 – Oct. 29	Nov. 22 – Nov. 29	Dec. 23 – Jan. 15
2016-2017	Sept. 3 – Oct. 30	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2015-2016	Sept. 5 – Nov. 1	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2014-2015	Sept. 1 – Oct. 31	Nov. 22 – Nov. 30	Dec. 27 – Jan. 15
2013-2014	Sept. 2 – Oct. 14	Oct. 19 – Nov. 2	Dec. 31 – Jan. 11
2012-2013	Sept. 1 – Oct. 13	Oct. 17 – Oct. 27	Dec. 28 – Jan. 12
2011-2012	Sept. 3 – Oct. 10	Oct. 25 – Nov. 5	Dec. 26 - Jan. 14
2010-2011	Sept. 4 – Oct. 11	Oct. 20 – Nov. 6	Dec. 27 – Jan. 8
2009-2010	Sept. 5 - 26	Oct. 7 – Nov. 7	Dec. 25 – Jan. 9
2008-2009	Sept. 1 - 27	Oct. 4 – Oct. 31	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10
2007-2008	Sept. 1 – 29	Oct. 5 – Oct 27	Dec. 26 – Jan. 12
2006-2007	Sept. 2 – 23	Oct. 7 – Nov. 4	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2005-2006	Sept. 3 – 24	Oct. 8 – Nov. 5	Dec. 27 – Jan. 14
2004-2005	Sept. 4 – 25	Oct. 9 – Nov. 6	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2003-2004	Sept. 1 – 27	Oct. 8 – Nov. 8	Dec. 31 – Jan. 10
2002-2003	Sept. 2 - 28	Oct. 9 – Nov. 9	Jan. 1 – Jan. 11
2001-2002	Sept. 1 - 29	Oct 13 – Nov. 10	Dec. 29 – Jan. 9

DOVE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024
Hunting dates may run consecutively or be split into no more than three (3) segments.

SEASON LENGTH: Not more than 90 days.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily and 45 in possession. Daily bag limit can be composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

SHOOTING HOURS: Between ½ hour before sunrise and sunset daily (State may select ½ day shooting in any segment).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 2 - October 22 (51 days)
November 18 - November 26 (9 days)
December 22 - January 20 (30 days)

SHOOTING HOURS:

September 2	Noon until sunset
September 3 – October 22	½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
November 18 – November 26	½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
December 22 - January 20	½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily and 45 in possession. Composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

Rails

Background Information and Population Status

- **Harvest** – Comprised predominantly of clapper rails (85%), some sora (14%), and small number of Virginia rails taken. Clappers are mostly local VA birds, some are migrants from NY, NJ, and other coastal states.
- **Nesting** - Clapper rails nest from May through June, with re-nesting in July/August. Late nesting rails have broods that do not reach flight stage until August or September. This occurs in years when 1st nests are flooded by spring storms/tides and re-nests contribute significantly to production. Therefore, we generally wait until the second week of September to open the hunting season. The key to setting the season is to bracket the greatest number of high tides possible.
- **Harvest Data** - Avg. No. hunters = 290, Avg. Harvest = 3,300 (HIP, past 5-yr avg.)

Past Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days)</u>	
2022	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2021	Sept. 7 – Nov. 15	
2020	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2019	Sept. 7 – Nov. 15	
2018	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2017	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2016	Sept. 10 - Nov. 18	
2015	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2014	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2013	Sept. 7 - 28	Sept. 30 – Nov. 16
2012	Sept. 8 – 29	Oct. 1 – Nov. 17
2011	Sept. 10 – Oct. 1	Oct. 3 – Nov. 19
2010	Sept. 8 – Oct. 2	Oct. 4 – Nov. 17
2009	Sept. 8 – Oct. 3	Oct. 5 – Nov. 17
2008	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2007	Sept. 10 – Nov. 17	
2006	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2005	Sept. 12 – Nov. 19	
2004	Sept. 13 – Nov. 20	
2003	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2002	Sept. 9 - Nov. 16	
2001	Sept. 11 – Nov. 19	
2000	Sept. 13 – Oct. 2	Oct. 11 – Nov. 29

RAILS (Clapper, King, Sora, Virginia) & Gallinules (Common, Purple)

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024

SEASON LENGTH: 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

DAILY BAG LIMIT: Clapper/King - 15, in aggregate.
Sora/Virginia - 25, in aggregate.
Gallinules - 15, in aggregate.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 11 - November 5 (56 days)
November 13 - November 26 (14 days)

DAILY BAG LIMIT: Clapper/King: 15 - in aggregate, only 1 can be a King Rail.
Sora/Virginia: 25 - in aggregate.
Gallinules: 15 - in aggregate.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

NOTES: - This recommendation provides 30 days of 3-ft or greater lunar tides.
- Non-Toxic shot is required for Rail, Snipe and Gallinule hunting in Virginia.

Woodcock

Background Information and Population Status

- Harvest Strategy includes 3 regulatory options (Liberal, Moderate and Restrictive). Annual regulation based on the 3-year mean of the call count survey. For 2023-24, Harvest Strategy calls for Moderate Regulations (45 days/3 birds).
- Singing-ground survey (SGS) in Eastern Management Region from most recent survey:
 - 1 year trend (2021-2022): stable
 - 10 year trend (2013-2022): 1.07% decline per year.
 - Long-term (1966-2022): 0.84% decline per year.
- The 2021 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.38 jv/ad female) was 14% below the 2021 index and 15% below the long-term index.
- Research suggests that habitat loss is the major factor of the long-term population decline.
- Virginia is participating in a Flyway-wide study of woodcock movements and habitat use for the past several years. GPS transmitters are tracking woodcock migration routes and chronology, and this data is being used to better inform woodcock management strategies and hunting seasons.
- Federal regulations prohibit zones for woodcock hunting, however, we are permitted to split the season into two segments. In Virginia, this allows us to provide both early and late opportunities for hunters across the state.

Recent Seasons (bag limit has been 3 birds)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>		<u>Days</u>
2022-2023	Nov. 11 – Dec. 3	Dec. 27 – Jan. 17	45
2021-2022	Nov. 11 – Dec. 8	Dec. 27 – Jan. 12	45
2020-2021	Nov. 7 – Nov. 30	Dec. 24 – Jan. 13	45
2019-2020	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2018-2019	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 8 – Jan. 14	45
2017-2018	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2016-2017	Oct. 29 – Nov. 4	Dec. 9 – Jan. 15	45
2015-2016	Nov. 23 – Dec. 5	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2014-2015	Nov. 24 – Dec. 6	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2013-2014	Oct. 26 – Nov. 1	Dec. 5 – Jan. 11	45
2012-2013	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 6 – Jan. 12	45
2011-2012	Oct. 29 – Nov. 12	Dec. 16 – Jan. 14	45
2010-2011	Oct. 30 - Nov. 13	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10	30
2009-2010	Nov. 7 – 21	Dec. 26 – Jan. 9	30
2008-2009	Nov. 8 – 22	Dec. 20 – Jan 3	30
2007-2008	Oct. 27 – Nov. 10	Dec. 22 – Jan. 5	30
2006-2007	Nov. 4 – 18	Dec. 23 – Jan. 6	30
2005-2006	Nov. 12 – 26	Dec.17 – Dec 31	30
2004-2005	Oct. 30 – Nov. 13	Dec.18 – Jan. 1	30
2003-2004	Nov. 1 – 15	Dec. 20 – Jan. 3	30
2002-2003	Nov. 2 – 16	Dec. 21 - Jan. 4	30
2001-2002	Nov. 3 - 17	Dec. 22 - Jan. 5	30
<u>2000-2001</u>	<u>Nov. 4 - 18</u>	<u>Dec. 23 - Jan. 6</u>	<u>30</u>

Avg. No. hunters = 1,620. Avg. Harvest = 2,860 (Data from HIP, past 5-year avg.)

WOODCOCK

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 13, 2023 - January 31, 2024

SEASON LENGTH: 45 days, straight or 2 segments.

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: November 10 – December 2 (23 days)
December 26 – January 16 (22 days)

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

Snipe

Background Information

- Season generally set to overlap duck season. There are relatively few snipe hunters in VA and most snipe are taken opportunistically by other migratory bird hunters.
- Harvest Data (HIP, past 5-yr avg.): No. hunters = 225, Harvest = 550

Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 107 days)</u>	
2022-2023	Sept. 26 – Nov. 27	Dec. 17 – Jan. 29
2021-2022	Oct. 8 – Oct. 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2020-2021	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2019-2020	Oct. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2018-2019	Oct. 5 – Oct. 8	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2017-2018	Oct. 6 – Oct. 9	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2016-2017	Oct. 7 – Oct. 10	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2015-2016	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2014-2015	Oct. 10 – Oct. 13	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2013-2014	Oct. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2012-2013	Oct. 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2011-2012	Oct. 6 – Oct. 10	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2010-2011	Oct. 7 – Oct. 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2009-2010	Oct. 8 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 30
2008-2009	Oct. 9 – Oct. 13	Oct. 22 – Jan.31
2007-2008	Oct 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2006-2007	Oct 4 – Oct. 9	Oct. 23 – Jan. 31
2005-2006	Oct 5 – Oct.10	Oct. 24 – Jan. 31
2004-2005	Oct 7 – Oct 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2003-2004	Oct. 8 – Oct 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2002-2003	Oct 9 – Oct 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2001-2002	Oct. 10 - Oct. 13	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2000-2001	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1999-2000	Oct. 6 - Oct. 9	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1998-1999	Oct. 7 - Oct. 10	Oct. 20 - Jan. 30
1997-1998	Oct. 8 - Oct. 11	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1996-1997	Oct. 9 - Oct. 12	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1995-1996	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31

SNIFE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024

SEASON LENGTH: 107 days, straight or 2 segments

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 25 – November 26 (63 days)
December 19 - January 31 (44 days)

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON FACT SHEET - 2023

- Special teal seasons were initiated in late 1960's to provide harvest opportunities on blue-winged and green-winged teal. When the blue-winged teal breeding population (BPOP) is above 3.3 million, a 9-day season can be offered. If the BPOP exceeds 4.7 million, a 16-day season can be offered.
- Blue-winged teal are one of the earliest migrants. Many pass through Virginia from late August through October, prior to the opening of the late duck season.
- Green-winged teal are also early migrants and arrive in September and October. However, some Green-wings remain through the winter depending on weather conditions.
- Virginia has held a special September teal season since 1999 (see dates listed below). The season was initially held only in the area east of I-95 because there are greater numbers of teal and teal hunters in the coastal plain. Even in the coastal plain, teal are not widespread, and the harvest has been relatively small. The season was expanded in 2011 to provide some teal hunting opportunity in the area west of I-95.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u> <u>East of I-95</u>	<u>Season Dates</u> <u>West of I-95</u>
2022	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2021	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2020	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2019	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2018	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2017	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2016	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2015	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2014	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 22 - 30
2013	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 23 - 30
2012	Sept. 17 – 29	Sept. 24 - 29
2011	Sept. 19 – 30	Sept. 26 - 30
2010	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2009	Sept. 21 – 30	na
2008	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2007	Sept. 17 – 26	na
2006	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2005	Sept. 16 – 24	na
2004	Sept. 16 – 25	na
2003	Sept. 13 – 23	na
2002	Sept. 14 – 24	na
2001	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2000	Sept. 14 – 23	na
1999	Sept. 16 – 25	na

Average Annual Harvest: 600 teal

SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 30, 2023

SEASON LENGTH: Up to 16 days

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only)

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 17 – September 30
HUNT AREA: East of I – 95

September 21 – September 30
HUNT AREA: West of I – 95

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only).

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

FACT SHEET - Waterfowl Hunters and Harvests - 2023

- Liberal duck seasons (60 days, 6 bird bag limit) and resident goose seasons have resulted in high waterfowl harvests in Virginia during the past ten years. Harvest has averaged ~132,400 ducks and ~47,400 Canada geese from 2016-2020, compared to 114,770 ducks and 25,000 geese during the 1990's. The long season length and liberal bags offer greater opportunity and a greater cumulative harvest over the course of the season.
- Waterfowl hunter numbers in Virginia have been generally stable since the late 1990's. Since 1999, the Harvest Information Program (HIP) has been used to estimate hunter effort and harvest. The average number of duck and goose hunters over the past 3 years, as measured by HIP, was 16,700 and 13,800 respectively.
- Conditions during the 2021-2022 season were mild and warm resulting in poor waterfowl hunting conditions and a delayed migration. This resulted in a duck harvest that was lower than the previous 5-year average. Estimated Canada goose harvest was also lower than previous years mainly due to the reduction in the AP Canada goose bag limit.
- The total estimated duck harvest during the 2021-2022 season in Virginia (111,100) was 14% lower than the previous year (128,800) and 16% lower than the previous 5-year average (132,400).
- During the 2021-2022 season, mallards were the most commonly harvested duck in Virginia, followed by wood ducks, scoters, buffleheads and gadwall. The mallard harvest in Virginia in 2021-2022 (23,221) decreased 31% from 2020-2021 (33,200) and was 37% lower than the past 5-year average (36,500).
- The Canada goose harvest in Virginia in 2021-2022 (20,770) was 32% lower than the 2020-2021 season (30,350) and 56% lower than the previous 5-year average (47,400).

FACT SHEET - The Status of Ducks - 2023

- Waterfowl harvest in the Atlantic flyway is managed by the stocks of four different species of eastern waterfowl populations (wood ducks, American green-winged teal, ring-necked ducks and goldeneyes). The 2022 estimated breeding population size for wood ducks was 1.00 million (SE = 0.12 million), 0.32 million (SE = 0.07 million) for American green-winged teal, 0.64 million (SE = 0.11 million) for ring-necked ducks and 0.71 million (SE = 0.21 million) for goldeneyes.
- The total 2022 mid-continent mallard breeding population is predicted to be 7.16 million (SE = 0.23 million). This is 9% below the long-term (1955-2019) average of 7.9 million (+ 0.04 million).

Virginia: Habitat conditions in Virginia during the spring of 2022 were average.

- The 2022 breeding pair estimate for mallards (21,630) increased 66% from the previous year (14,210). Estimated black duck pairs (319) increased slightly from last year (152). The number of Wood duck pairs (9,675) decreased 7% from the previous year (10,424). The breeding pair estimate for Canada geese (40,966) decreased 23% from the 2021 estimate (53,025).

Return to the 4-Mallard Bag Limit in the Atlantic Flyway

The mallard has been one of the most abundant duck species in eastern North America. However, mallard numbers in the Northeastern U.S. declined about 40% from the late 1990's through around 2019. About 60% of the mallards harvested in Atlantic Flyway states, and around 80% of those harvested in Virginia, are derived from the Northeastern U.S. Mallard numbers in Eastern Canada were stable or slightly increasing during this same time period, but overall, the breeding mallard population in eastern North America had declined. This decline prompted waterfowl managers to enact harvest restriction on mallards in the Atlantic Flyway in 2019. The bag limit was reduced from 4 to 2 mallards daily, with a limit of 1 hen mallard. Those restrictions were in place for the past 4 hunting seasons.

Since 2019, Eastern Mallard numbers have increase 15%. In addition, a new Eastern Mallard Harvest Strategy and Population Model was developed based on recent population dynamics. The Strategy has been put in place for 2023-2024 hunting season regulation process, and allows for a return to a 4-mallard bag limit (2 hens). Projections from the new harvest strategy indicate that under current conditions, Atlantic Flyway regulations should allow for a liberal mallard bag limit (4 mallards total, only 2 hens) around 87% of the time.

YOUTH and VETERANS WATERFOWL DAYS

Guidelines for the Youth Days and Veterans Days include:

1. States may select 2 days per duck-hunting zone, designated as "Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days," in addition to their regular duck seasons. States may also select 2 days per duck-hunting zone designated as "Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Days" in addition to their regular duck seasons. The Youth and Veterans days could be combined and held on the same day or could be held separately.
2. Youth Days must be held outside of any regular duck season on a weekend, holidays, or other non-school days when youth hunters would have the maximum opportunity to participate.
3. Youth and Veterans Days could be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season frameworks or within any split of a regular duck season.
4. The daily bag limit is the same as that allowed in the regular season and includes ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, gallinules, 1 Canada geese (except in Canada Goose Zones where the bag limit is higher), and 1 tundra swan (if the hunter possesses a tundra swan permit). Flyway species restrictions remain in effect.
5. Youth hunters must be 15 years of age or younger. Youth 12 years of age and older will need a valid Virginia state hunting license. A licensed adult at least 18 years of age or older must accompany youth hunters into the field. This adult may not duck hunt, but may participate in other open seasons.
6. Those allowed to participate in the special **Veterans Days** include 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 for training).

DUCKS

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Outside Dates: September 23, 2023 - January 31, 2024

Season Length: 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunt Days.

Bag Limits: **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:**
Can include no more than **4 mallards (only 2 hens)**, 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 2 canvasback, scaup: 1/day for 40 days and 2/day for 20 days, 2 redheads, 1 pintail, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, 4 total sea ducks (no more than 3 scoters, 3 eider (only 1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks). Closed season on harlequin duck.
Possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

Split Season Options: 3-way split season, no zones

Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Length: 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Day

Season Dates: October 6 - 9 (Black Duck closed)
November 15– November 26
December 19 – January 31
October 21, February 3 – Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Days

Bag Limit: **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:** can include no more than **4 mallards (only 2 hens)**, 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks (except closed Oct. 6–9), 2 redheads, 2 canvasback, 1 pintail, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck.
Scaup: 1/day from October 6-9, November 15-26, December 19 - January 11, and 2/day from January 12-31.
Sea Ducks: 4 total sea ducks to include no more than 3 scoters, 3 eiders (only 1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks. Closed season on harlequin ducks.
The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

MERGANSER AND COOT

MERGANSER

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Option A

Season Length: 60 hunting days.
Outside Date: September 23, 2023 - January 31, 2024.
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily.
15 in possession.

Option B

To be included into the general duck bag. If included in the general duck bag, the restriction on 2 hooded mergansers would apply.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Option A

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily, 15 in possession.

AMERICAN COOT

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 60 hunting days
Outside Date: September 23, 2023 - January 31, 2024
Bag Limit: 15 birds daily (45 in possession)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season.
Bag Limit: 15 daily (45 in possession)

FACT SHEET - The Status of Resident Canada Geese - 2023

- The resident Canada goose population increased significantly in Virginia during the 1980's and 1990's, and peaked at 260,000 geese in the late 1990's. This population caused significant conflicts with human and wildlife populations, and management actions were taken to reduce their numbers. The current population estimate is 170,540 (+/- 44,340) in Virginia and over 1 million in the Atlantic Flyway.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons were initiated in 1993 to help manage this population and to provide recreational opportunities for hunters. These seasons occur prior to the arrival of most migrant geese (~Sept. 25 in Virginia), or in areas where there are fewer migrant geese. The Federal Framework allows Virginia to conduct a statewide September Resident Goose season from September 1-25.
- There are fewer migrant geese in the western portion of Virginia, and special “Goose Hunting Zones” have been established that allow more liberal seasons in areas with a greater percentage of resident geese.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons have been very popular, and have increased hunter participation and resident goose harvests. These seasons have been very effective in managing resident goose populations and helping to meet our statewide population objectives.
- In areas where hunting is not feasible, other options including special Depredation Orders for Airports, Agricultural areas, and Nest and Egg removal have been implemented to help manage resident goose conflicts.

Year	Population Estimate *	September Harvest
2022	170,540 +/-26%	n/a
2021	177,056 +/-29%	6,300
2020	163,198 +/- 24%	13,000
2019	125,966 +/-20%	6,300
2018	132,633 +/- 24%	5,600
2017	142,167 +/- 21%	5,500
2016	158,200 +/- 19%	900
2015	150,651 +/- 22%	6,100
2014	130,503 +/- 26%	7,500
2013	144,910 +/- 26%	10,700
2012	158,267 +/- 28%	9,700
2011	165,022 +/- 28%	14,700
2010	147,313 +/- 29%	15,600
2009	145,019 +/- 29%	16,800
2008	157,560 +/- 29%	17,500
2007	154,030 +/- 27%	13,600
2006	136,700 +/- 27%	11,100
2005	129,486 +/- 26%	10,100
2004	143,741 +/- 25%	17,000
2003	186,753 +/- 23%	14,800
2002	218,719 +/- 24%	14,300
2001	218,384 +/- 27%	11,800
2000	227,164 +/- 32%	10,800
1999	261,554 +/- 34%	11,400
1998	264,867 +/- 35%	12,200
1997	249,612 +/- 34%	10,500

*3-year running average

SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 25, 2023

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily, 45 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset (except as provided for in special hunting options *)

* SPECIAL HUNTING OPTIONS: Allows the use of electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours (1/2 hr after sunset) when **no other** waterfowl seasons are open.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 1 – September 25 (25 days)

BAG LIMIT: 10 daily, 30 in possession

HUNT AREA: Statewide

SHOOTING HOURS:

East of I-95

September 1 – 16: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset.

September 17 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise **to sunset.**

West of I-95

September 1 – 20: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset.

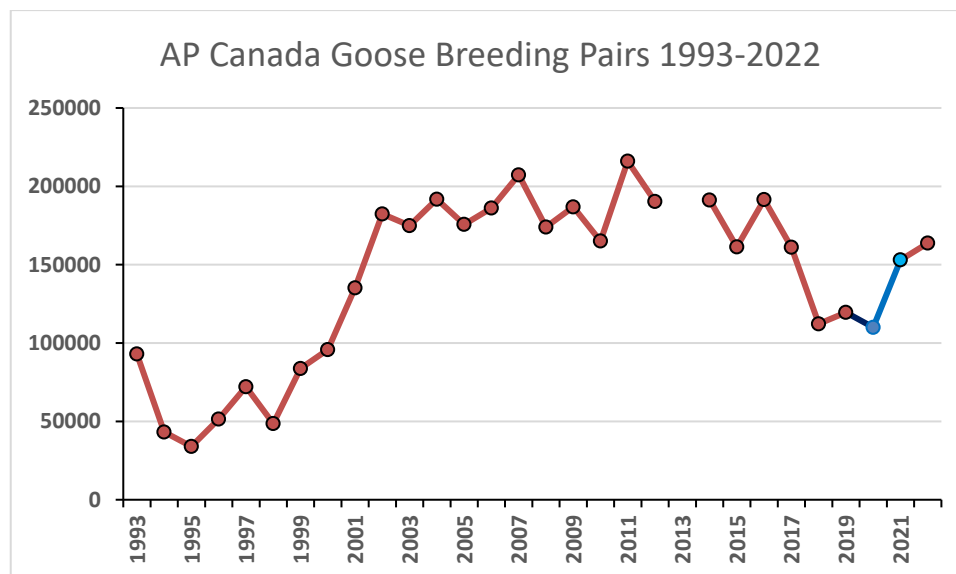
September 21 - 25: ½ hr before sunrise **to sunset.**

NOTE: Staff is not recommending the options of using electronic calls or unplugged shotguns for hunting geese in the September season.

FACT SHEET- History and Status of Migrant Canada Geese - 2022

- Migrant Canada geese from the Atlantic Population (AP) declined significantly from 1985-1995. The hunting season was closed in 1995 to allow the population to recover. Goose numbers rebounded quickly and a limited season (6 days with a 1-bird bag) was held in both 1999 and 2000. As the population increased, the season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days from 2012-2018.
- However, a series of poor reproductive years led to a gradual decline in this population from 2016-2019. The harvest regulations were restricted in 2019 to a 30-day season with a 1-geese/day bag limit. These restrictions were in effect from the 2019-20 through the 2022-23 seasons.
- Productivity has improved over the past several years and the estimated breeding population has increased. Although no breeding population survey (BPOP) was conducted in either 2020 or 2021 due to Coronavirus concerns, population models were used to estimate the breeding population size. The BPOP survey was reinitiated this summer and the population estimate was 163,7000 (see figure below). Based on this survey and the population model estimates, a liberal harvest regulation including a 45-day season with a 2-geese daily limit will be allowed for the 2023-2024 hunting season.

Figure 1. Atlantic Population Canada Goose Breeding Pair survey estimates 1993-2022. Blue dots/lines are population model estimates for surveys that were not conducted in 2020 and 2021.



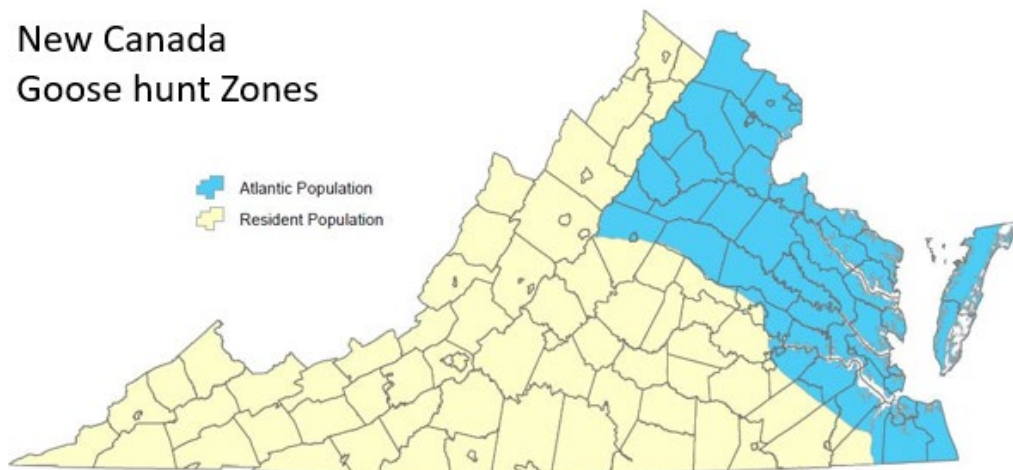
Change in Migrant Goose Hunt Zones

- There has been a change in how the Atlantic Flyway, the Mississippi Flyway and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are defining and managing the different “Migrant” Canada goose populations in the Eastern United States. The Southern James Bay Population (SJBP) is no longer recognized as a separate population, and the eastern portion of this population is now considered part of the Atlantic Population (AP). The Atlantic Population along with the North Atlantic Population (NAP) are now the only recognized subpopulations of “migrant” Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway. Nearly all the migrant geese that winter in Virginia are from the Atlantic Population, with only ~1% from the NAP.
- Due to this change, we have had to eliminate the SJBP Hunting Zone in Virginia. Some of this former zone (predominantly the northern portion) has been placed in the AP Zone, while the remainder of the area, where fewer migrant geese are located, has been included in the Resident Population Zone (RP).
- The hunting regulations for those areas that are now part of a different zone have changed significantly, so hunters need to make sure they are aware of the new zone boundaries. The description and map of these new Canada geese hunt zones is shown below.

The Southern James Bay Population Zone has been eliminated

Atlantic Population (AP) Hunt Zone – The area to the east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County border) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Interstate 95 in Richmond, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

Resident Population (RP) Hunt Zone – The portion of the state west of the above AP Zone boundary.



CANADA GOOSE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE (AP):

Season Length:

45 hunting days

Outside Dates:

November 15 – February 5

Bag Limit:

2 birds daily (6 in possession)

RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE (RP):

Outside Dates:

November 15 – March 10

Season Length:

80 hunting days

Bag Limit:

5 birds daily (15 in possession)

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese in the aggregate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE: (AP)

Season Dates:

November 22 – November 26 (5 days)

December 23 – January 31 (40 days)

Bag Limit:

2 geese per day (6 in possession)

Shooting Hours:

1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE: (RP)

Season Dates:

November 15 – November 26

December 19 - February 24

Bag Limit:

5 geese daily (15 in possession)

Shooting Hours:

1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese in the aggregate.

FACT SHEET - Status of Light Geese (Greater and Lesser Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese) - 2023

- The majority (95%) of the “Light” geese found in the Atlantic Flyway are Greater Snow Geese, while less than 5% are Lesser Snow Geese, with even smaller numbers of Ross’s Geese.
- The principal nesting areas for greater snow geese are on Bylot, Axel Heiberg, Ellesmere, and Baffin Islands, and on Greenland. They winter along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to North Carolina.
- The Greater Snow Goose population is monitored on spring staging areas along the St. Lawrence Valley in Quebec. The 2022 population estimate was 753,000 geese.
- Banding crews at the major snow goose breeding colony on Bylot Island reported that spring condition and nest initiation were very late this year. In addition, nest predation by foxes was high due to low number of lemmings. Therefore, production is expected to be very poor this season and will likely result in a reduced fall flight.
- Over the last 30 years, snow goose populations increased nearly ten-fold. A shift from feeding almost exclusively in marshes to feeding more on agricultural grains has allowed them to expand their range and habitat use. This shift has also allowed them to return to their breeding habitats in better physical condition, which has led to increased productivity.
- This population has generally stabilized over the past 5 year, however concerns about habitat degradation on their breeding, migration and wintering areas still remain. Snow geese can cause damage to these habitats by pulling up plant roots and denuding marshes of vegetation. Snow geese can also cause conflicts with agricultural interest by pulling up green grains including wheat and barley.
- Current hunting regulations for snow geese are as liberal as Federal Frameworks will allow and include a 107-day season that runs from October to January, and a bag limit that was increased from 15 to 25 in 2010. Liberal seasons have helped increase the harvest, however, the population is still quite large.
- In addition to the regular hunting season, a Conservation Order (CO) was established in 2009 that authorizes additional snow goose hunting after the end of the regular season frameworks. The CO allows the use of alternative management strategies (unplugged shotguns, electronic calls, shooting to ½ hour after sunset, no daily bag limit) to further increase the harvest of snow geese. The snow goose harvest in Virginia has averaged around 300 birds during the regular season and 600 birds during the Conservation Order over the past 5 years.

LIGHT GOOSE SEASONS

REGULAR LIGHT GOOSE SEASON

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	107 hunting days
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	October 1, 2023 - March 10, 2024
<u>Split Season Option:</u>	3-way split season
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Season Dates:</u>	October 17 – January 31	(107 days)
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)	

LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION ORDER

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Outside Dates:

When no other waterfowl seasons are open

Bag Limit:

No daily or possession limit

Special Hunting Methods:

Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset **only in areas and at times when other waterfowl seasons are closed.**

Special Requirements:

States participating in the Conservation Order are required to monitor hunter participation, effort, and success.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Conservation Order Zone: The same as the **new AP Canada Goose Zone identified in blue on the map below** - The area to the east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County border) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Interstate 95 in Richmond, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

Season Dates:

February 1, 2023 – April 5, 2024

Bag Limit:

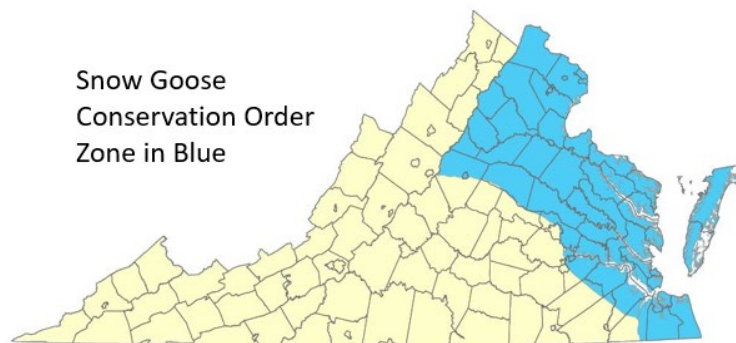
No daily or possession limit

Special Hunting Methods:

Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset.

Special Requirements:

Hunters participating in the Conservation Order **must register with DWR**, keep a record of their harvest and participation, and return a harvest report form within two weeks following the close of the season.



FACT SHEET - Status of Atlantic Brant and Tundra Swan - 2023

- **BRANT**. The main breeding areas for Atlantic Brant are in the Eastern Canadian Arctic on Baffin, Southampton, and Ellesmere Islands. Most brant winter along the Atlantic Coast from MA to NC.
- The 2022 mid-winter survey count for brant was 109,000, considerably lower than the previous 5-year average (150,000). The Atlantic brant productivity estimated was 7.4%. this was down 34% from the 2021 estimate.
- The annual brant hunting regulation is now based on the Atlantic Brant Integrated Population Model (IPM) that was adopted by the Atlantic Flyway in 2021 and provides an index to the brant population. The model prediction for this year is 107,000 birds. As per the Brant Harvest Strategy, this estimate calls for a 2023-2024 harvest regulation of 30 days with a 1-bird daily limit. This is a restriction from the past several years when the harvest regulation was 50 days with a 2-bird daily limit.
- **TUNDRA SWANS**. The Eastern Population of tundra swans nest in arctic tundra areas from Alaska, east to Hudson Bay and Baffin Island. These birds winter in coastal areas from Maryland to North Carolina.
- Estimated productivity of eastern population tundra swans in 2021 was 9% immature birds. This estimate is higher than the 2020 estimate (8%) but 30% lower than the long-term average (12.9%).
- There were 95,000 eastern population tundra swans counted in the Atlantic Flyway on the 2022 Mid-Winter Survey. This count was 9% higher than last year, but still below the past 10-year average (2012-2021: 105,435)
- Nine states in the U.S. hunt tundra swans including Alaska, Utah, Montana and Nevada in the Pacific Flyway, North Dakota and South Dakota in the Central Flyway, and Delaware, Virginia and North Carolina in the Atlantic Flyway.
- There are no changes in the total number of hunting permits allowed for EP tundra swans this year (9,600 across the U.S., with 5,600 of those in the Atlantic Flyway) as the population estimate is still within the 70,000 to 110,000 range. In the Atlantic Flyway, the allocation of hunt permits is split between the 3 states in approximate proportion to the number of swans in each state. The 5,600 permits available in the Atlantic Flyway for the 2023-2024 season will be distributed as follows: NC– 4,721, VA-532, and DE-347.
- The tundra swan hunting season in Virginia is authorized and conducted as specified in the Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swan Management Plan and Hunt Plan, with limits and guidelines as specified under an MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

ATLANTIC BRANT

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	30 hunting days
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	September 23, 2023 - January 31, 2024
<u>Split Season Option:</u>	2-way split season
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Season Dates:</u>	December 23 – December 31 (9 days) January 11 – January 31 (21 days)
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

TUNDRA SWAN

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 90 hunting days

Outside Dates: October 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024

Virginia may issue up to 532 permits and must obtain harvest and hunter participation data. Each permittee is authorized to take one (1) tundra swan per season.

Bag Limit: One per permittee per season

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: November 15 - January 31

Bag Limit: One per permittee per season

Hunt Area: All counties and portions of counties east of U.S. Route I- 95 and south of the Prince William/Stafford county line in Chopawamsic Creek at Quantico Marine Corps Base.

NOTE: VDWR will issue no more than 532 swan-hunting permits to holders of a valid Virginia hunting license. Only hunters with a valid 2023-2024 tundra swan-hunting permit issued by VDWR shall be authorized to hunt tundra swans. Each permittee will be authorized to take one tundra swan during the season. Swan hunting permits are non-transferable and are valid for use only by the person to whom issued. Permits must be in the immediate possession of the permittee while swan hunting. Immediately at the time and place of kill, successful hunters must permanently record the month and day of kill on their permit and attach it to their swan. The VDWR is required to obtain hunter participation and harvest information to offer this Tundra Swan hunting season. **Hunters are required to complete the tundra swan hunt questionnaire (survey) and submit their results to the Department by February 15, 2024.** Those who fail to submit their results are ineligible for future drawings.

FALCONRY

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	No more than 107 on any species (Gun and Falconry combined)
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	September 1 - March 10
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	3 daily (9 in possession)
<u>Hawking Hours:</u>	½ hour before sunrise until sunset.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Dove:</u>	September 2 – October 22 November 18 – November 26 December 22 – January 31
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<u>Rail, Gallinule, Moorhen:</u>	September 11 – December 26
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<u>Woodcock:</u>	October 17 – January 31
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<u>Snipe:</u>	September 25 – November 26 December 19 – January 31
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<u>Canada Goose:</u>	September 1 - September 25 November 15 – November 26 December 19 - February 24
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<u>September Teal:</u>	September 17 - September 30
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<u>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot:</u>	October 6 - 9 November 15 – February 9
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<u>Brant and Snow Goose:</u>	October 17 – January 31
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NOTE: Recommended dates based on adoption of preceding gun season proposals; if amended, staff requests permission to calculate permissible dates for each species within the allowable federal framework.

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

2023-2024 WILDLIFE REGULATION REVIEW AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

Public Scoping Period – Summarization of Public Feedback

January 2023

Introduction

The Department’s 2023-2024 Wildlife Regulation Review and Amendment Process began with a 60-day public scoping period from October 3 – December 2, 2022. During that time, the Department received 2,476 comment submissions (2,469 online submissions, 7 email/handwritten submissions) containing 2,876 individual comments from the public regarding desired regulation amendments. The number of comment submissions received during the public scoping period phase of the current wildlife regulation review and amendment process increased by ~44% from the previous wildlife regulation review and amendment process.

Regulation Review & Amendment Process	<u>2015-2016</u>	<u>2017-2018</u>	<u>2019-2020</u>	<u>2021-2022</u>	<u>2023-2024</u>
# Comment Forms	487	424	1,099	1,722	2,476

Online comment forms were compiled in a single database that was shared with Wildlife Division regional staffs and regulation committee chairs. Emails received via the Department’s regcomments@dwr.virginia.gov inbox were forwarded to the appropriate wildlife regulation committee chair, and handwritten submissions were electronically scanned and forwarded to the appropriate staff member(s). Wildlife regulation committee chairs compiled all comments received regarding their committee’s regulatory issues. These public comments, along with the Department’s biological and sociological data and administrative capabilities, are being evaluated and considered by the committees in preparation for the Department to bring forward staff recommendations for regulation amendments during the Board’s March 16, 2023 meeting.

Outreach efforts to encourage public input

1. Throughout the 60-day comment period, a link to the online scoping period comment form was featured in the “Notes from the Field” section of the Department’s homepage.
2. The online scoping period comment form was also shared on DWR’s Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. All combined, these posts reached 21,749 users.
3. An article on the regulation scoping period and a link to the online comment form were included in both the hunting-focused and wildlife viewing-focused editions of the Department’s *Notes from the Field* newsletter. The hunting edition was distributed to 316,494 individuals and the wildlife viewing edition was distributed to 52,942 individuals.
4. Constituents who previously indicated they wanted to receive notification when the Department was seeking public input received an email regarding the public scoping period. This email was sent to 1,148 individuals.
5. These outreach efforts generated 17,536 visits to the online comment form for the scoping period.

Deer (1,101 comments)

Deer project staff evaluated 1,108 individual comment submissions and divided these into 1,407 total comments. For further analysis the approximately 306 comments related to predator hunting or banning all hunting are removed from these deer comment numbers for a total of 1,101 deer related regulation comments. Seven hundred and thirty-two (66.5%) of the comments were identified as being statewide in nature and 369 (33.4%) referenced a specific county or group of counties. Public comments were assigned to 12 categories by deer management staff (Table 1).

Category	Count	Percent of Total
Hounds-Hunting	244	22.16%
Bag Limits/Tags	211	19.16%
Doe Days	206	18.71%
Seasons	152	13.81%
APRs	73	6.63%
Weapons	65	5.90%
Baiting/Feeding	22	2.00%
Public Land Access	21	1.91%
Hounds-Chase	14	1.27%
Licenses	11	1.00%
Kill Permits	6	0.54%
Miscellaneous	76	6.90%

Table 1. 2022 Deer regulation public input comment summary (doesn't include predator hunting or banning all hunting comments).

The most frequent public comment received for deer related to deer hunting with dogs, with a considerable percentage asking to discontinue or more closely regulate deer hunting with dogs. Issues identified included dog trespass, right to retrieve, road hunting, etc. Recommendations for additional restrictions included acreage minimums, permits or licenses for registered hound users, use of GPS collar technology, and timing of hound use (delay for several weeks after the opening of firearms season, separate season after general firearms closes). Comments by those in favor of the use of hounds for deer hunting primarily addressed wanting a deer hound training season and/or allowing the use of hounds on the Saturday of the deer youth/apprentice weekend. Note: deer hunting with dogs is allowed in 59 counties (or portions thereof) in eastern Virginia.

Public comments related to bag limits and/or tags were the next highest percentage received. Bag limit comments were diverse, but a theme to reduce the antlered buck bag limit was evident and public requests for antler point restrictions were common. There were also requests to allow either-sex deer tags to be utilized throughout the entire deer season (also known as a “floating” tag to be used any day of the season) as opposed to only on designated either-sex days.

Most public comments relating to either-sex deer hunting days were suggestions for increasing the number of either-sex days in certain area(s) of the state. Requests to expand the deer firearms season (added days/weeks of season) made up the majority of comments related to seasons and were primarily requested for localities West of the Blue Ridge.

Comments categorized in the muzzleloader and archery seasons were less about increased opportunities and more frequently requested changes in season timing (when a season starts, season length, which season comes in “first”), and various weapon requests for those individual seasons.

Miscellaneous comments made up only 5.3% of the total comments and related to a myriad of issues including increased law enforcement, youth days, quota hunts, and road hunting/distance minimums.

Bear (477 comments):

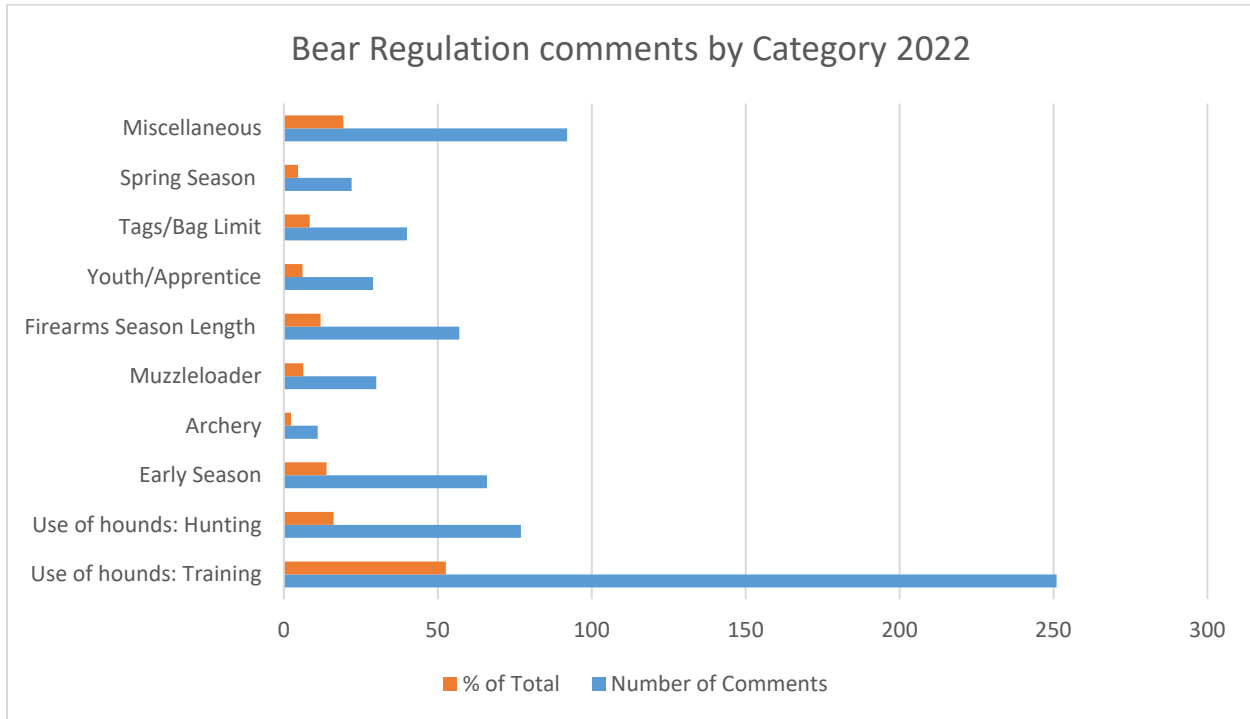


Figure 1. Number of comments and percentage of total bear comments by category during the 2022 regulation scoping period.

The majority of comments (52%) related to increasing opportunities for bear hound training. A lot of individuals asked for a year-round chase season similar to West Virginia but requests to have a chase season start after spring turkey and run it through October were mentioned frequently. Individuals also wanted to be able to run their dogs through the whole bear firearms season. The second most common topic was the hound hunting season (8.9%). A lot of individuals asked to allow hound hunting on Sundays and numerous comments requested a longer hound hunting season and more counties available for hound hunting. A fair amount of comments to restrict hound hunting also came in which included ending right to retrieve, requiring hound hunters to obtain permission to access private lands, only allowing hunting with hounds when a certain amount of acreage is available, and restricting hound hunting opportunities to the end of firearms season and the end of late muzzleloader to limit conflicts between hound hunters and non-hound hunters. Comments related to the early season were primarily in reference to expansion to new areas (not currently included in the early season) or lengthening the early season (from 3 days to 5 or 7 days). They also included removing the 3-day season from areas with mange and running the season from Friday to Sunday instead of Monday to Wednesday. Some individuals wanted to see the 3-day season eliminated and add more chase season days in its place. All of the muzzleloader comments, except for

one, were to allow bear muzzleloader season to overlap the current deer early muzzleloader season (full 2 weeks). Few had opposition to muzzleloader seasons with some asking to do away with the late season and only allow hound hunting.

Nearly 13% of the comments dealt with licenses and tags/bag limits. The highest percentage of comments in this category were requesting an additional bear tag in some capacity (statewide 2nd bear tag, allowance of 2nd tag only in certain areas, bonus tag for certain areas, increase bag limits statewide or in a limited area). Of the 67 comments related to tags/licenses/bag limits, a majority were in support of combining the deer, bear, and turkey license into one license again. Another common request was to have a hound chase/hunting tag with proceeds going to bear management and research with mange research specifically mentioned.

The majority of comments about the youth/apprentice bear hunting weekend (29 comments total) regarded moving the season from its current timeframe during the general archery season to some other period (before 3-day early season, in chase season, or in November). Other comments related to youth/apprentice hunting included combining all youth days (deer, bear, and turkey), adding bear to the deer youth/apprentice weekend, and allowing youth to harvest a bear any time during the hunting season.

The baiting/feeding and spring season comments encompassed about (9%) of all comments, and they referenced allowing the use of bait (during chase, during hunting seasons), allowing the use of bait to treat mange-infected bears, allowing feeding as a means to prevent conflict. A spring season when agriculture damage is occurring was suggested to reduce conflict. Some of the other comments included increasing the weight minimum, decreasing the weight minimum, creating a lifetime muzzleloader and archery license, banning bear hunting with dogs, opening public land gates to bear hunters during chase season, modifying the legal weapons of take to include smaller calibers, and having a 2-week period of no electronic devices for a more traditional style of hunting.

Wild Turkey (64 comments)/Grouse (4 comments)

Regulation comments pertaining to wild turkey can generally be categorized as those referencing fall seasons (19), spring seasons (29), or bag limits (18). The most common fall season comments were to increase the amount of overlap with deer muzzleloader and WBR deer firearms seasons and to simplify the fall season structure. Other comments for the fall season included removing rifles from the fall season and expanding opportunities in specific counties. The most common comments from the spring season category were to eliminate rifles in spring, move the opener earlier, and to allow for all-day hunting for the entirety of the season. Comments on bag limits basically consisted of wanting to reduce the statewide bag limit to 2 birds, with only 1 comment desiring a higher bag limit and that was for a fall-specific tag. There were several miscellaneous comments such as those desiring to disallow the use of decoys, protecting bearded hens, and running the youth fall turkey season concurrent with the youth deer and bear seasons.

Grouse regulation comments (4) generally involved the idea of shortening or closing all or a portion of the season, with one exception that was interested in an earlier opening date. The comments regarding shortening the season were listed as desiring to increase the population.

Elk (15 comments)

The most frequent comment submitted involved changing the elk hunt lottery for the Elk Management Zone (EMZ) so that only Virginia residents would be eligible to receive a special elk hunting license. However, one individual requested more opportunity for non-residents to receive a special elk hunting

licenses for the EMZ. Two respondents requested more special elk hunting license opportunities, in general. Instituting a preference point system for the elk hunt lottery to reward loyalty and provide an option for points-only applications was suggested by multiple commenters. Multiple individuals also requested expansion of EMZ or to establish elk in other parts of Virginia; however, one respondent specifically opposed expanding the Elk Management Zone and supports the continued harvest of elk outside the EMZ with a deer tag. Finally, one person asked for a senior lifetime hunting license option that includes deer, turkey, and elk, and one person would like to restrict the legal weapon options for the elk hunt in the EMZ only to the weapons that are in-season for deer at the time the elk hunt occurs.

Small Game (18 comments)

As with other species, small game had many comments from the website (429) that were ultimately determined by staff to be predator contests or ending all hunting. In addition to the remaining 16 comments from the website, we had two recommendations come directly to staff. The quail comments recommended (2) extending the season into February and (2) stopping quail hunting. The comments that remained for squirrels recommended (1) a continuous open training season on public land, (1) providing more public lands access east of I-95, (1) extending fox squirrel season to the end of February, and (1) opening Henry County to fox squirrel hunting. Rabbit comments recommended (1) changing rabbit season to start at the opening of deer gun season to reduce conflicts with muzzleloader hunters, (1) open rabbit season two weeks earlier to avoid conflicts with deer hunters, (4) open rabbit training opportunities on public lands, and (1) more rabbit dog training on private lands. Additionally, rabbit and squirrels had two comments that specifically called for ending all hunting for these species.

Furbearers/Trapping (1,121 comments)

Although 1,121 furbearer-related comments were received, the vast majority (N = 1,031, 92%) were related to a requested ban on wildlife hunting contests. Species-specific comments included 22 requests for a closure of the fox hunting season and 2 comments requesting additional restrictions for the killing of foxes causing human-wildlife conflict issues. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we received one comment asking for a continuous open season for hunting foxes. Four comments suggested shortening or eliminating the time period during which foxes could be hunted or chased with hounds. Another person requested a ban of hunting all furbearers with dogs. One person asked for a prohibition against using electronic calls and night vision for hunting foxes.

We received 8 comments asking for the closure of the bobcat season and 13 comments asking that the coyote hunting season be closed. Three hunters requested additional opportunities to hunt coyotes on public lands, specifically on National Forest. Three people asked for the elimination of coyote bounties and another asked that a coyote bounty be instituted for Botetourt County. One person asked that coyotes be removed from the nuisance species list and reclassified as “indigenous”.

Suggested modifications to trapping regulations included extending the muskrat season to March 10 to allow more time to trap after the waterfowl season closes (1 comment). Another person asked for a change to allow predator trapping during the nesting season for turkeys. Several hunters requested a continuous open season for hunting raccoons and opossums, again due to concerns related to turkey nest predation. One person asked for a provision that would allow the use of game cameras to check traps in lieu of a physical trap check. We also received 13 requests to ban trapping entirely and 3 comments asking to ban foothold traps specifically. Three people asked for otters to be protected from trapping or shooting.

Non-regulatory comments included a request to create a lifetime trapping license and several individuals encouraged the Department to work with the General Assembly to simplify laws and regulations related to foxhound training preserves.

Migratory Game Bird/Waterfowl Blinds (24 comments)

Public feedback on migratory game bird topics ranged from comments on waterfowl and woodcock season dates to waterfowl blind laws and opening areas that are closed to waterfowl hunting. Several commentors requested an extension of the duck season into February and an increase in the mallard bag limit. A couple comments favored a later duck season opening date or a change in how the season was structured, but there was little agreement on any changes. A few comments were related to Canada goose bag limits and hunting zones. Waterfowl blind comments (5) focused on shorting the distance between blinds and allowing hunting around “unoccupied” blinds. Two dove hunting comments were related to altering season dates and reducing the daily bag limit. Comments on woodcock were mixed with some requesting earlier season dates while others requested later season dates. There were no comments on other waterfowl species (brant, snow geese, swans, ...) or other webless species (rails, snipe, coots...).

Other/Nongame (52 comments)

While most comments submitted by constituents focus on issues specific to harvested species, the scoping period comment form enables constituents to offer feedback on items, which are not species-specific, by offering categories for “Other” and “Nongame” regulation issues. Comments submitted by constituents selecting these categories cover a variety of topics; however, common themes include legal/permits/enforcement issues, license structure and fees, public lands issues, hunting digest and website information, and a few fishing-related comments. Several individuals requested higher penalties for hunting violations and additional enforcement of hunting laws generally, with one individual specifically requesting better enforcement of spotlighting. Enacting new regulations to prohibit the discharge of firearms after sunset, placement of hunting stands near property lines, use of lead ammunition, and a ban on use of ammonia and ammonium nitrogen were received. Conversely, some respondents wanted to allow greater use of UTVs on non-primary roads, enable blaze camo to satisfy the blaze color requirement for hunting, and legalize shotgun barrels shorter than 18 inches for hunting. Comments related to management of public lands centered on improving habitat conditions, prohibiting game cameras, allowing year-round target shooting, allowing e-bikes, opening WMA roads year-round, and increasing deer harvest opportunities. While one person commented that they wanted public lands open for Sunday hunting, a few respondents wished to prohibit hunting on Sunday on all lands or at least give non-hunters one day a week when they could recreate outdoors without hunters in the woods. Multiple individuals wanted to create special licenses (e.g., all inclusive senior lifetime license, 2nd bear license/tag), reduce license fees, include saltwater fishing on the Sportsman’s License, or allow anyone paying taxes in Virginia to qualify for a resident license. One individual would like to see the better oversight of waterfowl blind license sales to avoid purchases licenses within 500 yards of existing blinds/stakes. Comments related to hunting with dogs included prohibiting dog training during archery seasons, allowing year-round dog training on National Forest and state lands, enacting a March or September deer hound training season, require hunters to contact landowners prior to retrieving their hunting dogs, discontinue hunting with dogs in Mathews County, and creating a dog registry. Improved communications with hunters and other constituents was cited in multiple individuals including comments to increase the character limit for online comment submissions, requesting individual feedback on each comment submitted during the scoping period, expanding constituent engagement beyond hunters to include all Virginia citizens, and developing an annual hunting calendar/mobile app where individuals

could more easily understand what species could be hunted in a specific locality on a certain date. Two fishing-related comments involved allowing noodling of catfish on Virginia rivers and DWR water bodies and requiring fisherman to have lights or signaling devices on a fishing vests when fishing at night.

Conclusion

Because some individual comment forms included multiple, suggested changes, the total number of individual comments (2,876) reviewed by staffs exceeded the total number of comment forms (2,476) submitted to the Department. As with past regulation review and amendment processes, subjects such as deer hunting, bear hunting, and hunting with dogs compose a very significant portion of constituent's comments. However, during the current scoping period, comments associated with prohibiting wildlife hunting contests were the most frequently cited issue submitted by the public. Overall, the types of regulatory suggestions offered by constituents remains relatively unchanged from previous public scoping periods: increase hunting and harvest opportunities for abundant game species, reduce hunting and harvest opportunities on species where populations may be declining, increased opportunities for youth, expressions or support/concern for certain hunting or trapping techniques. The consistency displayed in the public's feedback to the Department enables staffs to monitor issues continuously and collect/evaluate biological and sociological data trends to develop regulation amendments to best ensure appropriate management of our wildlife resources to meet the needs of Virginia's diverse citizenry.