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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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INTERIOR APPROVES STATE WATERFOWL HUNTING REGULATIONS

Final action on waterfowl hunting regulations for the 50 States was taken today when Secretary Stewart L. Udall approved the States' proposals. The regulations, which are being published in the Federal Register, were found to be in accordance with the framework laid down previously by the Secretary.

The "outside dates" fixed several days ago by Secretary Udall are October 5, 1963, through January 5, 1964, for ducks in all flyways; October 1 through January 15 for geese in the Atlantic, Mississippi and Central Flyways; and October 5 through January 5 for geese in the Pacific Flyway. The number of shooting days and the bag and possession limits vary with the flyway, but in most instances there were increases in bag and possession limits and in hunting days over last season. This is because surveys indicate an increase in the supply of ducks.

In the final regulations, the additional harvest of two scaup ducks in the bag and four in possession has been extended to all States of the Atlantic Flyway.

Waterfowl hunting regulations are issued by the Secretary of the Interior after recommendations have been made by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Bureau recommendations are based on two intensive aerial and ground surveys of waterfowl breeding areas; upon information derived from banding hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese on their breeding and wintering areas; upon a measure of birds killed the previous year, as obtained from a mail survey of waterfowl hunters; and on data collected during an annual survey in January to measure distribution of birds on the wintering areas following the shooting season.

The first 1963 survey of the breeding grounds, which began in early May and extended into June, indicated a small increase over the 1962 breeding population which was 38 percent below the 1950-62 average. The second survey, made primarily in July, showed considerably better production of most species of ducks in 1963 than in 1962.

Comprehensive hearings were held by Representative T. A. Thompson, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. At these hearings, Bureau personnel described the methods of obtaining the basic information and the results obtained. Sportsmen and sportsmen's groups also presented their views.

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