

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release October 23, 1980

Joy Davis 202/343-5634

HANDICAPPED GET A SPORTING CHANCE TO HUNT MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

Sportsmen with certain disabilities will be allowed to hunt migratory game birds from stationary motor vehicles under an amended hunting regulation announced in the October 23, 1980, Federal Register.

Paraplegic hunters and hunters missing one or both legs may use stationary motor vehicles--including cars, vans, and pick-up trucks--to enable them to participate in the sport. However, the change will not supersede existing laws or other restrictions which conflict with the ruling, such as limited vehicle access on some national wildlife refuges.

By expanding hunting opportunities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to include these disabled sportsmen, the Service is making it possible for States to broaden their laws.

Providing handicapped hunters such recreational opportunities has caught the public's attention, and the Service has conducted experimental hunts. In the fall of 1978, the Service allowed disabled sportsmen to hunt sika and white-tailed deer on Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia through a special program sponsored by the Service and the Disabled Sportsmen of America. The hunting program, conducted to reduce an overpopulation of deer on the refuge, served as a model for providing assistance, whenever possible, to handicapped hunters.

Chincoteague's program for disabled persons was an outgrowth of an extended effort to serve handicapped people that began when a disabled visitor, noting the refuge's hunting program, questioned the refuge manager about hunting opportunities for the handicapped.

Both able-bodied and handicapped hunters must comply with all State hunting regulations. All migratory waterfowl hunters age 16 or older must possess a 1980-81 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, available for \$7.50 at post offices and some refuges. Proceeds from stamp sales are used for acquisition of waterfowl habitat.

X X X