



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AIMS TO RESOLVE SUBSISTENCE HUNTING ISSUE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently released a revised draft environmental assessment on the subsistence hunting of migratory birds in Alaska.

Of the five major options listed in the document, the Service favors amending the 1916 Migratory Bird Convention to legalize carefully regulated subsistence harvest during what is now a period of the year closed to hunting.

As part of their traditional lifestyle, subsistence hunters in far northern areas harvest waterfowl and other miscellaneous migratory birds. In Alaska, this subsistence activity occurs mainly during the spring and summer. In the northern and western portions of the state, few waterfowl are available at any other time of the year. A comparable situation exists in northern Canada.

The current revision is based on comments the Service received during a 60-day comment period on the initial draft issued last fall. Entitled an Environmental Assessment of

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Managing Migratory Bird Subsistence Hunting in Alaska, the document offers five major options aimed at resolving the issue of closed season subsistence hunting in Alaska.

Currently, the 1916 Migratory Bird Convention between the United States and Great Britain, on behalf of Canada, calls for closure of migratory bird hunting in North America between March 10 and September 1, with few exceptions. Northern subsistence hunters say restricting their activities during spring denies them fair access of a traditional and customary use of the migratory bird resource. Many are Alaska Natives who contend their traditional harvest violates a law they had no voice in developing.

Amending the Convention could involve regulating the use of harvested birds, limiting the harvests of birds and eggs, establishing eligible regions, and defining who would be eligible to engage in subsistence hunting.

Only specific regions of Alaska would be eligible for this special subsistence harvest of migratory birds. The Service is suggesting that only Alaska Natives and non-Natives residing in certain designated rural areas be qualified for subsistence hunting.

Availability of the document and other information appeared in the March 7, 1994, Federal Register. Comments and requests for additional information concerning this revised document should be sent by April 21, 1994 to: Paul R. Schmidt, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Migratory Bird Management, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Arlington, Virginia 22203, or Walter O. Stieglitz, Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99503.

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