

## **PROPOSAL 5**

### **5 AAC 85.065. Hunting seasons and bag limits for small game.**

Change the waterfowl season in Units 1 - 4 by creating a split season as follows:

5 AAC 85.065. (a)(4)(A) Duck (B) Sea Ducks (C) Geese, Canada and cackling combined (D) Geese, White-fronted (E) Geese, Light (Snow and Ross') (F) Brant (H) Cranes (I) Snipe

Season split recommendations will be determined through advisory committees and presented to the Board of Game at the January 2023 meeting.

An example configuration of a two-segment 'split' open season for Units 1 - 4: Sept. 1 – Nov. 23; Dec. 9 – Dec. 31

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** At the Southeast Region meeting in 2019, the Board of Game (board) adopted an amended proposal to set the season dates in Units 1 - 4 (Southeast Migratory Bird Hunt Zone) for hunting migratory game birds to September 16 – December 31 in even numbered years and September 1 – December 16 in odd numbered years. This action by the board was intended to accommodate a public desire to better align hunting opportunity with species-specific abundance corresponding to the general fall movement and winter settling patterns of migratory game birds (e.g., hunting early season migrants vs. late season wintering birds). Federal regulations prohibited the board from considering a two-segment or 'split' season configuration (open – closed – open) to address the issue – Alaska is allowed a single split season, which at the time was assigned to the Kodiak Zone (Unit 8). A split season is structured with a mid-season closure to extend the early and/or late hunting dates, within the federal framework season length of 107 days.

The current regulation of odd-even numbered year season dates creates a regulatory burden in the Southeast Zone via inconsistent interannual season dates that adds complexity for hunters, enforcement, and the regulations publication process. In addition, the current regulation reduces early or late season hunting opportunity in alternating years by shifting between early and late open/closed season dates. In even numbered years, hunting opportunity for early migrant game birds is reduced and likewise in odd numbered years, opportunity is reduced for late migrant species that winter in the Southeast Region, such as sea ducks.

Since the 2019 Southeast Region meeting, federal regulations were modified to reassign Alaska's single split season option from the Kodiak Zone to the Southeast Zone (Units 1 - 4), allowing this option to be considered in state regulation. Accordingly, the department recommends implementing a split season in Units 1 - 4 to hunt migratory game birds. The benefit of this regulation change is establishing a consistent set of interannual season dates, thereby reducing regulatory complexity, while allowing in-season early and late hunting opportunity to satisfy better hunting season alignment with species-specific abundance.

The department proposes a regulation change that includes replacing the current regulation of odd-even numbered year season dates in Units 1 - 4 with a two-segment 'split' season structure; open on September 1 – closed for up to 2 + weeks – reopen until the end of 107 days for:

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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