

Waterfowl Hunting Zones and Splits for the 2021 – 2025 Seasons

LWF Commission
August 6, 2020



Zone/Split Season Guidelines:

- Zones and Split Seasons can only be changed at 5 year intervals.
- The selection this year will be used for the 2021-2025 seasons.
- A decision is needed:
 - 1) By early October, 2020 if we want to implement in 2021 for 5 years.
 - 2) By May, 2021 if we want to implement in 2022 for 4 years.

Zones and Splits Options

- Four zones with the straight seasons (no splits)
- Three zones with option for split seasons in any of those zones
- Two zones with up to 2 season splits (3 season segments) in either zone.

Current Zone Boundaries
with Split seasons



0 10 20 30 40 Miles



Specific Considerations

3 zones with split seasons:

- After 8 seasons, hunters are familiar with this option.
- Opportunity to hunt different zones.
- Flexibility in setting season dates separately in each zone.

Specific Considerations

2 zones with 2 splits (3 season segments):

- Three opening days versus 2, but same total number of weekends (10) and 1 of the opening/closing days will not be on a weekend.
- 2 rest periods versus one.
- The opportunity to move across zones is reduced.
- More flexibility for season dates within a zone.

2020 Survey of Louisiana Waterfowl Hunters

Count	Total	%
Sent	73,554	
Emails Bounced	4,976	
Delivered Emails	68,578	
Surveys Submitted*	<u>13,483</u>	<u>19.7 %</u>
Delete "did not hunt waterfowl"	3,900	28.9 %*
Delete "age < 16"	2	0.0 %*
Delete < 5 questions answered	1,383	10.3 %*
Valid responses	<u>8,218</u>	<u>12.0 %</u>

19.7% overall response rate

12.0% valid response

Zones Hunted Most Frequently

Zone Hunted Most Frequently	Frequency	Valid Percent
Coastal Zone	3,737	49.5 %
East Zone	3,003	39.7 %
West Zone	795	10.5 %
Uncertain	<u>21</u>	0.3 %
Sub-Total	7,556	
Did not hunt ducks in Louisiana last season	645	7.9%
Missing	<u>17</u>	
Total	8,218	

Frequency of Hunting Multiple Zones

Number of Zones	Hunters	Valid %
1	4528	77.8
2	1131	19.4
3	163	2.8
Total Reporting	5822	100.0
Missing	2,396	
Total	8,218	

Hunters' Satisfaction with Zones

Satisfaction	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Geographic boundaries	6,682	3.3	1.0
Dates of season opening	6,890	2.6	1.2
Dates of season closing	6,887	2.5	1.2
Timing of the closure between split seasons	6,780	2.9	1.1
Timing of youth hunts	6,292	3.3	1.0

Scale: 1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied

Hunters' Preference of Zones/Splits

Preferred Zone/Split Options	Frequency	Valid Percent
The current format of 3 zones with 1 split and 2 opening weekends	2,066	29.4 %
An alternative format of 2 zones with 2 splits and 3 opening weekends	2,143	30.5 %
No opinion	2,040	29.0 %
I prefer another option	<u>775</u>	<u>11.0</u> %
Sub-Total	7,024	100.0 %
Missing	<u>1,194</u>	
Total	8,218	

Confidence: +/- 1.5 - 2.0%

No specific season dates offered

2-Zone Options



A



B



C



D

Hunters' Preference for 2-Zone Options

Preferred Geographic Zones	Frequency	Valid Percent
A. North/South	2,422	34.9 %
B. East/West with Current Boundaries	804	11.6 %
C. East/West with continuous Coastal	1,312	18.9 %
D. East/West with boundary at Atchafalaya River	<u>2,396</u>	<u>34.6 %</u>
Sub-Total	6,934	100.0 %
Missing	<u>1,284</u>	
Total	8,218	



5 Regions of Interest

West Region

East Region

Rice Region

SW Coastal Region

SE Coastal Region



0 10 20 30 40 Miles



Satisfaction with Current Geographic Boundaries by Sub-Regions

Satisfaction	West Region	Rice Region	SE Coastal Region	SW Coastal Region	East Region	Total
Very Dissatisfied	7.2%	17.0%	7.7%	11.7%	6.4%	8.7%
Dissatisfied	6.5%	13.5%	6.8%	8.9%	6.0%	7.4%
Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	41.6%	36.5%	33.6%	37.5%	39.5%	37.7%
Satisfied	36.2%	28.1%	41.8%	33.1%	39.2%	37.4%
Very Satisfied	8.6%	4.9%	10.1%	8.8%	8.9%	8.9%
Total	558	288	1,311	1,475	2,083	5,715

Preferred Zone/Split Options by Sub-Regions

Zone Preference	West Region	Rice Region	SE Coastal Region	SW Coastal Region	East Region	Total
3-zones with 1 split and 2 opening weekends	29.7%	21.2%	33.3%	28.4%	31.3%	30.3%
2-zones with 2 splits and 3 opening weekends	27.3%	42.1%	31.5%	31.8%	30.7%	31.4%
No opinion	27.6%	27.9%	22.8%	28.5%	27.4%	26.7%
I prefer another option	15.4%	8.7%	12.3%	11.3%	10.5%	11.5%
Total	583	297	1,344	1,528	2,130	5,882

Preferred Geographic Zones by Sub-Region

Zone Preference	West Region	Rice Region	SE Coastal Region	SW Coastal Region	East Region	Total
A. North/South	36.3%	28.7%	35.3%	38.9%	32.2%	34.9%
B. East/West with current boundaries	13.0%	14.7%	8%	8.4%	15.1%	11.6%
C. East/West with continuous Coastal	15.8%	24%	15.8%	22.9%	18.2%	18.9%
D. East/West with boundary at Atchafalaya River	34.9%	32.4%	40.8%	29.6%	34.4%	34.5%
Total	576	299	1,319	1,506	2,118	5,818

A. 2 Zones - North/South Option

No significant differences in level of support.



Preferred Geographic Zones by Sub-Region

Zone Preference	West Region	Rice Region	SE Coastal Region	SW Coastal Region	East Region	Total
A. North/South	36.3%	28.7%	35.3%	38.9%	32.2%	34.9%
B. East/West with current boundaries	13.0%	14.7%	8%	8.4%	15.1%	11.6%
C. East/West with continuous Coastal	15.8%	24%	15.8%	22.9%	18.2%	18.9%
D. East/West with boundary at Atchafalaya River	34.9%	32.4%	40.8%	29.6%	34.4%	34.5%
Total	576	299	1,319	1,506	2,118	5,818

63.7%

C. 2 Zones - East/West w/ Continuous Coastal

Significant higher levels of support in SW Coastal Zone and Rice Region.

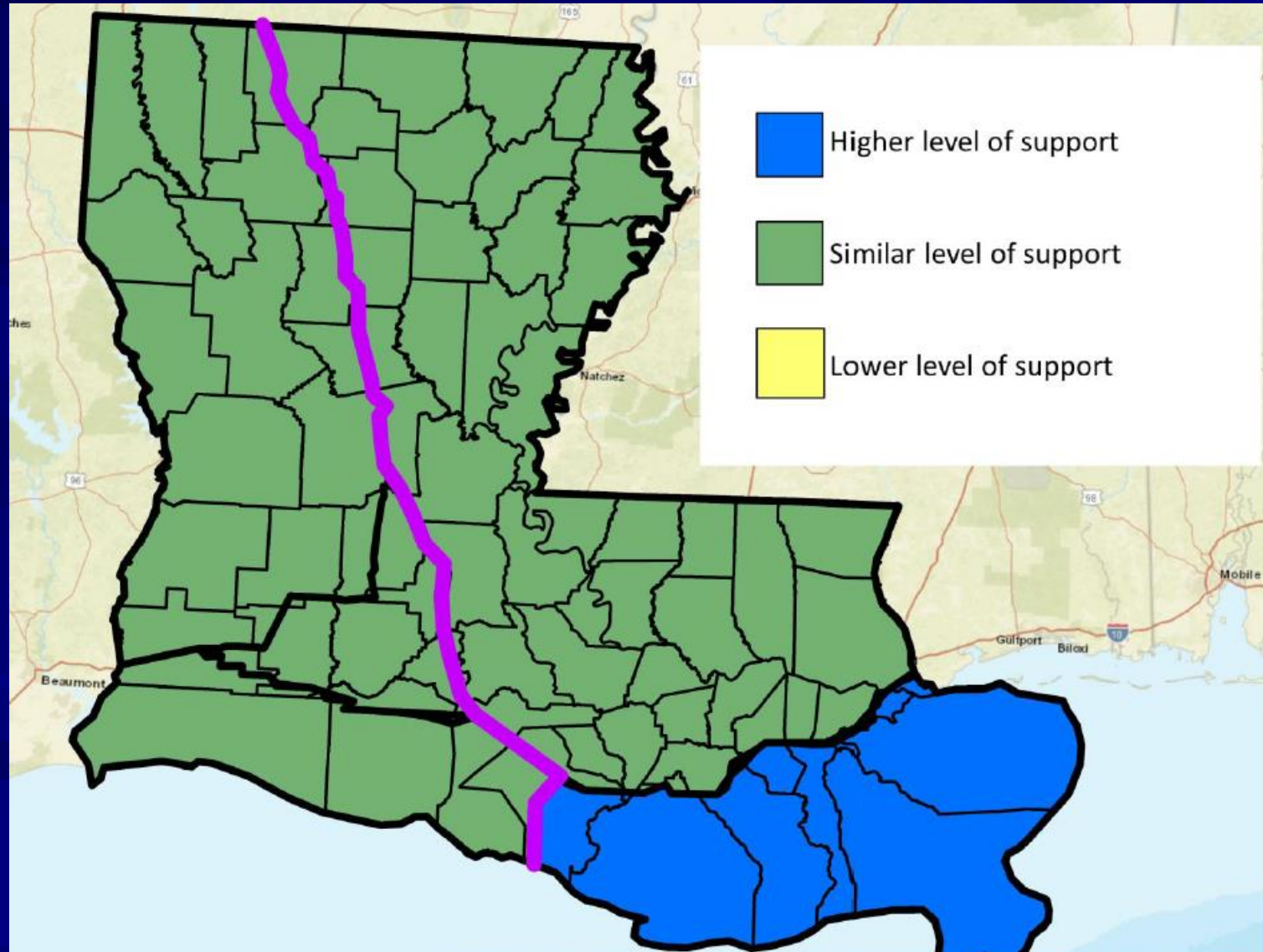


Preferred Geographic Zones by Sub-Region

Zone Preference	West Region	Rice Region	SE Coastal Region	SW Coastal Region	East Region	Total
A. North/South	36.3%	28.7%	35.3%	38.9%	32.2%	34.9%
B. East/West with current boundaries	13.0%	14.7%	43.4%	8.4%	15.1%	11.6%
C. East/West with continuous Coastal	15.8%	24%	15.8%	22.9%	18.2%	18.9%
D. East/West with boundary at Atchafalaya River	34.9%	32.4%	56.4%	29.6%	34.4%	34.5%
Total	576	299	1,319	1,506	2,118	5,818

D. 2 Zones – East/West w/ boundary at Atchafalaya River

Significant higher support in SE Coastal Zone.



Preferred Geographic Zones by Sub-Region

Zone Preference	West Region	Rice Region	SE Coastal Region	SW Coastal Region	East Region	Total
A. North/South	36.3%	28.7%	35.3%	38.9%	32.2%	34.9%
B. East/West with current boundaries	13.0%	14.7%	8%	8.4%	15.1%	11.6%
C. East/West with continuous Coastal	15.8%	24%	15.8%	22.9%	18.2%	18.9%
D. East/West with boundary at Atchafalaya River	34.9%	32.4%	40.8%	29.6%	34.4%	34.5%
Total	576	299	1,319	1,506	2,118	5,818

} } **59.1%**

Conclusions

Hunter dissatisfaction is higher with season dates than zone configuration.

No clear favorite in overall zones/splits options.

Majority support for an East/West 2-zone option.

Waterfowl Hunting Zones

2001 - 2011



West Zone

East Zone

SOUTHWEST

- Calcasieu
- Cameron
- Jefferson Davis
- Acadia
- Vermilion

SOUTHEAST

- Terrebonne
- Lafourche
- Jefferson
- Plaquemines
- St. Bernard



0 10 20 30 40 Miles



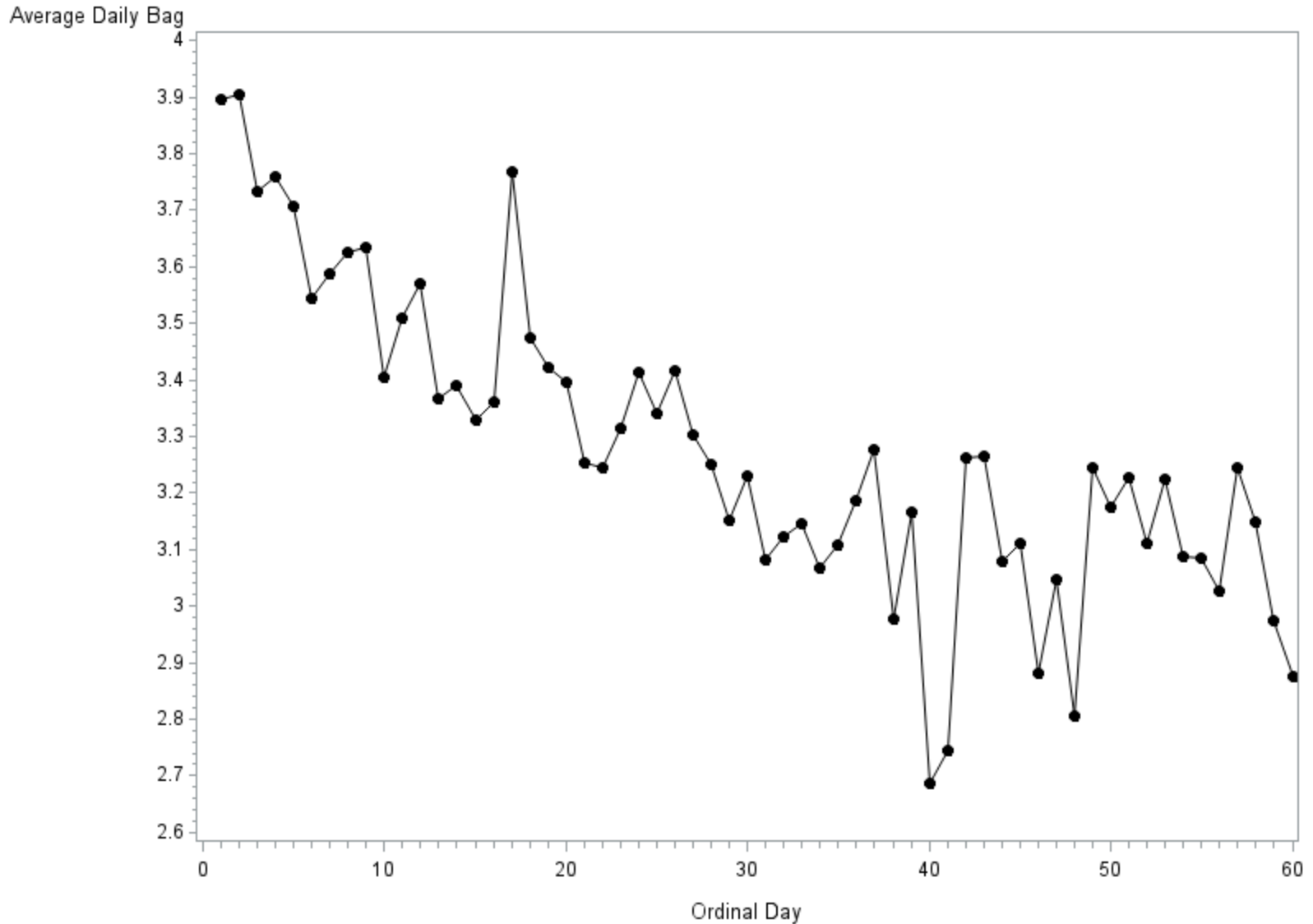
Harvest Data

Chronology of Harvest: 2001-2009* seasons:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Region</u>		
	<u>Southwest</u>	<u>Southeast</u>	<u>Northwest</u>
1	22.3	21.8	18.5
2	15.1	12.1	19.4
3	14.5 (51.9)	16.6 (50.5)	17.9 (55.8)
4			
5			
6	12.7	14.0	13.8
7	9.1	10.5	8.4
8	8.0	8.2	7.4
9	7.2	6.3	6.7
10	11.1 (48.1)	10.5 (49.5)	7.8 (44.2)

* Excludes 2002 when first split was 4 weeks

Average Daily Bag observed in Louisiana HIP sample from 2004-2013



Harvest Summary Since 2010

Things are not so clean 2010-2019:

- 2010-2014 season dates are same
- 2015 there were 4 weeks in first split
- 2016 portions of Southwest Parishes were moved to the East Zone with different season dates and now incalculable harvest by Zone.

Harvest Data

Chronology of Harvest: 2010-2014 seasons:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Region</u>	
	<u>Southwest</u>	<u>Southeast</u>
1	23.1	22.6
2	14.3	12.6
3	14.3 (51.7)	17.0 (52.2)
4		
5		
6	13.6	13.7
7	8.7	7.2
8	7.7	8.4
9	6.2	7.5
10	12.1 (48.3)	11.0 (47.8)

Harvest Data

Chronology of Harvest: Southeast Region Only

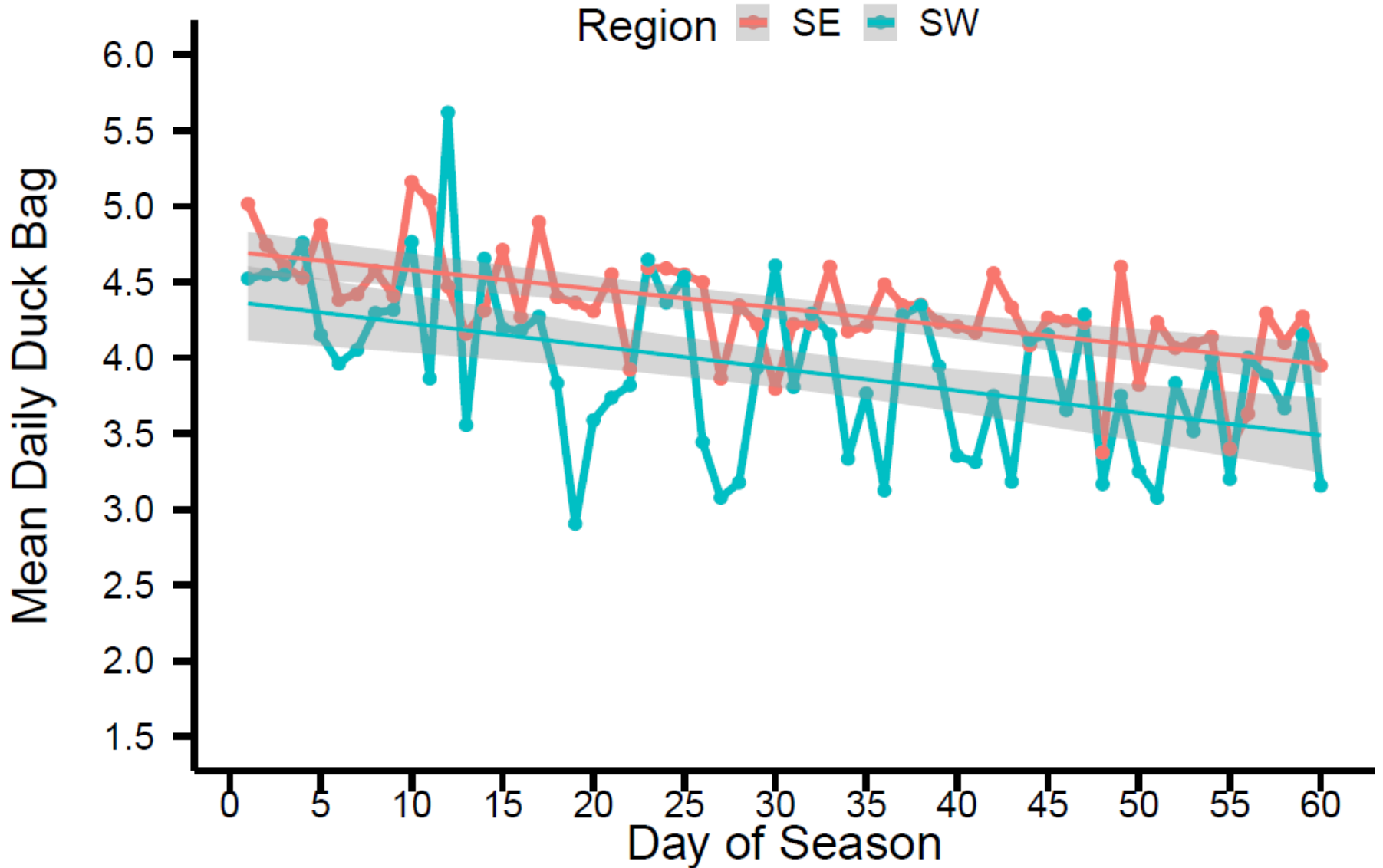
<u>Week</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	
	<u>2001-2009</u>	<u>2010-2018*</u>
1	21.8	22.6
2	12.1	12.6
3	16.6 (50.5)	17.0 (52.2)
4		
5		
6	14.0	13.7
7	10.5	7.2
8	8.2	8.4
9	6.3	7.5
10	10.6 (49.5)	11.0 (47.8)

* Excludes 2015 when first split was 4 weeks

Average Daily Duck Bag for Hunters Bagging at Least 1 Duck

2010 - 2014 in SW Region

2010 - 2018 in SE Region (except 2015 when first split had 4 weeks)



Conclusions

Harvest chronology has not shifted later in Southeast coastal region.

Not different from Southwest where comparisons are valid.

Little justification for dividing the coastal region.

Recommendation

- Implement 2-zones/2-splits for the 2021-25 waterfowl hunting seasons with boundaries described in Option C:



The Path Forward

- NOI meeting introduction and comments
- Waterfowl Hunter Survey results (June)
- Harvest analyses
- Formal Recommendation at August Commission meeting
- Decision at September Commission meeting to include zones/splits option and authorization for Secretary to convey that to the USFWS by October 1
- New zones in Title 76, proposed season dates in January NOI

Questions?



Larry Reynolds

Luke Laborde, PhD

Michael Kaller, PhD

Michael Sullivan

Joe Lancaster, PhD

lreynolds@wlf.la.gov

llabor2@lsu.edu

mkalle1@lsu.edu

msull45@lsu.edu

jlancaster@ducks.org