

Questions received from public meeting

1. I attended the 2019 public meeting in Lake Charles. One of the issues raised was the possibility of a shorter speck season and a limit of 3. Every person in attendance was opposed to this due to the added gun pressure it would impose on our dwindling speck migration numbers. So what did we end up with for the 2020-2021 season, none other than a 3 speck limit.

My question is, why were the hunters of SW Louisiana not listened to? We all know that Louisiana cannot support 6 duck and 3 speck limits. When is Louisiana going to stop managing the revenue and start managing the resource? We have lost an age old tradition in this state and we are not going to solve anything at the state level. Something has to be done at a federal level.

Answer:

The season length and bag limits are set at the state level. To inform that decision, LDWF conducted a Waterfowl Hunter Survey in 2020 that generated responses from over 8,000 hunters.

Below are the results of that survey for all waterfowl hunters and goose hunters specifically (those that hunted 1-5 days specifically for geese, and those who hunted >5 days). That information from 1,220 goose hunters gave the results in the table below. So in response to your first question, we did indeed listen to hunters, and note my comments acknowledging small but growing support for restricting opportunity for specklebellies.

It's important to recognize that if we believe we can maintain white-fronted goose populations and hunting success by reducing season length and bag limit, then we will HAVE to act at the State level. The white-fronted goose population is doing very well at the Flyway and continental levels, so federal restrictions in harvest regulations are not justified. That is why I asked those specific questions on the Hunter Survey to measure the support for restricting harvest opportunity, and we will continue to consider that.

Hunting Regulations:

We also asked about white-fronted goose hunting seasons with all the controversy about 88/2 vs 74/3 and possibly reducing hunting pressure by shortening seasons and lowering bag limits in an attempt to keep more birds in our state.

- 49.4% had no opinion on season length and bag limits
- 18.4% favored 88 days with a 2-bird bag
- 21.2% favored 74 days with a 3-bird bag

- 11% favored 60 days with a 2-bird bag

This is a pretty big change from 2015 when:

- 34.8% had no opinion
- 16.9% favored 88/2
- 45.3% favored 74/3
- 2.9% favored 74/2

More important is looking at what known goose hunters think. Luke Laborde just sent me this summary of respondents that hunted 1-5 and >5 days specifically for geese.

Season length & bag limit for White-fronted Geese * Goose Days Crosstabulation

			Goose Days		Total
			1-5 days	> 5 days	
Season length & bag limit for White-fronted Geese	No preference	Count	154	22	176
		% within Goose Days	17.3%	6.7%	14.4%
	88 days and 2 birds per day (current package)	Count	276	123	399
		% within Goose Days	30.9%	37.5%	32.7%
	74 days and 3 birds per day	Count	351	143	494
		% within Goose Days	39.3%	43.6%	40.5%
	60 days concurrent with duck seasons and 2 birds per day	Count	111	40	151
		% within Goose Days	12.4%	12.2%	12.4%
Total		Count	892	328	1220
		% within Goose Days	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Sample size drops to 1,220 and there is more separation between the options.

A larger proportion of respondents in 2020 seem to be willing to accept shorter seasons and lower bag limits. In fact 11-12% favor reducing season length 14 days below what is currently allowable, where 5

years ago only 3-5% favored leaving the season where it was rather than liberalizing. But we still have work to do to make this more meaningful by comparing respondents from North Louisiana compared to South Louisiana.

2. Why are veteran days being combined with youth?

Youth days are already so busy with disrespectful teenagers and parents. Disabled veterans have a hard enough time finding an accessible spot on public land we don't need to be competing with kids.

There is no problem with splitting the weekend between youth and veterans.

Answer:

We set the Veterans Duck Hunting days for this past season a year ago without benefit of any hunter-opinion data. In April, 2020, we conducted a large-scale Waterfowl Hunter Opinion survey that generated information from over 8,000 Louisiana hunters and included a question about the Veterans hunt days. We include all hunters in our questions about Youth or Veteran hunt days even if they can't participate, because the timing of those hunts may affect them as well. See the results below.

Clearly, there was not overwhelming support for any specific option, and nearly 1/3 of respondents either had no opinion or thought extra days for military should not be allowed. However, because the most popular option was to combine the Youth and Veterans hunt days, and because that policy is consistent with what neighboring states of AR, MS, and AL have done for the past 2 seasons, we proposed that option for the 2021-22 season.

We have received virtually no feedback on the Veterans hunt days; not when we proposed/approved them last year or since the experience of this past season. So we appreciate your comments. They will be forwarded to the Commission for consideration.

Preference for youth and military hunts.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	One weekend (Saturday & Sunday) prior to the opening of the first split (military before/ youth after)	1027	14.8
	One weekend (Saturday & Sunday) following the closing of the second split (youth before/ military after)	945	13.6

Split the youth and military hunts so they are Saturday/Sunday (1 day each) prior to the first split and a Saturday/Sunday (1 day each) after the regular season closes	648	9.3	
I favor a military season, but have no preference about the timing	1432	20.6	
Extra days for military-only hunting should not be allowed	691	9.9	
Allow military and youth to hunt on the same days	2219	31.9	
Total	6962	100.0	
Did not answer question	1401		
Total	8363		

Questions received continued:

3. Would it be possible to allow squirrel dogs to be at least run during the spring squirrel season on Forest Service land? I requested this a few years back and it was (supposedly) answered by a Mr. Byrd with the USFS. He says that it was allowed but if you read the current regulations, it says something to the effect of the dog can be loose but has to be within sight/voice control of the owner. I have bad news...such a dog does not have a future in this world if it has no more drive than that. All I ask is it be worded allowing the dog to be hunted. Something similar to the regs for coonhounds/foxhounds.

Next, let's address the issue of hogs. We have a problem with those, but I'm sure you knew that. From a biological viewpoint, why wouldn't allowing a brief period of time in which baiting is allowed be safe? I know that eating corn for a prolonged period isn't good for the turkeys. What I'm suggesting is this: During the month of February, allow baiting on Forest service land. I'd suggest allowing hog dogs too. This would give them over a month to get the bait cleaned up before turkey season and no deer season is open at that time. This should also be before they go to nesting. If this isn't harmful, maybe another period in say..July or August. I realize that it's hot then though.

Now one more thing...I mentioned something similar 6 years ago and you guys acted like I suggested genocide or something. BUT..and it's a big but..at this very time they were PAYING someone to try trapping the hogs. Yes..using bait. This probably didn't work too well. I found 2 of their traps in the woods; which brings up a concern..a guy could easily be walking in that area and get near enough to be in violation of hunting a baited area strictly by accident. The only markings or signs were one sign right by one of the traps. I have pictures by the way. I don't think it worked too well because the traps aren't mobile enough. I was seeing several sounders of pigs about a half to a mile away at this time.

Mr. Tuma, all I'm asking for is an experimental season to see if it has any effect on the hog population. I feel that it is foolish to spend money to pay someone to try to catch them when you have so many free resources at hand that would be willing to help out.

Answer:

Kisatchie National Forest sets their own seasons as well as makes their own management decisions (i.e. hog trapping). I will forward this email to them for their consideration. Future comments regarding KNF can be forwarded to David Byrd at dcbyrd@fs.fed.us or 318-473-7160. Please let me know if you have any other questions or concerns.

4. I had a question regarding the hunting of raccoons with archery equipment. Are you allowed to hunt raccoons on wmas or other public land with archery equipment. If so what are the rules about taking feral hogs while raccoon hunting. The hog situation is getting out of control.

Answer:

If the proposed regulation is passed, you will indeed be able to hunt raccoon with archery gear. As feral hogs are incidental take on WMAs, you would be able to harvest a feral hog while hunting resident game as long as you are using legal gear defined for whatever species you are hunting.

5. On page 101 of proposed regulations the Pass A Loutre WMA does not allow harvest of doe deer with archery. This is only site in state that does not allow harvest of does by archery. Can we get a limited or reduced harvest of doe by archery. I hunt the management area and there is a good

amount of doe deer seen. You still allow shotgun harvest of bucks during the peak of the rut. Any help on a limited archery doe harvest would be appreciated. Will continue to follow the rules given. Thanks for your consideration of this issue.

Answer:

Thank you for the comment and observations. The coastal marshes at the mouth of the Mississippi River were once used as a source for deer restocking in the 1960s. The area supported the removal of 139 deer per year over a 6 year period during the state restocking era (1949-1969). In later years, the WMA supported a sustainable harvest of bucks and does. However, gradual habitat loss lessened the amount of available habitat and preferred forage for deer. Declining harvest rates were observed over time and eventually led to a camera mark-recapture study that involved the capture and tagging of deer along with monitoring between 2007 - 2014. The details are covered in the attached document which may be of interest. The study did allow us to document high survival rates post hurricanes which was an unintended addition to the original objective of indexing annual deer survival. Unfortunately, why survival post-hurricane was documented, annual survival rates for female deer were approximately 50%. While that number represents the minimum number that survived, male survival rates were approximately 78% in comparison. Declining harvest rates and estimated survival rates led to a change in season. This change was not immediate, but eventually the decision to limit antlerless harvest due to observed declines in female survival from non-hunting mortality triggered the bucks only season.

Your report of good antlerless deer numbers is refreshing. However, the continued loss of habitat does not help the long term outlook for deer on Pass-A-Loutre WMA. We will maintain the antlerless season at this time while monitoring future changes that may allow the liberalization of harvest.

Comments received from public meeting

1. Mr. Tuma,

I have a comment regarding the proposed dates for waterfowl specifically the Veteran and Youth hunts.

I feel it should reflect this year except both veterans and youth should get 2 days (Saturday & Sunday) on the week before the respective zone opens.

The reason I say this is because it's 2021 and people have a lot of stuff going on. Between the child that couldn't make the Saturday youth hunt because of football or the Veteran dad that was coaching and couldn't make it on Saturday they are given an opportunity to make it on Sunday before church.

Our veterans have taken care of us and our youth is our future and will be taking care of us in the years to come. For what it's worth that's just my thoughts.

Thank you for your time.

2. Guys

You mentioned water is not predictable in the east zone so it alters when we open and close seasons. In the coastal zone which I know we don't have this year, we can predict when we will have water by looking at tide tables. We know every year there is going to be at least two weeks in late Dec and in Jan that there will be no water in the coastal areas due to negative tides. If the tide is more than -.4ft you can not access the marsh making it all but impossible to hunt. The ducks leave to go offshore at this time and only return at night when the tide comes in.

Trying to hunt at these times is dangerous for the inexperienced hunter as we noted many times this year. Agents had to rescue folks, some suffering from https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A_hypothermia.You&d=DwIFaQ&c=xIPCXuHzMdaH2Flc1sgyicYpGQbQbU9KDEmgNF3_wl0&r=bj59jHDFYVw4jeUhE5s_dw&m=dsIzMhqiiwVtR0k_7njZhpHB0OHtAR6KjIEnWL0WXA&s=D0-CXI0GmFj2synzZ0kb-jhm5VdKE3beChZceeDb5HE&e= can look at surveying data to check this out but the ducks killed at these times in the coastal areas is dismal.

I would like to see the season start and stop according to the tides in the coastal areas. We are closing the season during one of these low tide periods this year while not hitting the tide perfect it does help.

3. I have hunted in the East Zone for 30 years now, and I prefer to have two "breaks" like you guys have proposed for the West Zone. I'm not concerned when the East Zone opens or closes, I just like the fact that the birds will rest twice, and I will have increased success and planning of three "opening days" that I can enjoy instead of two, even if that means I will have one opening day on a weekday. I guess that means I may be a proponent of a state wide zone and dates, just as Arkansas does it. as always, thank you for your work on this.