

THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES – JULY 30, 2014

Chairman Plummer called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

Approval for the July 30, 2014 Meeting Agenda

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Wojton moved to accept the July 30, 2014 Meeting Agenda as presented.
 2. Commissioner Compton seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Approval for Minutes from June 18, 2014 Meeting

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Compton moved to approve the June 18th meeting minutes as presented.
 2. Commissioner Wojton seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Cell Phone Usage During WAC Meetings – Chairman Plummer

- Chairman Plummer wanted to remind members to turn down their cell phones during the meetings.
- Cell phones can be distracting to presenters.

Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee Report – Presentation given by Larry Hindman, Waterfowl Project Leader.

- Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee (MGBAC) met on July 29th via conference call. MGBAC went over some of the information that Mr. Hindman will be discussing. MGBAC concurred with suggested seasons and bag limits.
 1. Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee (MGBAC) met on December 9th last year. There had been some talk of changing the closing date for AP Canada Goose season. Some of the members of MGBAC wanted it later.
 2. MGBAC sent out questionnaire surveys to 1500 waterfowl hunters. [ATTACHMENT A]
 3. At the December 9th meeting at Gwynnbrook, the MGBAC met with members of the MD Waterfowler's Association, Guide and Outfitters Association and the Natural Resources Police. They went over preferences expressed in the survey. Hunters were almost split evenly on the options discussed – more on this below.
 4. There are two vacancies on the MGBAC that staff are trying to fill.

2014 – 2015 Waterfowl Season Proposals – Presentation given by Larry Hindman, Waterfowl Project Leader.

- Mr. Hindman provided a Power Point on 2014-2015 Waterfowl Season Proposals. [ATTACHMENT B]
- Discussion on the Waterfowl population status for this year.
 1. Water conditions were good to excellent throughout most of the traditional survey areas. The only area that influenced our birds was Western Ontario, the lower part of the Hudson Bay and east side of James Bay. The ponds this year in the U.S. and Canada were higher this year at 7.2 million.
 2. Waterfowl conditions in terms of water were quite good. They have been trending upward in recent years.

3. Total duck numbers were up 8 percent. Trend is upward in survey areas since about 2005.
4. In traditional areas, they count 10 species. Pintail and scaup are the only two species below the long-term average. Pintails are down 3 percent, canvasback down 13 percent.
5. Eastern mallards drive our duck hunting regulations. The spring breeding index was 860,000 birds. Most of those from NE plot survey. That level of index prescribes a liberal regulation in the Atlantic Flyway, which includes a 60-day season with a 6 duck bag limit.
6. Black ducks are surveyed in the spring as well. The 2014 estimates were similar to last year at 600,000. One change this year, the liberal regulation that was in place last year in Canada has been reduced to a moderate package
7. Scaup, a species that is below the long-term average, showed an increase this year at 4.6 million. Harvest strategy prescribes a moderate package with 60 days and a two-bird bag limit.
8. Canvasback breeding population was 685,000, which is similar to last year, which is 18% above the long-term average. Harvest strategy prescribes a 1 bird daily bag limit in 60-day season, which is decreased from 2 bird limit last year.
9. Canada geese management strategy is a 3-year average and is 190,000; 500 pairs is the most recent 3-year study. Moderate regulation is prescribed with a 50-day season with a two-bird bag limit. In the Chesapeake area, the season is November 15 thru February 5. A recent change going into February.
10. This year on the Ungava Peninsula, particularly on the Hudson Bay Coast, is quite good. Bill Harvey, Game Bird Section Leader has done surveys there since the early '90's. The survey in mid-June shows that the total number of breeding pairs is at 184,000, which is similar to the survey done in 2012. No survey was done in 2013 due to aircraft safety problems with equipment. Basically since about 2001-2002, numbers have been stable.
11. Total number of AP Canada Geese has declined some. This year it was a little under 800,000. This could be because the survey conducted in recent years has been done a little bit late or a bit earlier. Birds aren't there yet or just arriving. Plus, there have been liberalization of resident Canada goose hunting regulations in Eastern North America, which may attribute to some of that drop. We don't use this for setting harvest regulations.
12. As far as production this year, Bill and his team were counting birds, and the index was at 63 percent, which is the highest observation in history of this survey. We also use a model developed by the Canadian Wildlife Service that combines the May temperatures and June snowfall in Ungava Bay to predict gosling production at time of banding in early August. This also predicted a slightly above average production year as well. We will have two helicopter teams there in early August leg-banding the geese as well.
13. Brant - we do not winter many brant here in Maryland (maybe about 1500 along coastal bays). We do use the mid-winter survey to track this population. This year, the mid-winter survey was about 133,000. Last year it was 111,000. It calls for a 50-day season. However, with poor production last year and in 2012, a decision to not liberalize and keep the 30 day-season and 2 bird bag limit that was in place last year.
14. Greater Snow Goose is an over-abundant species. The objective in the Atlantic Flyway is to maintain the population between ½ million to ¾ million birds indexed by the spring survey. They use a photo count to get an estimate of the spring population. This year, the population was just under 800,000, which is a 15 percent decrease from last spring. This has been a trend. We hope that will continue. However, it looks like a good population and hunting success should be pretty good.
15. Waterfowl are regulated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service via the Migratory Treaty Act. Frameworks are provided to WHS, and WHS select the season dates and daily bag limits. The cycle starts with:

- a. Population monitoring in the winter or the spring.
 - b. Atlantic Flyway Game Bird Technical Section met with the Atlantic Flyway Council. They provide recommendations.
 - c. U.S.F.W.S. Regulations Committee will then meet in Arlington.
 - d. The final framework is developed and submitted to the states.
 - e. Then, we will propose seasons and bag limits for the 2014 season and select input from the public at Chesapeake College meeting on August 18 at 7 p.m.
 - f. Of course, we get input from the Commission, the Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee, the Outfitters Association and the MD Waterfowlers Association.
 - g. Final selections will be made by DNR with final approval by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service generally by September 1. Then, they will be published.
- Mr. Hindman asked the Commission for any questions. Mr. Hindman then moved on to the preliminary 2014 seasons and bag limits that we're considering. DNR's priorities in setting these seasons must meet biological requirements of the waterfowl resources to sustain healthy populations and try to the extent to overlap the seasons so that people could take a duck or goose on the same day. Try to maximize opportunities for all hunters. Try to have seasons open on Saturdays or holidays, particularly, we give attention to youth hunters. WHS try to keep the regulations as simple as possible.
 - Waterfowl questionnaire survey: we wanted to try to get a feel for hunter preferences on the regular duck and goose seasons. WHS sent survey to 1500 randomly selected waterfowl hunters. By December 1, we received 425 responses. We summarized the data and found that most had hunted both ducks and geese. Participants were also questioned on the length of the seasons, opening days, which week in October they would prefer, and where to place extra days. We took the information to the stakeholders and Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee to come up with the following recommendations for ducks this year given the framework.
 1. WHS are proposing two youth waterfowl hunting days, similar dates to last year on November 1 and February 7, which was a very popular date.
 2. Duck season proposed is 7 days from Saturday to Saturday, October 11 to October 18. Again, November 8 to 28; and December 16 to January 24. The ending framework for ducks is the last Sunday in January; daily bag limit is 6.
 3. Only one change and that is the canvasback bag limit is 1.
 4. Since 1983, we do not allow black duck season in October - to protect the breeding stock. Black duck season is open the 2nd and 3rd splits - those dates are November 8 to November 28 and December 16 to January 24 with 1 bird per day.
 5. New – the USFWS is doing an assessment on harvest potential on sea ducks. They have done work on common eiders and black scoters. Studies show they are being overharvested. Sea ducks are being looked at to address concerns on hunting regulations. Sea ducks on the East Coast get a special season of 107 days with a 7 bird bag limit. Some NE states are already reducing the daily bag limit on the species. USFWS may propose to forego the special sea duck season in the next few years. Sea ducks would be part of the regular duck season. More information will have to come; they were just informed of this at the Atlantic Flyway Council meeting.
 6. There is really no change in the sea duck season this year, which is 107 days, October 1 to January 31; 5 per day. No more than 4 scoters in the sea duck zone.
 7. AP Canada Geese in the survey, we wanted to see what hunters preferred. This included the opening and closing of the seasons. WHS is proposing a change from last year – opening the season on November 22 to November 28 and December 16 to February 4 using all 50 days. Bag limit 2 per day.

8. Resident Canada geese – 80 day season – proposing November 22 to November 28 and December 16 to March 10; 5 per day. WHS does monitor this even though regulations are liberal.
9. Brant proposal opening on Saturday, December 20 to Saturday, January 3, and reopening on Tuesday, January 6 to Saturday, January 24 with a 2 per day bag limit. No change from last year.
10. Light geese have a liberal season of 25 per day. Suggesting opening on October 4 to November 28 and again December 15 to February 7. February 7 is a youth day. Bag limit of 25. The other option WHS has of taking more snow geese is with the conservation order season, so WHS is proposing when the deer firearms season comes in for two weeks WHS is proposing to offer this light goose conservation season after the youth day on February 8 and going to mid-April. No bag limit. Hunters may use unplugged shotguns and electronic calls, and shooting hours are extended to half hour after sunset. Participants must have a snow goose conservation \$5 permit. The value of that is to get the names and addresses of the participants as required by federal regulation to evaluate the harvest under this conservation order as WHS sends out a questionnaire survey.
11. Some questions were brought up regarding the opening days of seasons and dates of hunting on the youth days. Adults cannot take a weapon on the youth day. There have not been any problems in the past.
12. Chairman Plummer asked how many years have we done the conservation order season for snow geese (light geese) and do we have data showing that it is successful? Larry Hindman does not have the Atlantic Flyway results, but he does have Maryland's report from last year and can send it to Chairman Plummer. It is on the waterfowl page. It usually adds at least another 26,000 birds to the light goose harvest.
13. Tyler Johnson questioned the February 4 closing date instead of February 5 for Canada Goose Season. Larry Hindman advised that they ran out of days. They started it and would have to take a day out from somewhere else. Some people may not like it and some will. Weather and temperature will affect the hunting as well.
- The Commission wanted to know if the Commission should take action on the proposals at this time. The Commission will have to wait until the public comment period has ended and then Mr. Hindman will present a summary of the public comments to the Commission and it is at that point the Commission will vote on the proposals.

Maryland Farm Bureau Update

- Matt Tefteau was not present to update the Commission on the reference to the horse council and Sunday hunting issue.

Blindsite Licenses – Commission Discussion

- Chairman Plummer asked a question regarding a caretaker of a farm who has a blind site license application on behalf of landowner, but he had used his home address to have it mailed to him. Caretaker is no longer employed there. Because the application was mailed to the caretaker, the landowner missed the deadline because of it. Chairman Plummer asked why we would accept the mailing address that is actually not the property of the landowner.
 1. Director Peditto advised that there are many that are not actually mailed to the property addresses. A lot of people own farm property, but do not live on it. This is just one example. If it is mailed to the farm, then people are likely to say that they didn't get it because it was mailed to the farm.
 2. If a caretaker gets the permits and no longer employed, it is up to the landowner to let us know if they want to pursue a new mailing option.

Director Peditto advised ADC book maps are used for property records for the blind site licenses. We have tried to find funding to change; it's not a project that is authorized for federal aid monies. Chairman Plummer asked if we had any mapping systems now. Director Peditto advised that we do, but we'd have to integrate that technology with this database. That doesn't happen for free and we are unsure what that cost would be. Discussion followed on options to transition to a modern technology based system.

- Director Peditto thanked the Commission for discussing this. WHS is in the process of putting together a wish list for the next Administration. Director Peditto has a handful of priorities, and this is one.

Old Business or New Business

- Director Peditto wanted to ask the Commission one technical question, and he'll go with their will. Director Peditto has been attempting in various meetings to "tweet" live, and is asking permission to do that from the Commission.
- Director Peditto asked the Commission what is your level of comfort or is it okay having your image posted.
- Motion
 1. Commissioner Michael made a motion to have it approved to allow it.
 2. Commissioner Gulbrandsen seconded the motion. Any opportunity for public involvement should be welcomed.
 3. Director Peditto advised that best professional judgment would be used; things would be filtered to the Commission if comments are received from the public.
 4. Motion passed. No opposition.

Natural Resources Police Update – Presentation given by Captain Edward Johnson.

- The academy is progressing well. Three contractual officers were hired in Anne Arundel County (retired officers—he believes from PG and Howard Counties outside of DNR).
- Chairman Plummer asked what training they will go through. All things that they need. They, of course, had the general law enforcement in the past and the specialty stuff as well. They have the natural resources training.
- There are 20 currently in a class at the academy.
- Commissioner Boyles Griffin asked if they were involved in a cruelty case going on now at a farm, where the individuals illegally trapped and killed some animals. Captain Johnson believes that it is being handled by the special ops division. No facts on that case.
- Commissioner Michael mentioned the MD State's Attorney's Association. They are going to offer DNR-specific training to prosecutors. Commissioner Michael asked Captain Johnson to get together issues that he would want discussed in the fall—those of late fall or the water issues and the start of hunting issues that would all happen in the District Court. A lot of times you have junior prosecutors in there that may not have that background.

Commissioner Gulbrandsen pointed out that you may have a few new State's Attorneys after the election. Commissioner Gulbrandsen asked if that a good topic for the State's Attorneys convention. Commissioner Michael responded that the board of the State Attorneys meets every month. Every elected member is on the board, and then they have a larger meeting that incorporates the senior folks in Cambridge in November after the election. Commissioner Michael advised that they have a meeting in Ocean City, but he doesn't know that it would work there.

 1. Commissioner Michael mentioned that if there is any issue that we want to get out to the membership from NRP or WHS or anybody, the meeting is on November 15 at Cambridge is

the best. Five, ten or fifteen minutes of discussion on critical issues for the State's Attorneys. Most bang for the buck. Very interested on any issue that you may want to get out. This meeting would include the new State's Attorneys if they choose to come.

2. Commissioner Michael advised that the canvas is open. It will probably be scheduled in Ellicott City in November/December, gets kind of busy by that time. Commissioner Michael would like feedback from the officers about that. The framework is about 2 ½ hours.
- Chairman Plummer wanted to put it out on the table that there was recently a high-profile baiting case for waterfowl on the Eastern Shore. Chairman Plummer had some involvement in that as he had hunted the farm prior to the convictions. From the result of his long-term involvement with waterfowl and the vagueness of the law, Chairman Plummer asked Director Peditto and the attorney that was involved in that to meet today to shore up that law and really convict some of the bad guys. Chairman Plummer wants to take some of that vagueness out of the law. They will meet at 1 p.m. on July 30th and hope to come to a better system.
 1. Director Peditto does not know any facts about the case.
 2. Chairman Plummer indicated that this attorney does seem to know some of the background of natural resources, but the discussion isn't necessarily to this case—just in general. It prompted Chairman Plummer to want to take this opportunity.

Further Discussions

- Chairman Plummer asked if there was any other information.
- Director Peditto asked Commissioner Michael about the meeting with the Farm Bureau and equestrian community. Commissioner Michael advised that there was a meeting regarding Sunday hunting. It was going to be the Farm Bureau's attempt to bridge conversation with equestrian community. Ultimately, Matt Tefteau, MFB asked that WHS bring other stakeholders to the table.
 1. Director Peditto got a proposed date for a meeting just last week.
 2. Commissioner Michael advised that he understands that the Farm Bureau asked to meet with the senior people in a legislative committee and the president of the Maryland Horse Council, and a group from Farm Bureau. It was MFB meeting. Commissioner Michael spoke to people that were there, and the issue wasn't Sunday hunting. The issue was deer herd reduction. He is a third party to the meeting, but he heard that the consensus among them is to support the deer herd reduction. It is a different path than recreational hunting. Seems like towards the end of the meeting, there was some common ground; there was leveraging out of season or extended season that would curtail at a certain time so that other recreational opportunities could be enjoyed as well.
- Commissioner Michael discussed that when Sunday hunting legislation or expanded seasons are introduced, as the Southern MD expanded season, the Maryland Farm Bureau (in his understanding) is required to support it by their charter.
- Director Peditto advised that WHS was charged with budget bill language in producing a report to inform the legislature on the status of deer management options. WHS had hoped that one of the parts of that report would be a reference of the outcome from a meeting of the stakeholders. WHS was hoping that this meeting would have given us that forum. WHS were disinvited, which was okay as it was the Farm Bureau's meeting. WHS are obligated to push that forward and will call a meeting—a larger stakeholder audience to have a discussion about deer management in the State of Maryland and gather some feedback from that for a December report. Look for an invite in next several weeks. It will probably take place in late September/early October.
- Commissioner Michael asked have the proposals that were looked at during the last meeting from Pete Jayne gone to emergency regulation. Director Peditto advised that some of the regulations went in July 24 proposals. Some are in there; WHS just got approval for the emergencies on July

29 that includes the archery handgun in the Western Maryland and SB 966 is right on the heels of that so any day now. Associate Director Glenn Therres followed up with information. The Office of the Secretary and the Maryland Attorney General approved those; they will go in to be published in the MD Registrar.

1. Director Peditto outlined the Sunday deer hunting; the total for Western Maryland is 10 Sundays, 2 of which is junior hunting days, 8 adult and 2 junior days.
 2. Commissioner Boyles Griffin asked what can be done for Charles and St. Mary's Counties. Nothing that we can do. There are some leases. Farmers have signed some addendums to the leases. Deer Management Permit (DMP) holders are not going to have Sunday shooting with all the opportunities. DMP holders will not be happy about that. DMP holders are starting to read the law and are asking questions. WHS is still sorting it out. WHS has an obligation to update their permits, and WHS sent letters.
 3. Commissioner Compton asked as deer season comes around, staff will be on other duties now; what will a 90 day deer season in Jan-March do to the work force. Director Peditto responded that from November to March, we have a strong law enforcement presence. Still have oysters, ducks, and geese. NRP will make a proactive presence. With a 90-day deer season, you're going to have a lot of reactive calls. NRP cannot tell a landowner that they cannot show up.
- Chairman Plummer asked if there are any other comments.
 - Ms. Puffenberger mentioned that Ms. Spencer requested to remind the Commission to get nominees for the Farmer of the Year to Ms. Spencer.
 - Director Peditto encouraged the Commission members to attend the Waterfowl Meeting. WHS would love to have the Commission at the meetings. Associate Director Pete Jayne will chair the Waterfowl Meeting. If you can attend the public meeting, they can make an announcement that members are present. The date August 18th at 7 p.m. at Chesapeake College.
 - Mr. Hindman announced that there is an online forum on proposals. Online comments will triple five or six times then in person.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 A.M.

The next meeting will be held at 9:30 A.M. on Wednesday, August 20, 2014 in the Tawes State Office Building, C-1 Conference Room; Annapolis, Maryland.

Attendance

Members:	S. Boyles Griffin, L. Compton, T. Gregor, E. Gulbrandsen, J. Michael, J. Plummer, C. Rodney, and B. Wojton
Absent:	G. Fratz
Guest:	T. Johnson
Staff:	C. Felker, B. Harvey, L. Hindman, E. Johnson, P. Peditto, I. Puffenberger, and G. Therres



Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
Joseph P. Gill, Secretary
Frank W. Dawson III, Deputy Secretary

October 21, 2013

Dear Waterfowl Hunter:

Thank you for purchasing a Maryland Migratory Game Bird Hunting Stamp and contributing to the waterfowl hunting heritage in the State of Maryland. Your participation in Maryland waterfowl hunting has provided you with an opportunity to have input into the selection of future Maryland waterfowl seasons. We randomly selected 1,500 waterfowl hunters who indicated they hunted ducks or geese last season and mailed them the enclosed questionnaire.

Through this process we hope to increase our knowledge and understanding of what waterfowl hunters would like the Maryland DNR Wildlife and Heritage Service to consider when setting waterfowl seasons and bag limits in the future.

Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire. Return your questionnaire by placing it in the postage paid return envelope. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Larry Hindman, at 410-221-8838 ext. 105 or email him at lhindman@dnr.state.md.us.

Thank you for your time and input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter S. Jayne".

Peter S. Jayne
Associate Director for Game Management

You have been selected for this survey based on your 2013-2014 purchase of a Maryland Migratory Game Bird Stamp. Please answer each of the following questions completely. Results from this study will be reported only as an overall summary of all the responses and no individual results will be reported, i.e., your input is confidential.

Did you hunt waterfowl (ducks and/or geese) in Maryland during the 2012-2013 season? Please circle the number for your response below and follow the instructions for answering the following surveys questions.

1. I hunted both ducks and geese.
2. I hunted ducks, but not geese.
3. I hunted geese, but not ducks.
4. I did not hunt waterfowl.

The following section relates to your preferences for duck season dates. Federal frameworks allow Maryland to offer up to 60 days of duck hunting, with the option to split the season into three segments. The duck season cannot run past the last Sunday in January. In addition, State law and federal regulations prohibit waterfowl hunting on Sundays in Maryland. In recent years, Maryland has selected a 60-day season with three segments: Early (October), Mid (November - Thanksgiving), and Late (December-January). For the 2013-2014 duck season, the dates are October 12–19 (7 days), November 9–29 (18 days), and December 17–January 25 (35 days).

1. The length of the October duck season has ranged from 2 to 7 hunting days. In recent years we have used 7 hunting days during October, i.e., Saturday to Saturday. There is interest by some hunters in a shorter October season and shifting the days to the Mid or Late segment of the duck season.

Please indicate your level of support (check box) for the following October duck season options.

Options for Length of the October duck season	Support	Does Not Matter	Oppose
2 days			
3 days			
4 days			
5 days			
7 days (same as current season, i.e. Saturday to Saturday)			

2. If the length of the October duck season was reduced from 7 days, would you prefer the season to start on a Saturday or start during the week and end on a Saturday?

Options for Day of the Week	Support	Does Not Matter	Oppose
Start on a Saturday.			
Start during the week and end on a Saturday.			

3. Please indicate your support for the week in October when you would prefer the Early duck season to be held, recognizing the early muzzleloader deer season usually opens during the third week in October.

Options for Week in October	Support	Does Not Matter	Oppose
Open the October duck season the first week in October.			
Open the October duck season the second week in October.			
Open the October duck season the third week in October.			

Continue next page

Open October duck season the fourth week in October.			
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4. If the number of duck hunting days during the October season were reduced where would you prefer to place the additional days of duck hunting opportunity? Note: We currently run the duck season as late in January as federal frameworks allow.

Options	Support	Does Not Matter	Oppose
Earlier in November, i.e., at the front of the November split season.			
Earlier in December, but not during the 2-week deer firearm season.			
Earlier in December but during the 2 nd week of the deer firearm season.			

The following section relates to your preferences for migrant Canada goose hunting season dates. Federal regulations allow Maryland to offer up to 50 days of hunting for migrant Atlantic Population (AP) Canada geese, with the option to split the season into two segments. The migrant AP goose season cannot open before November 15 and cannot run later than February 5. In recent years, Maryland has selected a 50-day season with two segments: Early (mid-November - Friday after Thanksgiving) and Late (mid- December - late January). The dates for the 2013 - 2014 AP Canada goose seasons are November 16 – 29 (12 days) and December 17 – January 29 (38 days).

5. Please indicate your level of support for the opening day of the 50-day migrant AP Canada goose season. If the season were to begin later in November (on the Saturday before Thanksgiving), the extra goose-hunting days would be placed to overlap with the Late portion of duck season to the extent possible and some days added later in January or early February. The first split season would still close the day after Thanksgiving.

Options for Opening Day of AP Canada Goose Season	Support	Does Not Matter	Oppose
Saturday nearest November 15? In 2014 Nov. 15			
Saturday before Thanksgiving? In 2014 Nov. 22			

6. Please indicate your level of support for the close of the migrant AP Canada goose season.

Options for the Last Day of AP Canada Goose Season	Support	Does Not Matter	Oppose
Close duck and goose the same Saturday in late January.			
Close on the Saturday following the close of duck season.			
Close on the first Saturday in February.			
Close on the latest day possible (Feb. 5) even if it is a weekday.			

Your contribution to this survey is greatly appreciated. The survey results will be considered when developing proposed waterfowl hunting seasons for 2014-2015.

Maryland Waterfowl Hunter Season Preference Questionnaire Survey

On December 9, 2013, the Maryland DNR, Wildlife and Heritage Service convened a meeting of the Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee and stakeholders to discuss possible changes to the regular duck and Canada goose season beginning in 2014. Committee members present included Chair Ladd Johnson, Chip Heaps, Aaron Ward, Margaret Sentman, Dr. Mark Conner, and Steve Meyers.

Stakeholders present included Tyler Johnson, President, *Maryland Outfitters and Guide Association*, Marion Chambers, Regional Director, *Maryland Waterfowlers Association*, and Captain Ed Johnson, *Natural Resources Police*. Maryland Ducks Unlimited's Chairman was invited but could not attend.

We reviewed the results of a mail questionnaire survey which was used to measure Maryland waterfowl hunters' preferences for regular duck and goose seasons. The questionnaire survey was mailed to a random sample of 1,500 hunters who obtained a Maryland Migratory Game Bird Hunting Stamp in 2013. The analysis presented (below) to the group was based upon 425 responses received by December 1, 2013.

Length of October Duck Season

About equal numbers of responding hunters preferred either a 7-day October season (same as in 2013) that begins and ends on a Saturday or a season of shorter length (2-3 days). However, survey respondents did express strong opposition to a shorter duck season. A shorter October season would result in the loss of a Saturday hunting day.

Preferred Opening Day of the October Duck Season

About equal number of survey respondents preferred either a Saturday opening (same as is 2013) or a weekday opening with the season ending on a Saturday. Generally it has been DNR "policy" to open regular duck and goose seasons on a Saturday to provide an equitable opportunity to all. A Saturday opening is particularly important to those who must work a Monday-Friday job and to youth hunters who only have one nonschool hunting day per week excluding the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday periods.

Preferred Week for October Duck Season

About equal numbers of survey respondents preferred the October duck season to be open during either the second week (same as 2013) or fourth week in October. There was strong opposition to opening the season the first and third weeks of October. We assume the opposition to the first week in October was because it was viewed as being too warm or did not coincide with the peak of duck numbers, particularly early migrants. We assume the third week in October was not popular as this would overlap the early muzzleloader deer season.

Where to Place Extra Duck Days?

Hunters were asked if the October duck season was reduced to fewer days, i.e., <7 days, where would hunters like to see the extra days scheduled. A majority of survey respondents wanted the days placed in early December but did not want the days to coincide with the deer firearm hunting season.

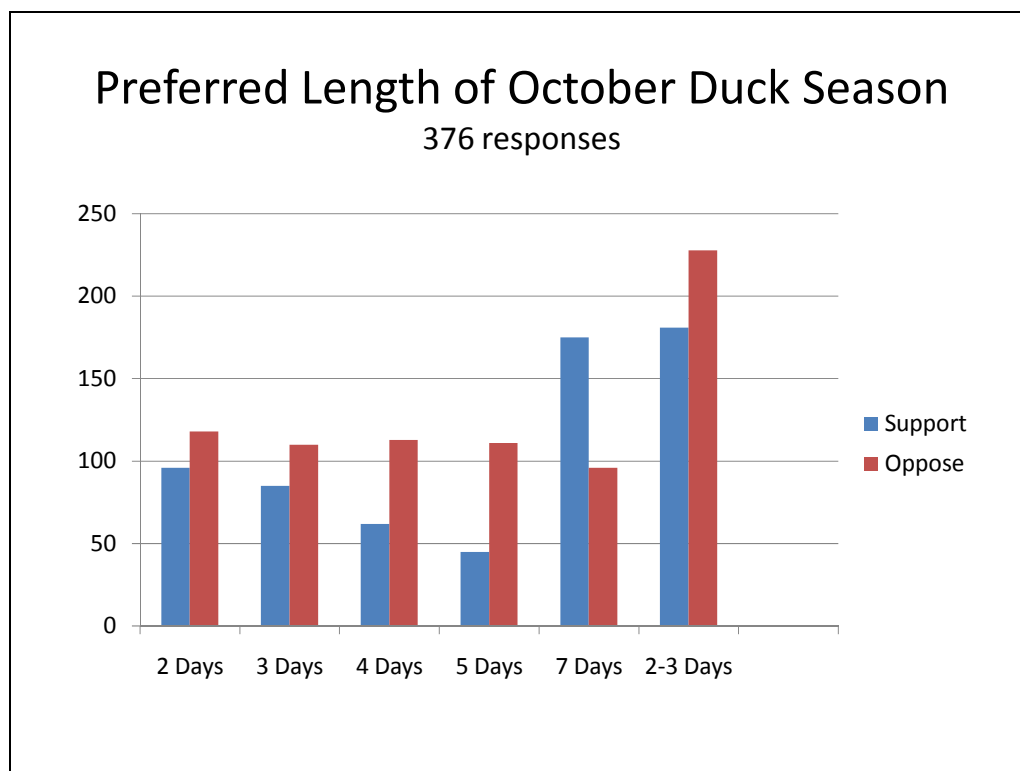
Preferred Opening Day for Canada Goose Season

Hunters were asked when they would like to see the opening of the migrant Atlantic Population (AP) Canada goose season. There was equal interest in opening the AP goose season either on the Saturday after November 15 (earliest permitted by the federal frameworks) or the Saturday preceding the Thanksgiving holiday period.

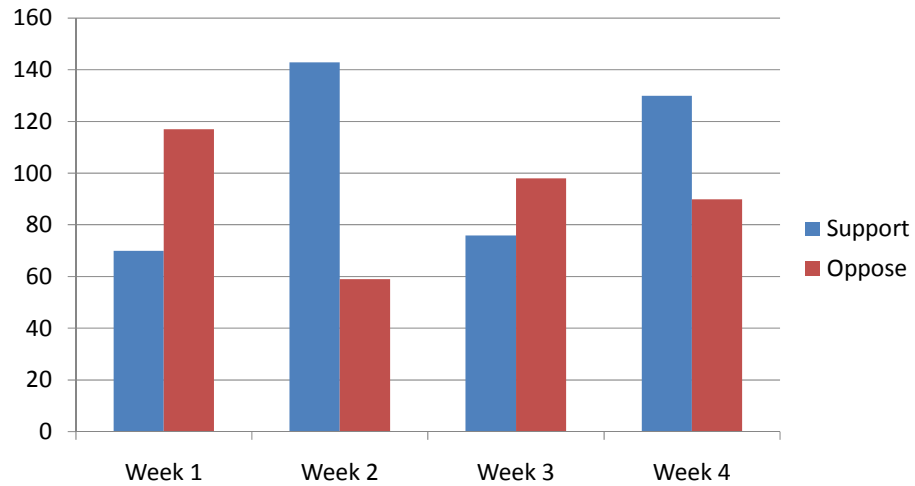
Preferred Closing Day of Canada Goose Season

Lastly, surveyed hunters were asked when they would like to see the AP Canada goose season close, recognizing that the closing framework date was February 5 and in most years would close on a weekday. Most survey respondents wanted the AP goose season to run as late as possible, i.e., to the end of the framework on February 5.

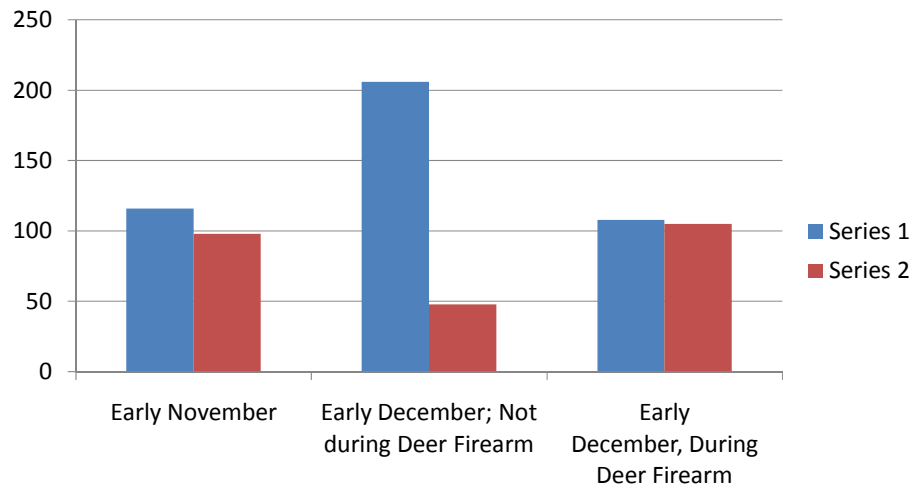
Fig. 1-5 Responses to Waterfowl Season Preference Questionnaire Survey



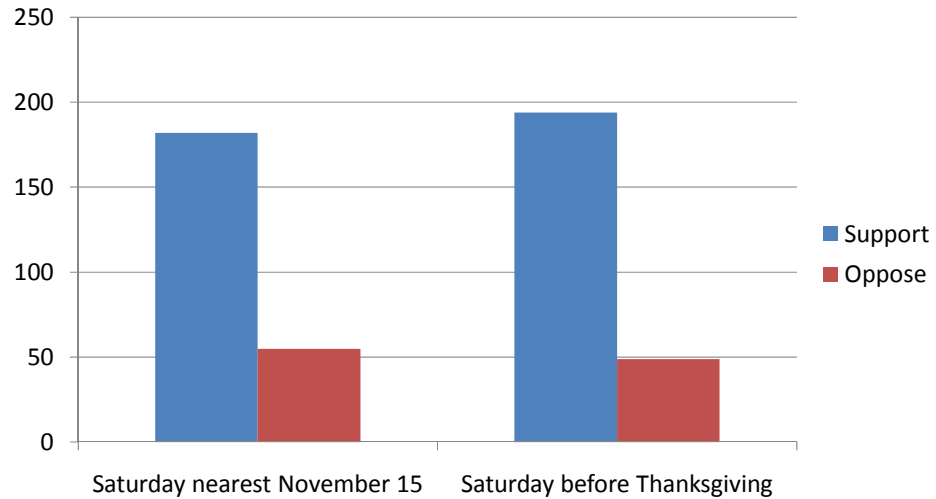
Preferred Week for October Duck Season



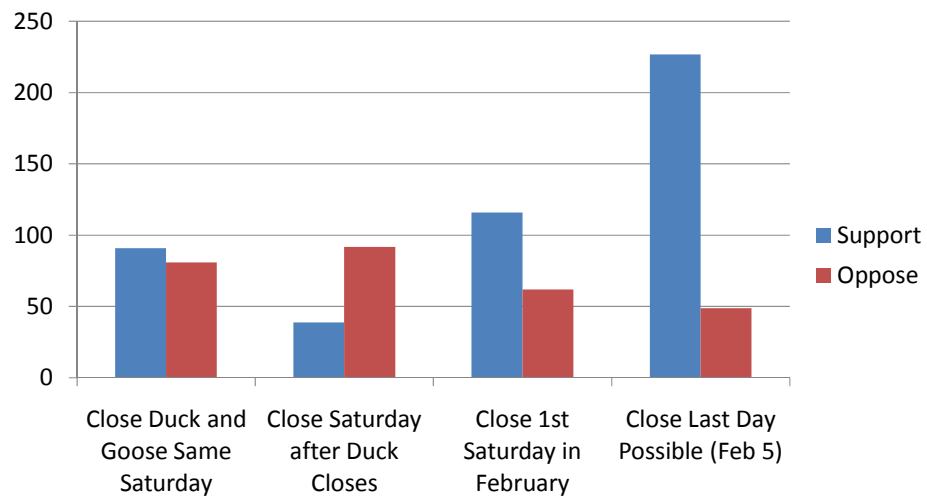
Where to Place Extra Duck Days?



Preferred Opening Day for Canada Goose Season



Preferred Closing Day of Canada Goose Season



Duck Population Status

Traditional Survey Area - In the traditional survey area, the total duck population estimate was 49.2 ± 0.8 [SE] million birds. This represents an 8% increase from last year's estimate of 45.6 ± 0.7 million, and is 43% higher than the long-term average (1955–2013). The total pond estimate (Prairie Canada and U.S. combined) was 7.2 ± 0.2 million, which was similar to the 2013 estimate of 6.9 ± 0.2 million and 40% above the long-term average of 5.1 ± 0.03 million

Eastern Survey - Total duck numbers from the 2014 Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl survey were 1.34 million, which was similar to the 2013 estimate and the long-term (1993–2013) average of 1.39 million. In the eastern survey area, estimated abundance of American black ducks was 0.6 ± 0.04 million, which was similar to the 2013 estimate and the 1990–2013 average. The estimated abundance of mallards was 0.4 ± 0.1 million, which was similar to the 2013 estimate and the 1990–2013 average.

Proposed 2014 Duck Seasons and Bag Limits

Regular Duck Season Dates, 60 days	Oct. 11 - Oct. 18 Nov. 8 - Nov. 28 Dec. 16 - Jan. 24
Black Duck Season Dates	Nov. 8 - Nov. 28 Dec. 16 - Jan. 24
Duck Daily Bag and Possession Limits	The daily bag limit of ducks (including mergansers) is 6. The 6-duck limit shall consist of no more than 5 long-tailed ducks, 4 scoters, 4 mallards (max. 2 hen mallards), 2 scaup, 3 wood ducks, 2 pintails, 2 redheads, 2 hooded mergansers, 1 canvasback, 1 black duck (during black duck season), 1 fulvous tree duck, and 1 mottled duck. All other species of ducks (except harlequin duck) may be taken up to the 6-duck limit. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit. In addition to the duck bag limit hunters may take 15 coots per day. No open season for harlequin ducks and swans.

Antlered Muzzleloader Oct. 16 - 18, Antlerless Muzzleloader Oct. 16 - 25

Junior Deer Hunt Nov. 15 & 16

Statewide Deer Firearm Season Nov. 29 - Dec. 13

Proposed Sea Duck Season and Bag Limits (Sea Duck Zone Only)

Sea Duck Season Dates, 106 days	Oct. 1 - Jan. 31
Daily Bag and Possession Limits	5 in aggregate, but no more than 4 scoters

Proposed 2014 Youth Waterfowl Days

Youth, 2 non-consecutive nonschool days	Nov. 1 & Feb. 7
Daily Bag and Possession Limits	6 ducks (species restrictions), 2 brant, 2 Canada geese in AP harvest zone, 5 Canada geese in AFRP harvest zone, 25 light geese, and 15 coots

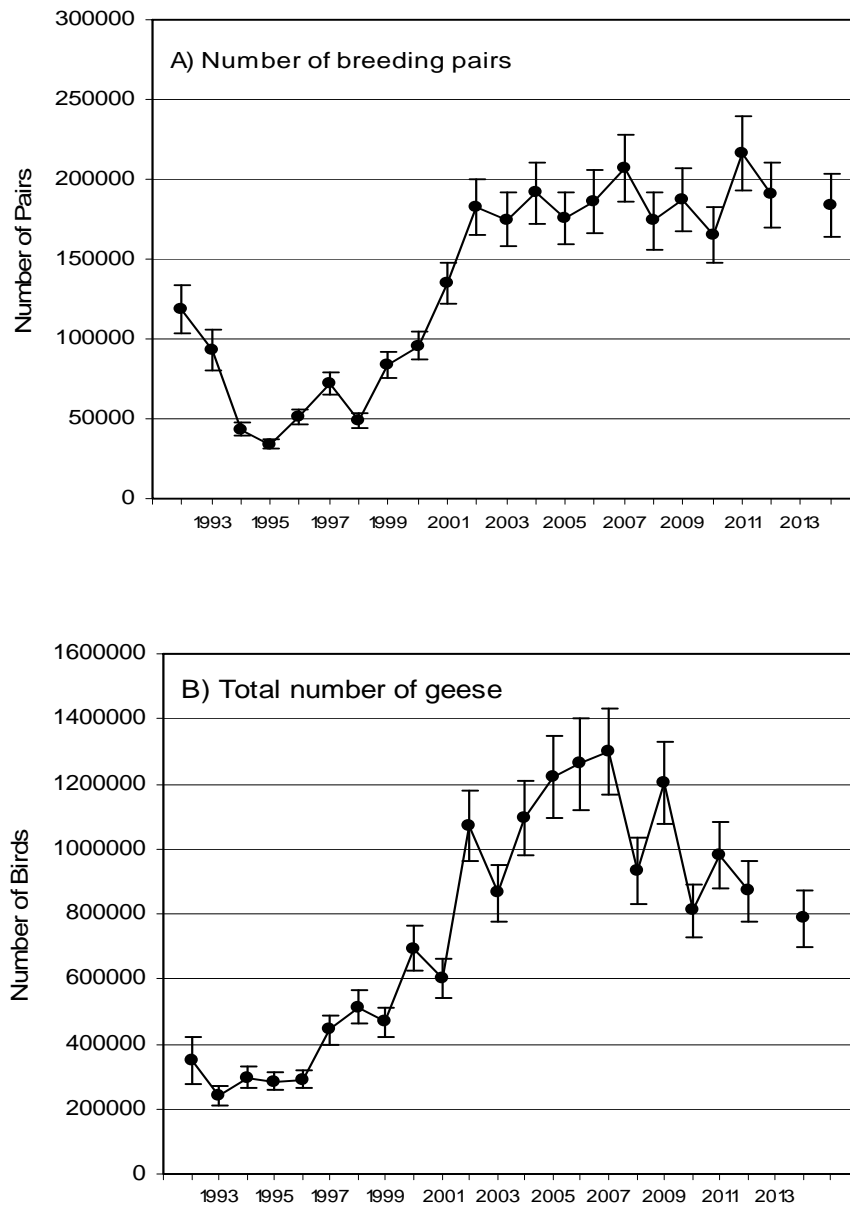
Any licensed hunter 15 years old or younger may participate during these one-day hunts. Youth of this age who are exempt from Maryland hunting license requirements may also participate. Youth waterfowl hunters must possess a receipt showing they purchased a \$9 Maryland Migratory Game Bird Hunting Stamp. Youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult at least 21 years old that holds a valid Maryland hunting license or is exempt from the hunting license requirements. The accompanying adult may call waterfowl, assist with decoys, and retrieve downed birds but may not possess a hunting weapon.

AP Canada Goose Status

AP Population Objective - 225,000 breeding pairs in the Ungava region of Quebec. 3-year average (2011-2012, 2014) = 190,500 pairs. When the breeding pair index (3 yr. average) is at or above 150,000, Moderate regulations (50-day season) may be considered that would target a projected harvest rate of breeding adults not to exceed 10%. Chesapeake Region framework is Nov. 15 - Feb. 5.

AP Goose Breeding Pair Survey 2014 - The estimated number of breeding pairs on the Ungava Peninsula in 2014 (183,642 pairs) was similar to the 2012 estimate of 190,340. The total population estimate ((indicated pairs x 2) + non-breeders) in 2014 (785,576 individuals) was

similar to the 2012 estimate of 871,198 individuals). The total population estimate includes breeding pairs, non-breeders (i.e., those not of breeding age), failed breeders, and molt migrants from other areas and should therefore be interpreted cautiously.



In 2014, the percentage of indicated pairs observed as singles was 63%, the highest observed in the history of this survey (mean = 51%, range = 34-63%). Pair survey results suggest a strong nesting effort and likely a good reproductive year. A model using May temperatures and

June snowfall at Kuujuaq (Ungava Bay) predicts gosling production to be slightly above average. 2014 gosling production will be confirmed by two banding crews on the Ungava Peninsula in early August.

Proposed 2014 AP Canada Goose Season and Bag Limit

AP Canada Goose Season Dates, 50 days	Nov. 22 - 28 Dec. 16 - Feb. 4
Daily Bag and Possession Limits	2 and 6, respectively

AP Goose Hunt Area: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Harford, Howard, Kent, Queen Annes, Somerset, St. Mary's, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties; and that portion of Carroll County east of Route 31 to the intersection of Route 97, and east of Route 97 to the Pennsylvania line; and that portion of Prince George's County east of Route 3 and Route 301; and that portion of Charles County east of Route 301 to the Virginia line.

AF Resident Canada Goose Status

A breeding population of 1,084,900 AFRP Canada geese was estimated during the spring of 2014, similar to the 2013 estimate of 951,900.

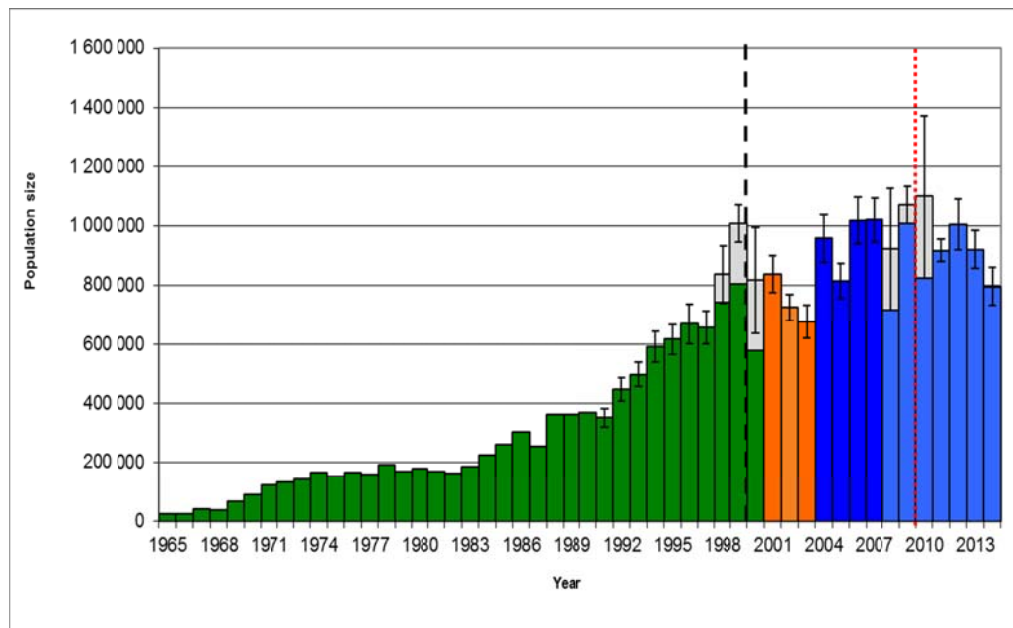
Proposed Resident Canada Goose Season and Bag Limit

Resident Canada Goose Season Dates, 80 days	Nov. 22 - 28 Dec. 16 - March 10
Daily Bag and Possession Limits	5 and 15, respectively

RP Goose Hunt Area: Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, Montgomery, and Washington Counties; and that portion of Carroll County west of Route 31 to the intersection of Route 97, and west of Route 97 to the Pennsylvania line; and that portion of Prince George's County west of Route 3 and Route 301; and that portion of Charles County west of Route 301 to the Virginia line.

Greater Snow Goose

Spring photo survey in the St. Lawrence River Valley indicated 796K in 2014, 15% below 921K in 2013.



Nesting conditions on Bylot Island were excellent; strong nesting effort.

Clutch size above average. Mean nest initiation, mean clutch size (4.03 egg per nest), and mean nest success was 95% were all above the long term average.

Lemmings were abundant, thus predation on nests was low. A very good fall flight is expected.

Proposed Regular Light Goose Season and Bag Limit

Light Goose Season Dates	Oct. 4 - Nov. 28 Dec. 15 - Feb. 7 Feb. 7 (2 nd Youth Day)
Daily Bag and Possession Limits	25 and no possession limit

Proposed Light Goose Conservation Order Season and Bag Limit

Light Goose Season CO Dates	Dec. 1 - Dec. 13 Feb. 9 - Apr. 18
Daily Bag and Possession Limits	No limits

Hunt Area: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Harford, Howard, Kent, Queen Annes, Somerset, St. Mary's, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester

Counties; and that portion of Carroll County east of Route 31 to the intersection of Route 97, and east of Route 97 to the Pennsylvania line; that portion of Prince George's County east of Route 3 and Route 301; and that portion of Charles County east of Route 301 to the Virginia line. The Special Sea Duck Zone is excluded from this hunt area.

Special Regulations during Light Goose Conservation Order Season:

(1) Participating hunters must possess a \$5 Snow Goose Conservation Order Hunting Season Permit while hunting light geese during this season; (2) Hunters may use shotguns capable of holding more than three shotshells; (3) Hunters may use electronic calls with recordings of light geese; and (4) Shooting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Atlantic Brant

The 2014 Midwinter Survey index for brant in the Atlantic Flyway was 132,900, 19% higher than the 2013 estimate of 111,800). These estimates have shown no trend over the 2005–2014 time period. The productivity of the previous year is estimated by the percentage of juveniles counted during November and December. In the fall of 2013, juvenile birds comprised 3.4% of the population, well below the long-term average of 18.3%. The snow pack on Southampton Island was light this winter and snowmelt occurred quickly. As a result, brant nesting occurred early, and clutch sizes were good. However, biologists observed heavy fox predation, and brant were especially hard-hit, with a nest success rate of less than 15%. Thus, despite their early arrival, below-average production of Atlantic brant was expected in 2014.

Proposed Atlantic Brant Seasons and Bag Limits

AP Canada Goose Season Dates, 30 days	Dec. 20 - Jan. 3 Jan 6. - Jan. 24
Daily Bag and Possession Limits	2 and 6, respectively

Prepared by:

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Wildlife and Heritage Service
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Cambridge, MD 21613
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Tel: 410-221-8838 ext. 105

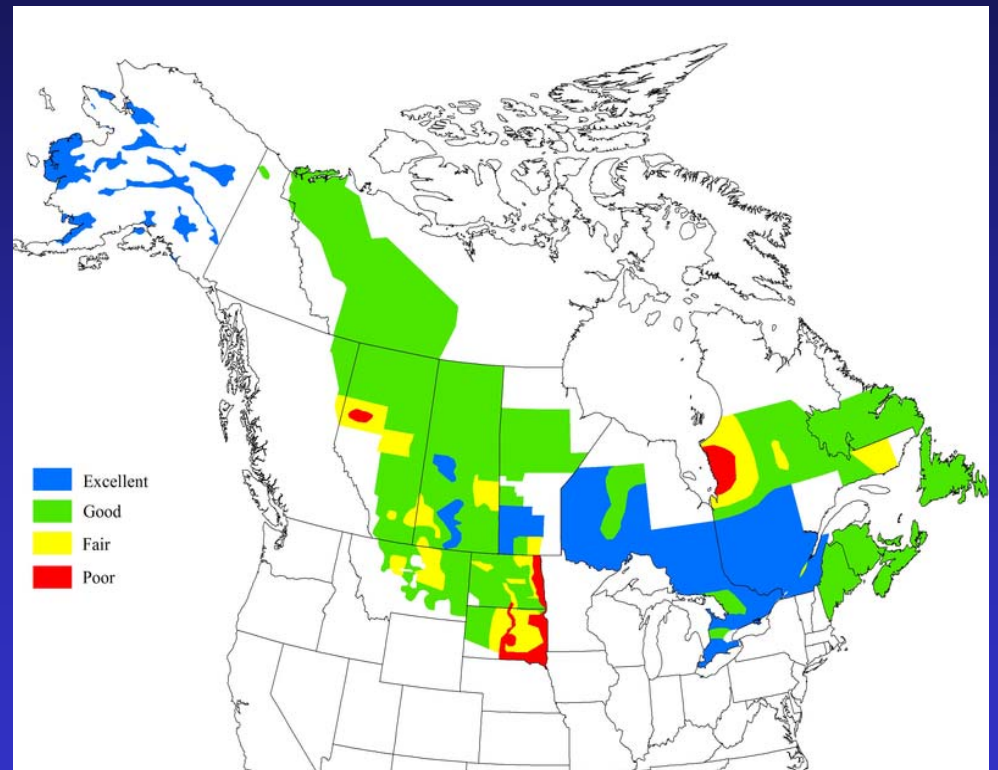
2014 Waterfowl Population Status



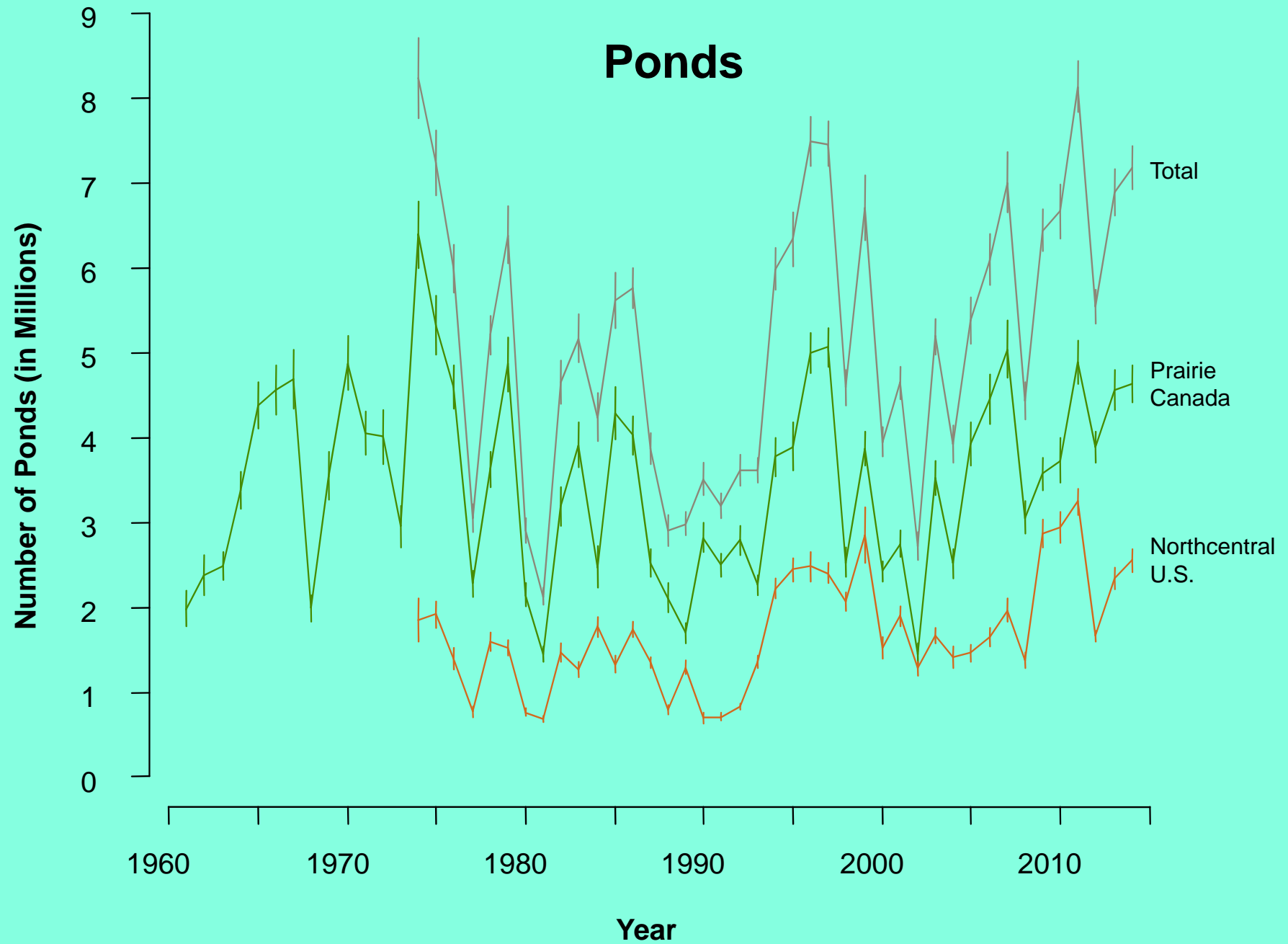
2014 Waterfowl Breeding and Habitat Survey

Total ponds in U.S. and Canada - 7.2M in 2014 vs. 6.9 last year

Similar to 2013 and 40% above the LTA (1955 - 2013) average of 5.1M

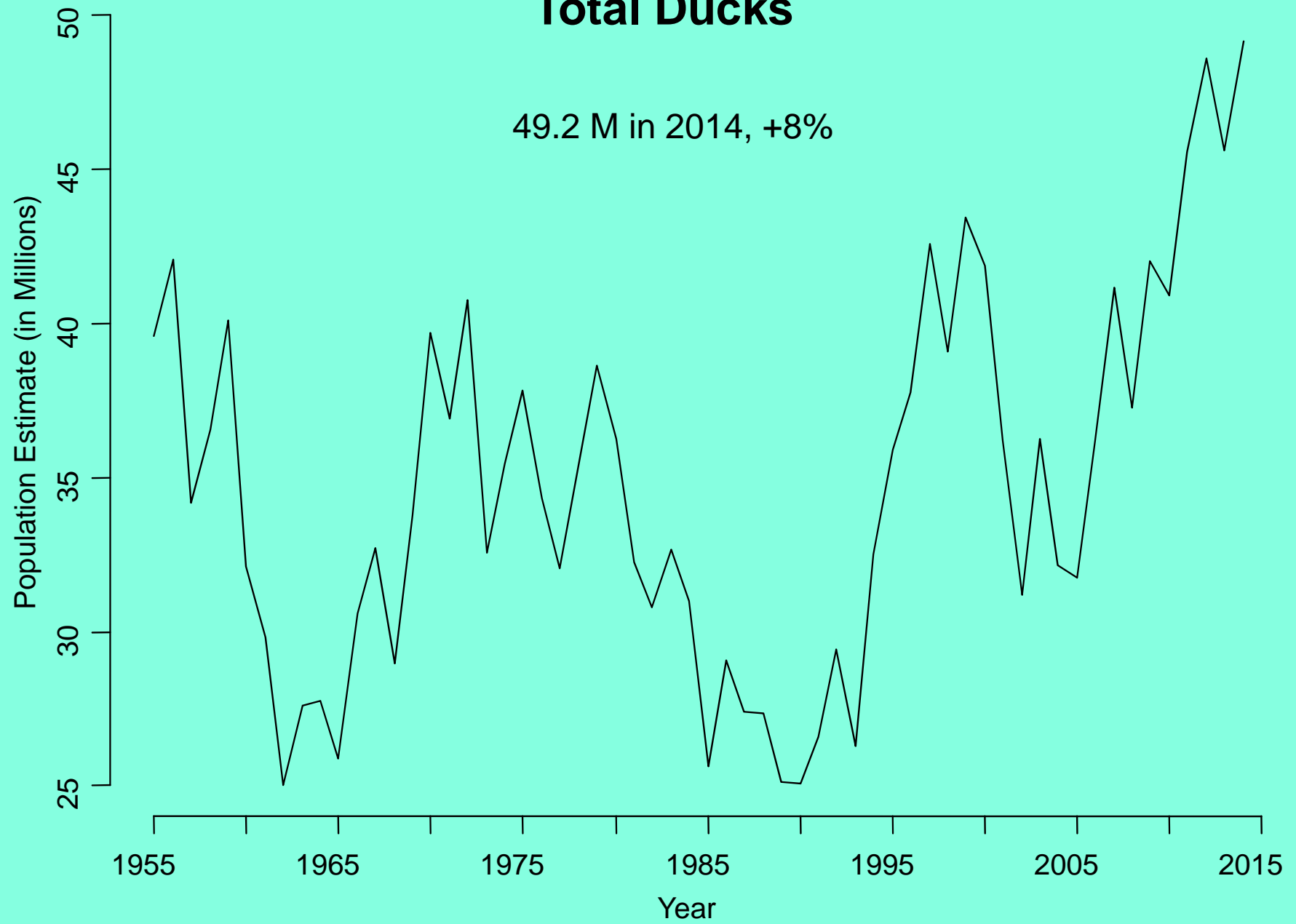


Ponds



Total Ducks

49.2 M in 2014, +8%



2014 Breeding Ducks By Species (in millions)

Species	2014	2013	% Change from 2013	% Change from LTA
Mallard	10.9	10.3	+5	+42
Gadwall	3.8	3.4	+14	+102
American wigeon	3.1	2.6	+18	+20
Green-winged teal	3.4	3.1	+13	+69
Blue-winged teal	8.5	7.7	+10	+75
Northern shoveler	5.3	4.6	+11	+114
Northern pintail	3.2	3.3	-3	-20
Redhead	1.3	1.2	+6	+85
Canvasback	.685	.787	-13	+18
Scaup	4.6	4.4	+11	-8

Eastern Mallard Population Status

Eastern Mallards breed in southern Ontario, Quebec, and the northeastern U.S.

Eastern Mallard BPOP Index used to set AF duck hunting regulations.

In 2014, the estimated Eastern Mallards BPOP was 0.86 M, including 0.63 M from the northeastern U.S.

A liberal regulation (60-day season and 6-duck bag limit) is prescribed for AF in 2014.



American Black Duck Population Status

Eastern Survey Area

Estimated Black Duck BPOP in 2014 was 600 K, similar to 2013.

Prescribed Black Duck hunting regulations in the U.S. remain restrictive, i.e., no change from 2013.

The AHM process allows for a moderate regulation in Canada.

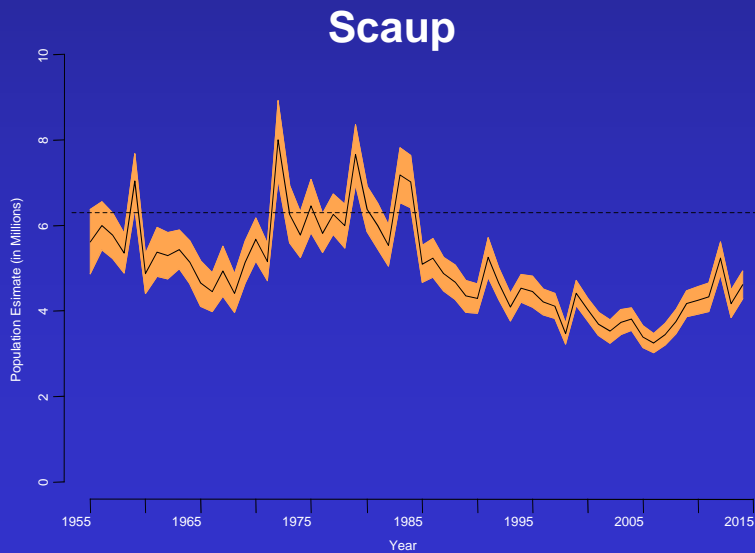




Scaup Population Status

The 2014 combined scaup BPOP estimate was 4.6 M, similar to 2013 (4.2 M).

Harvest strategy prescribes a moderate regulation, i.e., 60 days and 2-bird daily bag limit for all flyways.



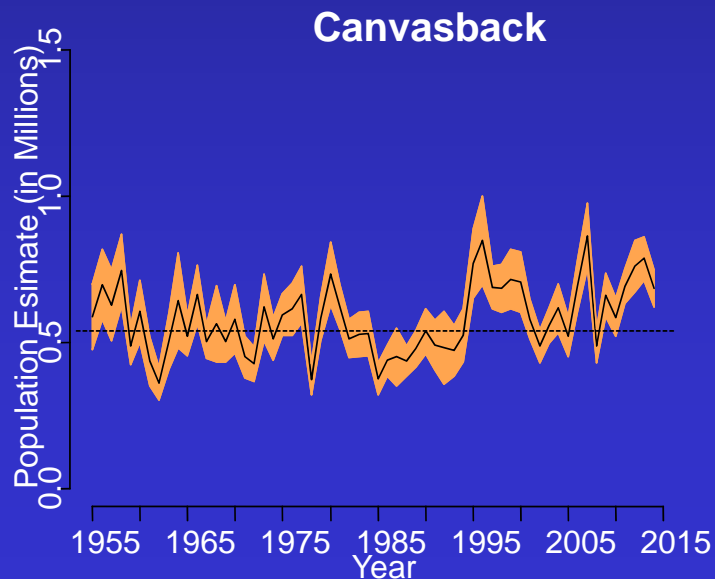
Canvasback Population Status



The 2014 BPOP was 685 K.

BPOP was similar to the 787 K in 2013 and 18% above the 1955-2013 average (LTA).

Ponds in Prairie Canada were 4.6 M, similar to 2013 and 33% above the LTA.



Harvest strategy calls for a full season with a 1-bird daily bag limit.

The predicted 2015 BPOP is below the 725 K required to trigger a 2-bird bag limit.

AP Canada Goose Harvest Strategy

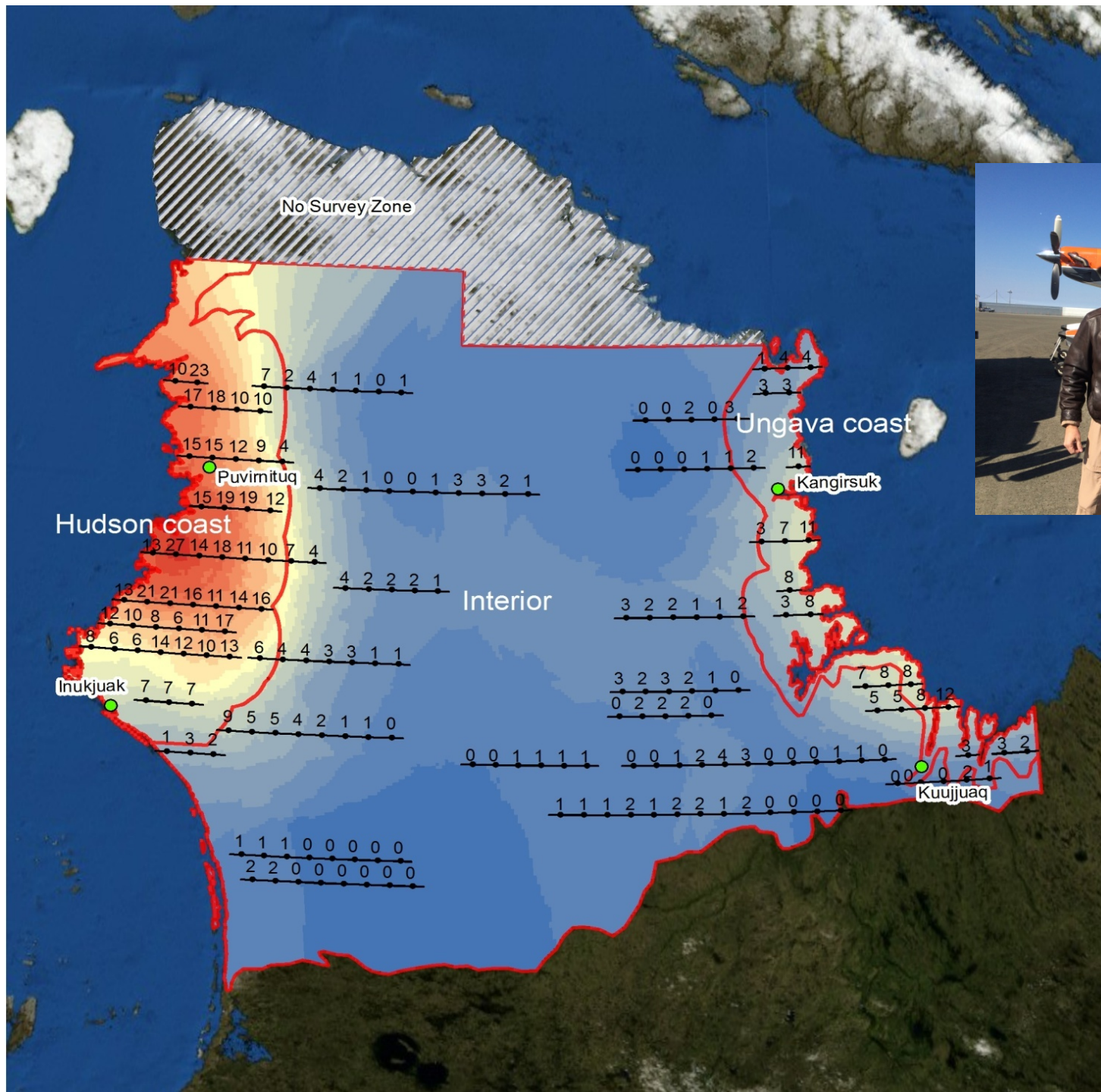
Atlantic Flyway Council

AP Population Objective - 225,000 breeding pairs in the Ungava region of Quebec.

3-year average (2011-2012, 2014) = 190,500 pairs; No pair survey conducted in 2013.

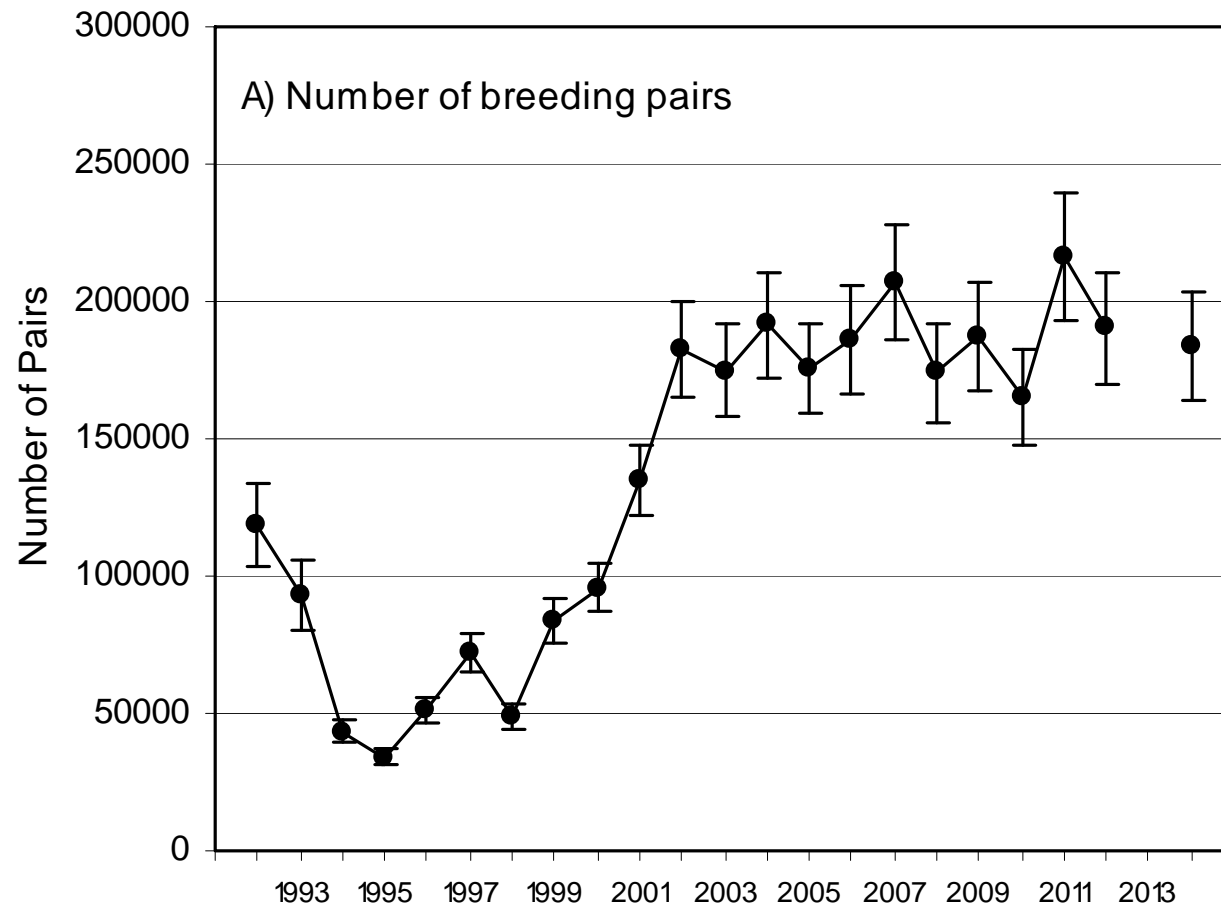
When the breeding pair index (3 yr. average) is at or above 150,000, Moderate regulations (50-day season) may be considered that would target a projected harvest rate of breeding adults not to exceed 10%. Chesapeake Region framework is Nov. 15 – Feb. 5.

When the breeding pair index (3-year average) is above 225,000, Liberal regulations (60-day season) may be considered that would target a projected harvest rate of breeding adults not to exceed 15%.

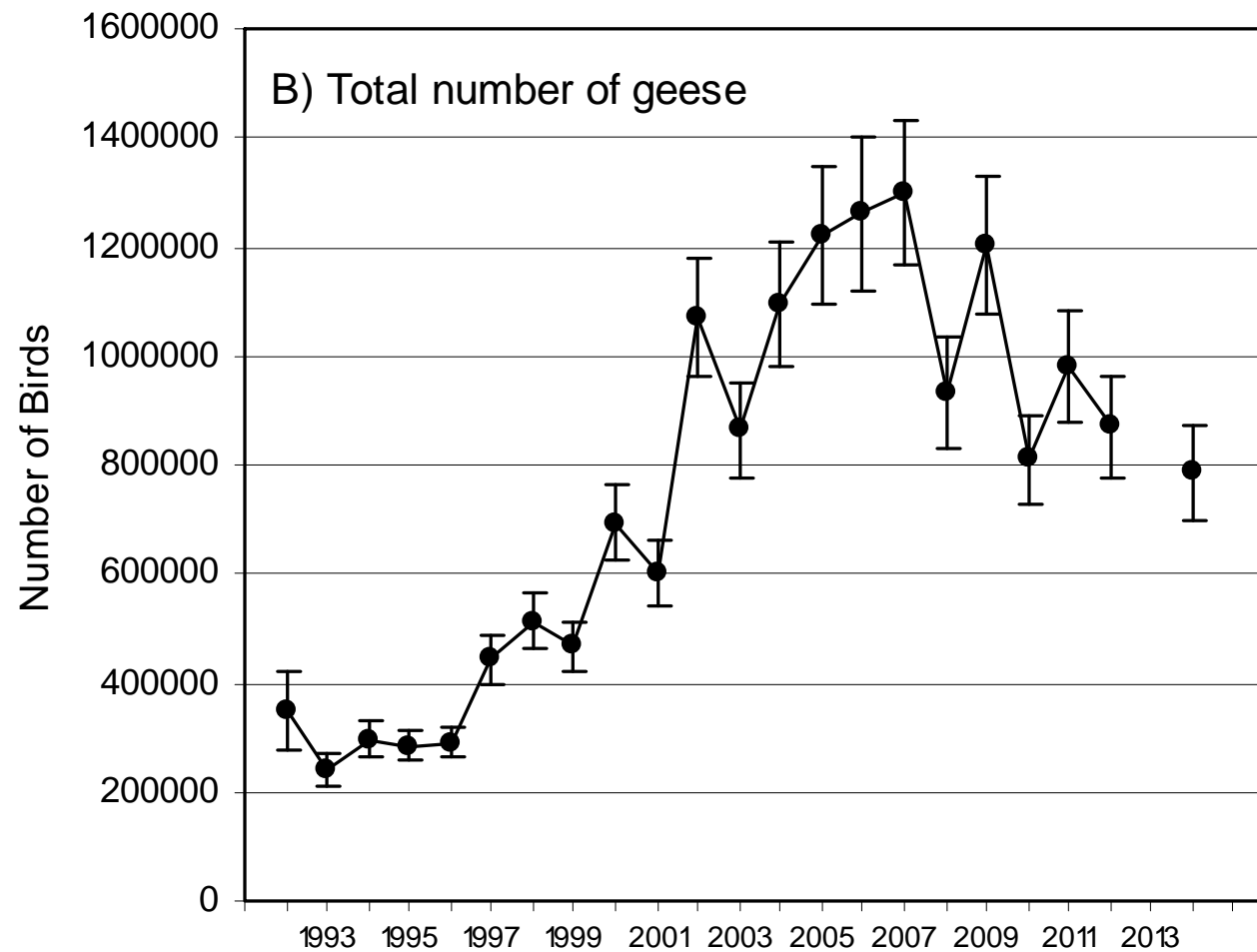




Estimates of Breeding Pairs of AP Canada Geese on the Ungava Peninsula 1992 - 2014



Estimates of Total Canada Geese on the Ungava Peninsula 1992 - 2014





AP Goose Production

- In 2014, the percentage of indicated pairs observed as singles was 63%, the highest observed in the history of this survey (mean = 51%, range = 34-63%),
- Pair survey results suggest a strong nesting effort and likely a good reproductive year.
- A model using May temperatures and June snowfall at Kuujjuaq (Ungava Bay) predicts gosling production to be slightly above average.
- 2014 gosling production will be confirmed by two banding crews on the Ungava Peninsula in early August.

Atlantic Brant Status

2014 Midwinter Survey - 132,900
above the threshold of 125K for a
50-day season.

Poor production in 2013, 3.4%
juveniles in fall flight.

Below average production expected
from Southampton Island, recruitment
information from other breeding areas
like Banks and Baffin Islands are not
yet available.



Greater Snow Goose Management Plan

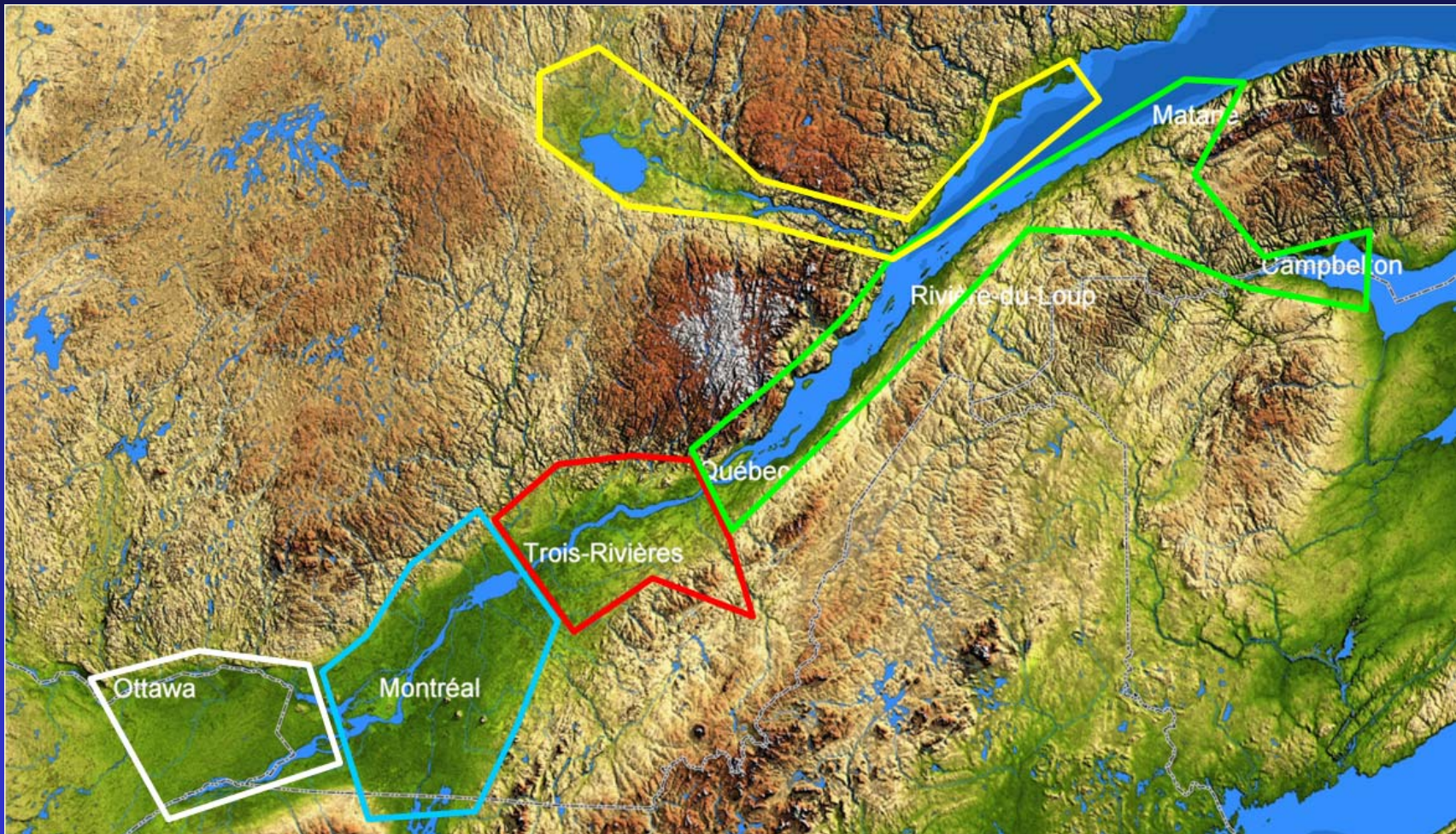
Atlantic Flyway Council

Objective - Reduce and maintain the population in a range between 500,000 and 750,000 as indexed by the spring survey in southern Québec.



Greater Snow Goose

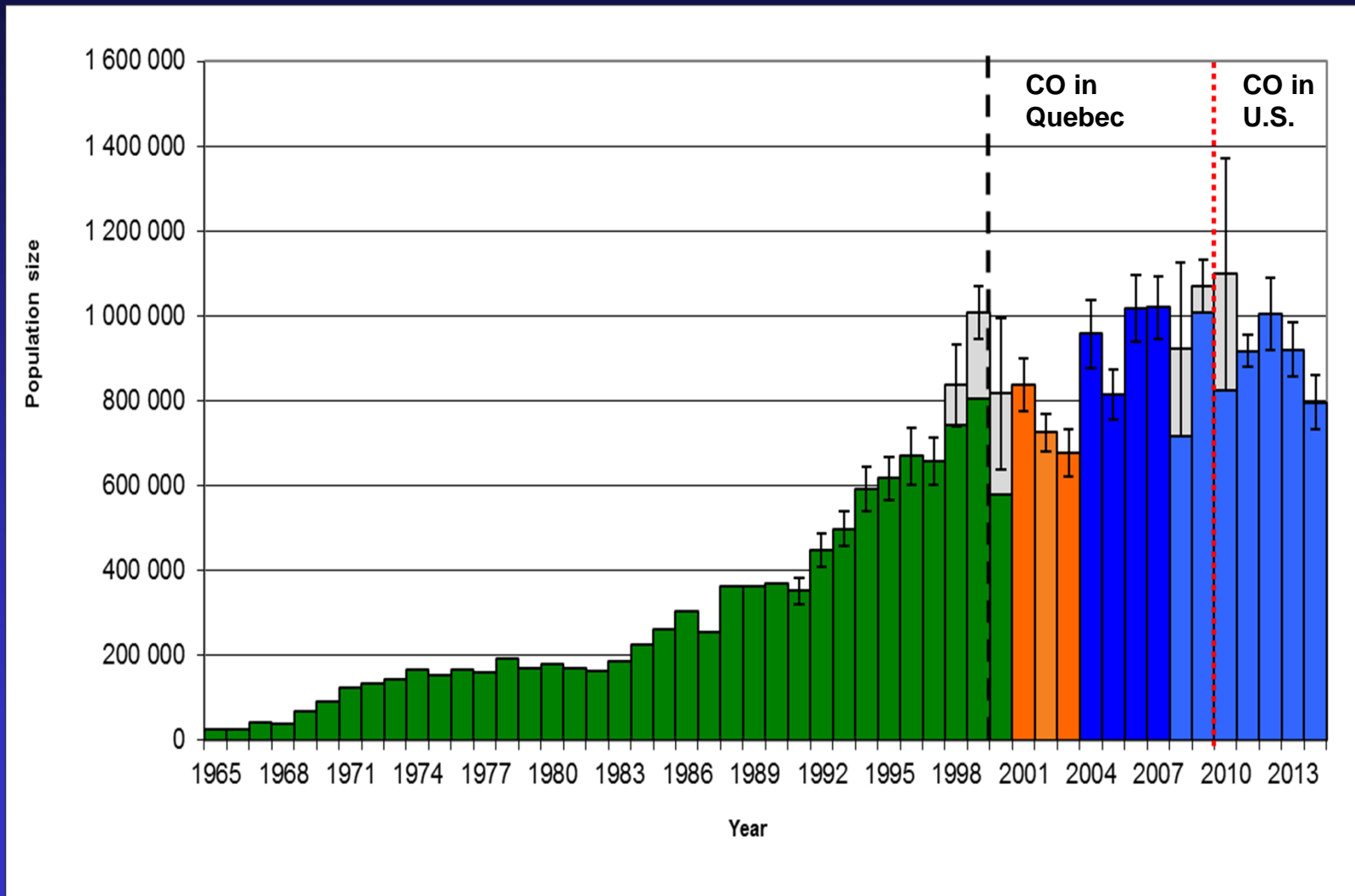
Spring Photo Count in St. Lawrence River Valley



Greater Snow Goose Photo Count

1965 - 2014

HL1



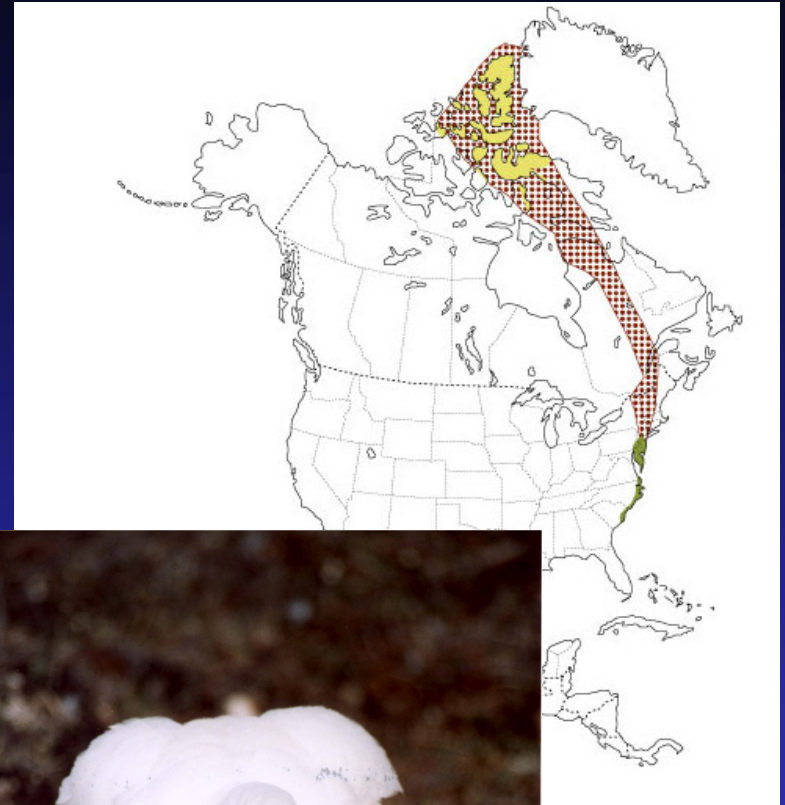
Slide 19

HL1

Hindman, Larry, 7/28/2014

Greater Snow Goose Nesting

- Nesting conditions on Bylot Island were excellent; strong nesting effort.
- Mean nest initiation date (June 10), clutch size (4.03 egg per nest), and nest success (95%) were all above the long term average.
- Lemmings were abundant, thus predation on nests was low.
- A large fall flight is containing a high proportion of juveniles is expected.



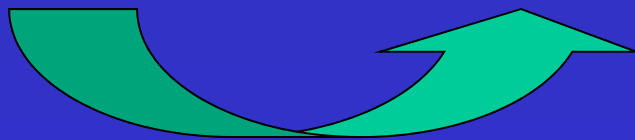
Migratory Bird Regulations

- Migratory Bird Treaty Act 1918 established Federal authority for management of migratory birds.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service promulgates hunting season frameworks provided to States.
- Frameworks include:
 - maximum season length
 - earliest and latest dates
 - maximum daily bag limit



Annual Cycle for Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations

- Population Monitoring
- Atlantic Flyway Technical Section meeting (mid July)
- Atlantic Flyway Council
- U. S. FWS Service Regulations Committee (includes 4 flyway council reps)
- Final approval by USFWS
- Final selection by DNR
- Input from public, WAC, MGBAC, MOGA, and MDWFA
- State announces proposed seasons and bag limits



Final Frameworks

Preliminary 2014 Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits under Consideration



MD DNR Priorities Considered when Formulating Hunting Season Proposals



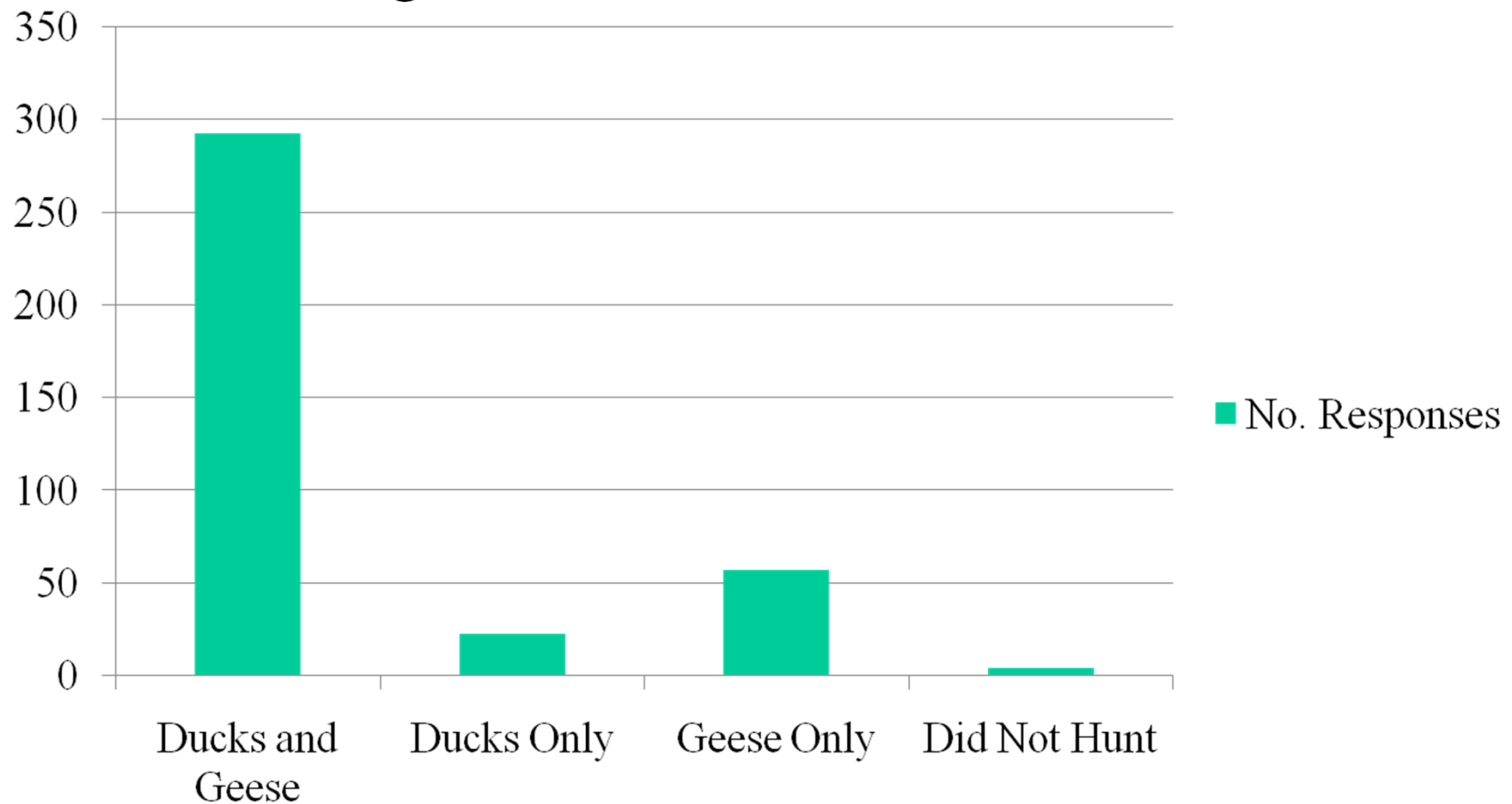
- Must meet the biological requirements of the waterfowl resource to sustain populations.
- Overlapping duck and goose seasons to the extent possible.
- Maximizing opportunity for all hunters, particularly youth.
- Maximizing open hunting days statewide, especially Saturdays and holidays.
- Regulation simplicity.

Waterfowl Hunter Preference Questionnaire Survey

- Measure Maryland waterfowl hunters' preferences for regular duck and goose seasons.
- Survey sent to 1,500 randomly selected waterfowl hunters who purchased a 2013 Maryland Migratory Game Bird Stamp.
- Analysis based upon 425 responses.

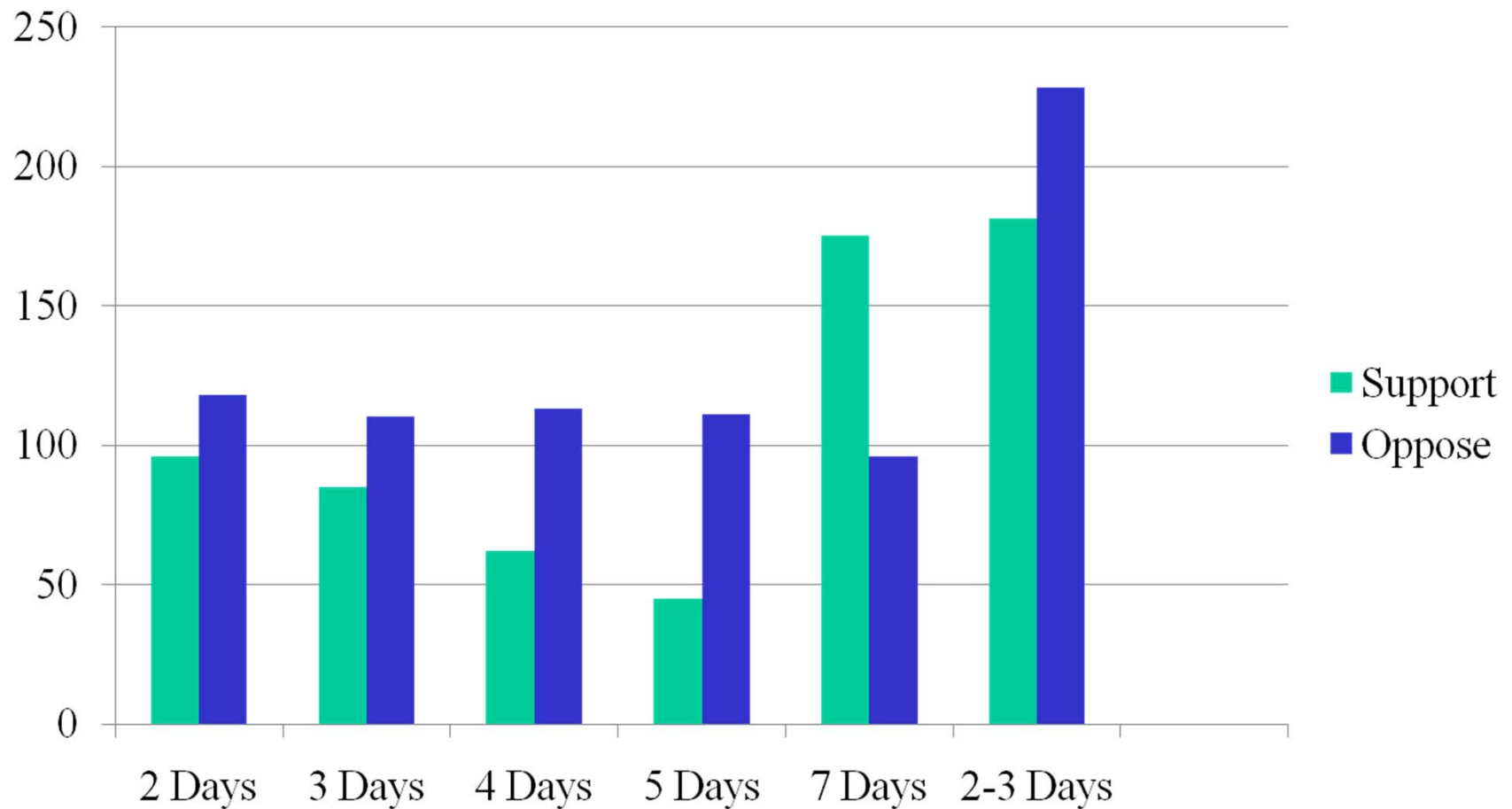


Did You Hunt Waterfowl in Maryland during the 2012-2013 Seasons?

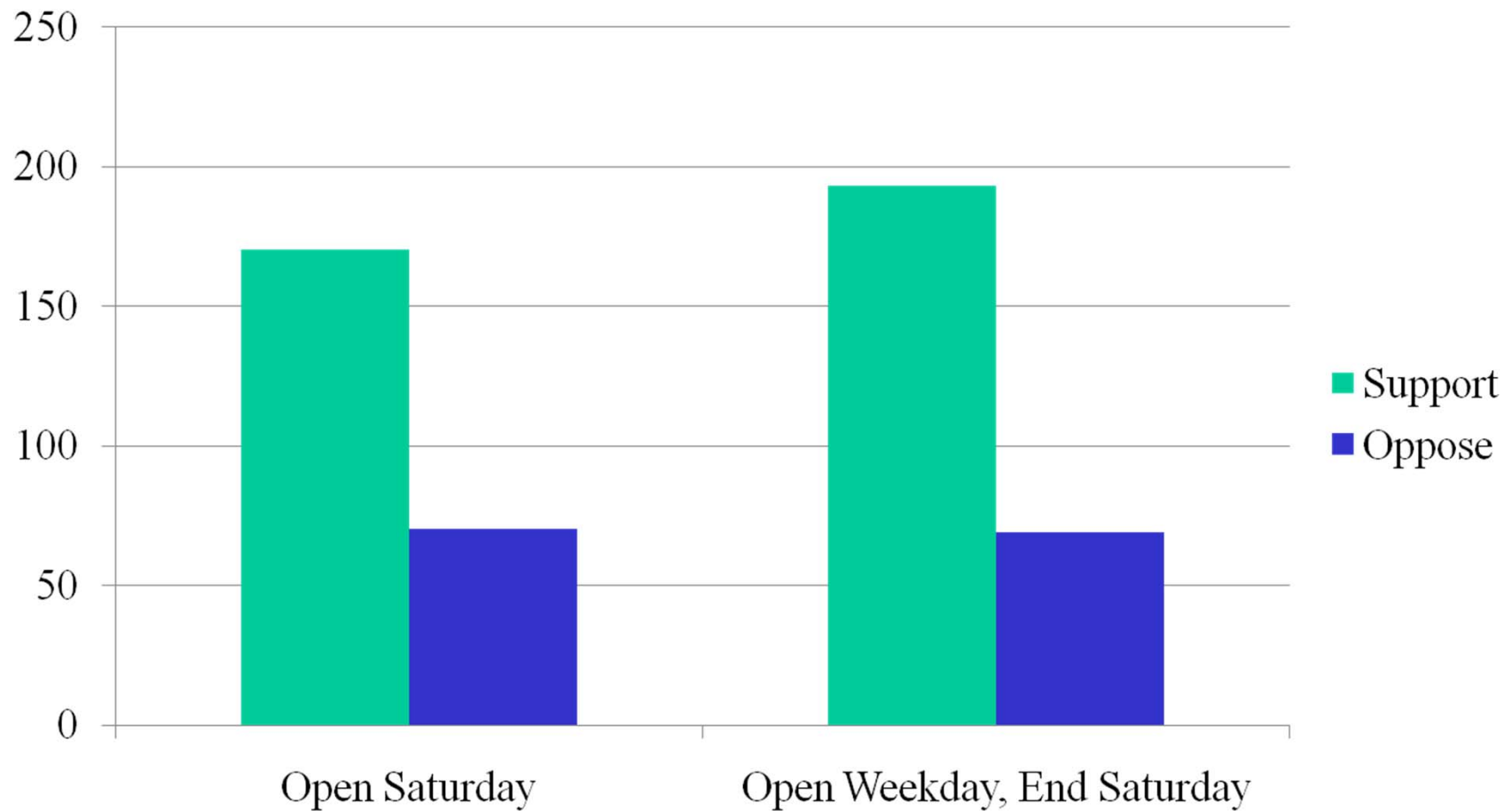


Preferred Length of October Duck Season

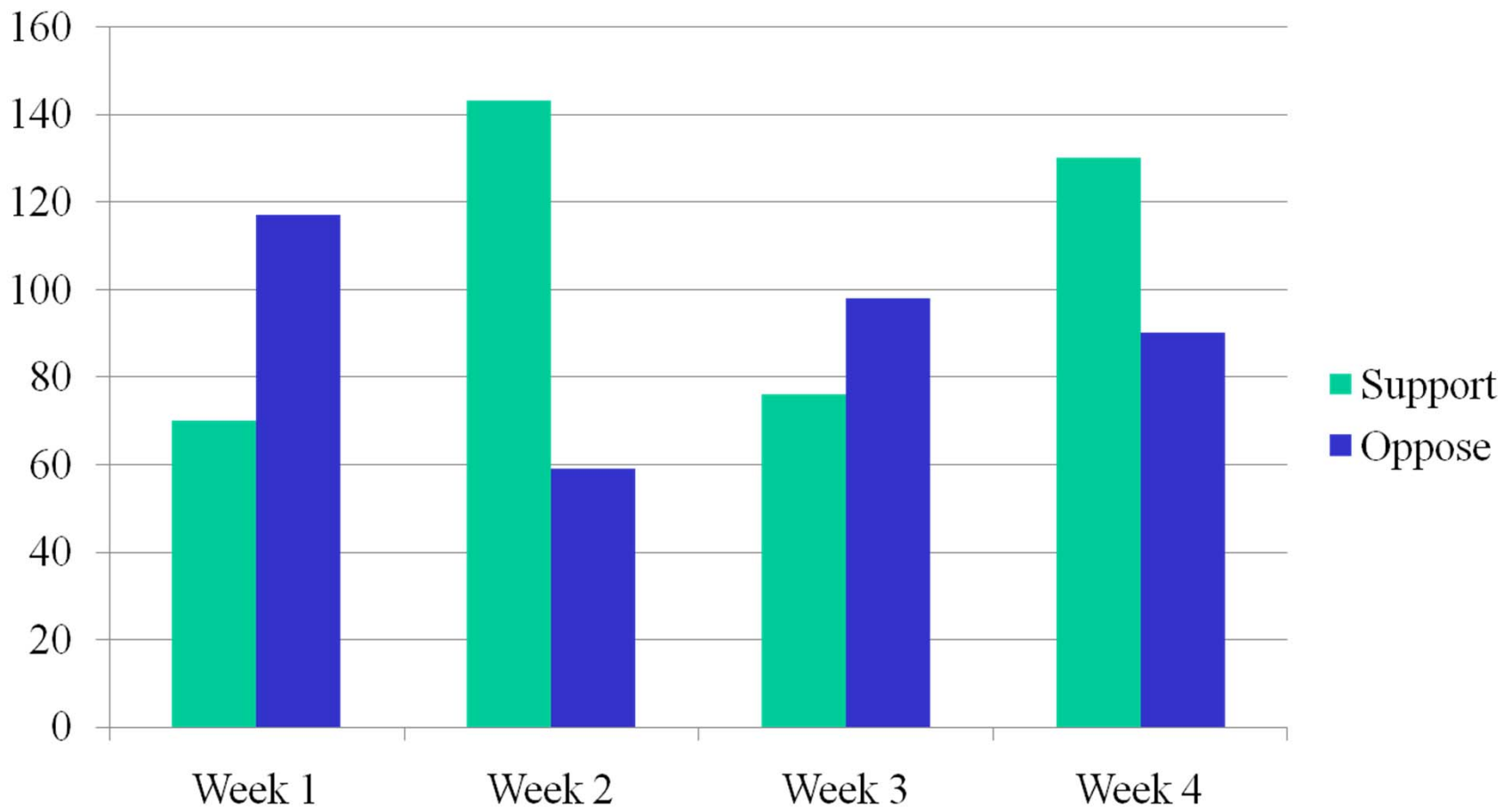
376 responses



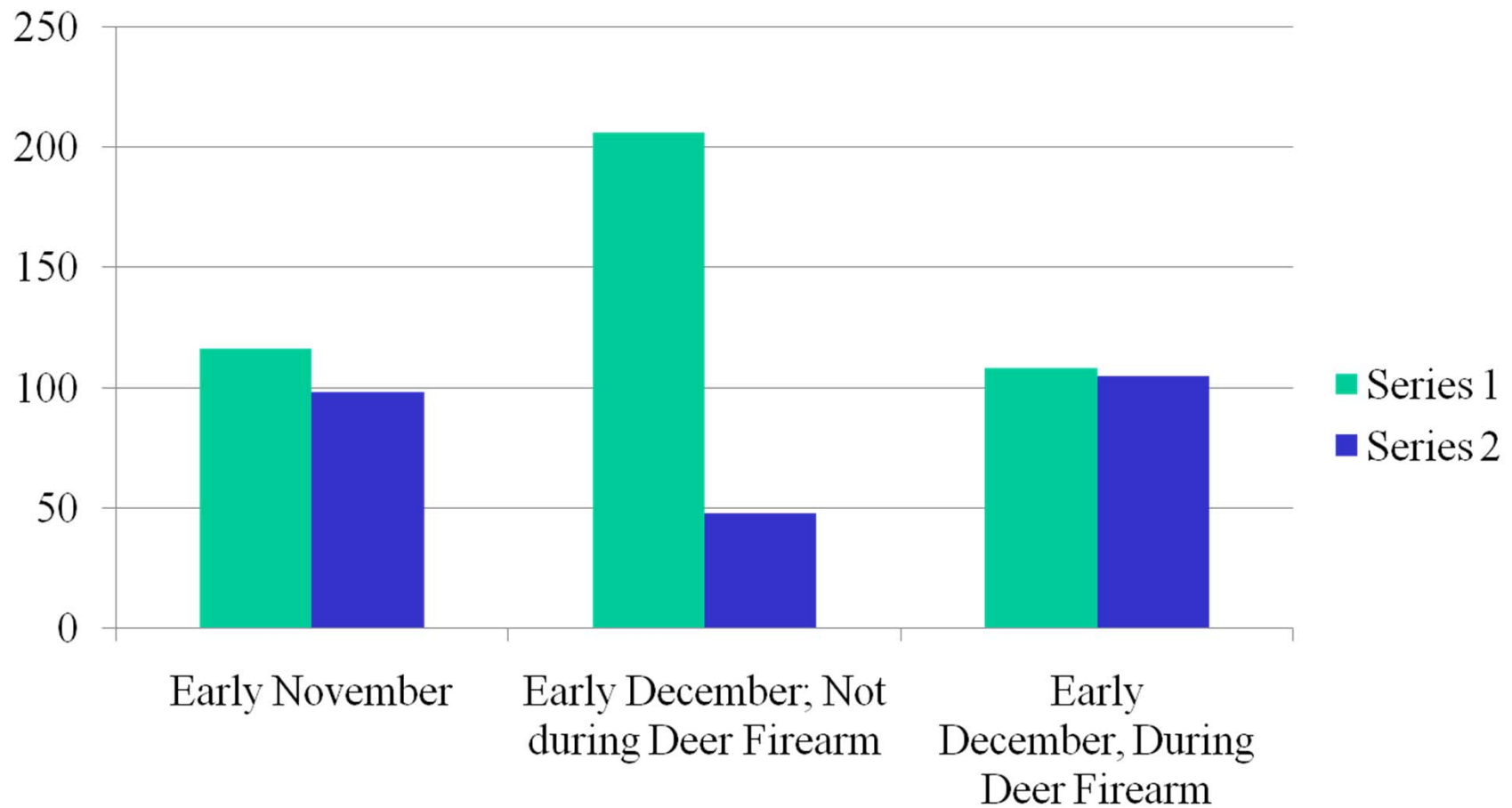
Preferred Opening Day of October Duck Season



Preferred Week for October Duck Season



Where to Place Extra Duck Days?



Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days



Suggested Days

Nov. 1 and Feb. 7

Suggested Bag Limit

6 ducks (certain species bag restrictions), 2 Canada geese, 2 brant, 25 light geese, and 15 coots.

Requirements

Must be accompanied by an unarmed, adult at least 21 years old. Adult may assist in calling, setting decoys, retrieving downed birds.

Duck Hunting Season

Federal Frameworks

Season length: 60 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 27 - Jan. 25 (Sunday)

Bag Limit: 6 per day

Suggested Season

Oct. 11 - Oct. 18

Nov. 8 - Nov. 28

Dec. 16 - Jan. 24

Suggested Daily Bag Limit

6 per day (including mergansers) but no more than 5 Long-tailed Ducks, 4 Scoters, 4 Mallards (2 hens), 3 Wood Ducks, 2 Pintails, 2 Redheads, 2 Scaup, 2 Hooded Mergansers, 1 Canvasback, 1 Black Duck (during Black Duck season), 1 Mottled Duck, and 1 Fulvous Tree Duck.

Federal Framework

Season Length: 60 days

Bag Limit: 1

Suggested Season

- Nov. 8 - Nov. 28
Dec. 16 - Jan. 24

Suggested Bag Limit

1 per day

No open season for Black Ducks in October provides protection to Maryland's breeding population. Migrant stocks begin arriving in early November.

Black Duck Season within Regular Duck Season



Sea Duck Harvest Potential Assessment

Estimated 91% chance that Common Eiders are being overharvested.

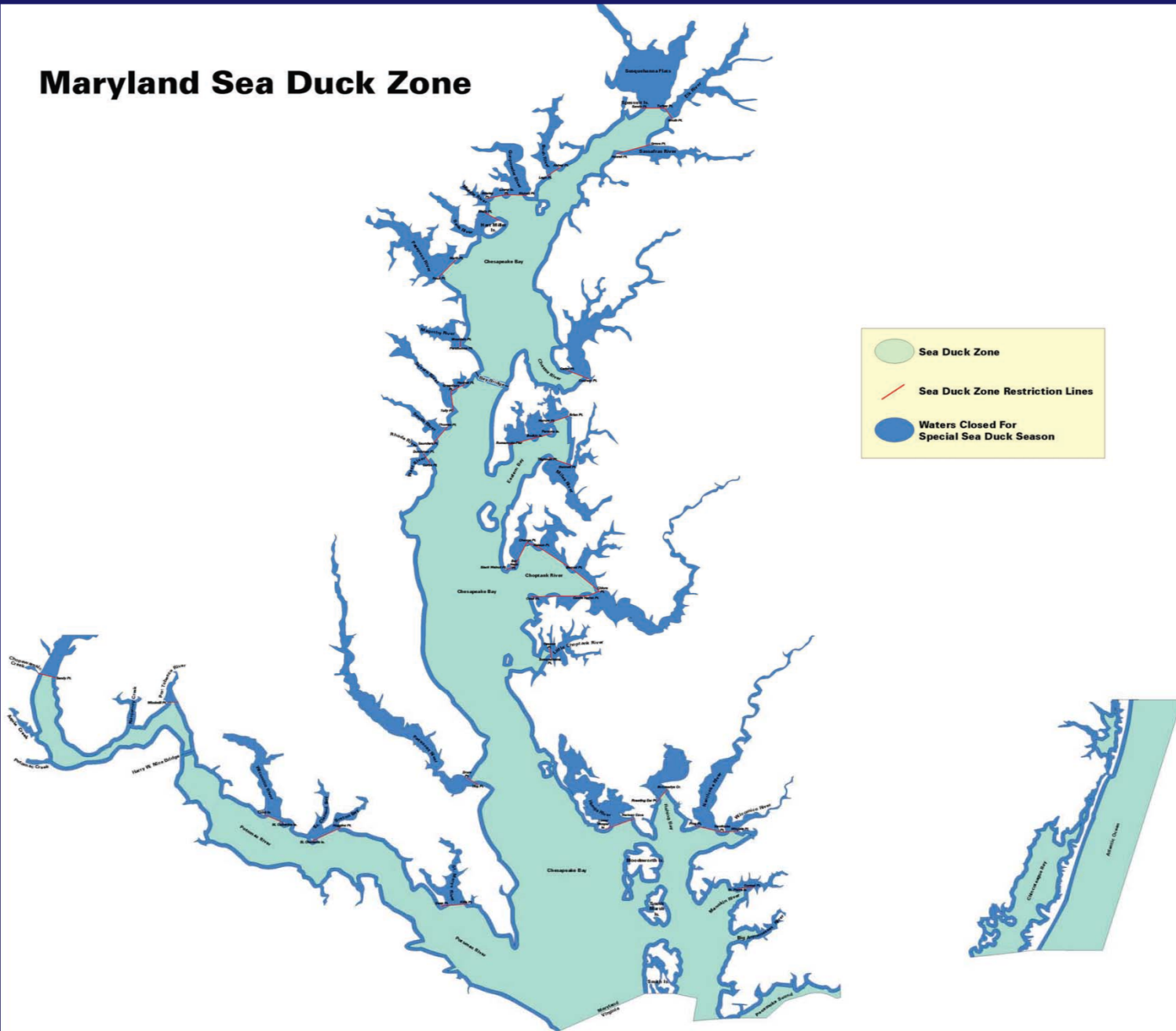
Eider duckling survival is low, cause is unknown.

Estimated 37% chance that Black Scoters are being overharvested.

Discussion underway to develop changes to harvest regulations 2-3 years, i.e., eliminate 107-day special sea duck season.



Maryland Sea Duck Zone



Federal Framework

Season Length: 107 days

Outside Dates: Sept. 15 - Jan. 31

Bag Limit: 7 per day, no more than 4 Scoters

Suggested Season
Oct. 1 - Jan. 31

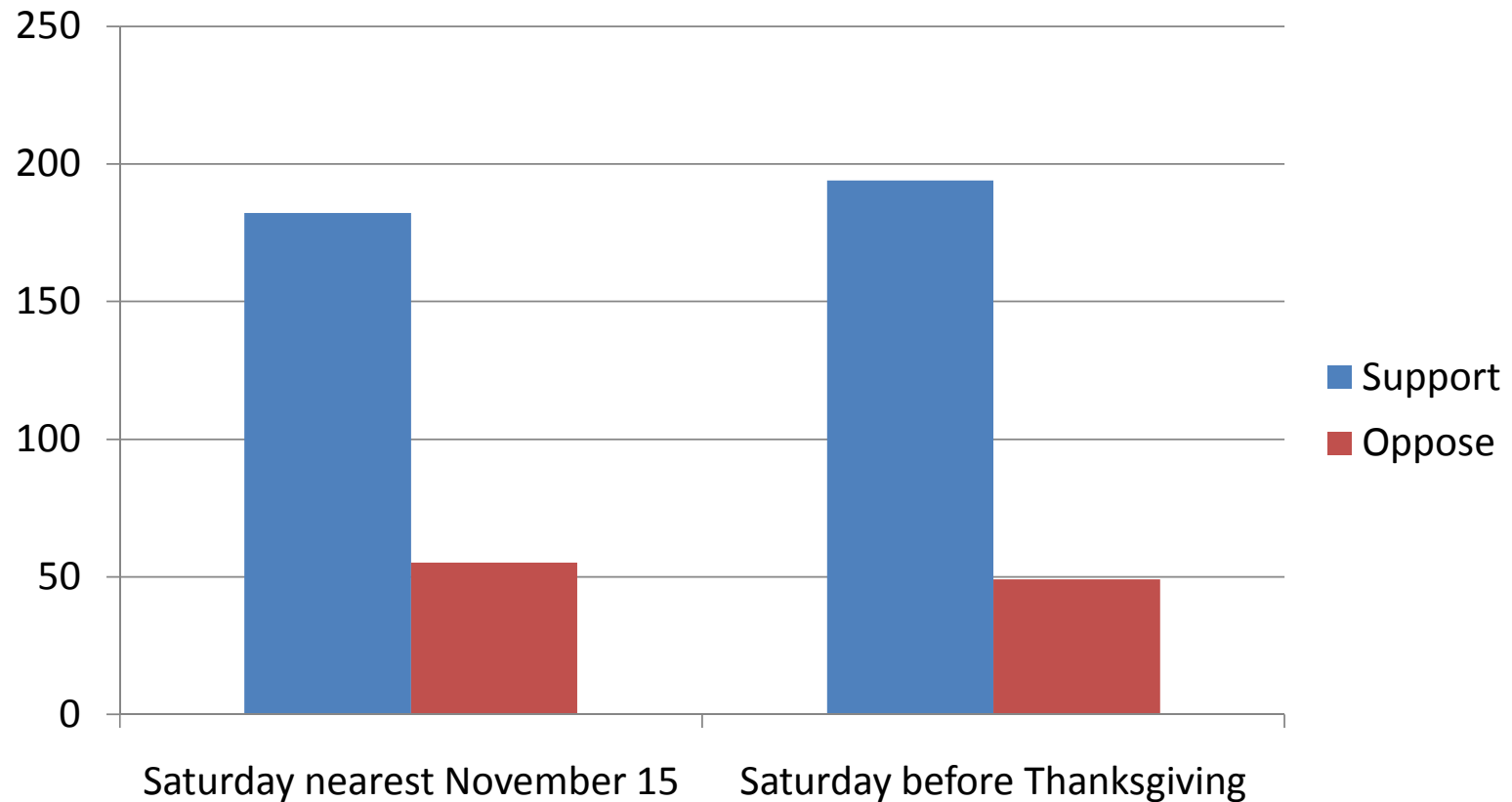
Suggested Bag Limit
5 per day, no more than 4
scoters

Special Sea Duck Hunting Season

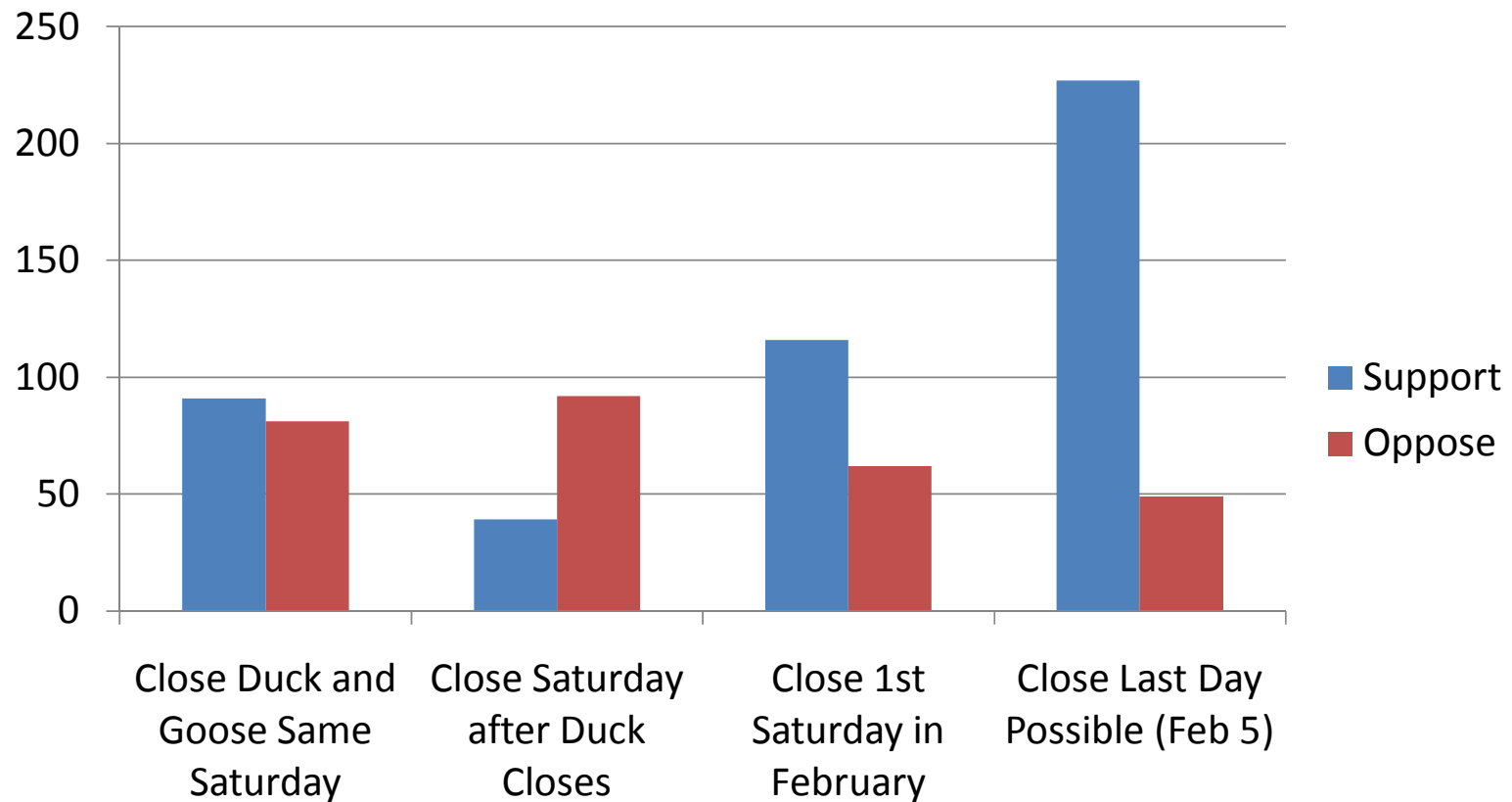
(Sea Duck Zone only)



Preferred Opening Day for AP Canada Goose Season



Preferred Closing Day AP Canada Goose Season



AP Canada Goose Hunting Season

Federal Framework

Season Length: 50 days

Outside Dates: Nov. 15 - Feb. 5

Bag Limit: 2 per day

Suggested Season

Nov. 22 - Nov. 28

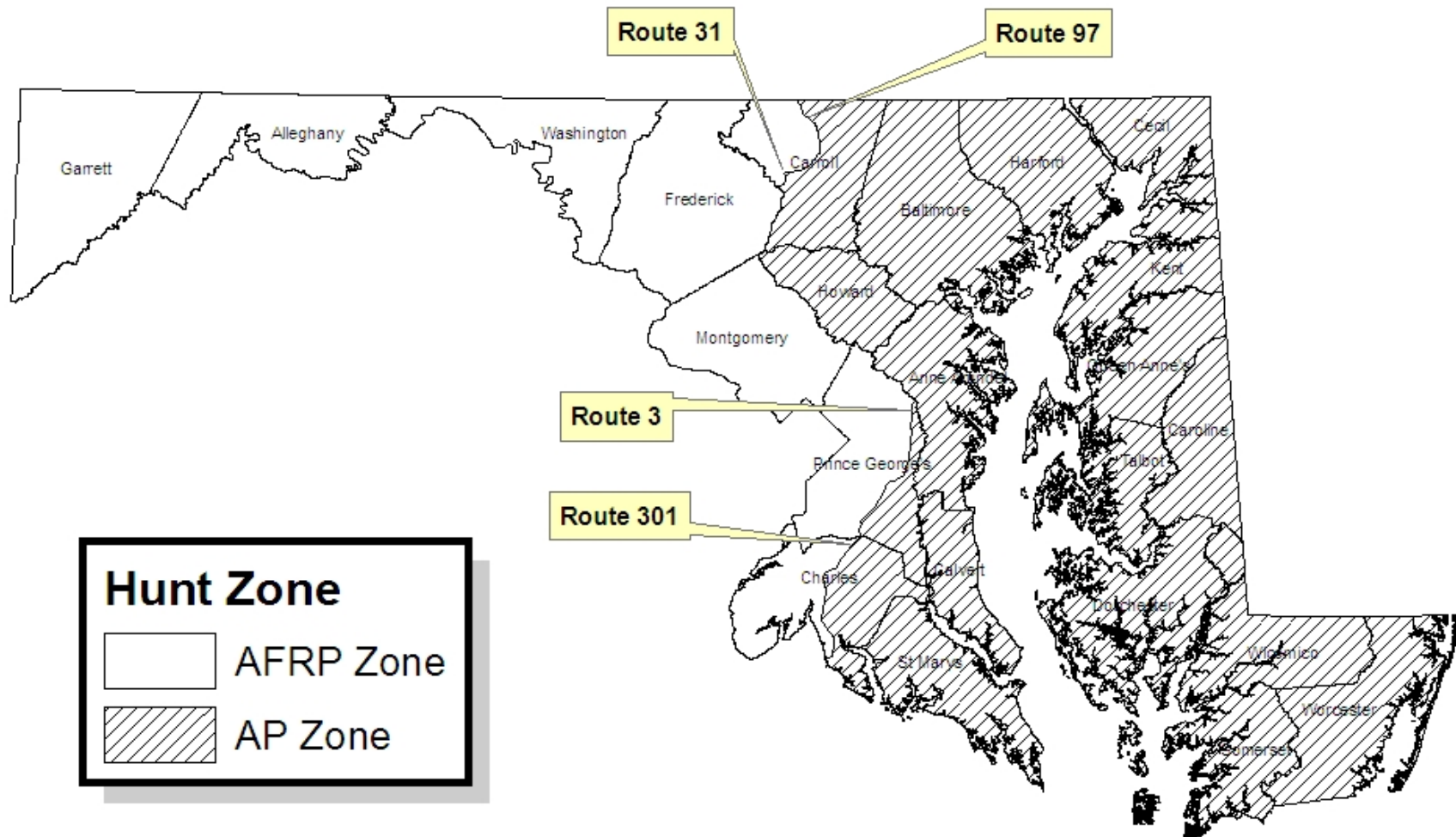
Dec. 16 - Feb. 4

Suggested Bag Limit

2 per day



Regular Canada Goose Hunt Zones in Maryland



Atlantic Flyway Resident Population Canada Goose Hunting Season Regular Season



Federal Framework

Season Length: 80 days

Outside Dates: Nov. 15 - Mar. 10

Bag Limit: 5 per day

Suggested Season

Nov. 22 - Nov. 28

Dec. 16 - Mar. 10

Suggested Bag Limit

5 per day

Atlantic Brant Hunting Season



Federal Framework

Season Length: 30 days

Bag Limit: 2 per day

Suggested Season

Dec. 20 - Jan. 3

Jan. 6 - 24

Suggested Bag Limit

2 per day

Light Goose Hunting Season

Federal Framework

Season Length: 107 days

Outside Dates: Oct. 1 - Mar. 10

Bag Limit: 25 per day

Suggested Season

Oct. 4 - Nov. 28

Dec. 15 - Feb 7

Feb. 7 (2nd youth day)

Suggested Bag Limit

25 per day



Light Goose Conservation Order Season

Suggested CO Season

Dec. 1 - Dec. 13

Feb. 9 - Apr. 11

Suggested Bag Limit

No bag limit

Hunters may use unplugged
shotguns and e-calls

Shooting hours extended to
1/2 hour after sunset

Participants must possess a Snow Goose Conservation Order Hunting Season Permit. Permits available from DNR sport license agents, online, or by phone for a \$5 fee.



Questions?

