

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Fish and Wildlife Service****50 CFR Part 20****RIN 1018-AE13****Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program; Participating States for the 1997-98 Season****AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.**ACTION:** Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Fish and Wildlife Service (hereinafter Service) herein proposes to amend the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (hereinafter Program) regulations. The Service plans to add Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas (beginning with the 1997-98 hunting season) to the list of participating States. This regulatory action will continue to require all licensed hunters who hunt migratory game birds in participating States to register as migratory game bird hunters and provide their name, address, and date of birth to the State licensing authority. Hunters will be required to have evidence of current participation in the Program on their person while hunting migratory game birds in participating States. The quality and extent of information about harvests of migratory game birds must be improved in order to better manage these populations. Hunters' names and addresses are necessary to provide a sample frame for voluntary hunter surveys to improve harvest estimates for all migratory game birds. States will gather migratory bird hunters' names and addresses and the Service will conduct the harvest surveys.

DATES: The written comment period for the proposed rule will end on May 13, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to the Chief, Office of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 10815 Loblolly Pine Drive, Laurel, Maryland 20708-4028. Comments received will be available for public inspection during normal business hours in Building 158, 10815 Loblolly Pine Drive (Gate 4, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center), Laurel, Maryland 20708-4028.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul I. Padding, Office of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 10815 Loblolly Pine Drive, Laurel, Maryland 20708-4028, (301) 497-5980, FAX (301) 497-5981.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of this rule is to expand the

Program to include the States of Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas beginning in the 1997-98 hunting season.

Background

The purpose of this cooperative Program is to annually obtain a nationwide sample frame of migratory bird hunters, from which representative samples of hunters will be selected and asked to participate in voluntary harvest surveys. State wildlife agencies will provide the sample frame by annually collecting the name, address, and date of birth of each licensed migratory bird hunter in the State. To reduce survey costs and to identify hunters who hunt less commonly-hunted species, States will also request that each migratory bird hunter provide a brief summary of his or her migratory bird hunting activity for the previous year. States will send this information to the Service, and the Service will sample hunters and conduct national hunter activity and harvest surveys.

A notice of intent to establish the Program was published in the June 24, 1991, Federal Register (56 FR 28812). A final rule that established the Program and initiated a 2-year pilot phase in three volunteer States (California, Missouri, and South Dakota) was published in the March 19, 1993, Federal Register (58 FR 15093). The pilot phase was completed following the 1993-94 migratory bird hunting seasons in California, Missouri, and South Dakota.

A State/Federal technical group was formed to evaluate Program requirements, the different approaches used by the pilot States, and the Service's survey procedures during the pilot phase. Changes incorporated into the Program as a result of the technical group's evaluation were specified in a final rule, published in the October 21, 1994, Federal Register (59 FR 53334), that initiated the implementation phase of the Program.

Currently, all licensed hunters who hunt migratory game birds in participating States are required to have a Program validation, indicating that they have identified themselves as migratory bird hunters and have provided the required information to the State wildlife agency. Hunters must provide the required information to each State in which they hunt migratory birds. Validations are printed on or attached to the annual State hunting license or on a State-specific supplementary permit. The State may charge hunters a handling fee to compensate hunting-license agents and

to cover the State's administrative costs for the Program.

The State/Federal technical group continues to evaluate the Program to determine the adequacy and timeliness of the sample frame and the time burden, cost, and other impacts on hunters, State license agents, State wildlife agencies, and the Service. Emphasis is currently on the time requirement for the sample frame and on alternative survey methods for special groups of unlicensed hunters (e.g., junior and senior hunters).

The Service's survey design calls for hunting-record forms to be distributed to hunters selected for the survey before they forget the details of their hunts. Because of this design requirement, States have only a short time to obtain hunter names and addresses from license vendors and to provide those names and addresses to the Service. Currently, participating States must send the required information to the Service within 30 calendar days of issuance of the hunting license or permit.

The Service has requested the cooperation of participating States to facilitate obtaining harvest estimates for hunters who are exempted from a permit requirement and those that are also exempted from State licensing requirements. This includes several categories of hunters such as junior hunters, senior hunters, landowners, and other special categories. Because exemptions and the methods for obtaining harvest estimates for exempt groups vary from State to State, the Service will incorporate these methods into individual memoranda of understanding with participating States.

Excluding from the Program those hunters who are not required to obtain an annual State hunting license also excludes their harvest from the estimates. The level of importance of the excluded harvest on the resulting estimates depends on how many hunters are excluded and on the number of birds they bag. If the level of importance is significant, excluding these hunters will result in serious bias. Minimum survey standards are being developed for exempted categories. States may require exempted hunters to obtain permits (e.g., Maryland required exempted hunters to obtain permits upon entry to the Program in 1994).

Previously, the Service stated that States will continue to be added to the Program until all States participate in 1998. A suggested implementation schedule was published in the October 21, 1994, Federal Register (59 FR 53334), and was revised in a final rule published in the August 30, 1996,

Federal Register (61 FR 46350). Ohio has requested a one-year delay to enable the State to implement improved license procedures that will better accommodate the Program.

Proposed Modifications to the Program

In addition to implementation of the Program in Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas, the Service proposes to modify the Program's implementation schedule by granting a one-year delay to Ohio.

NEPA Consideration

The establishment of the Harvest Information Program and options have been considered in the "Environmental Assessment: Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program." Copies of this document are available from the Service at the address indicated under the caption **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

On June 14, 1991, the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks concluded that the rule would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*). This rule will eventually affect about 3–5 million migratory game bird hunters when it is fully implemented. It will require licensed migratory game bird hunters to identify themselves and to supply their names, addresses, and birth dates to the State licensing authority. Additional information will be requested in order that they can be efficiently sampled for a voluntary national harvest survey. Hunters will be required to have evidence of current participation in the Program on their person while hunting migratory game birds.

The States may require a handling fee to cover their administrative costs. Many of the State hunting-license vendors are small entities, but this rule should not economically impact those vendors. Only migratory game bird hunters, individuals, would be required to provide this information, so this rule should not adversely affect small entities.

Collection of Information: Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program

As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3507 (d)), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has received approval for this collection of information, with approval number 1018–0015, with the expiration date of August 31, 1998.

The information to be collected includes: the name, address, and date of

birth of each licensed migratory bird hunter in each participating State. Hunters' names, addresses, and other information will be used to provide a sample frame for voluntary hunter surveys to improve harvest estimates for all migratory game birds. The Service needs and uses the information to improve the quality and extent of information about harvests of migratory game birds in order to better manage these populations.

All information is to be collected once annually from licensed migratory bird hunters in participating States by the State license authority. Participating States are required to forward the hunter information to the Service within 30 calendar days of license or permit issuance. Annual reporting and record-keeping burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.015 hours per response for 2,090,000 respondents, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Thus, the total annual reporting and record-keeping burden for this collection is estimated to be 31,350 hours. Organizations and individuals desiring to submit comments on the information collection requirements should direct them to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, ms 224—ARLSQ, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240, or the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project 1018–0015, Washington, DC 20503.

The Department considers comments by the public on this proposed collection of information in--

(1) Evaluating whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluating the accuracy of the Department's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhancing the quality, usefulness, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimizing the burden or the collection of information on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

OMB is required to make a decision concerning the collection of information

contained in these proposed regulations between 30 and 60 days after publication of this document in the Federal Register. Therefore, a comment to OMB is best assured of having its full effect if OMB receives it within 30 days of publication. This does not effect the deadline for the public to comment to the Department on the proposed regulations.

Executive Order 12866

This rule was not subject to Office of Management and Budget review under Executive Order 12866.

Unfunded Mandates

The Service has determined and certifies pursuant to the Unfunded Mandates Act, 2 U.S.C. 1502 *et seq.*, that this rulemaking will not impose a loss of \$100 million or more in any given year on local or state governments or private entities.

Civil Justice Reform

The Department has determined that these proposed regulations meet the applicable standards provided in Sections 3(a) and 3(b)(2) of Executive Order 12988.

Authorship

The primary author of this rule is Paul I. Padding, Office of Migratory Bird Management.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 20

Exports, Hunting, Imports, Reporting and record keeping requirements, Transportation, Wildlife.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 20 is proposed to be amended as set forth below.

PART 20—MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING

1. The authority citation for part 20 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 703–711, 16 U.S.C. 712, and 16 U.S.C. 742 a–j.

2. In Section 20.20 paragraphs (a), (b) and (e) are revised to read as follows:

§ 20.20 Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program.

(a) *Information collection requirements.* The collections of information contained in § 20.20 have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget under 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.* and assigned clearance number 1018–0015. The information will be used to provide a sampling frame for the national Migratory Bird Harvest Survey. Response is required from licensed hunters to obtain the benefit of hunting migratory game birds. Public reporting

burden for this information is estimated to average 0.015 hours per response for 2,090,000 respondents, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Thus, the total annual reporting and record-keeping burden for this collection is estimated to be 31,350 hours. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, MS-224 ARLSQ, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC 20240, or the Office of Management and

Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project 1018-0015, Washington, DC 20503.

(b) *General provisions.* Each person hunting migratory game birds in Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Vermont shall have identified himself or herself as a migratory bird hunter and given his or her name, address, and date of birth to the respective State hunting licensing authority and shall have on his or her person evidence, provided by that State, of compliance with this requirement.

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(e) *Implementation schedule.* The Service is completing the

implementation of this Program in 1998, which will incorporate approximately 1.3 million additional migratory bird hunters. It is proposed that the following States participate in 1998:

—Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Dated: March 5, 1997.

Don Barry,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

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