

# Waterfowl Regulation and Season Dates 2021-2024

## Welcome to our Waterfowl Town Hall!

**April 1, 2021 6:00PM – 8:00PM**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is updating the state's waterfowl regulations and season dates and is looking for public input on proposed regulations and season dates

- Follow this link to submit your comments  
<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wildlife/waterfowl/index.html>



# This evening's agenda

- Welcome
- Town Hall Logistics, Project Background & Public Input
- Waterfowl Status & Proposed Regulations and Season Dates
- Q&A (in chat) and public comment (spoken)



Welcome

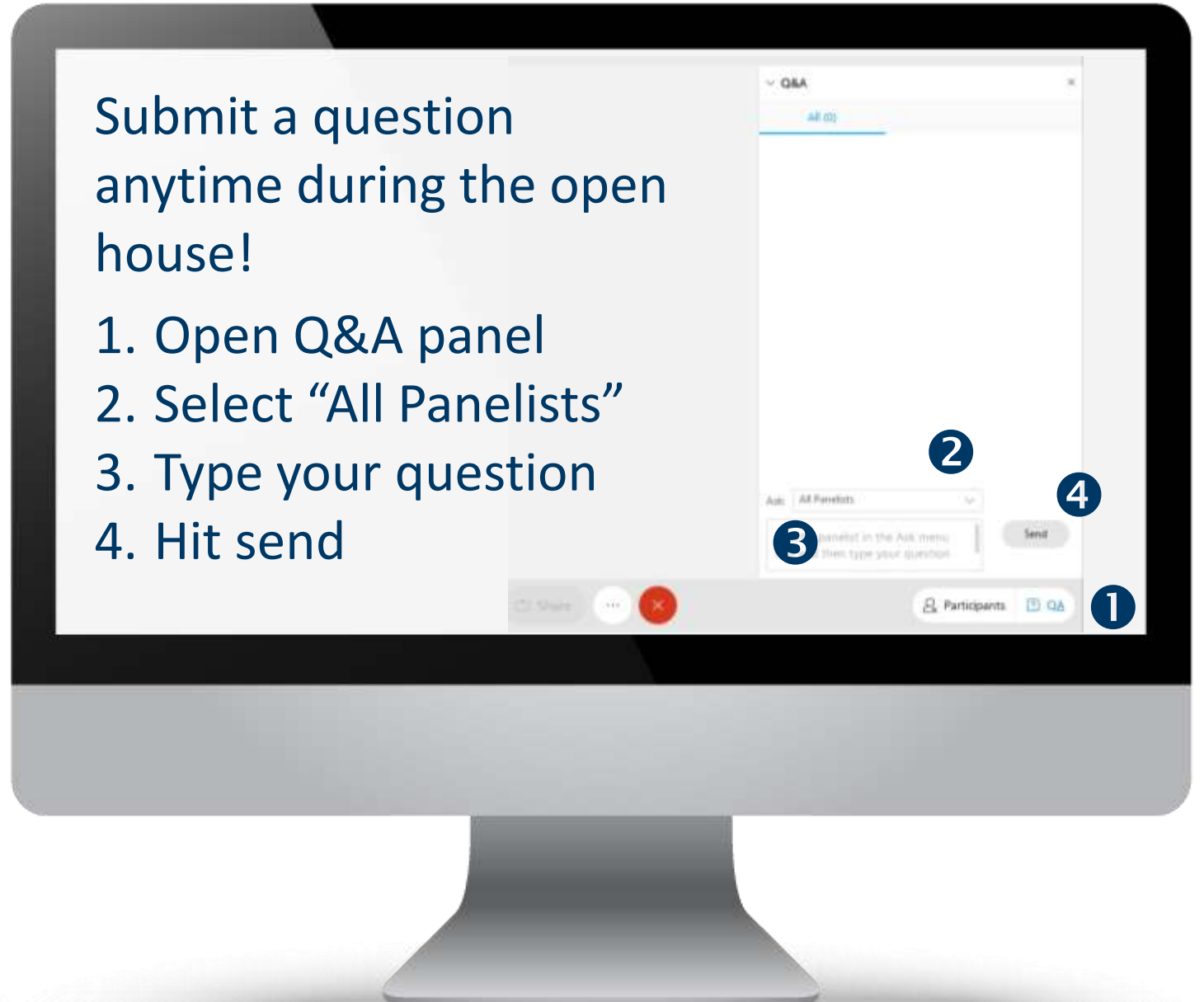
- You are muted
- Session is being recorded
- Time is limited for Q&A and public comment – please get in touch after the meeting if we miss you:
  - [steve.cordts@state.mn.us](mailto:steve.cordts@state.mn.us)
  - Take our public comment questionnaire at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wildlife/waterfowl/index.html>



# Q&A how-to

Submit a question  
anytime during the open  
house!

1. Open Q&A panel
2. Select “All Panelists”
3. Type your question
4. Hit send



# Public comment how-to

- You are muted
- Pre-registered speakers unmuted one at a time
- One minute limit
- To most effectively shape the plan, explain the “why” behind your comment, and share solutions/alternatives

# More information available online

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wildlife/waterfowl/waterfowl-public-input.html>

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## Proposed waterfowl regulation changes

### Your comments needed

The DNR wants your comments on these proposed changes to Minnesota's waterfowl hunting regulations:

- Increasing the Canada goose bag limit to five birds per day for the entire season;
- Extending legal shooting hours to sunset for the entire season, eliminating the 4 p.m. early season closure;
- Implementing a five-day early teal season (Sept. 4 - Sept. 8) as an experimental regulation for up to three years;
- Allowing statewide over-water goose hunting during the early September season; and
- Establishing season dates through the 2024 season for the north, central and south waterfowl hunting zones.



# Waterfowl Regulations and Season Dates 2021 - 2024

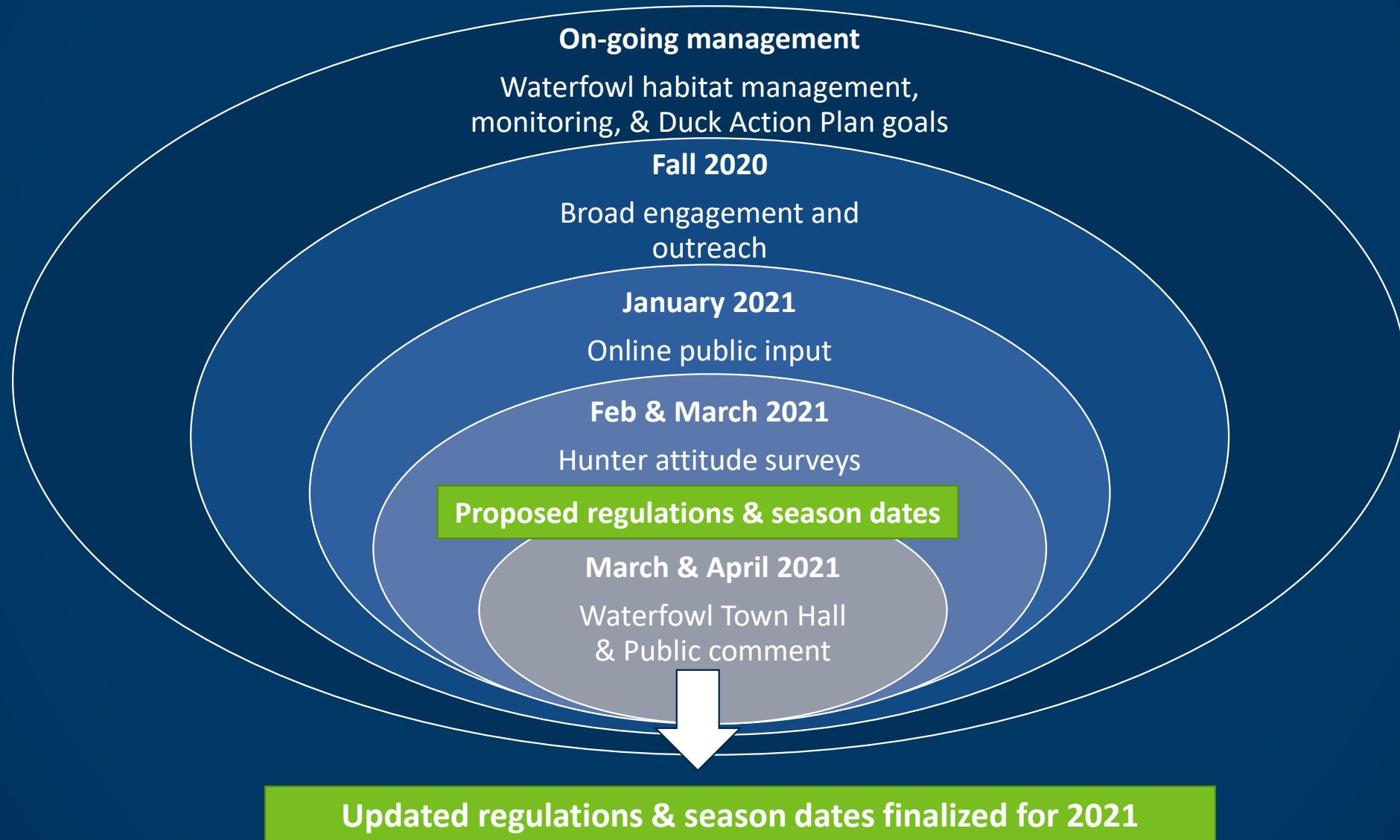


# Project Background

- Interest in a broad review of potential waterfowl season changes
- Focus on simplification and opportunity that is compatible with existing and future waterfowl populations



# Process and Timeline



# Feedback

- THANK YOU to everyone who has participated in the process so far!
  - Almost 4,000 responses to the online input
  - 6,864 hunters were selected for the hunter attitude survey
- Most people who participated in the online input expressed support of proposed regulation changes
- Preferences for season dates in the South Zone were mixed
- Preliminary results from the hunter attitude survey results are similar to the online input



## Population Status

# Waterfowl Town Hall



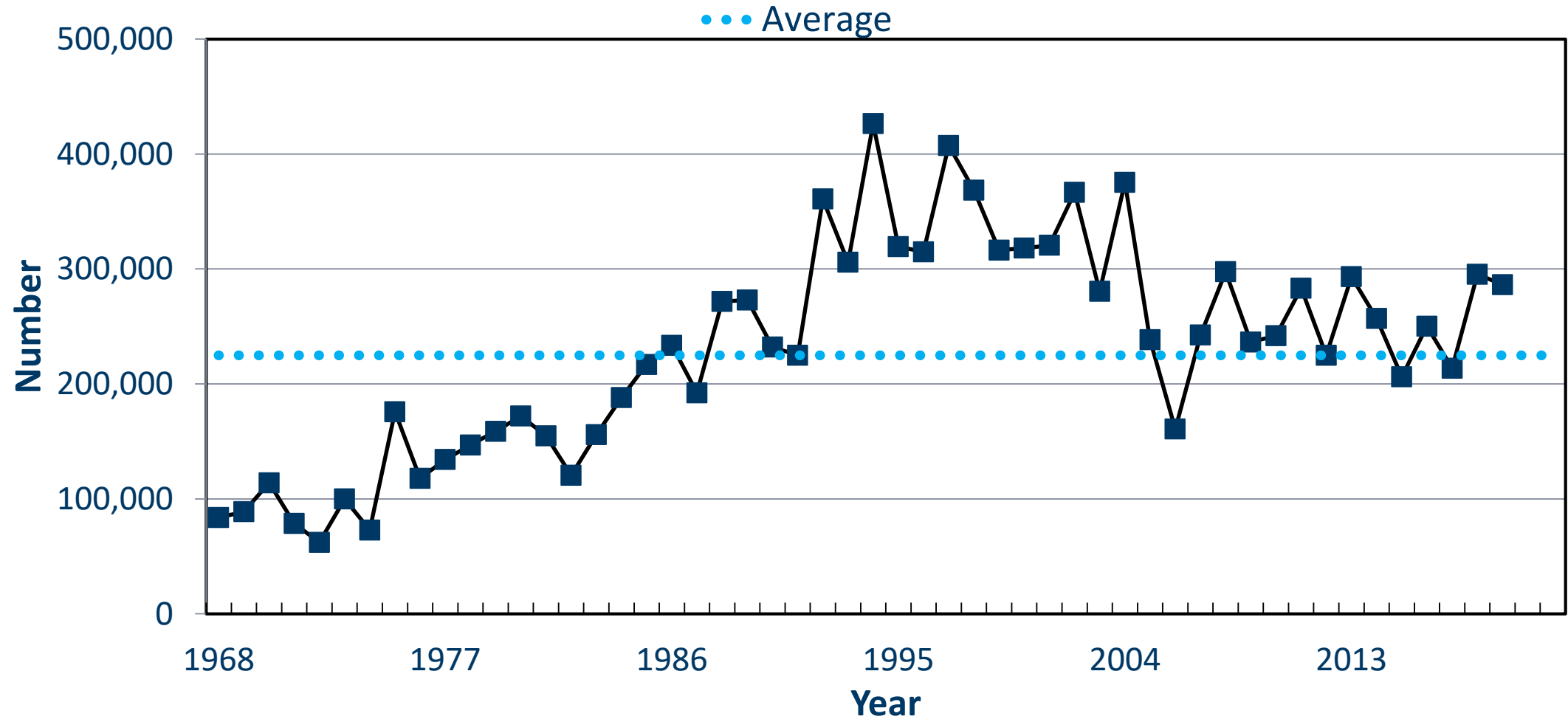


# Outline

- Waterfowl status
  - Populations, hunters, harvest
- Season and regulatory options
  - Background
  - Current status
  - Proposed regulatory changes



# Total breeding mallards in MN, 1968-2019

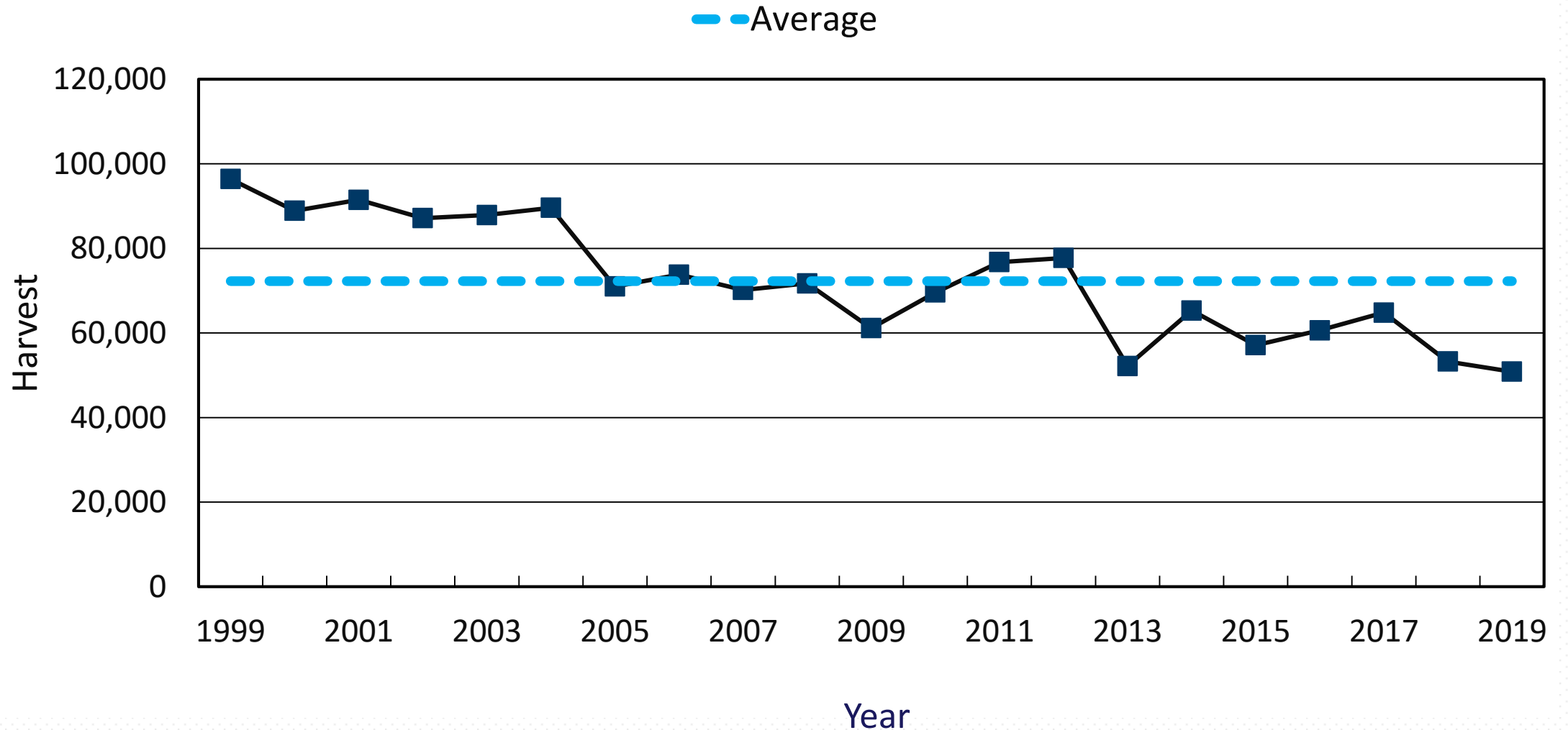


# Hunter numbers and duck harvest

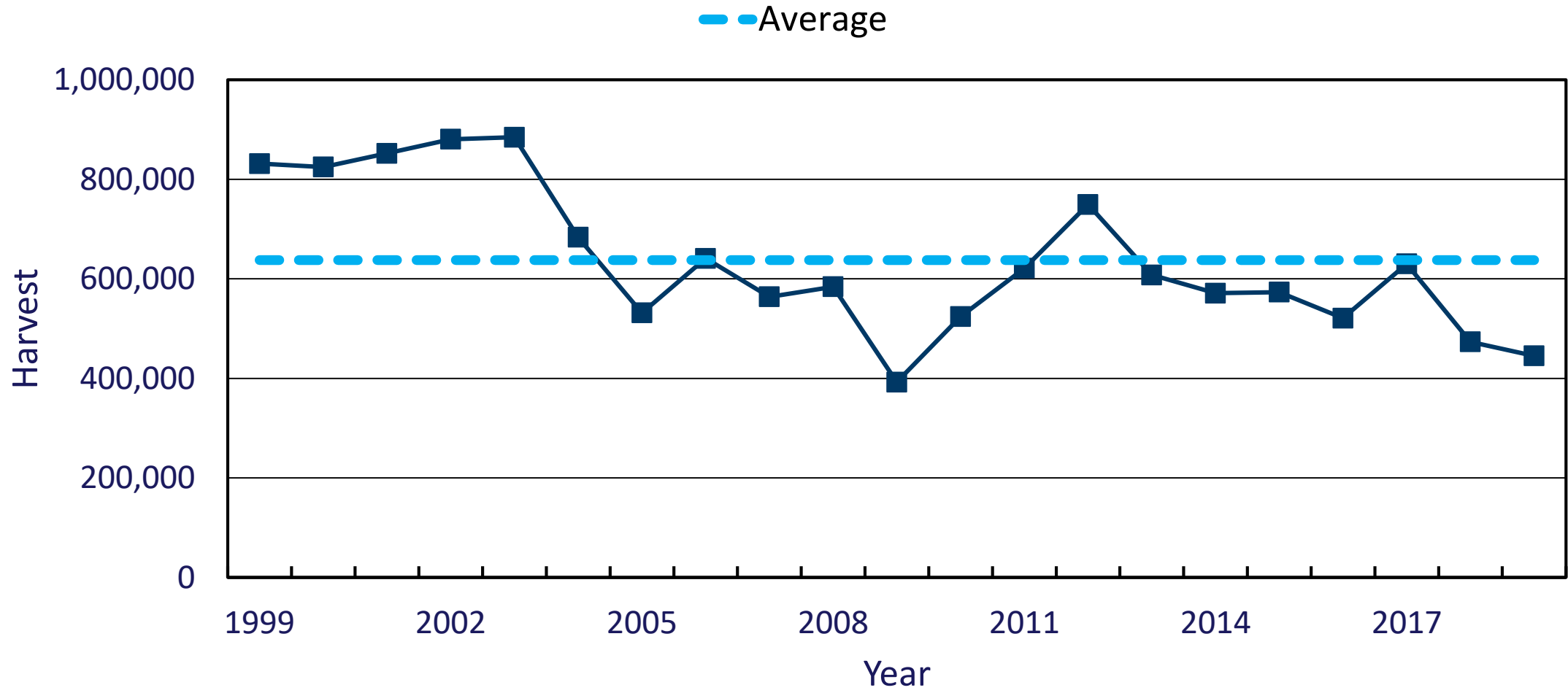




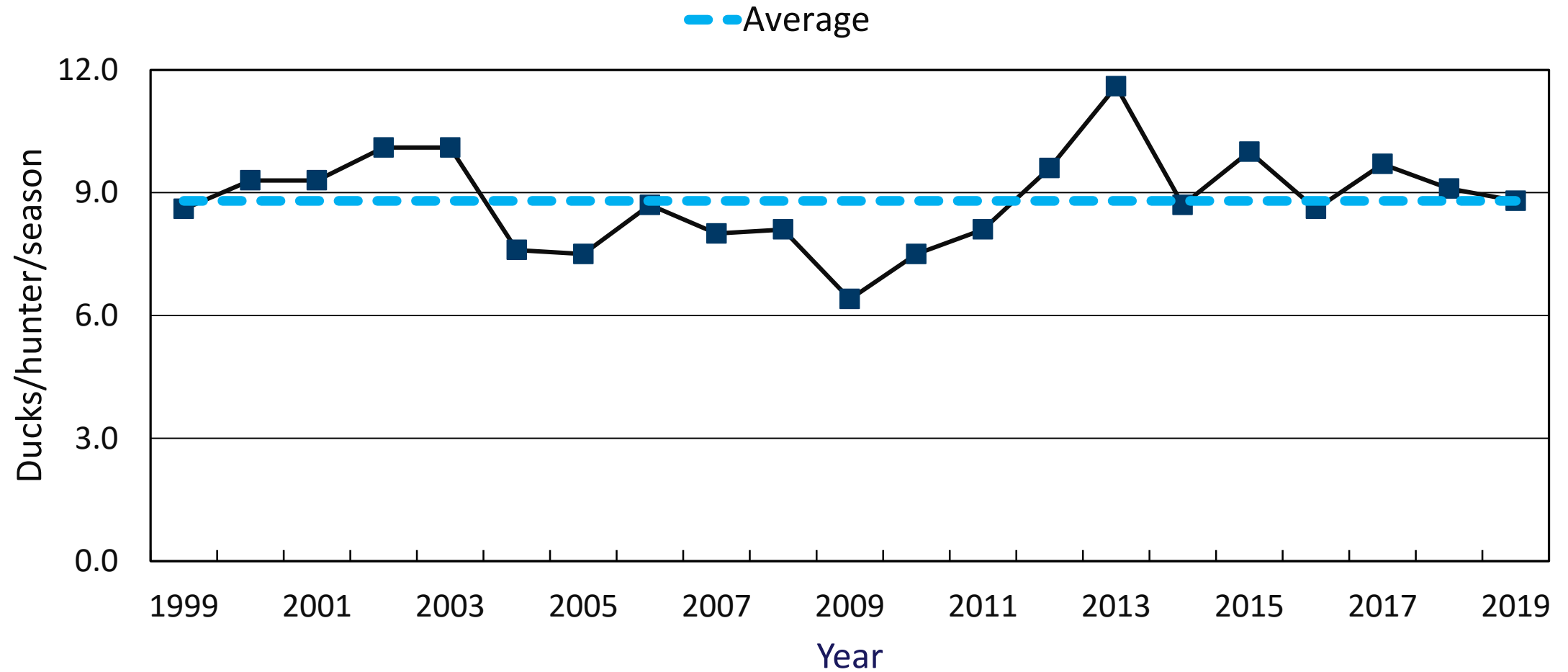
# Estimated duck hunter numbers in MN, 1999-2019



# Estimated total duck harvest in MN, 1999-2019

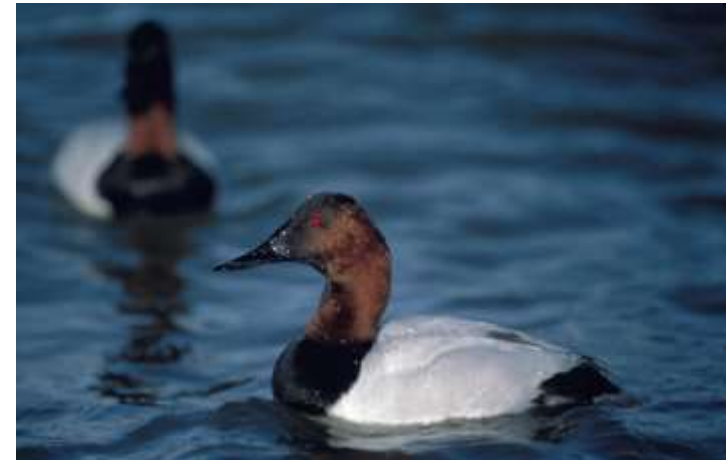


# Ducks/hunter/season in MN, 1999-2019



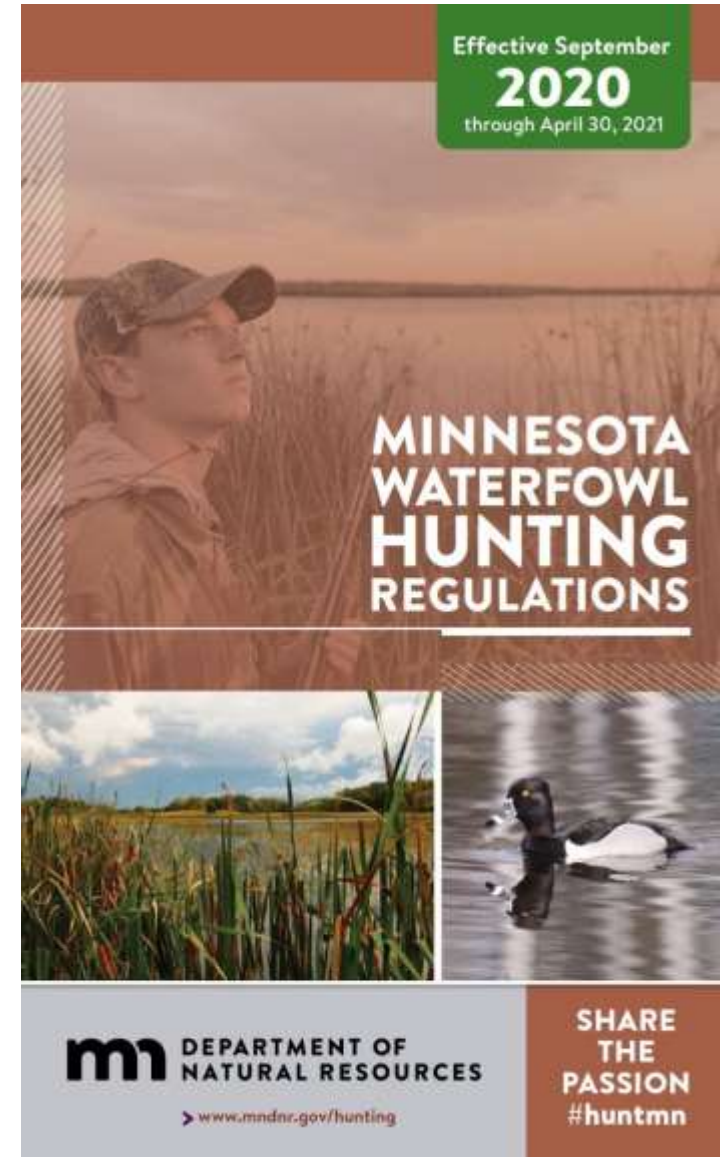
# Regulation Changes Considered

- Season dates and/or zones
- Early teal OR bonus teal limit
- Change 4 pm closure to sunset
- Expand open water duck hunting
- Create a military/veteran's hunt
- Increase Canada goose bag limit to 5
  - *already approved by FWS for all states*
- Remove restriction on over water goose hunting
- Motorized decoys  
*(current bill in Legislature – [SF814](#))*
- Allow trolling motors on Wildlife Management Areas  
*(need legislative action)*
- Create a 3-bird splash limit  
*(potential future option)*



# Waterfowl Regulations Process

- Federal Frameworks for Mississippi Flyway states
- Minnesota state rules and/or statutes
  - States can always use more conservative
- Public input/mail-out surveys
- DNR Waterfowl Committee
- Director, Wildlife Section Management Team
- Commissioner's Office



# Proposed regulation changes

1. Maintain current 3 zones but use 5 day split in South Zone (instead of 12)
2. Implement 5 day early teal season (Sept. 4 - Sept. 8)
3. Increase Canada goose bag limit to 5 birds/day for the entire season
4. Extend shooting hours to sunset (eliminate early season 4 pm closure)
5. Allow statewide over-water goose hunting during September season

\*\*Motorized decoy bill in state Legislature now



# Current zones and season splits

## History

MN first used zones in 2011

Every 5 years, FWS allows states to modify

States select from 4 options

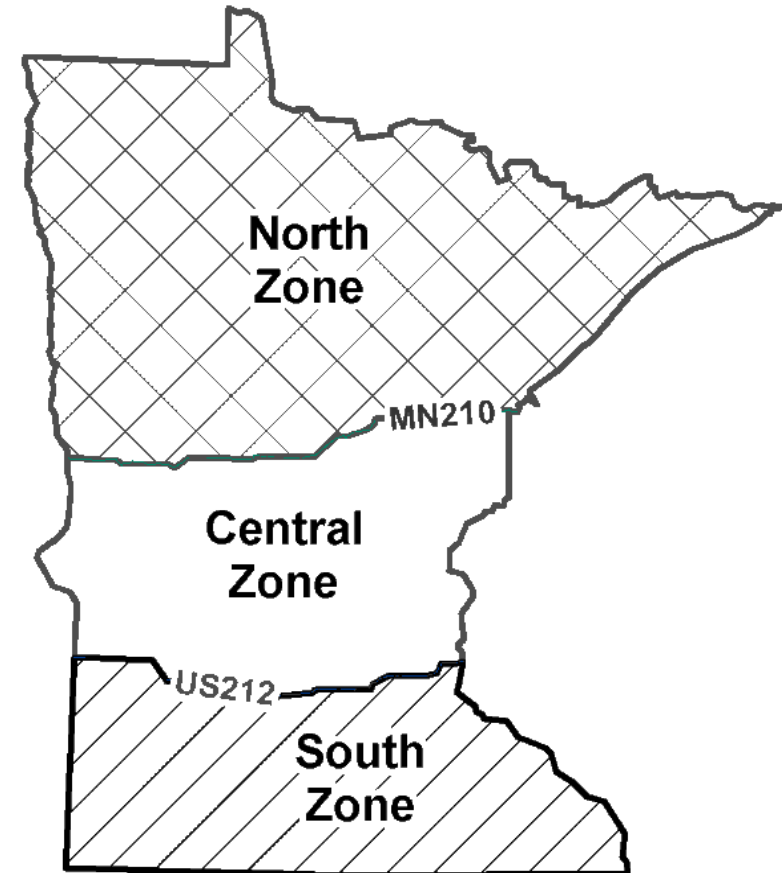
## Current

3 zones (North, Central, South)

North: no split

Central: 5 day split

South: 12 day split



# Season date preferences for 2021 by zone

What is your preference for season dates in 2021?	No split	5 day split	12 day split	No pref.
North zone hunters	79	11	7	4
Central zone hunters	37	43	9	10
South zone hunters	25	16	48	11
Hunters with no preference	21	14	8	58



# Proposed season dates for 2021

## **North Zone:**

Saturday September 25 to Tuesday November 23 (same as last year)

## **Central Zone:**

Same as South Zone

## **South Zone:**

Saturday September 25 to Sunday October 3, close 5 days, reopen  
Saturday October 9 to Sunday November 28

## Rationale:

- Lost opportunity in October with long 12 day split
- Usually frozen in South Zone before season ends



# Teal seasons

## History

1965-1967: Flyway-wide experiment

MN: Only season was 1965

2.5 days (noon Saturday-sunset Monday)

1969: MN, WI, MI, IA declared “production” states and not allowed early teal season

## Current

2014-2016: “Production” states allowed 3 year experimental teal season (MN did not participate)

Teal season regulations: up to 16 days from Sept. 1-30; up to 6 teal/day

Spy blind data required

Criteria: attempt rates at non-targets (non-teal) <25%

WI, MI, IA (2014-2016): 5.5%

# 2 bonus blue-winged teal

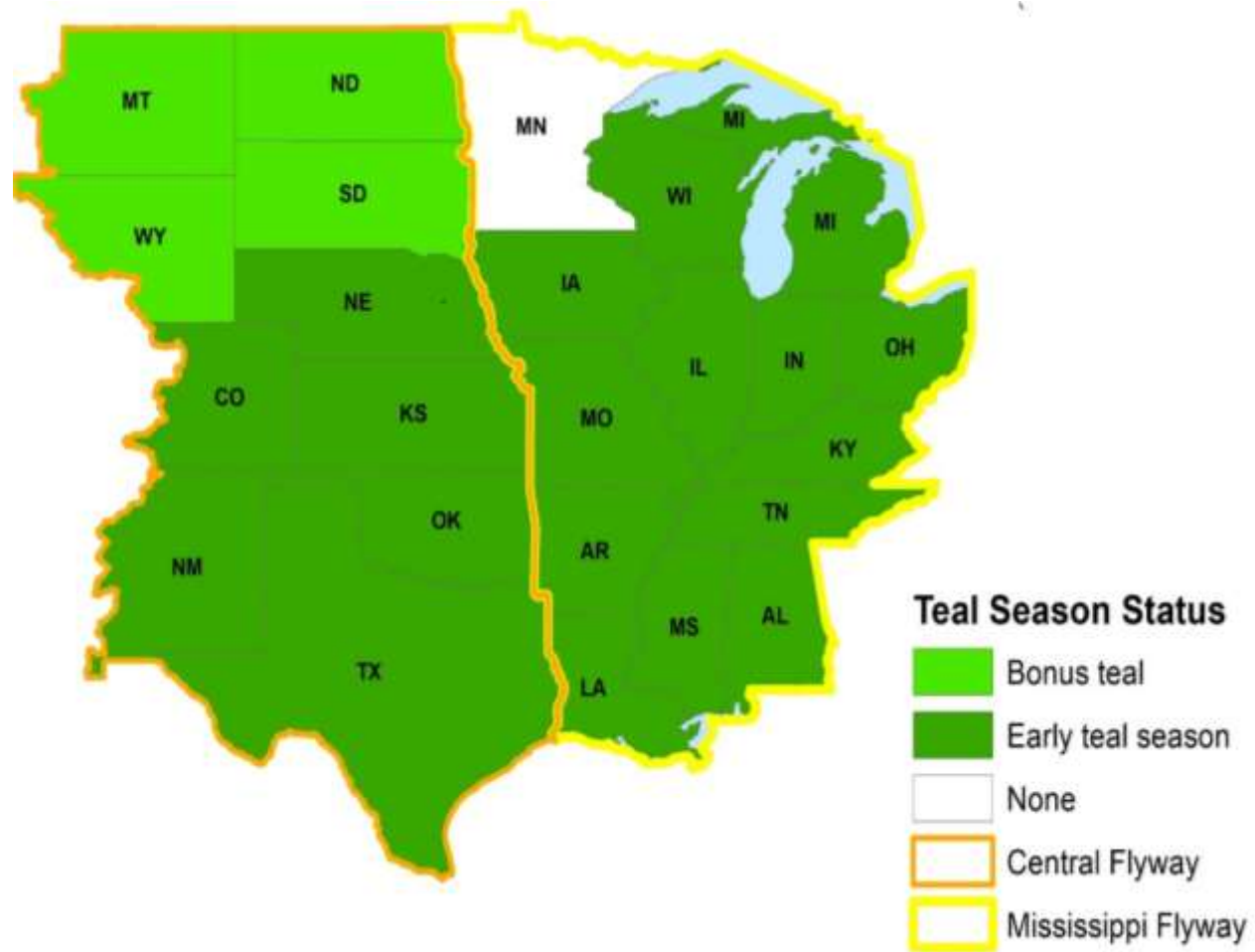
## History

- FWS discontinued “bonus” seasons in 1991
- But in 2014, states were allowed to use 2 bonus blue-winged teal in lieu of teal season
  - First 16 days of duck season
  - Duck 7 and 8 do not have to be blue-wings if you already have blue-wings in your bag

## Current

- Can be used in lieu of teal season
- Used in ND, SD, MT and WY

# Current teal and bonus blue-winged teal seasons



# Proposed teal season for 2021

- **Season dates (5 days): Saturday Sept. 4-Wed. Sept. 8**
- Bag limit: 6 teal (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon combined)
- Shooting hours: Sunrise to sunset
- 3 year experimental season (with spy blinds)

## Rationale:

- Supported by hunters and public input;
- Provides additional opportunity;
- 3 weeks prior to duck opener to minimize disturbance;
- Experimental so could discontinue any year

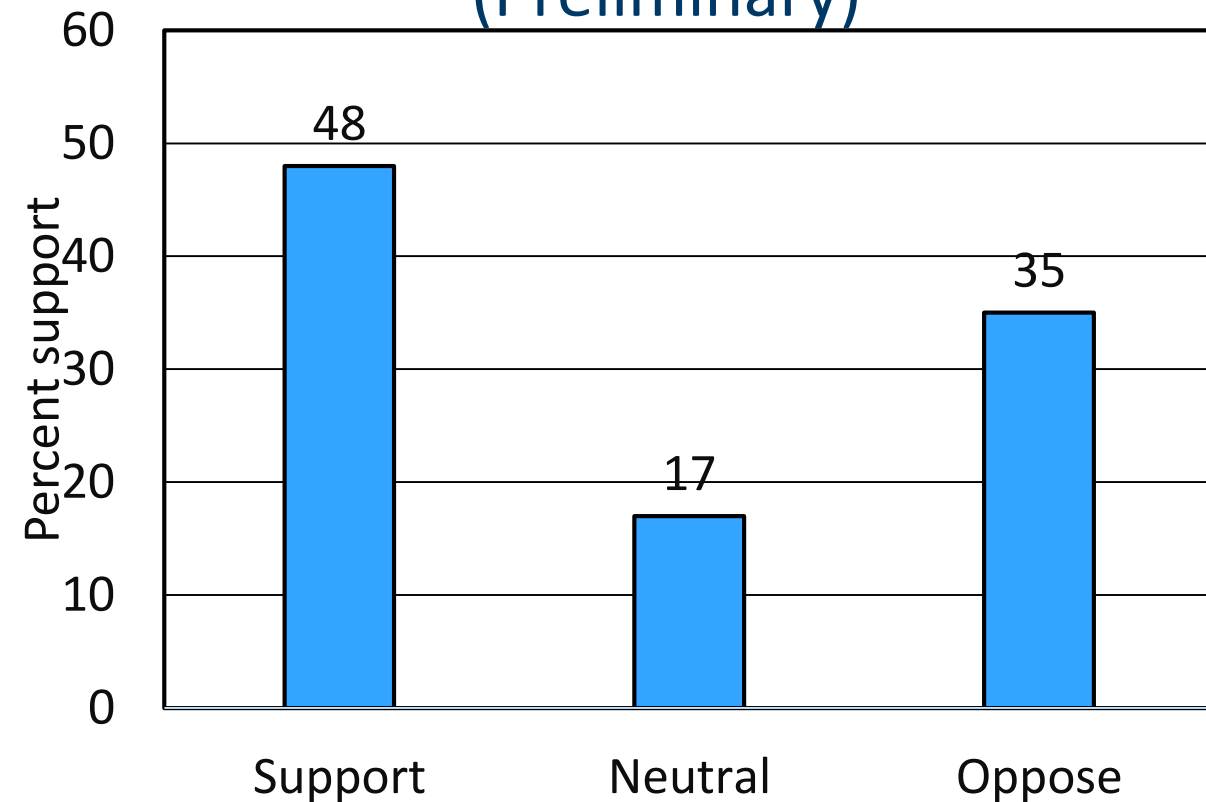


# Hunter support for teal season

## Public input questionnaire

Comments received	
Comments supportive of an early teal season	1,698
Comments not supportive of an early teal season	1,437

## Mail-out hunter survey (Preliminary)

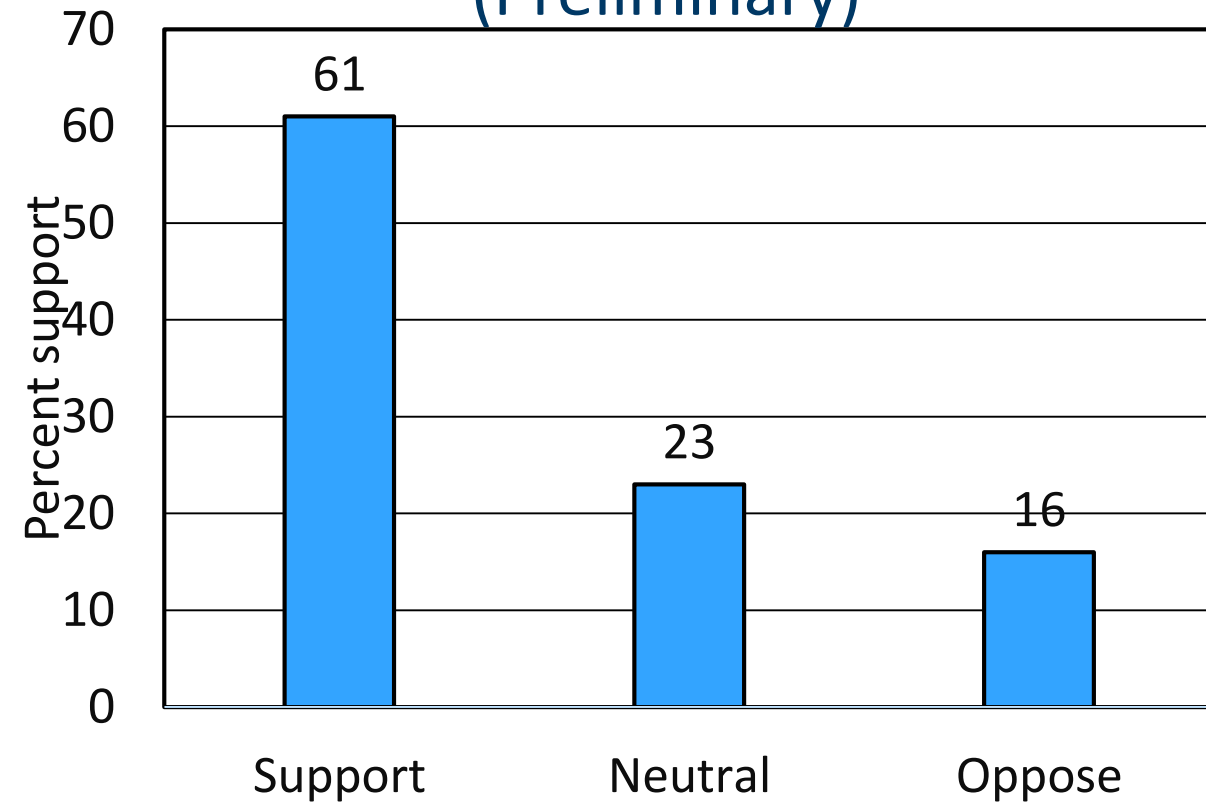


# Hunter support for 2 bonus blue-winged teal

## Public input questionnaire

Comments received	
Comments supportive of a bonus blue-winged teal season	1,733
Comments not supportive of a bonus blue-winged teal season	823

## Mail-out hunter survey (Preliminary)





# Increase Canada goose bag limit to 5/day

## Current

- Current bag limits: 5/day in Sept.; 3 day for remainder of season
- In 2021, all states in Mississippi Flyway are allowed 5 Canada geese/day entire season

## Rationale

- Provides additional opportunity
- Simplifies regulations
- Goose population remains high in MN/Flyway
- Well supported by hunters and public input



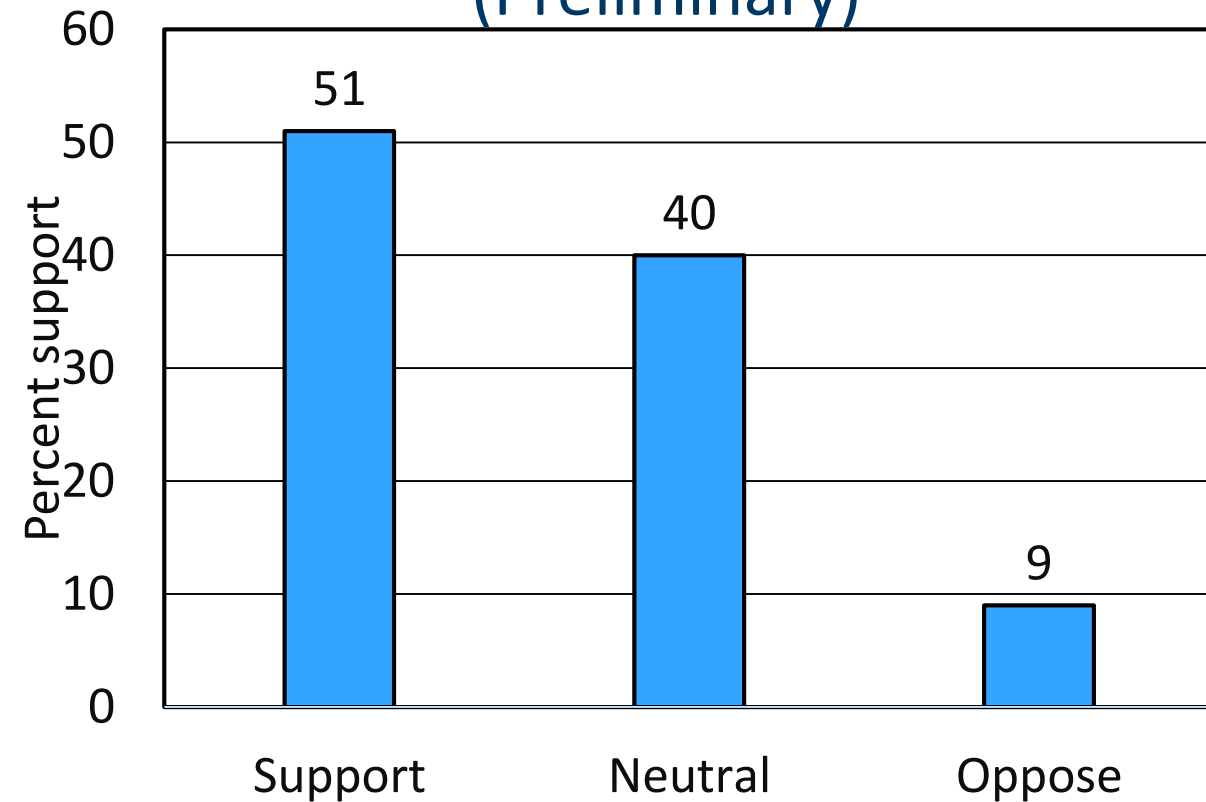


# Hunter support for 5 Canada goose bag limit

## Public input questionnaire

Comments received	
Comments supportive of 5 Canada goose bag limit	3,046
Comments not supportive of 5 Canada goose bag limit	292

## Mail-out hunter survey (Preliminary)



# Proposed shooting hours: end at sunset for entire season

## History

- 4 pm closure used in MN since 1973 for all or portions of duck season
- Initiated when breeding duck numbers were very low and hunter numbers and harvest very high
- Extends through Friday nearest Oct. 8 now

## Rationale:

- Provides additional opportunity
- Simplifies regulations
- Well supported by hunters and public input

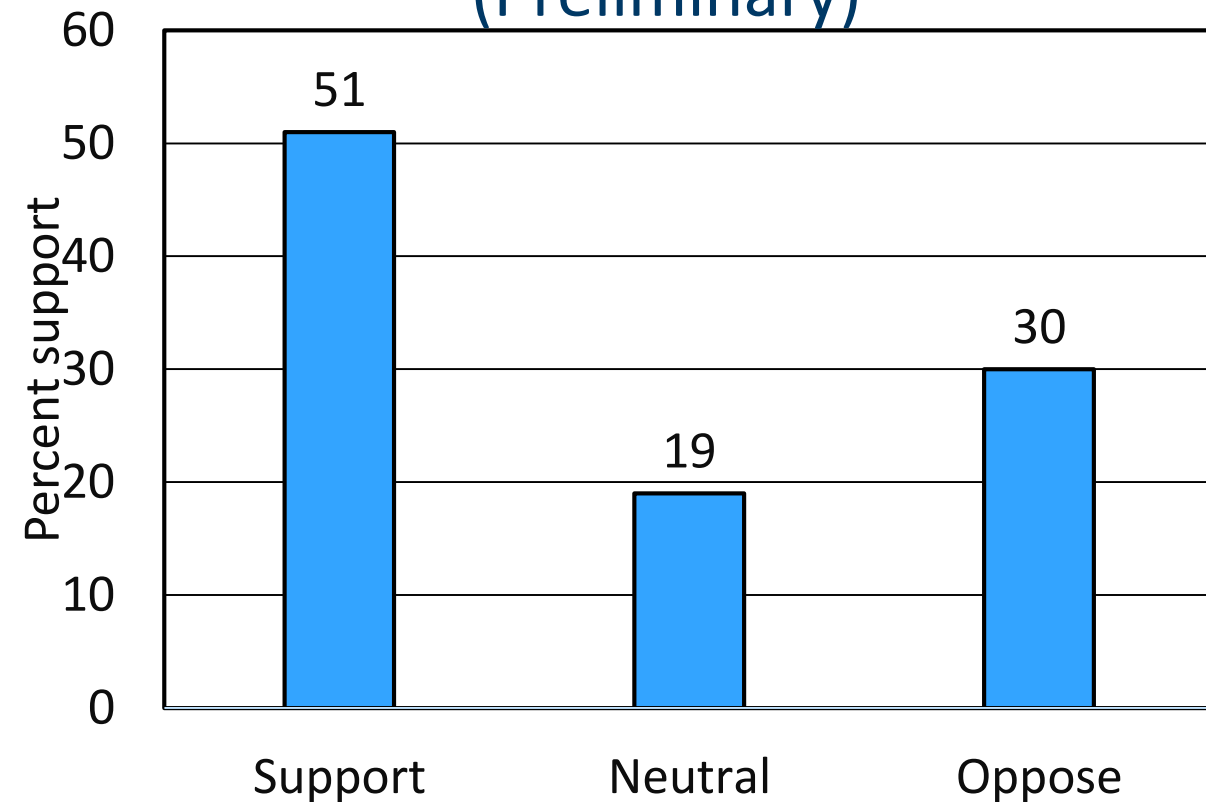


# Hunter support for sunset shooting hours season-long

## Public input questionnaire

Comments received	
Comments supportive of sunset shooting hours season-long	2,383
Comments not supportive of sunset shooting hours season-long	871

## Mail-out hunter survey (Preliminary)



# Allow overwater goose hunting statewide in September

## History

- Restricted statewide when early Sept. seasons started in 1987

## Current

- No hunting within 100 yards of surface water in NW zone, Carlos Avery WMA, Swan lake, and Ocheda refuge

## Rationale

- Provides additional opportunity
- Simplifies regulations
- Well supported by hunters and public input
- Will have to drop if teal season opens

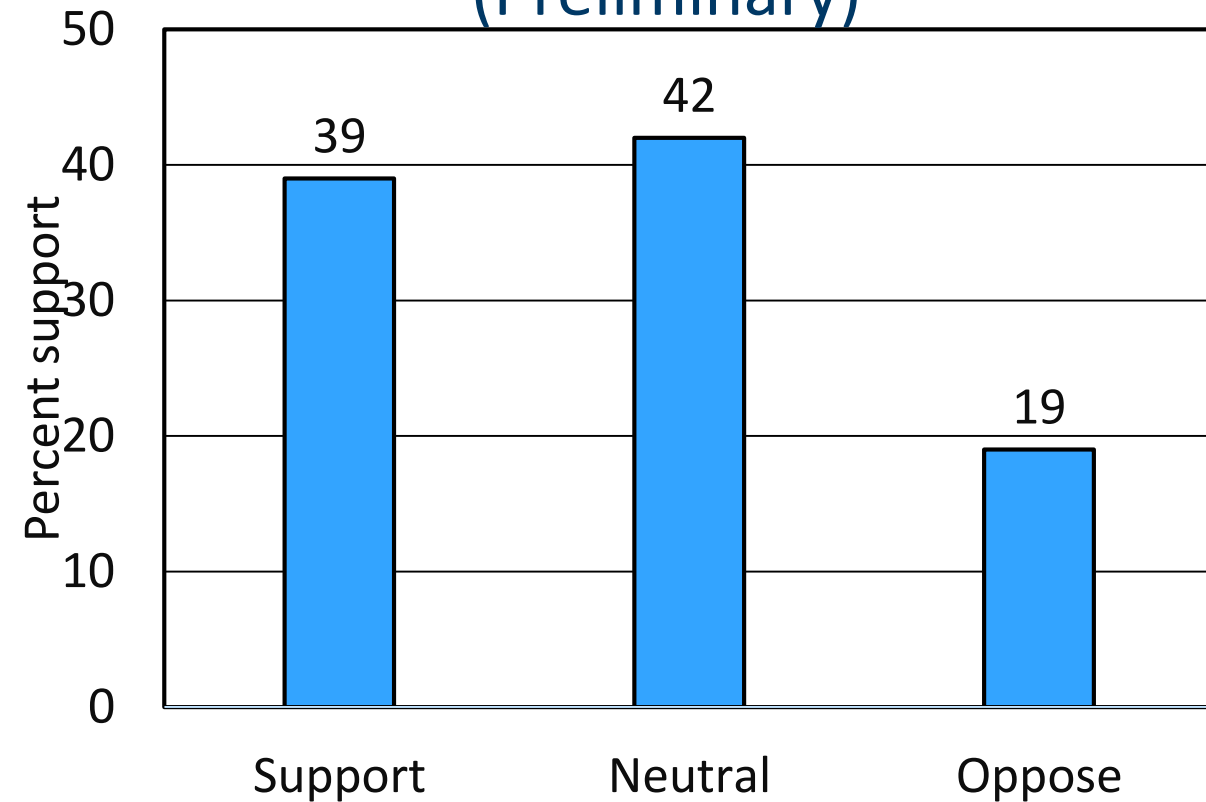


# Hunter support for overwater goose hunting statewide in Sept.

## Public input questionnaire

Comments received	
Comments supportive of overwater goose hunting statewide in Sept.	1,904
Comments not supportive of overwater goose hunting statewide in Sept.	605

## Mail-out hunter survey (Preliminary)



# Motorized decoys: Legislative item

## History

- First restricted in MN in 2002
- Initial concerns over effectiveness and increased harvest and/or increased use by hunters

## Current

- No motorized decoys through Sat. nearest Oct. 8 and on state WMAs season-long
- Current bill in Legislature – [SF814](#)



# Regulations considered but not recommended for change

- Expanded open water duck hunting
- Active duty military/veteran's hunt
- Allow trolling motors on state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)
- 3 bird splash duck limit (no species/sex restrictions)



# Open water duck hunting: no change

## History

- Restricted in MN since 1915

## Current

- Must be in partially concealing vegetation
- In 2014, allowed on Mille Lacs, Lake Pepin, Lake Superior, and Lake of the Woods

## Rationale

- Very few requests from hunters to consider expanding to other lakes/statewide





# Military/veteran's hunt: no change

## History

- Authorized by US Congress in 2019
- Up to 2 day hunt for active duty military and veteran's
- Could overlap with Youth Waterfowl Weekend or be separate weekend

## Rationale

- Supported by hunters and public input, but user groups (active military/veteran's) do not feel it is necessary

# Trolling motors on WMAs: no change

## History

- Motors (including trolling motors) restricted on state WMAs for decades (minor exceptions)

## Rationale

- May need legislative action
- Need broader engagement with other WMA user-groups (anglers, wild rice harvesters, canoe and kayak users, wildlife viewers, etc.)



# 3-splash duck limit: no change

## Current

- Will be used in South Dakota and Nebraska this fall for 3 year pilot program
- Hunters choose 1 of 2 licenses at time of purchase: Tier 1 (normal) or Tier 2 (3 duck limit)
- Could be a future recruitment tool

## Rationale

- Not an option for Mississippi Flyway states at present but could be in the future



# Timeline on proposed regulation changes

- March 29 – April 11: Public comments
- Late April: Internal review
- Early summer: Finalize fall 2021 waterfowl season
- July: Waterfowl supplement online and at vendors

# Thank you!

Contact:

Email: [steve.cordts@state.mn.us](mailto:steve.cordts@state.mn.us)

Cell: 218 766-0112



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