

POSSIBLE CHANGES FOR THE 2012/2013 HUNTING AND TRAPPING SEASONS TO BE DISCUSSED

The DNR is hosting public meetings on Tuesday March 6 to discuss possible changes in the hunting and trapping regulations for this fall. The changes would affect deer and waterfowl hunters as well as hunters and trappers who pursue bobcats and otters. These changes would stabilize deer numbers in some areas, potentially add a third zone for waterfowl and increase the number of otters and bobcats that could be harvested next fall.

These meetings are part of the new process instituted by Governor Branstad last year for making rules in state government. Any changes must be discussed with Iowa's citizens who might be impacted by the changes. The new process helps ensure that rule changes serve the public's wishes and do not unnecessarily impact Iowa's economy.

The changes for the waterfowl season are due to a change by the US Fish and Wildlife Service which now allow states to have 3 zones and a split waterfowl season. We have surveyed waterfowl hunters twice in the past year and there appears to be increased interest in a third zone. We need to continue these discussions to decide if this is what hunters really want to see for the next four years.

The regulation changes for deer would allow deer numbers to stabilize in areas of the state where numbers have been reduced to the department's goal while still allowing hunters to harvest extra does in areas of the state where numbers need to be reduced. Without these changes deer numbers in some areas of the state will continue to decline and Iowa will lose its standing as one of the best states for hunting whitetail deer.

FURBEARERS

1. Increase the river otter quota from 650 to 850 and the bobcat quota from 350 to 450.

Bobcat and especially otter populations appear to be stable or growing. Trappers are still taking a significant number of otters and bobcats after the season ends. Increasing the quota will allow more trappers to keep the animals that already being taken.

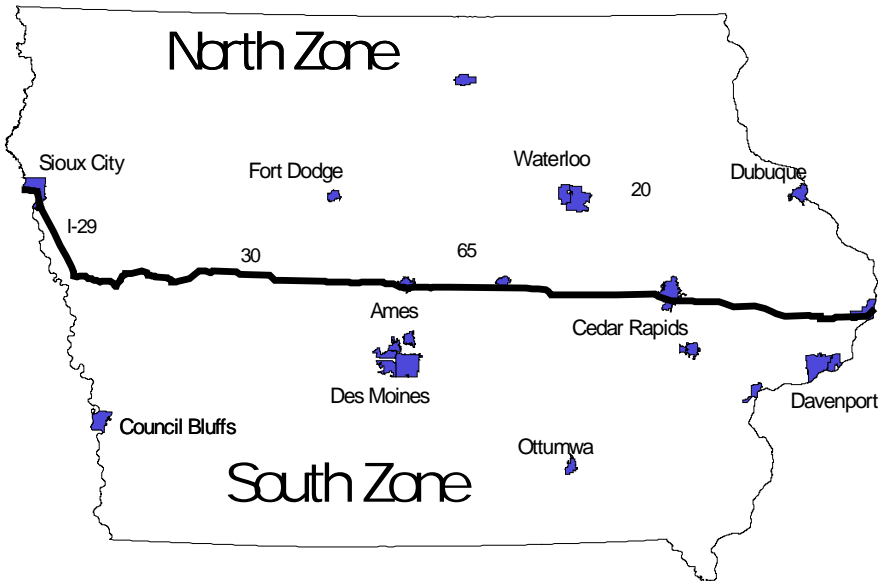
MIGRATORY BIRDS

1. Change from 2 to 3 zones for waterfowl and adjust season dates.

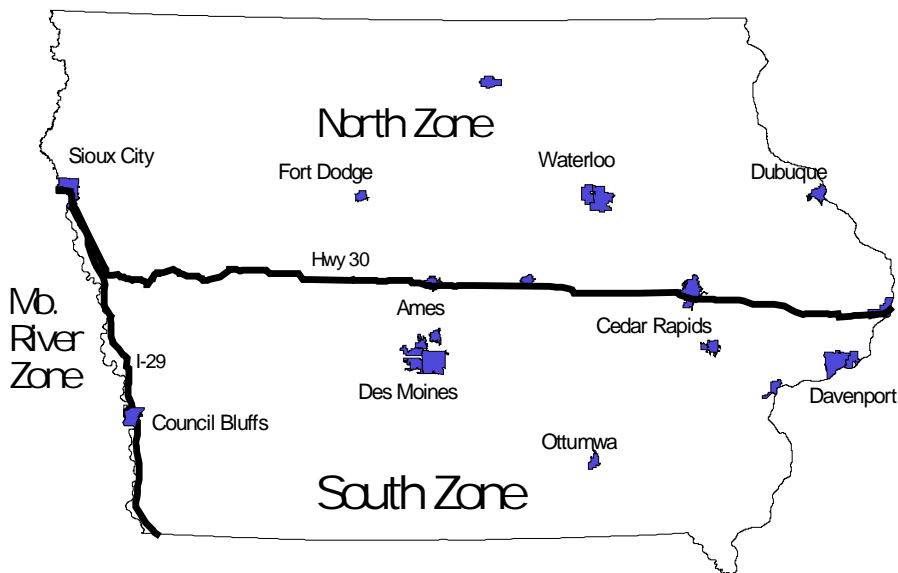
The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service will allow states to have up to 3 zones with the season split into 2 segments in each zone for ducks. Below are the options that have been proposed and potential season dates for each option.

Zone options:

Option 1. Retain the 2 zones used for the 2011-12 season.



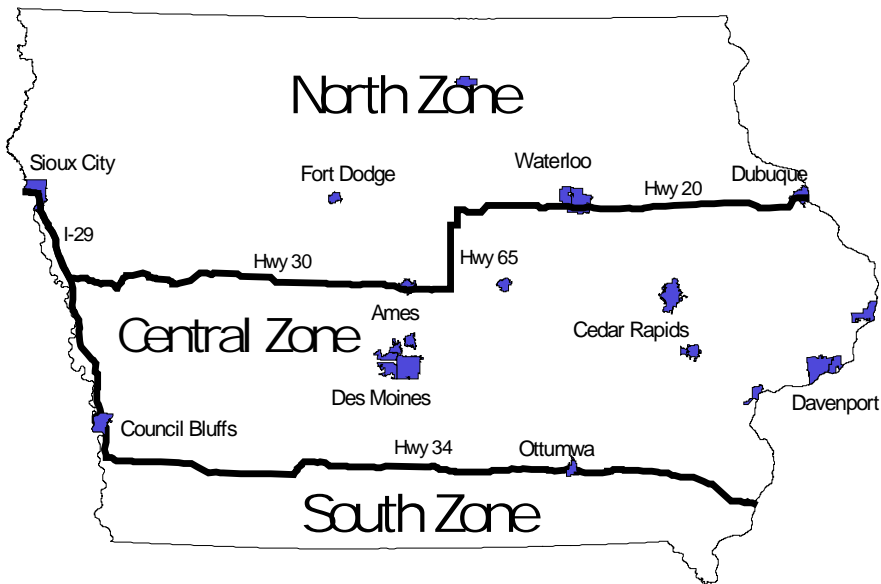
Option 2. Keep current 2 zone boundaries but add a 3rd zone along Missouri River



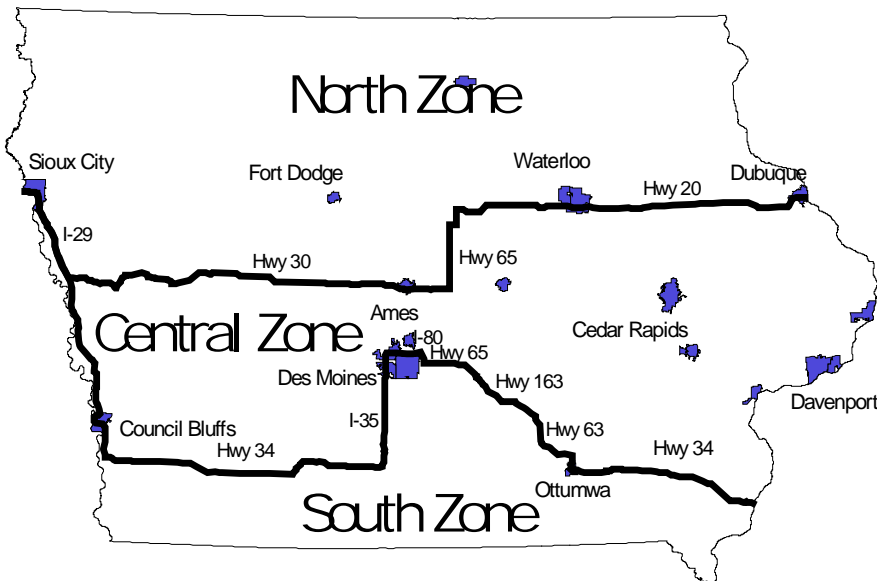
Proposed season dates for Options 1 or 2.

	NORTH ZONE*	SOUTH ZONE*	MO RIVER ZONE*
Ducks, Mergansers and Coots	Sept. 22 – 26 Oct. 13 – Dec. 6	Sept. 22 – 26 Oct. 20 – Dec. 13	Sept. 22 – 26 Oct. 27 – Dec. 20
Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	Oct. 6 – 7	Oct. 13 – 14	Oct. 20 – 21
Canada geese and Brant	Sept. 29 – Jan. 4, 2013	Oct. 6 – Jan. 11, 2013	Oct. 13 – Jan. 18, 2013
White-fronted geese	Sept. 29 – Dec. 11	Oct. 6 – Dec. 18	Oct. 13 – Dec. 25
Light Geese (white and blue phase snow geese and Ross' geese)	Sept. 29 – Jan. 13, 2013	Oct. 6 - Jan. 18, 2013	Oct. 13 - Jan. 18, 2013

Option 3. Add a 3rd zone along Missouri River and across southern Iowa south of Highway 34 and move the north zone boundary to Highway 20 in the eastern half of the state.



Option 4. Add a 3rd zone along Missouri River and across southern Iowa including the Lake Red Rock area and move the north zone boundary to Highway 20 in the eastern half of the state.



Potential season dates for Option 3 or 4.

	NORTH ZONE*	CENTRAL ZONE*	SOUTH ZONE*
Ducks, Mergansers and Coots	Sept. 22 – 26 Oct. 13 – Dec. 6	Sept. 22 – 26 Oct. 20 – Dec. 13	Sept. 22 – 26 Oct. 27 – Dec. 20
Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	Oct. 6 – 7	Oct. 13 – 14	Oct. 20 – 21
Canada geese and Brant	Sept. 29 – Jan. 4, 2013	Oct. 6 – Jan. 11, 2013	Oct. 13 – Jan. 18, 2013
White-fronted geese	Sept. 29 – Dec. 11	Oct. 6 – Dec. 18	Oct. 13 – Dec. 25
Light Geese (white and blue phase snow geese and Ross' geese)	Sept. 29 – Jan. 13, 2013	Oct. 6 - Jan. 18, 2013	Oct. 13 - Jan. 18, 2013

Alternative season dates for Option 3 and 4.

The following set of season dates avoids opening the duck season in the south zone on the same day as the pheasant season and closes the duck season during the first deer season in.

	NORTH ZONE*	CENTRAL ZONE*	SOUTH ZONE*
Ducks, Mergansers and Coots	Sept. 22 – 26 Oct. 13 – Dec. 6	Sept. 22 – 26 Oct. 20 – Dec. 13	Oct. 20 – Nov. 30 Dec. 6 – Dec. 23
Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	Oct. 6 – 7	Oct. 13 – 14	Oct. 13 – 14
Canada geese and Brant	Sept. 29 – Jan. 4, 2013	Oct. 6 – Jan. 11, 2013	Oct. 13 – Jan. 18, 2013
White-fronted geese	Sept. 29 – Dec. 11	Oct. 6 – Dec. 18	Oct. 13 – Dec. 25
Light Geese (white and blue phase snow geese and Ross' geese)	Sept. 29 – Jan. 13, 2013	Oct. 6 - Jan. 18, 2013	Oct. 13 - Jan. 18, 2013

Wildlife and law enforcement bureau discussion and preference for the zones.

Most of the wildlife and law enforcement bureau staff would prefer to keep the current 2 zones. They believe that the additional complexity of adding a third zone will not significantly increase hunting opportunities. Surveys and harvest records show most hunters prefer to hunt in October or November and not in December. There are many more ducks and places to hunt ducks in Iowa in October than December as most wetlands and backwaters freeze up by December. Consequently hunters shoot more ducks/day in October than December.

If the decision is made to add a third zone most law enforcement and wildlife staff believe option #3 is the best choice.

Another option for a third zone has been forwarded to the DNR and was not presented here. The third zone would include the Missouri River as well as areas along the Des Moines, Iowa and Cedar rivers. Although law enforcement and wildlife staff believe this zone might provide some limited hunting opportunity to a few hunters in December on parts of these rivers or in adjacent crop fields, most of the waterfowl hunting that occurs along these rivers occurs on public and private wetlands that will be frozen in December. Most waterfowl will have migrated out of the state by the end of the second week of December and those that do stay beyond that time are only found in a few limited locations.

2. Reduce areas closed for Canada goose hunting and allow landowners and their family to obtain permits to hunt on their land in all zones.

Minor changes were made to reduce the size of the closed areas. The closed areas are needed to keep geese in these areas. Without these areas, more geese will end up in urban refuges.

3. Add doves as a migratory bird listed in Chapter 92 so that state hunting regulations conform to federal rules.

The changes are needed so that the dove hunting regulations in Iowa's rules (such as having a plugged shotgun) conform to federal rules.

DEER

1. Reduce the antlerless licenses by 25,725 in 20 counties mostly in eastern Iowa and raise the quota in one county. Remove 4 counties from the January antlerless season and shorten the length of the season by one week.

Deer trend surveys indicate that deer numbers are at the departments goals in these counties. The extra week for the January season is no longer needed to reach the department's objectives in these counties.

2. Eliminate the November antlerless season.

The reported harvest during this season fell to less than 2,000 deer and is no longer needed to achieve the doe kill required to achieve deer population reductions.

3. Change regulations so that hunters who obtain a paid early muzzleloader license may not obtain a paid antlerless license during the shotgun deer seasons.

This change would allow more of the hunters who only want to hunt during the early muzzleloader season an opportunity to obtain a license. The quota for this season has filled in less than a week in each of the past 2 years.

OTHER ITEMS

Are there any other changes that you would like to see? We hope to have time for each group to discuss other changes to the hunting and trapping seasons.

For those who can not make these meeting comments can be sent to: wildlife@dnr.iowa.gov