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Migratory Bird Hunting; Proposed Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations on Certain Federal Indian Reservations and Ceded Lands for the 2012–13 Season; Proposed Rule

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Fish and Wildlife Service****50 CFR Part 20**

[Docket No. FWS-R9-MB-2012-0005;
FF09M21200-123-FXMB1231099BPP0L2]

RIN 1018-AX97

**Migratory Bird Hunting; Proposed
Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations on
Certain Federal Indian Reservations and
Ceded Lands for the 2012-13
Season**

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service,
Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (hereinafter, Service or we) proposes special migratory bird hunting regulations for certain Tribes on Federal Indian reservations, off-reservation trust lands, and ceded lands for the 2012-13 migratory bird hunting season.

DATES: We will accept all comments on the proposed regulations that are postmarked or received in our office by August 27, 2012.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on the proposals by one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on Docket No. FWS-R9-MB-2012-0005.

- *U.S. mail or hand-delivery:* Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R9-MB-2012-0005; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

We will not accept emailed or faxed comments. We will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that we will post any personal information you provide us (see the Public Comments section below for more information).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ron W. Kokel, at: Division of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, MS MBSP-4107-ARLSQ, 1849 C Street NW., Washington, DC 20240; (703) 358-1714.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In the April 17, 2012, **Federal Register** (77 FR 23094), we requested proposals from Indian Tribes wishing to establish special migratory bird hunting regulations for the 2012-13 hunting season, under the guidelines described in the June 4, 1985, **Federal Register** (50 FR 23467). In this supplemental proposed rule, we propose special

migratory bird hunting regulations for 30 Indian Tribes, based on the input we received in response to the April 17, 2012, proposed rule, and our previous rules. As described in that proposed rule, the promulgation of annual migratory bird hunting regulations involves a series of rulemaking actions each year. This proposed rule is part of that series.

We developed the guidelines for establishing special migratory bird hunting regulations for Indian Tribes in response to tribal requests for recognition of their reserved hunting rights and, for some Tribes, recognition of their authority to regulate hunting by both tribal and nontribal hunters on their reservations. The guidelines include possibilities for:

- (1) On-reservation hunting by both tribal and nontribal hunters, with hunting by nontribal hunters on some reservations to take place within Federal frameworks but on dates different from those selected by the surrounding State(s);

- (2) On-reservation hunting by tribal members only, outside of the usual Federal frameworks for season dates and length, and for daily bag and possession limits; and

- (3) Off-reservation hunting by tribal members on ceded lands, outside of usual framework dates and season length, with some added flexibility in daily bag and possession limits.

In all cases, the regulations established under the guidelines must be consistent with the March 10 to September 1 closed season mandated by the 1916 Convention between the United States and Great Britain (for Canada) for the Protection of Migratory Birds (Treaty). The guidelines apply to those Tribes having recognized reserved hunting rights on Federal Indian reservations (including off-reservation trust lands) and on ceded lands. They also apply to establishing migratory bird hunting regulations for nontribal hunters on all lands within the exterior boundaries of reservations where Tribes have full wildlife management authority over such hunting or where the Tribes and affected States otherwise have reached agreement over hunting by nontribal hunters on lands owned by non-Indians within the reservation.

Tribes usually have the authority to regulate migratory bird hunting by nonmembers on Indian-owned reservation lands, subject to Service approval. The question of jurisdiction is more complex on reservations that include lands owned by non-Indians, especially when the surrounding States have established or intend to establish regulations governing hunting by non-

Indians on these lands. In such cases, we encourage the Tribes and States to reach agreement on regulations that would apply throughout the reservations. When appropriate, we will consult with a Tribe and State with the aim of facilitating an accord. We also will consult jointly with tribal and State officials in the affected States where Tribes wish to establish special hunting regulations for tribal members on ceded lands. Because of past questions regarding interpretation of what events trigger the consultation process, as well as who initiates it, we provide the following clarification.

We routinely provide copies of **Federal Register** publications pertaining to migratory bird management to all State Directors, Tribes, and other interested parties. It is the responsibility of the States, Tribes, and others to notify us of any concern regarding any feature(s) of any regulations. When we receive such notification, we will initiate consultation.

Our guidelines provide for the continued harvest of waterfowl and other migratory game birds by tribal members on reservations where such harvest has been a customary practice. We do not oppose this harvest, provided it does not take place during the closed season defined by the Treaty, and does not adversely affect the status of the migratory bird resource. Before developing the guidelines, we reviewed available information on the current status of migratory bird populations, reviewed the current status of migratory bird hunting on Federal Indian reservations, and evaluated the potential impact of such guidelines on migratory birds. We concluded that the impact of migratory bird harvest by tribal members hunting on their reservations is minimal.

One area of interest in Indian migratory bird hunting regulations relates to hunting seasons for nontribal hunters on dates that are within Federal frameworks, but which are different from those established by the State(s) where the reservation is located. A large influx of nontribal hunters onto a reservation at a time when the season is closed in the surrounding State(s) could result in adverse population impacts on one or more migratory bird species. The guidelines make this unlikely, however, because tribal proposals must include:

- (a) Harvest anticipated under the requested regulations;

- (b) Methods that will be employed to measure or monitor harvest (such as bag checks, mail questionnaires, etc.);

- (c) Steps that will be taken to limit level of harvest, where it could be shown that failure to limit such harvest

would adversely impact the migratory bird resource; and

(d) Tribal capabilities to establish and enforce migratory bird hunting regulations.

We may modify regulations or establish experimental special hunts, after evaluation and confirmation of harvest information obtained by the Tribes.

We believe the guidelines provide appropriate opportunity to accommodate the reserved hunting rights and management authority of Indian Tribes while ensuring that the migratory bird resource receives necessary protection. The conservation of this important international resource is paramount. The guidelines should not be viewed as inflexible. In this regard, we note that they have been employed successfully since 1985. We believe they have been tested adequately and, therefore, we made them final beginning with the 1988–89 hunting season (53 FR 31612, August 18, 1988). We should stress here, however, that use of the guidelines is not mandatory and no action is required if a Tribe wishes to observe the hunting regulations established by the State(s) in which the reservation is located.

Service Migratory Bird Regulations Committee Meetings

Participants at the June 19–20, 2012, meetings reviewed information on the current status of migratory shore and upland game birds and developed 2012–13 migratory game bird regulations recommendations for these species plus regulations for migratory game birds in Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands; special September waterfowl seasons in designated States; special sea duck seasons in the Atlantic Flyway; and extended falconry seasons. In addition, we reviewed and discussed preliminary information on the status of waterfowl.

Participants at the previously announced July 25–26, 2012, meetings will review information on the current status of waterfowl and develop recommendations for the 2012–13 regulations pertaining to regular waterfowl seasons and other species and seasons not previously discussed at the early-season meetings. In accordance with Department of the Interior policy, these meetings are open to public observation and you may submit comments on the matters discussed.

Population Status and Harvest

Preliminary information on the status of waterfowl and information on the status and harvest of migratory shore and upland game birds was excerpted

from various reports and provided in the July 20, 2012, **Federal Register** (77 FR 42920). For more detailed information on methodologies and results, you may obtain complete copies of the various reports at the address indicated under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**, from our Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/NewsPublicationsReports.html>, or from <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Hunting Season Proposals From Indian Tribes and Organizations

For the 2012–13 hunting season, we received requests from 24 Tribes and Indian organizations. In this proposed rule, we respond to these requests and also evaluate anticipated requests for six Tribes from whom we usually hear but from whom we have not yet received proposals. We actively solicit regulatory proposals from other tribal groups that are interested in working cooperatively for the benefit of waterfowl and other migratory game birds. We encourage Tribes to work with us to develop agreements for management of migratory bird resources on tribal lands.

It should be noted that this proposed rule includes generalized regulations for both early- and late-season hunting. A final rule will be published in a late-August 2012 **Federal Register** that will include tribal regulations for the early-hunting season. Early seasons generally begin around September 1 each year and most commonly include such species as American woodcock, sandhill cranes, mourning doves, and white-winged doves. Late seasons generally begin on or around September 24 and most commonly include waterfowl species.

In this current rulemaking, because of the compressed timeframe for establishing regulations for Indian Tribes and because final frameworks dates and other specific information are not available, the regulations for many tribal hunting seasons are described in relation to the season dates, season length, and limits that will be permitted when final Federal frameworks are announced for early- and late-season regulations. For example, daily bag and possession limits for ducks on some areas are shown as the same as permitted in Pacific Flyway States under final Federal frameworks, and limits for geese will be shown as the same permitted by the State(s) in which the tribal hunting area is located.

The proposed frameworks for early-season regulations were published in the **Federal Register** on July 20, 2012 (77 FR 42920); early-season final frameworks will be published in late August. Proposed late-season frameworks for waterfowl and coots will

be published in mid-August, and the final frameworks for the late seasons will be published in mid-September. We will notify affected Tribes of season dates, bag limits, etc., as soon as final frameworks are established. As previously discussed, no action is required by Tribes wishing to observe migratory bird hunting regulations established by the State(s) where they are located. The proposed regulations for the 30 Tribes that meet the established criteria are shown below.

(a) *Colorado River Indian Tribes, Colorado River Indian Reservation, Parker, Arizona (Tribal Members and Nontribal Hunters)*

The Colorado River Indian Reservation is located in Arizona and California. The Tribes own almost all lands on the reservation, and have full wildlife management authority.

In their 2012–13 proposal, the Colorado River Indian Tribes requested split dove seasons. They propose that their early season begin September 1 and end September 15, 2012. Daily bag limits would be 10 mourning or white-winged doves in the aggregate. The late season for doves is proposed to open November 10, 2012, and close December 24, 2012. The daily bag limit would be 10 mourning doves. The possession limit would be twice the daily bag limit after the first day of the season. Shooting hours would be from one-half hour before sunrise to noon in the early season and until sunset in the late season. Other special tribally set regulations would apply.

The Tribes also propose duck hunting seasons. The season would open October 6, 2012, and run until January 20, 2013. The Tribes propose the same season dates for mergansers, coots, and common moorhens. The daily bag limit for ducks, including mergansers, would be seven, except that the daily bag limits could contain no more than two hen mallards, two redheads, two Mexican ducks, two goldeneye, three scaup, one pintail, two cinnamon teal, and one canvasback. The possession limit would be twice the daily bag limit after the first day of the season. The daily bag and possession limit for coots and common moorhens would be 25, singly or in the aggregate.

For geese, the Colorado River Indian Tribes propose a season of October 13, 2012, through January 20, 2013. The daily bag limit for geese would be three light geese and three dark geese. The possession limit would be six light geese and six dark geese after opening day.

In 1996, the Tribes conducted a detailed assessment of dove hunting.

Results showed approximately 16,100 mourning doves and 13,600 white-winged doves were harvested by approximately 2,660 hunters who averaged 1.45 hunter-days. Field observations and permit sales indicate that fewer than 200 hunters participate in waterfowl seasons. Under the proposed regulations described here and based upon past seasons, we and the Tribes estimate harvest will be similar.

Hunters must have a valid Colorado River Indian Reservation hunting permit and a Federal Migratory Bird Stamp in their possession while hunting. Other special tribally set regulations would apply. As in the past, the regulations would apply both to tribal and nontribal hunters, and nontoxic shot is required for waterfowl hunting.

We propose to approve the Colorado River Indian Tribes regulations for the 2012–13 hunting season, given the seasons' dates fall within final flyway frameworks (applies to nontribal hunters only).

(b) Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Flathead Indian Reservation, Pablo, Montana (Tribal and Nontribal Hunters)

For the past several years, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the State of Montana have entered into cooperative agreements for the regulation of hunting on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The State and the Tribes are currently operating under a cooperative agreement signed in 1990 that addresses fishing and hunting management and regulation issues of mutual concern. This agreement enables all hunters to utilize waterfowl hunting opportunities on the reservation.

As in the past, tribal regulations for nontribal hunters would be at least as restrictive as those established for the Pacific Flyway portion of Montana. Goose season dates would also be at least as restrictive as those established for the Pacific Flyway portion of Montana. Shooting hours for waterfowl hunting on the Flathead Reservation are sunrise to sunset. Steel shot or other federally approved nontoxic shots are the only legal shotgun loads on the reservation for waterfowl or other game birds.

For tribal members, the Tribe proposes outside frameworks for ducks and geese of September 1, 2012, through March 9, 2013. Daily bag and possession limits were not proposed for tribal members.

The requested season dates and bag limits are similar to past regulations. Harvest levels are not expected to change significantly. Standardized check station data from the 1993–94 and

1994–95 hunting seasons indicated no significant changes in harvest levels and that the large majority of the harvest is by nontribal hunters.

We propose to approve the Tribes' request for special migratory bird regulations for the 2012–13 hunting season.

(c) Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Cloquet, Minnesota (Tribal Members Only)

Since 1996, the Service and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians have cooperated to establish special migratory bird hunting regulations for tribal members. The Fond du Lac's May 26, 2012, proposal covers land set apart for the band under the Treaties of 1837 and 1854 in northeastern and east-central Minnesota and the Band's Reservation near Duluth.

The band's proposal for 2012–13 is essentially the same as that approved last year except for an expansion of the sandhill crane season to include both the 1854 and 1837 ceded territories only and not reservation lands. The proposed 2012–13 waterfowl hunting season regulations for Fond du Lac are as follows:

Ducks:

A. 1854 and 1837 Ceded Territories:
Season Dates: Begin September 15 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 18 ducks, including no more than 12 mallards (only 3 of which may be hens), 9 black ducks, 9 scaup, 9 wood ducks, 9 redheads, 9 pintails, and 9 canvasbacks.

B. Reservation:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 12 ducks, including no more than 8 mallards (only 2 of which may be hens), 6 black ducks, 6 scaup, 6 redheads, 6 pintails, 6 wood ducks, and 6 canvasbacks.

Mergansers:

A. 1854 and 1837 Ceded Territories:
Season Dates: Begin September 15 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 15 mergansers, including no more than 6 hooded mergansers.

B. Reservation:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 10 mergansers, including no more than 4 hooded mergansers.

Canada Geese: All Areas:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 20 geese.

Sandhill Cranes: 1854 and 1837 Ceded Territories:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: Two sandhill cranes. A crane carcass tag is required prior to hunting.

Coots and Common Moorhens (Common Gallinules):

A. 1854 and 1837 Ceded Territories:
Season Dates: Begin September 15 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 20 coots and common moorhens, singly or in the aggregate.

B. Reservation:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 20 coots and common moorhens, singly or in the aggregate.

Sora and Virginia Rails: All Areas:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 25 sora and Virginia rails, singly or in the aggregate.

Common Snipe: All Areas:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: Eight common snipe.

Woodcock: All Areas:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 25, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: Three woodcock.

Mourning Dove: All Areas

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end October 30, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 30 mourning doves.

The following general conditions

apply:

1. While hunting waterfowl, a tribal member must carry on his/her person a valid Ceded Territory License.

2. Shooting hours for migratory birds are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

3. Except as otherwise noted, tribal members will be required to comply with tribal codes that will be no less restrictive than the provisions of Chapter 10 of the Model Off-Reservation Code. Except as modified by the Service rules adopted in response to this proposal, these amended regulations parallel Federal requirements in 50 CFR part 20 as to hunting methods, transportation, sale, exportation, and other conditions generally applicable to migratory bird hunting.

4. Band members in each zone will comply with State regulations providing for closed and restricted waterfowl hunting areas.

5. There are no possession limits for migratory birds except for cranes in the Ceded Territories, unless otherwise noted above. For purposes of enforcing bag limits, all migratory birds in the possession or custody of band members on ceded lands will be considered to have been taken on those lands unless tagged by a tribal or State conservation warden as having been taken on-

reservation. All migratory birds that fall on reservation lands will not count as part of any off-reservation bag or possession limit.

The band anticipates harvest will be fewer than 500 ducks and geese, and less than 12 sandhill cranes.

We propose to approve the request for special migratory bird hunting regulations for the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians.

(d) Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Suttons Bay, Michigan (Tribal Members Only)

In the 1995–96 migratory bird seasons, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians and the Service first cooperated to establish special regulations for waterfowl. The Grand Traverse Band is a self-governing, federally recognized Tribe located on the west arm of Grand Traverse Bay in Leelanau County, Michigan. The Grand Traverse Band is a signatory Tribe of the Treaty of 1836. We have approved special regulations for tribal members of the 1836 treaty's signatory Tribes on ceded lands in Michigan since the 1986–87 hunting season.

For the 2012–13 season, the Tribe requests that the tribal member duck season run from September 15, 2012, through January 15, 2013. A daily bag limit of 20 would include no more than 5 pintail, 3 canvasback, 1 hooded merganser, 5 black ducks, 5 wood ducks, 3 redheads, and 9 mallards (only 4 of which may be hens).

For Canada and snow geese, the Tribe proposes a September 1 through November 30, 2012, and a January 1 through February 8, 2013, season. For white-fronted geese and brant, the Tribe proposes a September 20 through November 30, 2012, season. The daily bag limit for Canada and snow geese would be 10, and the daily bag limit for white-fronted geese and including brant would be 5 birds. We further note that, based on available data (of major goose migration routes), it is unlikely that any Canada geese from the Southern James Bay Population will be harvested by the Tribe.

For woodcock, the Tribe proposes a September 1 through November 14, 2012, season. The daily bag limit will not exceed five birds. For mourning doves, snipe, and rails, the Tribe proposes a September 1 through November 14, 2012, season. The daily bag limit would be 10 per species.

For sandhill cranes, the Tribe proposes a new season of September 1 through November 30, 2012. The daily bag limit will not exceed one bird daily. All cranes in this proposed hunt area are Eastern Population (EP) sandhill

cranes (see Sandhill Crane Season under (e) Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission for further discussion).

All other Federal regulations contained in 50 CFR part 20 would apply. The Tribe proposes to monitor harvest closely through game bag checks, patrols, and mail surveys. Harvest surveys from the 2011–12 hunting season indicated that approximately 29 tribal hunters harvested an estimated 140 ducks and 45 Canada geese.

We propose to approve the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians requested 2012–13 special migratory bird hunting regulations, including the establishment of a new sandhill crane season. However, given the need to closely monitor the harvest of this species, we request that Grand Traverse implement either a special crane harvest tag or crane harvest reporting system/survey to track crane harvest, similar to that implemented by Fond du Lac last year.

(e) Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Odanah, Wisconsin (Tribal Members Only)

Since 1985, various bands of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians have exercised judicially recognized off-reservation hunting rights for migratory birds in Wisconsin. The specific regulations were established by the Service in consultation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. (GLIFWC is an intertribal agency exercising delegated natural resource management and regulatory authority from its member Tribes in portions of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota). Beginning in 1986, a Tribal season on ceded lands in the western portion of the Michigan Upper Peninsula was developed in coordination with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. We have approved regulations for Tribal members in both Michigan and Wisconsin since the 1986–87 hunting season. In 1987, GLIFWC requested, and we approved, regulations to permit Tribal members to hunt on ceded lands in Minnesota, as well as in Michigan and Wisconsin. The States of Michigan and Wisconsin originally concurred with the regulations, although both Wisconsin and Michigan have raised various concerns over the years. Minnesota did not concur with the original regulations, stressing that the State would not recognize Chippewa Indian hunting rights in Minnesota's treaty area until a court with jurisdiction over the State acknowledges and defines the extent of

these rights. In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the existence of the tribes' treaty reserved rights in *Minnesota v. Mille Lacs Band*, 199 S.Ct. 1187 (1999).

We acknowledge all of the States' concerns, but point out that the U.S. Government has recognized the Indian treaty reserved rights, and that acceptable hunting regulations have been successfully implemented in Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Consequently, in view of the above, we have approved regulations since the 1987–88 hunting season on ceded lands in all three States. In fact, this recognition of the principle of treaty reserved rights for band members to hunt and fish was pivotal in our decision to approve a 1991–92 season for the 1836 ceded area in Michigan. Since then, in the 2007 Consent Decree the 1836 Treaty Tribes' and Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment established court-approved regulations pertaining to off-reservation hunting rights for migratory birds.

For 2012, the GLIFWC proposed off-reservation special migratory bird hunting regulations on behalf of the member Tribes of the Voigt Intertribal Task Force of the GLIFWC (for the 1837 and 1842 Treaty areas in Wisconsin and Michigan), the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and the six Wisconsin Bands (for the 1837 Treaty area in Minnesota), and the Bay Mills Indian Community (for the 1836 Treaty area in Michigan). Member Tribes of the Task Force are: the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, the Sokaogon Chippewa Community (Mole Lake Band), all in Wisconsin; the Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians, and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians in Minnesota; the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Chippewa Indians, and the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community in Michigan.

The GLIFWC 2012 proposal has several significant changes from regulations approved last season. In the 1837 and 1842 Treaty Areas, the GLIFWC proposal would allow the use of electronic calls throughout the season; would extend shooting hours by 30 minutes in both the morning and the evening to 1 hour before sunrise and 1 hour after sunset; would increase the daily bag limits to 50 ducks and remove all species restrictions within the daily bag limit for ducks; would allow the

first harvest of sandhill cranes and tundra swans; would open the season (other than for geese) on September 4; and would remove restrictions for decoy use in Wisconsin. In the 1836 Treaty Area, the GLIFWC proposal would remove all species restrictions within the daily bag limit for ducks.

GLIFWC states that the proposed regulatory changes are intended to provide tribal members a harvest opportunity within the scope of rights reserved in their various treaties and increase tribal subsistence harvest opportunities, while protecting migratory bird populations. Under the GLIFWC proposed regulations, GLIFWC expects total ceded territory harvest to be approximately 1,575 ducks, 300 geese, 50 sandhill cranes, and 50 tundra swans, which is roughly similar to anticipated levels in previous years for those species for which seasons were established. GLIFWC further anticipates that tribal harvest will remain low given the small number of tribal hunters and the limited opportunity to harvest more than a small number of birds on most hunting trips.

Recent GLIFWC harvest surveys (1996–98, 2001, 2004, and 2007–08) indicate that tribal off-reservation waterfowl harvest has averaged less than 1,050 ducks and 200 geese annually. In the latest survey year for which we have specific results (2004), an estimated 53 hunters took an estimated 421 trips and harvested 645 ducks (1.5 ducks per trip) and 84 geese (0.2 geese per trip). Analysis of hunter survey data over 1996–2004 indicates a general downward trend in both harvest and hunter participation.

While we acknowledge that tribal harvest and participation has declined in recent years, we do not believe that the GLIFWC's proposal for tribal waterfowl seasons on ceded lands in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota for the 2012–13 season is in the best interest of the conservation of migratory birds. More specific discussion follows below.

Allowing Electronic Calls

As we stated last year (76 FR 54676, September 1, 2011), the issue of allowing electronic calls and other electronic devices for migratory game bird hunting has been highly debated and highly controversial over the last 40 years, similar to other prohibited hunting methods such as baiting. Electronic calls, i.e., the use or aid of recorded or electronic amplified bird calls or sounds, or recorded or electrically amplified imitations of bird calls or sounds to lure or attract migratory game birds to hunters, was

Federally prohibited in 1957 because of its effectiveness in attracting and aiding the harvest of ducks and geese and is generally not considered a legitimate component of hunting. In 1999, after much debate, the migratory bird regulations were revised to allow the use of electronic calls for the take of light geese (lesser snow geese and Ross geese) during a light-geese-only season when all other waterfowl and crane hunting seasons, excluding falconry, were closed (64 FR 7507, February 16, 1999; 64 FR 71236, December 20, 1999; and 73 FR 65926, November 5, 2008). The regulations were subsequently changed also in 2006 to allow the use of electronic calls for the take of resident Canada geese during Canada-geese-only September seasons when all other waterfowl and crane seasons, excluding falconry, were closed (71 FR 45964, August 10, 2006). In both instances, these changes were made in order to significantly increase the harvest of these species due to either serious population overabundance, or depredation issues, or public health and safety issues, or both.

Available information from the use of additional hunting methods, such as electronic calls, during the special light-geese seasons indicate that total harvest increased approximately 50–69 percent. On specific days when light-geese special regulations were in effect, the mean light goose harvest increased 244 percent. One research study found that lesser snow goose flocks were 5.0 times more likely to fly within gun range (≤ 50 meters) in response to electronic calls than to traditional calls and the mean number of snow geese killed per hour per hunter averaged 9.1 times greater for electronic calls than for traditional calls. While these results are only directly applicable to light geese, we believe these results are applicable to most waterfowl species, and indicative of some likely adverse harvest impacts on other geese and ducks.

Removal of the electronic call prohibition would be inconsistent with our long-standing conservation concerns. Given available evidence on the effectiveness of electronic calls, and the large biological uncertainty surrounding any widespread use of electronic calls, we believe the potential for overharvest could contribute to long-term population declines. Further, migratory patterns could be affected and it is possible that hunter participation could increase beyond GLIFWC's estimates (50 percent) and could result in additional conservation impacts, particularly on locally breeding populations. Thus, we do not support

allowing the use of electronic calls in the 1837 and 1842 Treaty Areas.

Additionally, given the fact that tribal waterfowl hunting covered by this proposal would occur on ceded lands that are not in the ownership of the Tribes, we believe the use of electronic calls to take waterfowl would lead to confusion on the part of the public, wildlife-management agencies, and law enforcement officials in implementing the requirements of 50 CFR part 20. Further, similar to the impacts of baiting, uncertainties concerning the zone of influence attributed to the use of electronic calls could potentially increase harvest from nontribal hunters operating within areas electronic calls are being used, thereby posing risks to the migratory patterns and distribution of migratory waterfowl.

Lastly, we remind GLIFWC that electronic calls are permitted for the take of resident Canada geese during Canada-geese-only September seasons when all other waterfowl and crane seasons are closed. In the case of GLIFWC's proposed seasons, electronic calls could be used September 1–14 for resident Canada geese (as long as GLIFWC's duck and crane season begins no earlier than September 15). This specific regulatory change was implemented in 2006 in order to significantly control resident Canada geese due to widespread population overabundance, depredation issues, and public health and safety issues.

Expanded Shooting Hours

Normally, shooting hours for migratory game birds are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. A number of reasons and concerns have been cited for extending shooting hours past sunset. Potential impacts to some locally breeding populations (e.g., wood ducks), hunter safety, difficulty of identifying birds, retrieval of downed birds, and impacts on law enforcement are some of the normal concerns raised when discussing potential expansions of shooting hours. However, despite these concerns, in 2007, we supported the expansion of shooting hours by 15 minutes after sunset in the 1837, 1842, and 1836 Treaty Areas (72 FR 58452, October 15, 2007). We had previously supported this expansion in other tribal areas and have not been made aware of any wide-scale problems. Further, at that time, we believed that the continuation of a specific species restriction within the daily bag limit for mallards, and the implementation of a species restriction within the daily bag limit for wood ducks, would allay potential conservation concerns for these species. We supported the

increase with the understanding that we would need to closely monitor tribal harvest through either GLIFWC's own increased harvest surveys or GLIFWC's assisting the Service to survey tribal hunters.

Last year, in deference to tribal traditions and in the interest of cooperation, and in spite of our previously identified concerns regarding species identification, species conservation of locally breeding populations, retrieval of downed birds, hunter safety, and law enforcement impacts, we approved shooting 30 minutes after sunset (an extension of 15 minutes from the then-current 15 minutes after sunset) (76 FR 54676, September 1, 2011). This was consistent with other Tribes in the general area (Fond du Lac, Leech Lake, Oneida, Sault Ste Marie, and White Earth). Extending shooting hours on both the front end and the back end of the day to 1 hour before sunrise and 1 hour after sunset as GLIFWC has proposed would be contrary to public safety and only heightens our previously identified concerns. It is widely considered dark 45 minutes after sunset (and 45 minutes before sunrise), and we see no viable remedies to allay our concerns. Shooting this early or late would also significantly increase the potential take of non-game birds. Thus, we cannot support increasing the shooting hours by 30 minutes in the 1837 and 1842 Treaty Areas (to 60 minutes before sunrise and 60 minutes after sunset).

Increasing the Overall Daily Bag Limit for Ducks

Based on the proposed increased daily bag limits (from 30 to 50 ducks per day in the 1837 and 1842 Treaty Areas), GLIFWC is estimating a relatively small additional duck harvest (1,050 to 1,575 ducks). While it is possible that hunter participation and harvest could increase beyond their estimates (50 percent), we do not anticipate such an increase given their relatively small average daily harvest (2.2 ducks per day). Further, GLIFWC reports that the largest number of ducks reportedly harvested in a single day was 20. Thus, we do not anticipate any large-scale harvest shifts or significant biological conservation impacts with GLIFWC's proposal. However, we also note that GLIFWC's own dated harvest data indicates that present daily bag limits do not appear to be a hindrance or limiting factor for Tribal harvest, and increasing the daily bag limit to 50 ducks from the present 30-duck daily bag limit would be far in excess of anything we currently have experience with regarding tribal migratory bird hunting regulations. We

further note that in 2007, in an effort to obtain the necessary information, we implemented a pilot expansion of the daily bag limit for ducks to 30 birds per day in the 1837 and 1842 Treaty Areas. We supported this with the understanding that we would need to closely monitor tribal harvest through either GLIFWC's own increased harvest surveys or GLIFWC's assisting the Service to survey tribal hunters. We have reiterated our request over the past several years for GLIFWC to continue their current harvest survey based on our implementation of this pilot bag limit increase for ducks in the 1837 and 1842 Treaty Areas in 2007, particularly for species such as mallards, the bag limits for which were subsequently significantly increased in 2008 (from 10 to 30 per day). To date, we have not been presented with any new data since the 2008 harvest survey results.

Remove Restrictions on Decoy Use in Wisconsin

In Wisconsin, State law requires that decoys may not be placed more than an hour before legal shooting hours or left out more than 20 minutes after legal shooting hours. As we stated last year concerning a similar decoy restriction in Michigan (76 FR 54676, September 1, 2011), while we believe that there may be safety concerns with elimination of such a restriction, we take no position on the relative need or lack of need for such a restriction. Other than regulations on National Wildlife Refuges and other Federal lands, there are no Federal restrictions requiring the removal of unattended decoys.

Additionally, given the fact that tribal waterfowl hunting covered by this proposal would occur on ceded lands that are not in the ownership of the Tribes, we believe the use of unattended decoys to "reserve" hunting areas in public waters (i.e., those lands in the ceded territories outside of lands directly controlled by the Tribes) could lead to confusion and frustration on the part of the public, hunters, wildlife-management agencies, and law enforcement officials due to the inherent difficulties of different sets of hunting regulations for different areas and groups of hunters. However, we view this issue as a Tribal-State issue, and the Service takes no position on it in this proposed rule.

Removal of Species Restrictions for Ducks

We have several concerns with GLIFWC's proposal to remove all species restrictions within the overall duck daily bag limits in the 1837 and 1842 Treaty Areas. We have a number

of duck species that are either showing long-term downward population trends (pintails and black ducks), or other species for which an increased daily bag limit of 50 birds per day could potentially have conservation impacts (scaup, canvasbacks), particularly on locally-breeding ducks (mallards and wood ducks). Overharvest of these species in localized areas due to removal of species restrictions could contribute to long-term declines. However, while we believe the proposal to eliminate all species restrictions within the daily bag limit for ducks could potentially have resource conservation impacts on locally-breeding duck populations, and would prefer not to implement such a change at this time, we are willing to remove the restrictions for tribal harvest in the 1836, 1837, and 1842 ceded areas. As we stated last year regarding the removal of possession limits (76 FR 54676, September 1, 2011), we make this change with some trepidation. However, in the interest of our long-term relationship with GLIFWC, and the high importance GLIFWC has placed on this issue, we would agree with this important change. We note that, should resource conservation impacts be discovered, or should a particular species' population status warrant action, we would expect that the lack of species restrictions would be revisited and adjusted accordingly, especially if a particular species warranted a nationwide closed season (e.g., canvasbacks).

Earlier Duck Season Opening Date

The Migratory Bird Treaty allows the hunting of migratory game birds beginning September 1. Generally, we have tried to guide Tribes to select an opening date for duck hunting of no earlier than September 15. This guidance is based on our concern that hunting prior to September 15 significantly increases the potential for taking ducks that have not yet fully fledged (normally the result of late-nesting or re-nesting hens) or species misidentification due to the fact that some species and/or sexes are not yet readily distinguishable. While these impacts primarily concern locally-breeding ducks, the potential does exist for the take of molt migrants, i.e., birds that have specifically migrated to an area to complete the molting process. We would prefer that GLIFWC adhere to this guidance and would prefer not to implement such a change at this time. However, we see no significant conservation implications given the relatively small numbers of tribal hunters and are willing to allow

GLIFWC to begin the duck season on September 4 in the 1836, 1837, and 1842 ceded areas. We are proposing this change in the interest of our long-term relationship with GLIFWC and the understanding that if significant conservation impacts are discovered, we would adjust the duck season opening date accordingly.

Sandhill Crane Season

We have no objections to the establishment of a sandhill crane season in the 1837 and 1842 Treaty Areas. We note that at least one other Tribe currently has a sandhill crane season (see (c) Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Minnesota elsewhere in this proposed rule) and another has proposed establishing a new season this year (see (d) Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa in Michigan elsewhere in this proposed rule). All cranes in these current and proposed hunt areas are Eastern Population (EP) sandhill cranes. EP sandhill cranes rebounded from near extirpation in the late 1800s to over 30,000 cranes by 1996. As of last year, the current 3-year average population index for EP cranes was 51,217 cranes. As a result of this rebound and their continued range expansion, the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyway Councils developed a cooperative management plan for this population, and criteria were developed describing when hunting seasons could be opened. The State of Kentucky held its first hunting season on this population in 2011–12 and harvested 50 cranes. Further, allowance for Tribal harvest is specifically considered in the EP plan.

GLIFWC estimates that no more than 50 cranes will be harvested during the proposed season. We note that two cranes were harvested last year in the inaugural Fond du Lac sandhill crane season. We support the establishment of GLIFWC's new sandhill crane season. However, given the need to closely monitor the harvest of this species, we request that GLIFWC implement either a special crane harvest tag or crane harvest reporting system/survey to track crane harvest, similar to that implemented by Fond du Lac last year, and requested of Grand Traverse this year (see (d) Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians in Michigan elsewhere in this proposed rule).

Tundra Swan Season

As we stated with sandhill cranes, we are not opposed to the establishment of a tundra swan season in Wisconsin. However, unlike the sandhill crane issue, the establishment of a new tundra

swan season in the ceded territory areas in question involves several significant concerns and special considerations. We believe these concerns need further study and consideration before any implementation of a new tundra swan season in the ceded territories.

First, the proposed areas in question are also home to trumpeter swans. Many cooperators, including GLIFWC, worked together to reestablish a breeding trumpeter swan population in the Great Lakes. These efforts have been largely successful with the removal of this species from the Wisconsin endangered species list in 2009. After a 25-year recovery program, there are currently about 200 breeding pairs in Wisconsin. However, it is very difficult to distinguish between tundra and trumpeter swans unless swans vocalize in flight. We have significant concerns over the accidental harvest of trumpeter swans by tribal hunters hunting during a tundra swan season. Further, within Wisconsin, the northern ceded territory is an area of high trumpeter swan use containing over 80 percent of the breeding pairs. We believe such areas should be avoided either temporally or geographically to the extent possible. When a hunting season on tundra swans is ultimately implemented, we believe it would be best to focus hunting efforts on the primary tundra swan migration concentrations while avoiding areas of significant trumpeter swan numbers. Unfortunately, most such areas are located outside of the ceded territories of northern Wisconsin.

In addition to the concerns about potential impacts to trumpeter swans, we believe it is imperative that any tribal tundra swan hunting proposal follow the Eastern Population of tundra swans management plan including a quota permit system and harvest reporting. The EP tundra swan management plan was cooperatively developed by the Atlantic, Central, and Mississippi Flyway Councils in 2007 and guides the management and harvest of EP tundra swans.

For these reasons, we do not believe that a tribal tundra swan hunting season in the ceded territory should be implemented this year. Given that all these concerns can be worked through over the next year, we do not believe that implementation of a tundra swan season next season is unrealistic. We note that both the Service and the State wildlife agencies have considerable trumpeter swan information that would be helpful in conducting additional biological evaluation and harvest planning and are available to work with GLIFWC on these issues.

The proposed 2012–13 waterfowl hunting season regulations apply to all treaty areas (except where noted) for GLIFWC as follows:

Ducks:

Season Dates: Begin September 4 and end December 31, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 50 ducks in the 1937 and 1842 Treaty Area; 30 ducks in the 1836 Treaty Area.

Mergansers:

1836 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 15 and end December 31, 2012.

1837 and 1842 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 4 and end December 31, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 10 mergansers.

Geese:

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end December 31, 2012. In addition, any portion of the ceded territory that is open to State-licensed hunters for goose hunting outside of these dates will also be open concurrently for tribal members.

Daily Bag Limit: 20 geese in aggregate.

Other Migratory Birds:

A. Coots and Common Moorhens (Common Gallinules):

1836 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 15 and end December 31, 2012.

1837 and 1842 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 4 and end December 31, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 20 coots and common moorhens (common gallinules), singly or in the aggregate.

B. Sora and Virginia Rails:

1836 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 15 and end December 31, 2012.

1837 and 1842 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 4 and end December 31, 2012.

Daily Bag and Possession Limits: 20, singly, or in the aggregate, 25.

C. Common Snipe:

1836 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 15 and end December 31, 2012.

1837 and 1842 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 4 and end December 31, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 16 common snipe.

D. Woodcock:

1836 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 15 and end December 31, 2012.

1837 and 1842 Treaty Area Season Dates: Begin September 4 and end December 31, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 10 woodcock.

E. Mourning Dove: 1837 and 1842 Ceded Territories only.

Season Dates: Begin September 1 and end November 9, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 15 mourning doves.

F. Sandhill Cranes: 1837 and 1842 Ceded Territories only.

Season Dates: Begin September 4 and end December 31, 2012.

Daily Bag Limit: 1 crane.

General Conditions

A. All tribal members will be required to obtain a valid tribal waterfowl hunting permit.

B. Except as otherwise noted, tribal members will be required to comply with tribal codes that will be no less restrictive than the model ceded territory conservation codes approved by Federal courts in the *Lac Courte Oreilles v. State of Wisconsin (Voigt)* and *Mille Lacs Band v. State of Minnesota* cases. Chapter 10 in each of these model codes regulates ceded territory migratory bird hunting. Both versions of Chapter 10 parallel Federal requirements as to hunting methods, transportation, sale, exportation, and other conditions generally applicable to migratory bird hunting. They also automatically incorporate by reference the Federal migratory bird regulations adopted in response to this proposal.

C. Particular regulations of note include:

1. Nontoxic shot will be required for all waterfowl hunting by tribal members.

2. Tribal members in each zone will comply with tribal regulations providing for closed and restricted waterfowl hunting areas. These regulations generally incorporate the same restrictions contained in parallel State regulations.

3. There is no possession limit. For purposes of enforcing bag limits, all migratory birds in the possession and custody of tribal members on ceded lands will be considered to have been taken on those lands unless tagged by a tribal or State conservation warden as taken on reservation lands. All migratory birds that fall on reservation lands will not count as part of any off-reservation bag or possession limit.

4. The baiting restrictions included in the respective section 10.05(2)(h) of the model ceded territory conservation codes will be amended to include language which parallels that in place for nontribal members as published at 64 FR 29799, June 3, 1999.

5. The shell limit restrictions included in the respective section 10.05(2)(b) of the model ceded territory conservation codes will be removed.

6. Hunting hours shall be from a half hour before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset.

We propose to approve the above GLIFWC regulations for the 2012–13 hunting season.

(f) Jicarilla Apache Tribe, Jicarilla Indian Reservation, Dulce, New Mexico (Tribal Members and Nontribal Hunters)

The Jicarilla Apache Tribe has had special migratory bird hunting regulations for tribal members and nonmembers since the 1986–87 hunting season. The Tribe owns all lands on the reservation and has recognized full wildlife management authority. In general, the proposed seasons would be more conservative than allowed by the Federal frameworks of last season and by States in the Pacific Flyway.

The Tribe proposed a 2012–13 waterfowl and Canada goose season beginning October 13, 2012, and a closing date of November 30, 2012. Daily bag and possession limits for waterfowl would be the same as Pacific Flyway States. The Tribe proposes a daily bag limit for Canada geese of two. Other regulations specific to the Pacific Flyway guidelines for New Mexico would be in effect.

During the Jicarilla Game and Fish Department's 2012–13 season, estimated duck harvest was 436, which is within the historical harvest range. The species composition in the past has included mainly mallards, gadwall, wigeon, and teal. Northern pintail comprised less than one percent of the total harvest in 2011. The estimated harvest of geese was 23 birds.

The proposed regulations are essentially the same as were established last year. The Tribe anticipates the maximum 2012–13 waterfowl harvest would be around 500 ducks and 15–25 geese.

We propose to approve the Tribe's requested 2012–13 hunting seasons.

(g) Kalispel Tribe, Kalispel Reservation, Usk, Washington (Tribal Members and Nontribal Hunters)

The Kalispel Reservation was established by Executive Order in 1914, and currently comprises approximately 4,600 acres. The Tribe owns all Reservation land and has full management authority. The Kalispel Tribe has a fully developed wildlife program with hunting and fishing codes. The Tribe enjoys excellent wildlife management relations with the State. The Tribe and the State have an operational Memorandum of Understanding with emphasis on fisheries but also for wildlife.

The nontribal member seasons described below pertain to a 176-acre waterfowl management unit and 800 acres of reservation land with a guide for waterfowl hunting. The Tribe is utilizing this opportunity to rehabilitate an area that needs protection because of

past land use practices, as well as to provide additional waterfowl hunting in the area. Beginning in 1996, the requested regulations also included a proposal for Kalispel-member-only migratory bird hunting on Kalispel-ceded lands within Washington, Montana, and Idaho.

For the 2012–13 migratory bird hunting seasons, the Kalispel Tribe proposed tribal and nontribal member waterfowl seasons. The Tribe requests that both duck and goose seasons open at the earliest possible date and close on the latest date under Federal frameworks.

For nontribal hunters on reservation, the Tribe requests the seasons open at the earliest possible date and remain open, for the maximum amount of open days. Specifically, the Tribe requests that the season for ducks begin September 22, 2012, and end January 31, 2013. In that period, nontribal hunters would be allowed to hunt approximately 101 days. Hunters should obtain further information on specific hunt days from the Kalispel Tribe.

The Tribe also requests the season for geese run from September 1 to September 13, 2012, and from October 1, 2012, to January 31, 2013. Total number of days should not exceed 107. Nontribal hunters should obtain further information on specific hunt days from the Tribe. Daily bag and possession limits would be the same as those for the State of Washington.

The Tribe reports past nontribal harvest of 1.5 ducks per day. Under the proposal, the Tribe expects harvest to be similar to last year and less than 100 geese and 200 ducks.

All other State and Federal regulations contained in 50 CFR part 20, such as use of nontoxic shot and possession of a signed migratory bird hunting stamp, would be required.

For tribal members on Kalispel-ceded lands, the Kalispel Tribe proposes season dates consistent with Federal flyway frameworks. Specifically, the Tribe requests outside frameworks for ducks of October 1, 2012, through January 31, 2013, and for geese of September 1, 2012, through January 31, 2013. The Tribe requests that both duck and goose seasons open at the earliest possible date and close on the latest date under Federal frameworks. During that period, the Tribe proposes that the season run continuously. Daily bag and possession limits would be concurrent with the Federal rule.

The Tribe reports that there was no tribal harvest. Under the proposal, the Tribe expects harvest to be less than 200 birds for the season with less than 100 geese. Tribal members would be

required to possess a signed Federal migratory bird stamp and a tribal ceded lands permit.

We propose to approve the regulations requested by the Kalispel Tribe, provided that the nontribal seasons conform to Treaty limitations and final Federal frameworks for the Pacific Flyway.

(h) Klamath Tribe, Chiloquin, Oregon (Tribal Members Only)

The Klamath Tribe currently has no reservation, per se. However, the Klamath Tribe has reserved hunting, fishing, and gathering rights within its former reservation boundary. This area of former reservation, granted to the Klamaths by the Treaty of 1864, is over 1 million acres. Tribal natural resource management authority is derived from the Treaty of 1864, and carried out cooperatively under the judicially enforced Consent Decree of 1981. The parties to this Consent Decree are the Federal Government, the State of Oregon, and the Klamath Tribe. The Klamath Indian Game Commission sets the seasons. The tribal biological staff and tribal regulatory enforcement officers monitor tribal harvest by frequent bag checks and hunter interviews.

For the 2012–13 season, the Tribe requests proposed season dates of October 1, 2012, through January 31, 2013. Daily bag limits would be 9 for ducks, 9 for geese, and 9 for coot, with possession limits twice the daily bag limit. Shooting hours would be one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. Steel shot is required.

Based on the number of birds produced in the Klamath Basin, this year's harvest would be similar to last year's. Information on tribal harvest suggests that more than 70 percent of the annual goose harvest is local birds produced in the Klamath Basin.

We propose to approve the Klamath Tribe's requested 2012–13 special migratory bird hunting regulations.

(i) Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Cass Lake, Minnesota (Tribal Members Only)

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is a federally recognized Tribe located in Cass Lake, Minnesota. The reservation employs conservation officers to enforce conservation regulations. The Service and the Tribe have cooperatively established migratory bird hunting regulations since 2000.

For the 2012–13 season, the Tribe requests a duck season starting on September 15 and ending December 31, 2012, and a goose season to run from September 1 through December 31, 2012. Daily bag limits for ducks would

be 10, including no more than 5 pintail, 5 canvasback, and 5 black ducks. Daily bag limits for geese would be 10. Possession limits would be twice the daily bag limit. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

The annual harvest by tribal members on the Leech Lake Reservation is estimated at 500–1,000 birds.

We propose to approve the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe's special migratory bird hunting season.

(j) Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, Manistee, Michigan (Tribal Members Only)

The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians is a self-governing, federally recognized Tribe located in Manistee, Michigan, and a signatory Tribe of the Treaty of 1836. We have approved special regulations for tribal members of the 1836 treaty's signatory Tribes on ceded lands in Michigan since the 1986–87 hunting season. Ceded lands are located in Lake, Mason, Manistee, and Wexford Counties. The Band normally proposes regulations to govern the hunting of migratory birds by Tribal members within the 1836 Ceded Territory as well as on the Band's Reservation.

For the 2012–13 season, we assume the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians would propose a duck and merganser season from September 15, 2012, through January 20, 2013. A daily bag limit of 12 ducks would include no more than 2 pintail, 2 canvasback, 3 black ducks, 3 wood ducks, 3 redheads, 6 mallards (only 2 of which may be a hen), and 1 hooded merganser. Possession limits would be twice the daily bag limit.

For white-fronted geese, snow geese, and brant, the Tribe usually proposes a September 20 through November 30 season. Daily bag limits would be five geese.

For Canada geese only, the Tribe will likely propose a September 1, 2012, through February 8, 2013, season with a daily bag limit of five. The possession limit would be twice the daily bag limit.

For snipe, woodcock, rails, and mourning doves, we expect the Tribe will propose a September 1 to November 14, 2012, season. The daily bag limit would be 10 common snipe, 5 woodcock, 10 rails, and 10 mourning doves. Possession limits for all species would be twice the daily bag limit.

The Tribe monitors harvest through mail surveys. General conditions are as follows:

A. All tribal members will be required to obtain a valid tribal resource card and 2012–13 hunting license.

B. Except as modified by the Service rules adopted in response to this proposal, these amended regulations parallel all Federal regulations contained in 50 CFR part 20.

C. Particular regulations of note include:

(1) Nontoxic shot will be required for all waterfowl hunting by tribal members.

(2) Tribal members in each zone will comply with tribal regulations providing for closed and restricted waterfowl hunting areas. These regulations generally incorporate the same restrictions contained in parallel State regulations.

D. Tribal members hunting in Michigan will comply with tribal codes that contain provisions parallel to Michigan law regarding duck blinds and decoys.

We plan to approve Little River Band of Ottawa Indians' special migratory bird hunting seasons upon receipt of their proposal based on the provisions described above.

(k) The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Petoskey, Michigan (Tribal Members Only)

The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB) is a self-governing, federally recognized Tribe located in Petoskey, Michigan, and a signatory Tribe of the Treaty of 1836. We have approved special regulations for tribal members of the 1836 treaty's signatory Tribes on ceded lands in Michigan since the 1986–87 hunting season.

For the 2012–13 season, the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians propose regulations similar to those of other Tribes in the 1836 treaty area. LTBB proposes the regulations to govern the hunting of migratory birds by tribal members on the LTBB reservation and within the 1836 Treaty Ceded Territory. The tribal member duck and merganser season would run from September 15, 2012, through January 31, 2013. A daily bag limit of 20 ducks and 10 mergansers would include no more than 5 hen mallards, 5 pintail, 5 canvasback, 5 scaup, 5 hooded merganser, 5 black ducks, 5 wood ducks, and 5 redheads.

For Canada geese, the Tribe proposes a September 1, 2012, through February 8, 2013, season. The daily bag limit for Canada geese would be 20 birds. We further note that, based on available data (of major goose migration routes), it is unlikely that any Canada geese from the Southern James Bay Population would be harvested by the Tribe. Possession limits are twice the daily bag limit.

For woodcock, the Tribe proposes a September 1, 2012, to December 1, 2012, season. The daily bag limit will not exceed 10 birds. For snipe, the Tribe proposes a September 1 to December 31, 2012, season. The daily bag limit will not exceed 16 birds. For mourning doves, the Tribe proposes a September 1 to November 14, 2012, season. The daily bag limit will not exceed 15 birds. For Virginia and sora rails, the Tribe proposes a September 1 to December 31, 2012, season. The daily bag limit will not exceed 20 birds per species. For coots and gallinules, the Tribe proposes a September 15 to December 31, 2012, season. The daily bag limit will not exceed 20 birds per species. The possession limit will not exceed 2 days' bag limit for all birds.

All other Federal regulations contained in 50 CFR part 20 would apply.

The Tribe proposes to monitor harvest closely through game bag checks, patrols, and mail surveys. In particular, the Tribe proposes monitoring the harvest of Southern James Bay Canada geese to assess any impacts of tribal hunting on the population.

We propose to approve the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians' requested 2012–13 special migratory bird hunting regulations.

(l) Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Reservation, Lower Brule, South Dakota (Tribal Members and Nontribal Hunters)

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe first established tribal migratory bird hunting regulations for the Lower Brule Reservation in 1994. The Lower Brule Reservation is about 214,000 acres in size and is located on and adjacent to the Missouri River, south of Pierre. Land ownership on the reservation is mixed, and until recently, the Lower Brule Tribe had full management authority over fish and wildlife via an MOA with the State of South Dakota. The MOA provided the Tribe jurisdiction over fish and wildlife on reservation lands, including deeded and Corps of Engineers-taken lands. For the 2012–13 season, the two parties have come to an agreement that provides the public a clear understanding of the Lower Brule Sioux Wildlife Department license requirements and hunting season regulations. The Lower Brule Reservation waterfowl season is open to tribal and nontribal hunters.

For the 2012–13 migratory bird hunting season, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe proposes a nontribal member duck, merganser, and coot season length of 97 days, or the maximum number of days allowed by Federal frameworks in the High Plains Management Unit for

this season. The Tribe proposes a duck season from September 29, 2012, through January 3, 2013. The daily bag limit would be six birds, including no more than two hen mallard and five mallards total, one pintail, two redheads, one canvasback, two wood ducks, two scaup, and one mottled duck. The daily bag limit for mergansers would be five, only two of which could be a hooded merganser. The daily bag limit for coots would be 15. Possession limits would be twice the daily bag limits.

The Tribe's proposed nontribal-member Canada goose season would run from October 27, 2012, through February 10, 2013 (107-day season length), with a daily bag limit of three Canada geese. The Tribe's proposed nontribal member white-fronted goose season would run from October 27, 2012, through January 4, 2013, and January 26 through February 10, 2013, with a daily bag limit of one white-fronted goose. The Tribe's proposed nontribal-member light goose season would run from October 27, 2012, through January 6, 2013, and February 2 through March 10, 2013. The light goose daily bag limit would be 20. Possession limits would be twice the daily bag limits.

For tribal members, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe proposes a duck, merganser, and coot season from September 22, 2012, through March 10, 2013. The daily bag limit would be six ducks, including no more than two hen mallard and five mallards total, one pintail, two redheads, one canvasback, two wood ducks, two scaup, and one mottled duck. The daily bag limit for mergansers would be five, only two of which could be hooded mergansers. The daily bag limit for coots would be 15. Possession limits would be twice the daily bag limits.

The Tribe's proposed Canada goose season for tribal members would run from September 22, 2012, through March 10, 2013, with a daily bag limit of three Canada geese. The Tribe's proposed white-fronted goose tribal season would run from September 22, 2012, through March 10, 2013, with a daily bag limit of two white-fronted geese. The Tribe's proposed light goose tribal season would run from September 22, 2012, through March 10, 2013. The light goose daily bag limit would be 20. Possession limits would be twice the daily bag limits.

In the 2011–12 season, hunters harvested 551 geese and 695 ducks. In the 2011–12 season, duck harvest species composition was primarily mallard (74 percent), gadwall, and green-winged teal (8 percent).

Goose harvest species composition in 2011–12 at Mni Sho Sho was insignificant due to the few hunting days offered compared to previous years.

The Tribe anticipates a duck harvest similar to those of the previous 3 years and a goose harvest below the target harvest level of 3,000 to 4,000 geese. All basic Federal regulations contained in 50 CFR part 20, including the use of nontoxic shot, Migratory Waterfowl Hunting and Conservation Stamps, etc., would be observed by the Tribe's proposed regulations. In addition, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe has an official Conservation Code that was established by Tribal Council Resolution in June 1982 and updated in 1996.

We plan to approve the Tribe's requested regulations for the Lower Brule Reservation given that the seasons' dates fall within final Federal flyway frameworks (applies to nontribal hunters only).

(m) Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Port Angeles, Washington (Tribal Members Only)

Since 1996, the Service and the Point No Point Treaty Tribes, of which Lower Elwha was one, have cooperated to establish special regulations for migratory bird hunting. The Tribes are now acting independently and the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe would like to establish migratory bird hunting regulations for tribal members for the 2012–13 season. The Tribe has a reservation on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State and is a successor to the signatories of the Treaty of Point No Point of 1855.

For the 2012–13 season, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe requests a duck and coot season from September 15, 2012, to January 6, 2013. The daily bag limit will be seven ducks including no more than two hen mallards, one pintail, one canvasback, and two redheads. The daily bag and possession limit on harlequin duck will be one per season. The coot daily bag limit will be 25. The possession limit will be twice the daily bag limit, except as noted above.

For geese, the Tribe requests a season from September 15, 2012, to January 6, 2013. The daily bag limit will be four, including no more than three light geese. The season on Aleutian Canada geese will be closed.

For brant, the Tribe proposes to close the season.

For mourning doves, band-tailed pigeon, and snipe, the Tribe requests a season from September 15, 2012, to January 6, 2013, with a daily bag limit of 10, 2, and 8, respectively. The

possession limit will be twice the daily bag limit.

All Tribal hunters authorized to hunt migratory birds are required to obtain a tribal hunting permit from the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe pursuant to tribal law. Hunting hours would be from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Only steel, tungsten-iron, tungsten-polymer, tungsten-matrix, and tin shot are allowed for hunting waterfowl. It is unlawful to use or possess lead shot while hunting waterfowl.

The Tribe typically anticipates harvest to be fewer than 10 birds. Tribal reservation police and Tribal fisheries enforcement officers have the authority to enforce these migratory bird hunting regulations.

The Service proposes to approve the request for special migratory bird hunting regulations for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.

(n) Makah Indian Tribe, Neah Bay, Washington (Tribal Members Only)

The Makah Indian Tribe and the Service have been cooperating to establish special regulations for migratory game birds on the Makah Reservation and traditional hunting land off the Makah Reservation since the 2001–02 hunting season. Lands off the Makah Reservation are those contained within the boundaries of the State of Washington Game Management Units 601–603.

The Makah Indian Tribe proposes a duck and coot hunting season from September 22, 2012, to January 26, 2013. The daily bag limit is seven ducks, including no more than five mallards (only two hen mallard), one canvasback, one pintail, three scaup, and one redhead. The daily bag limit for coots is 25. The Tribe has a year-round closure on wood ducks and harlequin ducks. Shooting hours for all species of waterfowl are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

For geese, the Tribe proposes that the season open on September 22, 2012, and close January 26, 2013. The daily bag limit for geese is four and one brant. The Tribe notes that there is a year-round closure on Aleutian and dusky Canada geese.

For band-tailed pigeons, the Tribe proposes that the season open September 15, 2012, and close October 28, 2012. The daily bag limit for band-tailed pigeons is two.

The Tribe anticipates that harvest under this regulation will be relatively low since there are no known dedicated waterfowl hunters and any harvest of waterfowl or band-tailed pigeons is usually incidental to hunting for other species, such as deer, elk, and bear. The

Tribe expects fewer than 50 ducks and 10 geese to be harvested during the 2012–13 migratory bird hunting season.

All other Federal regulations contained in 50 CFR part 20 would apply. The following restrictions are also usually proposed by the Tribe:

(1) As per Makah Ordinance 44, only shotguns may be used to hunt any species of waterfowl. Additionally, shotguns must not be discharged within 0.25 miles of an occupied area.

(2) Hunters must be eligible, enrolled Makah tribal members and must carry their Indian Treaty Fishing and Hunting Identification Card while hunting. No tags or permits are required to hunt waterfowl.

(3) The Cape Flattery area is open to waterfowl hunting, except in designated wilderness areas, or within 1 mile of Cape Flattery Trail, or in any area that is closed to hunting by another ordinance or regulation.

(4) The use of live decoys and/or baiting to pursue any species of waterfowl is prohibited.

(5) Steel or bismuth shot only for waterfowl is allowed; the use of lead shot is prohibited.

(6) The use of dogs is permitted to hunt waterfowl.

The Service proposes to approve the Makah Indian Tribe's requested 2012–13 special migratory bird hunting regulations.

(o) Navajo Nation, Navajo Indian Reservation, Window Rock, Arizona (Tribal Members and Nontribal Hunters)

Since 1985, we have established uniform migratory bird hunting regulations for tribal members and nonmembers on the Navajo Indian Reservation (in parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah). The Navajo Nation owns almost all lands on the reservation and has full wildlife management authority.

For the 2012–13 season, the Navajo Nation requests special migratory bird hunting regulations on the reservation for both tribal and nontribal hunters for ducks (including mergansers), Canada geese, coots, band-tailed pigeons, and mourning doves. For ducks, mergansers, Canada geese, and coots, the Tribe requests the earliest opening dates and longest seasons, and the same daily bag and possession limits allowed to Pacific Flyway States under final Federal frameworks.

For both mourning dove and band-tailed pigeons, the Navajo Nation proposes seasons of September 1 through September 30, 2012, with daily bag limits of 10 and 5, respectively. Possession limits would be twice the daily bag limits.

The Nation requires tribal members and nonmembers to comply with all basic Federal migratory bird hunting regulations in 50 CFR part 20 pertaining to shooting hours and manner of taking. In addition, each waterfowl hunter 16 years of age or over must carry on his/her person a valid Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp), which must be signed in ink across the face. Special regulations established by the Navajo Nation also apply on the reservation.

The Tribe anticipates a total harvest of fewer than 500 mourning doves; fewer than 10 band-tailed pigeons; fewer than 1,000 ducks, coots, and mergansers; and fewer than 1,000 Canada geese for the 2012–13 season. The Tribe will measure harvest by mail survey forms. Through the established Navajo Nation Code, titles 17 and 18, and 23 U.S.C. 1165, the Tribe will take action to close the season, reduce bag limits, or take other appropriate actions if the harvest is detrimental to the migratory bird resource.

We propose to approve the Navajo Nation's special migratory bird season.

(p) Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, Oneida, Wisconsin (Tribal Members Only)

Since 1991–92, the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin and the Service have cooperated to establish uniform regulations for migratory bird hunting by tribal and nontribal hunters within the original Oneida Reservation boundaries. Since 1985, the Oneida Tribe's Conservation Department has enforced the Tribe's hunting regulations within those original reservation limits. The Oneida Tribe also has a good working relationship with the State of Wisconsin and the majority of the seasons and limits are the same for the Tribe and Wisconsin.

In a June 18, 2012, letter, the Tribe proposed special migratory bird hunting regulations. For ducks, the Tribe described the general outside dates as being September 15 through December 2, 2012, with a closed segment of November 17 to 25, 2012. The Tribe proposes a daily bag limit of six birds, which could include no more than six mallards (three hen mallards), six wood duck, one redhead, two pintail, and one hooded merganser.

For geese, the Tribe requests a season between September 1 and December 30, 2012, with a daily bag limit of five Canada geese from September 1 through 14, 2012, and three from September 15, 2012, through December 30, 2012. The Tribe will close the season November 17 to 25, 2012. If a quota of 300 geese is attained before the season concludes,

the Tribe will recommend closing the season early.

For woodcock, the Tribe proposes a season between September 1 and November 4, 2012, with a daily bag and possession limit of 5 and 10, respectively.

For mourning dove, the Tribe proposes a season between September 1 and November 4, 2012, with a daily bag and possession limit of 10 and 20, respectively.

The Tribe proposes shooting hours be one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. Nontribal hunters hunting on the Reservation or on lands under the jurisdiction of the Tribe must comply with all State of Wisconsin regulations, including shooting hours of one-half hour before sunrise to sunset, season dates, and daily bag limits. Tribal members and nontribal hunters hunting on the Reservation or on lands under the jurisdiction of the Tribe must observe all basic Federal migratory bird hunting regulations found in 50 CFR part 20, with the following exceptions: Oneida members would be exempt from the purchase of the Migratory Waterfowl Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp); and shotgun capacity is not limited to three shells.

The Service proposes to approve the request for special migratory bird hunting regulations for the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin.

(q) Point No Point Treaty Council Tribes, Kingston, Washington (Tribal Members Only)

We are establishing uniform migratory bird hunting regulations for tribal members on behalf of the Point No Point Treaty Council Tribes, consisting of the Port Gamble S'Klallam and Jamestown S'Klallam Tribes. The two tribes have reservations and ceded areas in northwestern Washington State and are the successors to the signatories of the Treaty of Point No Point of 1855. These proposed regulations will apply to tribal members both on and off reservations within the Point No Point Treaty Areas; however, the Port Gamble S'Klallam and Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal season dates differ only where indicated below.

For the 2012–13 season, we expect the Point No Point Treaty Council to request special migratory bird hunting regulations for the 2012–13 hunting season for both the Jamestown S'Klallam and Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribes. For ducks and coots hunting season, based on past experience, the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe will likely propose the season open September 15, 2012, and close February 1, 2013. The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribes usually proposes the season open from

September 1, 2012, to February 1, 2013. The daily bag limit would be seven ducks, including no more than two hen mallards, one canvasback, one pintail, two redhead, and four scoters. The daily bag limit for coots would be 25. The daily bag limit and possession limit on harlequin ducks would be one per season. The daily possession limits are double the daily bag limits except where noted.

For geese, the Point No Point Treaty Council will likely propose the season open on September 15, 2012, and close March 10, 2013. The daily bag limit for geese would be four, not to include more than three light geese. The Council notes that there is a year-round closure on Aleutian and cackling Canada geese. For brant, we expect the Council to propose the season open on November 13, 2012, and close January 31, 2013. The daily bag limit for brant would be two.

For band-tailed pigeons and snipe, we expect the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe to propose the season open September 1, 2012, and close March 10, 2013. The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe will likely propose the season open September 15, 2012, and close March 10, 2013. The daily bag limit for band-tailed pigeons will probably be two and eight for snipe. For mourning dove, we expect the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe to propose the season open September 1, 2012, and close January 31, 2013. The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe will likely propose the season open September 15, 2012, and close January 14, 2013. The daily bag limit for mourning dove would be 10.

The Tribe usually anticipates a total harvest of fewer than 200 birds for the 2012–13 season. The tribal fish and wildlife enforcement officers have the authority to enforce these tribal regulations.

We propose to approve the Point No Point Treaty Council Tribe's special migratory bird seasons upon receipt of the Tribe's proposal.

(r) Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan (Tribal Members Only)

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians is a federally recognized self-governing Indian Tribe, distributed throughout the eastern Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The Tribe has retained the right to hunt, fish, trap, and gather on the lands ceded in the Treaty of Washington (1836).

In a May 31, 2012, letter, the Tribe proposed special migratory bird hunting regulations. For ducks, mergansers, and common snipe, the Tribe proposes outside dates as September 15 through

December 31, 2012. The Tribe proposes a daily bag limit of 20 ducks, which could include no more than 10 mallards (5 hen mallards), 5 wood duck, 5 black duck, and 5 canvasback. The merganser daily bag limit is 10 in the aggregate and 16 for common snipe.

For geese, coot, gallinule, sora, and Virginia rail, the Tribe requests a season from September 1 to December 31, 2012. The daily bag limit for geese is 20, in the aggregate. The daily bag limit for coot, gallinule, sora, and Virginia rail is 20 in the aggregate.

For woodcock, the Tribe proposes a season between September 2 and December 1, 2012, with a daily bag and possession limit of 10 and 20, respectively.

For mourning dove, the Tribe proposes a season between September 1 and November 14, 2012, with a daily bag and possession limit of 10 and 20, respectively.

All Sault Ste. Marie Tribe members exercising hunting treaty rights within the 1836 Ceded Territory are required to submit annual harvest reports including date of harvest, number and species harvested, and location of harvest. Hunting hours would be from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. All other regulations in 50 CFR part 20 apply including the use of only nontoxic shot for hunting waterfowl.

The Service proposes to approve the request for special migratory bird hunting regulations for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

(s) Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Fort Hall Indian Reservation, Fort Hall, Idaho (Nontribal Hunters)

Almost all of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation is tribally owned. The Tribes claim full wildlife management authority throughout the reservation, but the Idaho Fish and Game Department has disputed tribal jurisdiction, especially for hunting by nontribal members on reservation lands owned by non-Indians. As a compromise, since 1985, we have established the same waterfowl hunting regulations on the reservation and in a surrounding off-reservation State zone. The regulations were requested by the Tribes and provided for different season dates than in the remainder of the State. We agreed to the season dates because they would provide additional protection to mallards and pintails. The State of Idaho concurred with the zoning arrangement. We have no objection to the State's use of this zone again in the 2012–13 hunting season, provided the duck and goose hunting

season dates are the same as on the reservation.

In a proposal for the 2012–13 hunting season, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes requested a continuous duck (including mergansers) season, with the maximum number of days and the same daily bag and possession limits permitted for Pacific Flyway States under the final Federal frameworks. The Tribes propose a duck and coot season with, if the same number of hunting days is permitted as last year, an opening date of October 6, 2012, and a closing date of January 19, 2013. The Tribes anticipate harvest will be between 2,000 and 5,000 ducks.

The Tribes also requested a continuous goose season with the maximum number of days and the same daily bag and possession limits permitted in Idaho under Federal frameworks. The Tribes propose that, if the same number of hunting days is permitted as in previous years, the season would have an opening date of October 6, 2012, and a closing date of January 19, 2013. The Tribes anticipate harvest will be between 4,000 and 6,000 geese.

The Tribe requests a common snipe season with the maximum number of days and the same daily bag and possession limits permitted in Idaho under Federal frameworks. The Tribes propose that, if the same number of hunting days is permitted as in previous years, the season would have an opening date of October 6, 2012, and a closing date of January 19, 2013.

Nontribal hunters must comply with all basic Federal migratory bird hunting regulations in 50 CFR part 20 pertaining to shooting hours, use of steel shot, and manner of taking. Special regulations established by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes also apply on the reservation.

We note that the requested regulations are nearly identical to those of last year, and we propose to approve them for the 2012–13 hunting season given that the seasons' dates fall within the final Federal flyway frameworks (applies to nontribal hunters only).

(t) Skokomish Tribe, Shelton, Washington (Tribal Members Only)

Since 1996, the Service and the Point No Point Treaty Tribes, of which the Skokomish Tribe was one, have cooperated to establish special regulations for migratory bird hunting. The Tribes have been acting independently since 2005, and the Skokomish Tribe would like to establish migratory bird hunting regulations for tribal members for the 2012–13 season. The Tribe has a reservation on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State

and is a successor to the signatories of the Treaty of Point No Point of 1855.

The Skokomish Tribe requests a duck and coot season from September 16, 2012, to February 28, 2013. The daily bag limit is seven ducks, including no more than two hen mallards, one pintail, one canvasback, and two redheads. The daily bag and possession limit on harlequin duck is one per season. The coot daily bag limit is 25. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit except as noted above.

For geese, the Tribe requests a season from September 16, 2012, to February 28, 2013. The daily bag limit is four, including no more than three light geese. The season on Aleutian Canada geese is closed. For brant, the Tribe proposes a season from November 1, 2012, to February 15, 2013, with a daily bag limit of two. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

For mourning doves, band-tailed pigeon, and snipe, the Tribe requests a season from September 16, 2012, to February 28, 2013, with a daily bag limit of 10, 2, and 8, respectively. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

All Tribal hunters authorized to hunt migratory birds are required to obtain a tribal hunting permit from the Skokomish Tribe pursuant to tribal law. Hunting hours would be from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Only steel, tungsten-iron, tungsten-polymer, tungsten-matrix, and tin shot are allowed for hunting waterfowl. It is unlawful to use or possess lead shot while hunting waterfowl.

The Tribe anticipates harvest to be fewer than 150 birds. The Skokomish Public Safety Office enforcement officers have the authority to enforce these migratory bird hunting regulations.

We propose to approve the Skokomish Tribe's requested migratory bird hunting season.

(u) Spokane Tribe of Indians, Spokane Indian Reservation, Wellpinit, Washington (Tribal Members Only)

The Spokane Tribe of Indians wishes to establish waterfowl seasons on their reservation for its membership to access as an additional resource. An established waterfowl season on the reservation will allow access to a resource for members to continue practicing a subsistence lifestyle.

The Spokane Indian Reservation is located in northeastern Washington State. The reservation comprises approximately 157,000 acres. The boundaries of the Reservation are the Columbia River to the west, the Spokane River to the south (now Lake Roosevelt),

Tshimikn Creek to the east, and the 48th Parallel as the north boundary. Tribal membership comprises approximately 2,300 enrolled Spokane Tribal Members.

These proposed regulations would allow Tribal Members, spouses of Spokane Tribal Members, and first-generation descendants of a Spokane Tribal Member with a tribal permit and Federal Waterfowl stamp an opportunity to utilize the reservation and ceded lands for waterfowl hunting. It will also benefit tribal membership through access to this resource throughout Spokane Tribal ceded lands in eastern Washington. By Spokane Tribal Referendum, spouses of Spokane Tribal Members and children of Spokane Tribal Members not enrolled are allowed to harvest game animals within the Spokane Indian Reservation with the issuance of hunting permits.

For the 2012–13 season, the Tribe requests to establish duck seasons that would run from September 2, 2012, through January 31, 2013. The tribe is requesting the daily bag limit for ducks to be consistent with final Federal frameworks. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

The Tribe proposes a season on geese starting September 2, 2012, and ending on January 31, 2013. The tribe is requesting the daily bag limit for geese to be consistent with final Federal frameworks. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

Based on the quantity of requests the Spokane Tribe of Indians has received, the tribe anticipates harvest levels for the 2012–13 season for both ducks and geese to be below 100 total birds with goose harvest at fewer than 50. Hunter success will be monitored through mandatory harvest reports returned within 30 days of the season closure.

We propose to approve the Spokane Tribe's requested 2012–13 special migratory bird hunting regulations.

(v) Squaxin Island Tribe, Squaxin Island Reservation, Shelton, Washington (Tribal Members Only)

The Squaxin Island Tribe of Washington and the Service have cooperated since 1995 to establish special tribal migratory bird hunting regulations. These special regulations apply to tribal members on the Squaxin Island Reservation, located in western Washington near Olympia, and all lands within the traditional hunting grounds of the Squaxin Island Tribe.

Based on past experience, for the 2012–13 season, we expect the Tribe will request to establish duck and coot seasons that would run from September 1, 2012, through January 15, 2013. The daily bag limit for ducks would be five

per day and could include only one canvasback. The season on harlequin ducks is closed. For coots, the daily bag limit is 25. For snipe, the Tribe will likely propose that the season start on September 15, 2012, and end on January 15, 2013. The daily bag limit for snipe would be eight. For band-tailed pigeon, we expect the Tribe to propose that the season start on September 1, 2012, and end on December 31, 2012. The daily bag limit would be five. The possession limit would be twice the daily bag limit.

We expect the Tribe to propose a season on geese starting September 15, 2012, and ending on January 15, 2013. The daily bag limit for geese would be four, including no more than two snow geese. The season on Aleutian and cackling Canada geese would be closed. For brant, the Tribe will likely propose that the season start on September 1, 2012, and end on December 31, 2012. The daily bag limit for brant would be two. The possession limit would be twice the daily bag limit.

We propose to approve the Tribe's requested 2012–13 special migratory bird hunting regulations upon receipt of the Tribe's proposal.

(w) Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, Arlington, Washington (Tribal Members Only)

The Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians and the Service have cooperated to establish special regulations for migratory game birds since 2001. For the 2012–13 season, the Tribe requests regulations to hunt all open and unclaimed lands under the Treaty of Point Elliott of January 22, 1855, including their main hunting grounds around Camano Island, Skagit Flats, and Port Susan to the border of the Tulalip Tribes Reservation. Ceded lands are located in Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, and Kings Counties, and a portion of Pierce County, Washington. The Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians is a federally recognized Tribe and reserves the Treaty Right to hunt (*U.S. v. Washington*).

The Tribe proposes that duck (including mergansers) and goose seasons run from October 1, 2012, to February 15, 2013. The daily bag limit on ducks (including sea ducks and mergansers) is 10 and must include no more than 7 mallards (only 3 of which can be hens), 3 pintails, 3 redheads, 3 scaup, and 3 canvasbacks. For geese, the daily bag limit is six. Possession limits are totals of these two daily bag limits.

The Tribe proposes that coot, brant, and snipe seasons run from October 1, 2012, to January 31, 2013. The daily bag limit for coot is 25. The daily bag limit on brant is three. The daily bag limit for

snipe is 10. Possession limits are twice the daily bag limit.

The Tribe proposes that band-tailed pigeon and dove seasons run from September 1, 2012, to October 31, 2012. The daily bag limit for band-tailed pigeon is four. The daily bag limit on dove is 10. Possession limits are twice the daily bag limit.

Harvest is regulated by a punch card system. Tribal members hunting on lands under this proposal will observe all basic Federal migratory bird hunting regulations found in 50 CFR part 20, which will be enforced by the Stillaguamish Tribal law enforcement. Tribal members are required to use steel shot or a nontoxic shot as required by Federal regulations.

The Tribe anticipates a total harvest of 200 ducks, 100 geese, 50 mergansers, 100 coots, and 100 snipe. Anticipated harvest needs include subsistence and ceremonial needs. Certain species may be closed to hunting for conservation purposes, and consideration for the needs of certain species will be addressed.

The Service proposes to approve the 2012–13 Stillaguamish Tribe's request for special migratory bird hunting regulations for the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians.

(x) Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, LaConner, Washington (Tribal Members Only)

In 1996, the Service and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community began cooperating to establish special regulations for migratory bird hunting. The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is a federally recognized Indian Tribe consisting of the Swinomish, Lower Skagit, Samish, and Kikialous. The Swinomish Reservation was established by the Treaty of Point Elliott of January 22, 1855, and lies in the Puget Sound area north of Seattle, Washington.

For the 2012–13 season, we anticipate that the Tribal Community will request to establish a migratory bird hunting season on all areas that are open and unclaimed and consistent with the meaning of the treaty. The Tribal Community usually requests to establish duck, merganser, Canada goose, brant, and coot seasons opening on the earliest possible date allowed by the final Federal frameworks for the Pacific Flyway and closing 30 days after the State of Washington closes its season. The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community requests an additional three birds of each species over the numbers allowed by the State for daily bag and possession limits.

The Community normally anticipates that the regulations will result in the harvest of approximately 300 ducks, 50 Canada geese, 75 mergansers, 100 brant, and 50 coot. The Swinomish utilize a report card and permit system to monitor harvest and will implement steps to limit harvest where conservation is needed. All tribal regulations will be enforced by tribal fish and game officers.

On reservation, the Tribal Community will likely propose a hunting season for the above-mentioned species beginning on the earliest possible opening date and closing March 9, 2013. The Swinomish manage harvest by a report card and permit system, and we anticipate harvest will be similar to that expected off reservation.

We believe the estimated harvest by the Swinomish will be minimal and will not adversely affect migratory bird populations. Upon receipt of the 2012–13 Swinomish hunting proposal, we propose to approve the Tribe's requested 2012–13 special migratory bird hunting regulations.

(y) The Tulalip Tribes of Washington, Tulalip Indian Reservation, Marysville, Washington (Tribal Members and Nontribal Hunters)

The Tulalip Tribes are the successors in interest to the Tribes and bands signatory to the Treaty of Point Elliott of January 22, 1855. The Tulalip Tribes' government is located on the Tulalip Indian Reservation just north of the City of Everett in Snohomish County, Washington. The Tribes or individual tribal members own all of the land on the reservation, and they have full wildlife management authority. All lands within the boundaries of the Tulalip Tribes Reservation are closed to nonmember hunting unless opened by Tulalip Tribal regulations.

The Tribe proposes tribal and nontribal hunting regulations for the 2012–13 season. Migratory waterfowl hunting by Tulalip Tribal members is authorized by Tulalip Tribal Ordinance No. 67. For ducks, mergansers, coot, and snipe, the proposed season for tribal members is from September 7, 2012, through February 28, 2013. In the case of nontribal hunters hunting on the reservation, the season would be the latest closing date and the longest period of time allowed under the final Pacific Flyway Federal frameworks. Daily bag and possession limits for Tulalip Tribal members would be 7 and 14 ducks, respectively, except that for blue-winged teal, canvasback, harlequin, pintail, and wood duck, the bag and possession limits would be the same as those established in accordance

with final Federal frameworks. For nontribal hunters, bag and possession limits would be the same as those permitted under final Federal frameworks. For coot, daily bag and possession limits are 25 and 50, respectively, and for snipe 8 and 16, respectively. Nontribal hunters should check with the Tulalip tribal authorities regarding additional conservation measures that may apply to specific species managed within the region. Ceremonial hunting may be authorized by the Department of Natural Resources at any time upon application of a qualified tribal member. Such a hunt must have a bag limit designed to limit harvest only to those birds necessary to provide for the ceremony.

For geese, tribal members propose a season from September 7, 2012, through February 28, 2013. Nontribal hunters would be allowed the longest season and the latest closing date permitted by the Pacific Flyway Federal frameworks. For tribal hunters, the goose daily bag and possession limits would be 7 and 14, respectively, except that the bag limits for brant, cackling Canada geese, and dusky Canada geese would be those established in accordance with final Federal frameworks. For nontribal hunters hunting on reservation lands, the daily bag and possession limits would be those established in accordance with final Federal frameworks for the Pacific Flyway. The Tulalip Tribes also set a maximum annual bag limit for those tribal members who engage in subsistence hunting of 365 ducks and 365 geese.

All hunters on Tulalip Tribal lands are required to adhere to shooting hour regulations set at one-half hour before sunrise to sunset, special tribal permit requirements, and a number of other tribal regulations enforced by the Tribe. Each nontribal hunter 16 years of age and older hunting pursuant to Tulalip Tribes' Ordinance No. 67 must possess a valid Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp and a valid State of Washington Migratory Waterfowl Stamp. Each hunter must validate stamps by signing across the face.

Although the season length requested by the Tulalip Tribes appears to be quite liberal, harvest information indicates a total take by tribal and nontribal hunters of fewer than 1,000 ducks and 500 geese annually.

We propose to approve the Tulalip Tribe's request to have a special season.

(z) Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Sedro Woolley, Washington (Tribal members only)

The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe and the Service have cooperated to establish special regulations for migratory game birds since 2001. The Tribe has jurisdiction over lands within Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties, Washington. The Tribe issues tribal hunters a harvest report card that will be shared with the State of Washington.

For the 2012–13 season, the Tribe requests a duck season starting October 1, 2012, and ending February 28, 2013. The Tribe proposes a daily bag limit of 15 with a possession limit of 20. The Tribe requests a coot season starting October 1, 2012, and ending February 15, 2013. The coot daily bag limit is 20 with a possession limit of 30.

The Tribe proposes a goose season from October 1, 2012, to February 28, 2013, with a daily bag limit of 7 geese and a possession limit of 10. For brant, the Tribe proposes a season from November 1 to November 10, 2012, with a daily bag and possession limit of 2.

The Tribe proposes a mourning dove season between September 1 and December 31, 2012, with a daily bag limit of 12 and possession limit of 15.

The anticipated migratory bird harvest under this proposal would be 100 ducks, 5 geese, 2 brant, and 10 coots. Tribal members must have the tribal identification and tribal harvest report card on their person to hunt. Tribal members hunting on the Reservation will observe all basic Federal migratory bird hunting regulations found in 50 CFR part 20, except shooting hours would be 15 minutes before official sunrise to 15 minutes after official sunset.

The Service proposes to approve the request for special migratory bird hunting regulations for the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe.

(aa) Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, Aquinnah, Massachusetts (Tribal Members Only)

The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head is a federally recognized Tribe located on the island of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. The Tribe has approximately 560 acres of land, which it manages for wildlife through its natural resources department. The Tribe also enforces its own wildlife laws and regulations through the natural resources department.

For the 2012–13 season, the Tribe proposes a duck season of October 13, 2012, through October 21, 2012, and October 29, 2012, through February 23, 2013. The Tribe proposes a daily bag

limit of six birds, which could include no more than four hen mallards, four mottled ducks, one fulvous whistling duck, four mergansers, three scaup, two hooded mergansers, three wood ducks, one canvasback, two redheads, two pintail, and four of all other species not listed. The season for harlequin ducks is closed. The Tribe proposes a teal (green-winged and blue) season of October 11, 2012, through February 23, 2013. A daily bag limit of six teal would be in addition to the daily bag limit for ducks.

For sea ducks, the Tribe proposes a season between October 6, 2012, and February 23, 2013, with a daily bag limit of seven, which could include no more than one hen eider and four of any one species unless otherwise noted above.

For Canada geese, the Tribe requests a season between September 5 and September 22, 2012, and October 29, 2012, and February 23, 2013, with a daily bag limit of 8 Canada geese. For snow geese, the tribe requests a season between September 5 to September 22, 2012, and November 26, 2012, to February 23, 2013, with a daily bag limit of 15 snow geese.

For woodcock, the Tribe proposes a season between October 11 and November 24, 2012, with a daily bag limit of three. For sora and Virginia rails, the Tribe requests a season of September 1, 2012, through November 10, 2012, with a daily bag limit of 5 sora and 10 Virginia rails. For snipe, the Tribe requests a season of September 1, 2012, through December 16, 2012, with a daily bag limit of 8.

Prior to 2012, the Tribe had 22 registered tribal hunters and estimates harvest to be no more than 15 geese, 25 mallards, 25 teal, 50 black ducks, and 50 of all other species combined. Tribal members hunting on the Reservation will observe all basic Federal migratory bird hunting regulations found in 50 CFR part 20. The Tribe requires hunters to register with the Harvest Information Program.

We propose to approve the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head's requested 2012–13 special migratory bird hunting regulations.

(bb) White Earth Band of Ojibwe, White Earth, Minnesota (Tribal Members Only)

The White Earth Band of Ojibwe is a federally recognized tribe located in northwest Minnesota and encompasses all of Mahnom County and parts of Becker and Clearwater Counties. The reservation employs conservation officers to enforce migratory bird regulations. The Tribe and the Service first cooperated to establish special tribal regulations in 1999.

For the 2012–13 migratory bird hunting season, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe requests a duck season to start September 17 and end December 11, 2012. For ducks, they request a daily bag limit of 10, including no more than 2 mallards, 1 pintail, and 1 canvasback. For mergansers, the Tribe proposes the season to start September 17 and end December 18, 2012. The merganser daily bag limit would be five with no more than two hooded mergansers. For geese, the Tribe proposes an early season from September 1 through September 25, 2012, and a late season from September 26, 2012, through December 19, 2012. The early season daily bag limit is eight geese, and the late season daily bag limit is five geese.

For coots, dove, rail, woodcock, and snipe, the Tribe proposes a September 1 through November 30, 2012, season with daily bag limits of 20 coots, 25 doves, 25 rails, 10 woodcock, and 10 snipe. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. Nontoxic shot is required.

Based on past harvest surveys, the Tribe anticipates harvest of 1,000 to 2,000 Canada geese and 1,000 to 1,500 ducks. The White Earth Reservation Tribal Council employs four full-time conservation officers to enforce migratory bird regulations.

We propose to approve the White Earth Band of Ojibwe's request to have a special season.

(cc) White Mountain Apache Tribe, Fort Apache Indian Reservation, Whiteriver, Arizona (Tribal Members and Nontribal Hunters)

The White Mountain Apache Tribe owns all reservation lands, and the Tribe has recognized full wildlife management authority. As in past years, the White Mountain Apache Tribe has requested regulations that are essentially unchanged from those agreed to since the 1997–98 hunting year.

The hunting zone for waterfowl is restricted and is described as: the length of the Black River west of the Bonito Creek and Black River confluence and the entire length of the Salt River forming the southern boundary of the reservation; the White River, extending from the Canyon Day Stockman Station to the Salt River; and all stock ponds located within Wildlife Management Units 4, 5, 6, and 7. Tanks located below the Mogollon Rim, within Wildlife Management Units 2 and 3, will be open to waterfowl hunting during the 2012–12 season. The length of the Black River east of the Black River/Bonito Creek confluence is closed to waterfowl hunting. All other waters of the reservation would be closed to

waterfowl hunting for the 2012–13 season.

For nontribal and tribal hunters, the Tribe proposes a continuous duck, coot, merganser, gallinule, and moorhen hunting season, with an opening date of October 12, 2012, and a closing date of January 28, 2013. The Tribe proposes a separate scaup season, with an opening date of October 20, 2012, and a closing date of December 2, 2012. The Tribe proposes a daily duck (including mergansers) bag limit of seven, which may include no more than two redheads, two pintail, seven mallards (including no more than two hen mallards), one canvasback, and three scaup. The daily bag limit for coots, gallinules, and moorhens would be 25, singly or in the aggregate.

For geese, the Tribe proposes a season from October 20, 2012, through January 28, 2013. Hunting would be limited to Canada geese, and the daily bag limit would be three.

Season dates for band-tailed pigeons and mourning doves would run for the maximum season lengths in the Pacific Flyway, in Wildlife Management Unit 10 and all areas south of Y–70 and Y–10 in Wildlife Management Unit 7, only. Proposed daily bag limits for band-tailed pigeons and mourning doves would be 3 and 10, respectively.

Possession limits for the above species are twice the daily bag limits. Shooting hours would be from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. There would be no open season for sandhill cranes, rails, and snipe on the White Mountain Apache lands under this proposal.

A number of special regulations apply to tribal and nontribal hunters, which may be obtained from the White Mountain Apache Tribe Game and Fish Department.

We plan to approve the White Mountain Apache Tribe's 2012–13 hunting seasons.

(dd) Yankton Sioux Tribe, Marty, South Dakota (Tribal Members and Nontribal Hunters)

The Yankton Sioux Tribe has yet to submit a waterfowl hunting proposal for the 2012–13 season. The Yankton Sioux tribal waterfowl hunting season usually would be open to both tribal members and nontribal hunters. The waterfowl hunting regulations would apply to tribal and trust lands within the external boundaries of the reservation.

For ducks (including mergansers) and coots, we expect the Yankton Sioux Tribe to propose a season starting October 9, 2012, and running for the maximum amount of days allowed under the final Federal frameworks.

Daily bag and possession limits would be six ducks, which may include no more than five mallards (no more than two hens), one canvasback (when the season is open), two redheads, three scaup, one pintail, or two wood ducks. The bag limit for mergansers would be five, which would include no more than one hooded merganser. The coot daily bag limit would be 15.

For geese, the Tribe will likely request a dark goose (Canada geese, brant, white-fronted geese) season starting October 29, 2012, and closing January 31, 2013. The daily bag limit would be three geese (including no more than one white-fronted goose or brant). Possession limits would be twice the daily bag limit.

For white geese, the proposed hunting season would start October 29, 2012, and run for the maximum amount of days allowed under the final Federal frameworks for the State of South Dakota. Daily bag and possession limits would equal the maximum allowed under Federal frameworks.

All hunters would have to be in possession of a valid tribal license while hunting on Yankton Sioux trust lands. Tribal and nontribal hunters must comply with all basic Federal migratory bird hunting regulations in 50 CFR part 20 pertaining to shooting hours and the manner of taking. Special regulations established by the Yankton Sioux Tribe also apply on the reservation.

During the 2005–06 hunting season, the Tribe reported that 90 nontribal hunters took 400 Canada geese, 75 light geese, and 90 ducks. Forty-five tribal members harvested fewer than 50 geese and 50 ducks.

We plan to approve the Yankton Sioux 2012–13 hunting seasons upon receipt of their proposal based on the provisions described above.

Public Comments

The Department of the Interior's policy is, whenever possible, to afford the public an opportunity to participate in the rulemaking process. Accordingly, we invite interested persons to submit written comments, suggestions, or recommendations regarding the proposed regulations. Before promulgating final migratory game bird hunting regulations, we will consider all comments we receive. These comments, and any additional information we receive, may lead to final regulations that differ from these proposals.

You may submit your comments and materials concerning this proposed rule by one of the methods listed in the **ADDRESSES** section. We will not accept comments sent by email or fax. We will not consider hand-delivered comments

that we do not receive, or mailed comments that are not postmarked, by the date specified in the **DATES** section.

We will post all comments in their entirety—including your personal identifying information—on <http://www.regulations.gov>. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Comments and materials we receive, as well as supporting documentation we used in preparing this proposed rule, will be available for public inspection on <http://www.regulations.gov>, or by appointment, during normal business hours, at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Migratory Bird Management, Room 4107, 4501 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203.

For each series of proposed rulemakings, we will establish specific comment periods. We will consider, but possibly may not respond in detail to, each comment. As in the past, we will summarize all comments we receive during the comment period and respond to them after the closing date in the preambles of any final rules.

Required Determinations

Based on our most current data, we are affirming our required determinations made in the proposed rule; for descriptions of our actions to ensure compliance with the following statutes and Executive Orders, see our April 17, and May 17, 2012, proposed rules (77 FR 23094 and 77 FR 29516):

- National Environmental Policy Act;
- Endangered Species Act;
- Regulatory Flexibility Act;
- Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act;
- Paperwork Reduction Act;
- Unfunded Mandates Reform Act;
- Executive Orders 12630, 12866, 13563, 12988, 13175, 13132, and 13211.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 20

Exports, Hunting, Imports, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Transportation, Wildlife.

Based on the results of migratory game bird studies, and having due consideration for any data or views submitted by interested parties, this proposed rulemaking may result in the adoption of special hunting regulations for migratory birds beginning as early as September 1, 2012, on certain Federal Indian reservations, off-reservation trust lands, and ceded lands. Taking into account both reserved hunting rights and the degree to which tribes have full wildlife management authority, the regulations only for tribal members or

for both tribal and nontribal hunters may differ from those established by States in which the reservations, off-reservation trust lands, and ceded lands are located. The regulations will specify open seasons, shooting hours, and bag and possession limits for rails, coot, gallinules, woodcock, common snipe, band-tailed pigeons, mourning doves, white-winged doves, ducks, mergansers, and geese.

The rules that eventually will be promulgated for the 2012–13 hunting season are authorized under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of July 3, 1918 (40 Stat. 755; 16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.), as amended. The MBTA authorizes and directs the Secretary of the Interior, having due regard for the zones of temperature and for the distribution, abundance, economic value, breeding habits, and times and lines of flight of migratory game birds, to determine when, to what extent, and by what means such birds or any part, nest, or egg thereof may be taken, hunted, captured, killed, possessed, sold, purchased, shipped, carried, exported, or transported.

Dated: August 9, 2012.

Michael J. Bean,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

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