



Overview of Changes for 2021-22 Migratory Game Bird Seasons

ESTABLISHMENT OF INLAND AND COASTAL DUCK HUNTING ZONES IN NORTH CAROLINA FOR THE 2021-2022 DUCK SEASON

Every 5 years, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) offers states the option to make changes to their established duck hunting zones. If a state currently has no duck hunting zones, they are offered the opportunity to establish duck hunting zones following regulatory guidelines from the USFWS.

At their May 2020 meeting, the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) approved the establishment of an Inland and Coastal Duck Hunting Zone with Interstate 95 as the boundary between the two zones. The purpose of creating duck hunting zones in North Carolina was to allow the WRC to establish different season dates between zones in response to varying migratory duck patterns and hunters' preferences.

Following guidelines established by USFWS, each zone may have up to three season segments, and each zone can have either the same or different season dates. The number of season segments (up to three) and season dates can change each year within each zone, but the Coastal and Inland zones and the zone boundary must remain in place for 5 hunting seasons (2021-2025).

To determine optimal season dates and number of segments within each duck hunting zone, WRC staff distributed and analyzed an online survey of duck hunters' perspectives towards various aspects of duck hunting zones during October, 2020 through February, 2021. The primary objectives were to:

1. Assess perceived impacts of duck hunting zone establishment on hunters' experiences and understanding of regulations.
2. Assess preferences for season dates between Inland and Coastal duck hunters.
3. Understand perspectives towards Youth Waterfowl Days and Veterans/Military Waterfowl Days.

When establishing duck season dates for the 2021-2022 season, the WRC relied heavily on the results of this important survey to inform our choices to offer for public comment prior to finalizing the 2021-2022 season dates at their April, 2021 meeting. A link to the results of the 2020 Duck Season and Zoning survey can be found [here](#).