

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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1979 STEEL SHOT ZONES PROPOSED; STEEL SHOT REQUIRED FOR 12-GAUGE GUNS ONLY IN 1979

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today proposed zones where waterfowl hunters would be required to use nontoxic steel shot during the 1979 fall hunting season and invited the public to comment on the proposals.

At the same time, the Service also published a final regulation which requires that steel shot be used in all gauges of guns in steel shot zones beginning in the fall of 1980. Waterfowl hunters will be required to use steel shot only in 12-gauge guns when hunting in the zones during the 1979 fall hunting season.

The purpose of requiring waterfowl hunters to use steel shot is to reduce the incidence of lead poisoning in waterfowl. About 2 million waterfowl die of lead poisoning in the United States annually after eating spent lead shot, which the birds mistake for seeds or grit. Steel shot is not toxic to waterfowl.

A proposed regulation describing 1979 steel shot zones and a final rulemaking on the use of various gauges of steel shot were published in the January 12, 1979, Federal Register.

The proposed 1979 steel shot zones are almost identical to 1978 zones except for changes in Florida, Michigan, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. The proposals would affect parts of 32 States, including areas

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where steel shot regulations were not enforced in 1978 as a result of legislation passed by Congress that prohibited the Interior Department from enforcing steel shot regulations in any State unless the State fish and wildlife agency approved. Twenty-five States approved enforcement of steel shot regulations; 13 States did not approve enforcement in part or all of the areas designated as steel shot zones. The restriction on enforcement of steel shot regulations will expire September 30, 1979, unless renewed by Congress.

Detailed descriptions of the designated steel shot zones for 1979 will be listed in press releases to be issued by the six Fish and Wildlife Service regional offices. The States for which zones have been proposed are as follows:

Atlantic Flyway--Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Mississippi Flyway--Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

Central Flyway--Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas.

Pacific Flyway--California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.

Public comments on the proposals should be submitted by February 12, 1979, to the Director (FWS/MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Under the final rulemaking on use of various gauges of steel shot, waterfowl hunters will not be permitted to possess 12-gauge shotshells loaded with toxic (lead) shot while taking waterfowl in a steel shot zone during the 1979 season. Hunters using other gauges will be permitted to use toxic shot until September 1, 1980, when the use of all gauges of toxic shot will be prohibited in steel shot zones.

The Service had previously proposed to end the use of all gauges of toxic shot in steel shot zones beginning September 1, 1979. This regulation has now been delayed for 1 year because the aforementioned action by Congress created uncertainty regarding demand for shotshells loaded with either toxic or nontoxic shot.

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