

State of Wisconsin
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
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Tony Evers, Governor
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STATE OF WISCONSIN

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

TO ALL WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETINGS:

I, Karen Hyun, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and custodian of the official records, do hereby certify that the annexed copy of Natural Resources Board Order No. WM-13-25(E) has been compared by me with the original order on file in this office of the Department of Natural Resources, Madison, Wisconsin and that the same are true copy, thereof, and of the whole of such original order: that said order was duly passed and published as set forth therein.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
and affixed the official seal of the Department of Natural
Resources at the Natural Resources State Office Building in
the City of Madison,

this _____ day of 8/4/2026 | 8:26 AM CDT, 2026

Signed by:

Steven Little

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For Karen Hyun, Ph.D., Secretary

The statement of scope for this rule, SS 061-25, was approved by the Governor on September 11, 2025, published in Register No. 837A3 on September 15, 2025, and approved by the Natural Resources Board on December 10, 2025. This rule was approved by the Governor on May 1, 2026.

ORDER OF THE STATE OF WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AMENDING RULES

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board proposes an order to **amend** NR 10.01 (1) (d), (e) 1. and 2., (h) 3., (k), (L) 2. a., and (m) 1.; relating to establishing the 2026-2030 migratory bird season framework and regulations.

WM-13-25 (E)

Establishing the 2026-2030 migratory bird season framework and regulations

Analysis Prepared by the Department of Natural Resources

1. Statute Interpreted:

Chapter 29 of the Wisconsin Statutes addresses the department's authority with respect to wild animals and plants. Section 29.014, Stats., confers broad rule-making authority to the department to "establish and maintain open and closed seasons for fish and game and any bag limits, size limits, rest days and conditions governing the taking of fish and game that will conserve the fish and game supply and ensure the citizens of this state continued opportunities for good fishing, hunting and trapping. This grant of rule-making authority allows the department to promulgate rules related to migratory game bird hunting.

2. Statutory Authority:

In promulgating these rules, statutes being interpreted or establishing agency authority include s. 29.014, Stats.

3. Explanation of Agency Authority:

The chapter on wild animals and plants, in s. 29.014, Stats., "rule making for this chapter," establishes that the department shall maintain open and closed seasons for fish and game and any limits, rest days, and conditions for taking fish and game. This grant of rule-making authority allows the department to make changes related to hunting regulations.

4. Related Statutes or Rules:

There are no active related statutes or rules.

5. Plain Language Analysis:

The proposed rule addresses migratory game bird seasons and regulations for 2026. This rule is necessary to authorize migratory game bird hunting in a manner consistent with federal frameworks for the Mississippi Flyway.

SECTION 1 amends the preferred options for duck seasons should there be a 30-day or 45-day

waterfowl season.

6. Summary of, and Comparison with, Existing or Proposed Federal Statutes and Regulations:

Since migratory bird species are managed under federal law, each region of the country is organized in a specific geographic flyway which represents distinct migratory game bird populations. Wisconsin, along with Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa, are members of the Mississippi Flyway. Each year the states included in the flyways meet to discuss regulations and guidelines offered to the flyways by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS regulations and guidelines apply to all states within the Flyway, and therefore the regulations in the adjoining states closely resemble the rules established in this rule order, and only differ slightly based on hunter desires, habitat, and population management goals. However, these variations fall within guidelines and sideboards established by the USFWS.

7. If Held, Summary of Comments Received During Preliminary Comment Period and at Public Hearing on the Statement of Scope:

The Department held a preliminary public hearing on the statement of scope on Monday November 3, 2025, at 2 p.m. virtually through Teams. No members of the public attended the hearing. The department received one written comment during the open public comment period. This individual felt that since there was an early teal season, there is no longer a need to open the northern duck zone early. They also felt that because there are a large amount of southern zone hunters coming north to the northern zone due to the fact the northern zone opens a week earlier than the southern zone and that this causes overcrowding during that week.

8. Comparison with Similar Rules in Adjacent States:

Since migratory bird species are managed under federal law, each region of the country is organized in a specific geographic flyway which represents distinct migratory game bird populations. Wisconsin, along with Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa, are members of the Mississippi Flyway. Each year the states included in the flyways meet to discuss regulations and guidelines offered to the flyways by the USFWS. The USFWS regulations and guidelines apply to all states within the Flyway, and therefore the regulations in the adjoining states closely resemble the rules established in this rule order, and only differ slightly based on hunter desires, habitat, and population management goals. However, these variations fall within guidelines and sideboards established by the USFWS.

9. Summary of Factual Data and Analytical Methodologies Used and How Any Related Findings Support the Regulatory Approach Chosen:

This rule adjusts migratory game bird seasons and regulations for 2026 to be consistent with the federal framework for the Mississippi Flyway, current biological information and public input. In general, season frameworks for migratory birds in 2026 are identical to those implemented for 2023-2025. There are three exceptions.

This rule also adjusts the Mississippi River Canada Goose Zone season framework by eliminating the early closure in December. This will result in having the Canada Goose Season open throughout early and mid-December prior to freeze up on the Mississippi River. In 2023, the decision was made to match the Mississippi River Goose Zone season framework to that of

the South Zone Goose Season. After review and public feedback, it was determined that this alignment did not provide any increased opportunity on the Mississippi River and has been changed to reflect the public input.

Lastly, as part of this multi-year season framework setting process, the department requested public input on a 30 and 45-day duck season framework specific for each of the three duck zones (North, South, and Open Water). Wisconsin has had 60-day duck seasons every year since 1997, however, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service authorizes 30 and 45-day duck season frameworks if duck populations or habitat conditions fall below a certain threshold. As part of this rule package, the department asked hunters under a hypothetical scenario what would be the preferred season dates if Wisconsin were required to shorten the season from 60-days to 30 or 45-days. Based on the most recent public input, this rule alters the 30 and 45-day frameworks to reflect that preference.

10. Analysis and Supporting Documents Used to Determine the Effect on Small Business or in Preparation of an Economic Impact Report:

These rules, and the legislation which grants the department rule-making authority, do not have fiscal effects on the private sector or small businesses. No costs to the private sector or small businesses are associated with compliance to these rules.

11. Effect on Small Business (initial regulatory flexibility analysis):

These rules are applicable to individual sportspersons and impose no compliance or reporting requirements for small businesses, and no design or operational standards are contained in the rule. Because this rule does not add any regulatory requirements for small businesses, the proposed rules will not have an economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses under s. 227.24(3m), Stats.

12. Agency Contact Person:

Taylor Finger, Game Bird Specialist, 101 South Webster Street, PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921, (608) 266-8841

13. Place where comments are to be submitted and deadline for submission:

Comments may be submitted to the department contact person listed above or to DNRAAdministrativeRulesComments@wisconsin.gov until the deadline given in the upcoming notice of public hearing. The notice of public hearing and deadline for submitting comments will be published in the Wisconsin Administrative Register and on the department's Hearings and Meetings Calendar. [Access the Wisconsin Administrative Register \(https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/register\)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/register). [Access the department's Hearings and Meetings Calendar \(https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/calendar\)](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/calendar). [Submit comments through the Wisconsin Administrative Rules Website \(https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/emergency_rules/active\)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/emergency_rules/active).

RULE TEXT

SECTION 1. NR 10.01 (1) (d), (e) 1. and 2., (h) 3., (k), (L) 2. a., and (m) 1. are amended to read:

Kind of Animal	Locality	Dates
(d) <i>All species of wild duck, coot and merganser.</i>	1. Northern zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Beginning on the first Saturday in October and continuing for 30 consecutive days 9 days, followed by a <u>5-day closure</u> and then reopens for the remainder of the <u>30-day season</u> .
	2. Southern zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Beginning on the first Saturday in October and continuing for 9 days, followed by a 5-day <u>12-day</u> closure and then reopening for the remainder of the 30-day season.
	3. Open Water zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Beginning on the Saturday nearest October 15 <u>22</u> and continuing for 9 days, followed by a 5-day-closure and then reopening for the remainder of the 30-day season.
(e) <i>All species of wild duck, coot and merganser.</i>	1. Northern zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Beginning on the Saturday nearest September 24 <u>October 1</u> and continuing for 9 days, followed by a 5-day closure and then reopening for the remainder of the 45-day season.
	2. Southern zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Beginning on the first Saturday in October and continuing for 9 days, followed by a 5-day <u>12-day</u> closure and then reopens for the remainder of the 45-day season.

(h) <i>All species of wild geese.</i>	3. Mississippi River zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Beginning on September 16 <u>the Saturday nearest October 1</u> and continuing until the 5-day closure in the southern duck zone hunting season in par. (b), then reopening at the
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		end of the 5 day closure and continuing until the closure of the southern duck zone hunting season in par. (b), and then reopening on third Saturday in December and continuing for a season total of 92 days.
(k) Sora, Gallinule, and Virginia Rail and Snipe	Entire state	September 1 – November 9.

NR 10.001 (1) (L) 2. a. Canada Geese and its subspecies: 5 during the season established in par. (g), and 3 during the seasons established in par. (h), except the bag limit is 5 in the Southern ~~and Mississippi River zones beginning on December 16th~~ Zone beginning on the third Saturday in December until the close of the season.

(m) *Falconry special season. Any person possessing a valid falconry permit and hunting license shall be restricted to the following migratory game bird seasons and bag limits:*

Kind of Animal	Locality	Open season (all dates inclusive)	Daily Bag Limit
1. All species of wild ducks, mergansers, and coots.	Northern zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Concurrent with the open youth waterfowl hunt in par. (n) and open northern zone regular duck season in pars. (d), (e), or (f). Reopening on the second Friday in January and continuing to not exceed 45 days.	3 in aggregate with those species listed under subd. 2.
	Southern zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Concurrent with the open youth waterfowl hunt in par. (n) and open northern <u>southern</u> zone regular duck season in par. (d), (e), or (f). Reopening on	3 in aggregate with those species listed under subd. 2.

		the second Friday in January and continuing to not exceed 45 days.	
	Open water zone as established in s. NR 10.32.	Concurrent with the open youth waterfowl hunt in par. (n) and open northern <u>open water zone</u> regular duck season in par. (d), (e), or (f). Reopening on the first or second Friday in January and continuing to not exceed 45 days.	3 in aggregate with those species listed under subd. 2.

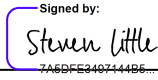
SECTION 2. STATEMENT OF EMERGENCY. The emergency rule procedure, pursuant to s. 227.24, Stats., is necessary and justified in establishing rules to protect the public welfare. The federal government and state legislature have delegated to the appropriate agencies rule-making authority to control the hunting of migratory birds. The State of Wisconsin must comply with federal regulations in the establishment of migratory bird hunting seasons and conditions. Federal regulations are not made available to states until the same year that the regulations must be implemented in order to have annual migratory bird hunting seasons. This order is designed to bring state hunting regulations into conformity with the federal regulations. Normal rule-making procedures will not allow the promulgation of permanent rules prior to when the seasons should be open. Failure to modify our rules will result in the failure to provide hunting opportunity and continuation of rules which conflict with federal regulations.

SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE. This rule takes effect upon publication in the official state newspaper, as provided in s. 227.24 (1) (c), Stats.

SECTION 4. BOARD ADOPTION. This rule was approved and adopted by the State of Wisconsin Natural Resources Board on April 15, 2026.

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin 8/4/2026 | 8:26 AM CDT _____

State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources

BY  Signed by:
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Steven Little, Deputy Secretary
For Karen Hyun, Ph.D., Secretary