

PROPOSAL 172

5 AAC 92.052. Discretionary permit hunt conditions and procedures.

Require mandatory harvest reporting for sea ducks in Kachemack Bay in Unit 15C as follows:

I propose mandatory harvest reporting for sea ducks in Kachemack Bay.

Regulatory language could be modeled on regulations in the State of Washington, which reads:

“To improve management of certain limited migratory bird species, you are required to possess a Migratory Bird Authorization and Harvest Record Card(s) if you are hunting those species (see page 10). Immediately after taking a band-tailed pigeon, brant, sea duck (scoters, long-tailed duck, harlequin, goldeneyes) in western Washington, snow goose (Goose Management Area 1) or any goose in Goose Management Area 2 — Coast & Inland into possession, you must fill out the required harvest record card information in ink. You must report hunting activity on your harvest record cards to WDFW using the online reporting system at: fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/, or by mailing the cards to: WDFW, Wildlife Program — Waterfowl Section, PO Box 43141 Olympia, WA 98504. Reports need to be postmarked by the reporting deadlines even if you did not harvest any birds. Please note that you must comply with these reporting requirements or you will be required to pay a \$10 administrative fee before obtaining a harvest record card the next year.”

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Accurate sea duck harvest numbers in Kachemack Bay are needed to assure hunt opportunities now and in the future. The Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee voted unanimously to sponsor this proposal at its April 2022 meeting, and they have submitted a similar proposal. I am submitting this to add supporting information.

The current reporting system, Alaska’s Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP), does not give us enough information and puts us in danger of over-harvest. HIP invites voluntary reporting from a very small, randomized group of hunters from across the state: it gives a just a little information on a statewide level and does not consider regional variations.

Residents and hunters are noticing increased sea duck hunting pressure in Kachemack Bay. In 2021, we saw a disturbing spike in harvest, and we learned that the addition of a few more guides means significantly increased harvest.

Kachemack Bay is one of the easiest places to access sea ducks in Alaska. Since bufflehead prefer protected bays and coves that are particularly easy to access, they are among the most threatened species of sea ducks.

Depressed populations of sea ducks do not recover quickly. They are known to have a high degree of site fidelity, which means that if an area’s population is depressed, birds from other areas are unlikely to boost the population. Also, according to the Sea Duck Joint Venture, they have lower reproductive and chick survival rates than other ducks.

The proposal is supported by two consecutive years of community sea duck surveys in Kachemack Bay—a local effort of over 30 people motivated by concern of over-harvest and lack of data. Our data suggests that the number of sea ducks in Kachemack Bay are limited and that populations do not bounce back after significant harvest occurs.

Populations of sea ducks in Kachemak Bay declined significantly in the 1990s, and according to ADF&G surveys and community science surveys, they have not yet recovered.

Kachemak Bay is an ADF&G Critical Habitat Area, whose legislative purpose is “to protect and preserve habitat” and the Kachemak Bay Management Plan says that “priority should be given to encouraging rehabilitation of indigenous fish and wildlife populations.”

PROPOSED BY: Penelope Haas

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