1. Ducks

The categories used to discuss issues related to duck harvest management are as follows: (A) General Harvest Strategy, (B) Framework Dates, (C) Season Length, (D) Closed Seasons, (E) Bag Limits, (F) Zones and Split Seasons, and (G) Special Seasons/Species Management. Only those categories containing substantial recommendations are included below.

A. General Harvest Strategy In the March 24, 1995, Federal

Register, the Service proposed that the choice of regulations frameworks for the 19950996 regular duck season be limited to three sets of frameworks similar to those in effect during the 19790993 hunting seasons. These three framework options were generally described as restrictive, moderate, or liberal. The Service also subsequently proposed in an information package made available on March 24, 1995, specific guidelines for selecting one of these framework packages based on the size of the mallard breeding population and habitat conditions in May 1995. The information package contained specific details of this year's proposed regulatory "packages" for each flyway, guidelines for the use of these regulatory packages, and a general description of the harvest management objective and duck population dynamics that were considered in the process. Based on public comments to date, the Service is continuing to refine the guidelines for the use of these regulatory packages and the specific details of the proposed packages for each flyway in this transition year to the Service's proposed development of a more formal and objective decision-making process.

All four Flyway Councils have endorsed the proposal to limit the choice of 19950996 frameworks to three packages. However, the Pacific, Central, and Mississippi Flyway Councils recommended some modifications to the specific regulatory packages proposed, and these modifications are identified below under "Framework Dates", "Season Length", and "Bag Limits."

The Atlantic Flyway Council endorsed the guidelines proposed for selecting a regulations package in 1995, but commented that the guidelines were based only on mid-continent mallards, which comprise a very small portion of the duck harvest in the Atlantic Flyway. The Lower-Region Regulations Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council also endorsed the guidelines. The Central Flyway Council and the Upper-Region Regulations Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council

expressed concerns about using the guidelines before the proposed general approach to managing duck harvests has been thoroughly reviewed by all interested parties. These concerns related only to the 19950996 hunting season. The Pacific Flyway Council supported the general format of the guidelines, but expressed reservations about guidelines based upon midcontinent mallards and a harvest strategy that does not permit greater harvest opportunity on lightly-harvested species. Further, the Council urged development of a specific harvest strategy for pintails, the second-most important species in the Pacific Flyway harvest.

B. Framework Dates

In the frameworks packages proposed for 19950996, the Pacific and Central Flyway Councils and the Upper-Region Regulations Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended that the framework opening and closing dates in all 3 packages be the Saturday nearest October 1 and the Sunday nearest January 20. The Lower-Region Regulations Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended that the opening and closing dates be the Saturday nearest October 1 and January 20 in all three packages.

C. Season Length

In the frameworks packages proposed for 19950996, the Pacific Flyway Council recommended that in the "restrictive" package, the season length be 60 days instead of 59 days.

E. Bag Limits

In the frameworks packages proposed for 19950996, the Pacific Flyway Council recommended that mallard daily bag limits be 5 (with 1 hen) instead of 4 (with 1 hen) in the "moderate" package and 6 (with 2 hens) instead of 6 (with 1 hen) in the "liberal" package. The Council also recommended that the pintail daily bag limit in the "liberal" package be 3 birds instead of 2.

The Central Flyway Council recommended reinstating the point-system option for establishing the daily bag limit for ducks in 1995. Further, the Council also would like to work with the Service in another cooperative review of its point-system policy.

F. Zones and Split Seasons

The Central Flyway Council recommended that the Service eliminate its policy that States may not zone and/ or use a 3-way split season simultaneously within a special management unit and the remainder of the State when establishing duck hunting zones.

G. Special Seasons/Species Management

The Upper-Region Regulations Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended that during the first 9 days of the regular duck season, production States be given the option of 1 additional blue- or green-winged teal in the bag limit during a 3-year experimental period.

i. Canvasback

As part of the general harvest strategy, the Pacific Flyway Council recommended that limits on canvasbacks follow the Service's harvest strategy; however, the Council believes that canvasbacks should be managed by western and eastern populations.

ii. September Teal Seasons
The Central Flyway Council
recommended that the September teal
season in the Central Flyway be
increased from 9 to 16 days.

4. Canada Geese

A. Special Seasons

The Atlantic Flyway Council recommended that Delaware and Rhode Island be permitted to initiate a 3-year experimental resident Canada goose season with framework dates of September 1 to 15.

The Atlantic Flyway Council also recommended that Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia be permitted to expand the hunt areas of their experimental goose seasons.

In North Carolina, the Atlantic Flyway Council requested that the framework date for the experimental resident Canada goose season in the Northeast hunt area be September 1 to 20.

The Upper-Region Regulations Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended modification of the early Canada goose seasons criteria to allow any State to conduct a nonexperimental special season between the dates of September 1 and 15. The Committee recommended that States continue monitoring hunter activity and success until they begin participation in the Harvest Information Program and close areas where evidence from band recoveries or other sources indicated unacceptable (greater than 10 percent) harvest non-target populations of concern. Special seasons occurring after September 15 would be required to meet all existing Service criteria for special resident Canada goose seasons and would not be altered in any way during the 3-year experimental period.

If the above modifications to the special-season criteria are not approved, the Upper-Region Regulations