media. Successful implementation of AHM will require continued consensus building, not only among traditional decision-makers, but also among the broader group of stakeholders who are concerned about the conservation of waterfowl.

## B. Framework Dates

Council Recommendations: The Atlantic Flyway Council recommended framework dates of October 1 to January

The Upper-Region and Lower-Region Regulations Committees of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended framework dates of September 28 to January 23.

The Central and Pacific Flyway Councils recommended framework dates of the Saturday nearest October 1 (September 30) to the Sunday nearest January 20 (January 21).

Written Comments: The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks opposed a fixed framework opening date, while an individual from Mississippi expressed support for a January 31 framework closing date.

The Humane Society recommended that all seasons open at noon on Wednesdays in order to reduce the high level of harvest associated with traditional Saturday season openings. They further recommended that season openings be delayed by two weeks in all breeding areas in order to allow ducks time to leave natal marshes before being subjected to hunting pressure.

*Šervice Response:* Traditional framework opening and closing dates have been oriented to the period October 1 - January 20, either as fixed calendar dates or "floating" dates, using as a guideline the Saturday nearest October 1 and the Sunday nearest January 20 to select opening and closing dates annually. In recent years, the Service has established fixed calendar dates of October 1 - January 20 for all Flyways. The fixed calendar dates of September 28 - January 23 recommended for the Mississippi Flyway this year would provide consistently wider frameworks over the years than the fixed October 1 - January 20 dates recommended for the Atlantic Flyway and the floating dates recommended for the Central and Pacific Flyways. To maintain consistency among Flyways in the procedures for selecting framework dates, and because floating dates have been recommended annually for the Mississippi Flyway in recent years, the Service proposes to return to the traditional procedure using fixed calendar dates for the Atlantic Flyway and floating dates for the Mississippi,

Central, and Pacific Flyways, all oriented to the October 1 - January 20 period. However, the Service reiterates its previously stated policy to retain the option of using framework dates as a harvest-management tool.

Regarding the Humane Society's recommendation for Wednesday season openings, the Service notes that States have the option of adjusting season opening and closing dates and shooting hours within the framework limits to correspond with particular days and/or times.

## C. Season Length and Bag Limits

Council Recommendations: The Atlantic Flyway Council recommended a 50-day season with a 5-bird daily bag limit, including no more than 1 black duck, 1 hen mallard, 1 pintail, 1 canvasback, 2 wood ducks, 2 redheads, and no harlequin ducks. Further, the Council recommended that States maintain a 40-percent reduction in the harvest of black ducks from the 1977-81 base period.

The Upper-Region Regulations Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended a 50-day season with a 5-bird daily bag limit, including no more than 4 mallards (no more than 1 of which may be a hen), 1 black duck, 1 pintail, 1 canvasback, 2 wood ducks, and 2 redheads.

The Lower-Region Regulations Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended a 50-day season with a 5-bird daily bag limit, including no more than 4 mallards (no more than 1 of which may be a hen), 3 mottled ducks, 1 black duck, 1 pintail, 1 canvasback, 2 wood ducks, and 2 redheads.

The Central Flyway Council recommended a 60-day season (83 days in the High Plains Mallard Management Unit with the last 23 days of the season taken no earlier than the Saturday closest to December 10) with a 5-bird daily bag limit, including no more than 1 hen mallard, 1 mottled duck, 1 pintail, 1 canvasback, 2 wood ducks, and 1 redhead. Furthermore, the Council recommended reinstating the pointsystem option for establishing the daily bag limit for ducks in 1995. The Council also would like to work with the Service in another cooperative review of its point-system policy.

The Pacific Flyway Council recommended a 93-day season (100 days in the Columbia Basin Management Unit) with a 6-bird daily bag limit, including no more than 1 hen mallard, 2 pintails, 1 canvasback, and 2 redheads.

Written Comments: Two local organizations in Massachusetts and

individuals from Arkansas and Georgia expressed support for the proposed 50day season and 5-bird daily bag limit. Individuals from Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Iowa and two people from Minnesota expressed support for the proposed increase in season length but were against the proposed bag limit increase. An individual from Wisconsin expressed support for a 70-day season. Another individual from Wisconsin and two people from Illinois supported a 50day season and a 4-bird daily bag limit, while an individual from Tennessee supported a 40-day season and a 4-bird daily bag limit. One person from Virginia requested a 73-day season.

An individual from Illinois expressed general concern over the proposed regulatory package and a person from Michigan was against any increase in the daily bag limit. Individuals from Louisiana and Minnesota were opposed to a 50-day season and 5-bird daily bag limit and a person from Iowa was opposed to a 40- to 50-day season with the proposed 5-bird daily bag limit. Two people from Illinois and one person from Minnesota recommended maintaining last year's regulations of a 40-day season and a 3-bird daily bag limit, while another individual from California expressed support for a 4-bird daily bag limit. An individual from Illinois recommended a 30-day season and a 2-bird daily bag limit. One individual from Kentucky expressed general support for low limits, and an individual from Georgia was against any lengthening of the season.

An individual from Minnesota stated that increasing the season length and bag limits would encourage overharvest and wanton waste, while a person from Illinois suggested keeping the bag limits low until the populations were more secure and then gradually increasing

both season length and bag limits. The National Wildlife Federation, in accordance with the significantly increased duck populations, concurred with the Service's proposal to expand duck hunting opportunities.

The Humane Society opposed the proposed liberalization of season length and bag limits, believing that it was an unwarranted and unwise action on the basis of only 2 years of good duck production.

Service Response: In reference to reinstating the point system, the Service, with input from the Flyway Councils, completed a comprehensive review of the point system in 1990, and established a policy that the point system should be restricted to a maximum daily bag limit no greater than that allowed under the conventional daily bag limit. In 1994,