



B-286136

September 5, 2000

The Honorable Robert C. Smith  
Chairman  
The Honorable Max Baucus  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate

The Honorable Don Young  
Chairman  
The Honorable George Miller  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Resources  
House of Representatives

Subject: Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service: Migratory Bird  
Hunting: Final Frameworks for Early-Season Migratory Bird Hunting  
Regulations

Pursuant to section 801(a)(2)(A) of title 5, United States Code, this is our report on a major rule promulgated by the Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), entitled "Migratory Bird Hunting; Final Frameworks for Early-Season Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations" (RIN: 1018-AG08). We received the rule on August 18, 2000. It was published in the Federal Register as a final rule on August 23, 2000. 65 Fed. Reg. 51496.

This rule is part of a series of regulations dealing with the establishment of seasons, limits, and other regulations for migratory game bird hunting under amendments to 50 C.F.R. part 20.

The final rule establishes the early-seasons frameworks from which states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands may select dates and other options available to them for the 2000-2001 migratory bird hunting season. After receiving this information, the Fish and Wildlife Service will publish the selections as the final regulations for the current hunting season.

Enclosed is our assessment of the Service's compliance with the procedural steps required by section 801(a)(1)(B)(i) through (iv) of title 5 with respect to the rule. Our review indicates that the Service complied with the applicable requirements.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact James W. Vickers, Assistant General Counsel, at (202) 512-8210. The official responsible for GAO evaluation work relating to the subject matter of the rule is Jim Wells, Director, Energy, Resources, and Science Issues. Mr. Wells can be reached at (202) 512-3841.

Robert P. Murphy  
General Counsel

Enclosure

cc: Stephen C. Saunders  
Acting Assistant Secretary for  
Fish and Wildlife and Parks  
Department of the Interior

ANALYSIS UNDER 5 U.S.C. § 801(a)(1)(B)(i)-(iv) OF A MAJOR RULE  
ISSUED BY THE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
ENTITLED  
"MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING; FINAL FRAMEWORKS FOR  
EARLY-SEASON MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING REGULATIONS"  
(RIN: 1018-AG08)

(i) Cost-benefit analysis

According to the cost-benefit analysis contained in the filing, the migratory bird hunting regulations (of which these regulations are a part) collectively have an economic impact in excess of an estimated \$600 million in direct expenditures. For example, the analysis indicates that \$293.3 million will be spent by duck hunters on equipment, \$144.3 million on food, \$147.1 million on transportation and lodging, plus \$73.8 million "other" direct expenditures. Without these regulations, the Service opines that the resources spent in game bird hunting would, to some degree, be spent on other recreational activities.

The analysis notes that the rules impose some costs of administration and enforcement on the state, but as the states also derive revenue from licensing, the net cost, if any, is not quantifiable.

(ii) Agency actions relevant to the Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 603-605, 607, and 609

The Service's compliance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act consisted of a "Small Entity Flexibility Analysis" updated with information from the 1996 National Hunting and Fishing Survey issued in 1998. The survey is updated on a 5-year basis. It appears that the analysis was so limited because the regulation's impact is primarily beneficial to a very substantial number of small businesses.

The analysis provided by the Service indicates that (1) the regulations are promulgated annually to set frameworks for harvest levels and seasons for migratory bird hunting; (2) the states then issue regulations within the established framework; and (3) under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. 703 *et seq.*, no legal migratory bird hunting could take place without the regulations.

The analysis notes that small entities shared in the estimated \$429-\$1,084 million spent by migratory bird hunters during the 1998-99 season. There are no new compliance requirements for small business resulting from the regulations. In addition, since the regulations are largely beneficial to small entities, the Service indicates that no special treatment was considered for them.

(iii) Agency actions relevant to sections 202-205 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995, 2 U.S.C. §§ 1532-1535

The final rule will not impose a federal mandate, as defined in title II, of more than \$100 million in any one year on either state, local, or tribal governments or the private sector.

(iv) Other relevant information or requirements under acts and executive orders

Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 551 et seq.

The final rule was issued using the notice and comment procedures contained at 5 U.S.C. 553. From April 25, 2000, through July 31, 2000, the Service published four Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRM) covering the various aspects of the migratory bird hunting regulations. The comments received in response to the NPRM's are responded to in the preamble to the final rule.

Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. §§ 3501-3520

The Service states that it uses various information collection requirements to develop future migratory game bird hunting regulations. The information collection requirements of the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Programs have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and assigned Control No. 1018-0015, expiration date of September 30, 2001. OMB has also approved the Sandhill Crane Harvest Questionnaire, Control No. 1018-0023, expiration date of July 31, 2003.

Statutory authorization for the rule

The rules concerning migratory waterfowl hunting are authorized by 16 U.S.C. 703-712 and 742 a-j.

Executive Order No. 12866

Collectively, the rules for migratory bird hunting are reviewed by OMB and are considered to be economically significant.

Executive Order No. 13132 (Federalism)

The final rule does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a federalism assessment, according to the Service.