

## NON-RESIDENT ALIEN WATERFOWL LICENSING IN ALBERTA

There has been some controversy over waterfowl licensing initiatives introduced for non-resident alien (NRA) waterfowl hunters (non-Canadian residents) in Alberta beginning with the 2006 season. These initiatives generated interest amongst sportsmen in many U.S. jurisdictions and were a discussion topic on some websites relevant to waterfowl sportsmen.

We, in Alberta, have found that much of the concern is focused on misconceptions about what was being implemented. In reality, Alberta continues to welcome hunters from outside of Canada and hunting opportunity for NRA hunters has not really changed. *Alberta did not and will not be implementing a mandatory guiding requirement for NRA waterfowl hunters; and did not and will not be restricting NRA waterfowl hunters to a single 6-day waterfowl license. We implemented and will continue to offer a 6-day NRA waterfowl license with the option of purchasing additional 6-day licenses if the hunter chooses to hunt more than six days.* Readers who are interested in the details and unfolding of events may wish to read through the following material.

### **2006 Regulation Recommendations and Changes**

Season and regulation-setting in Alberta involves input and recommendations from many stakeholder sources including outfitter-guide's associations. Outfitter-guides across the Prairie Provinces regularly provide recommendations aimed at enhancing economic security and compatibility of the outfitting-guiding industry within the waterfowl hunting community.

In 2006, the bird game outfitter-guide associations in all three provinces made recommendations that would require all NRA waterfowl hunter to contract the services of an outfitter. In Alberta, the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society (APOS) also recommended that NRA waterfowl hunters be restricted to a single 6-day hunting license each year. They (APOS) proposed these changes to address perceptions that some NRA hunters were illegally operating as outfitters ("rogue outfitters"), under the guise of holding a season-long game bird license. The perception was that restricting hunters to a single 6-day license and imposing a mandatory outfitter-guide requirement for NRA hunters would reduce opportunities for rogue outfitters to operate in the province.

The recommendations from APOS received considerable support from stakeholder groups involved in Alberta's regulatory review process. As a result, Alberta did eliminate the season-long license in 2006 and did introduce a 6-day NRA waterfowl license, BUT, each NRA hunter could purchase additional 6-day licenses if they chose to hunt for more than 6 days. In response to the recommendation for a mandatory outfitter-guide requirement for NRA hunters, Alberta recognizes the significant value in the retention of an option for free-lance hunting in the province and Alberta has dismissed any option for a mandatory outfitter-guide requirement for NRA hunters.

### **The Future of Waterfowl Licenses in Alberta**

Alberta has had one year of experience with the availability of multiple 6-day waterfowl licenses for NRA waterfowl hunters. The licensing database indicates that the change has not had any significant impact on the number of NRA waterfowl hunters in the province. The non-availability of a season-long license does not appear to be a major issue amongst NRA hunters so long as the option for additional licenses is available. Less than 5% of NRA waterfowl hunters purchased more than one 6-day licenses and less than 1% purchased more

than two. The vast majority of NRA hunters in Alberta hunt for 12 days or less and the introduction of multiple 6-day NRA waterfowl licenses in lieu of a season-long license does not appear to be a major issue amongst NRA hunters.

From a hunter and harvest management perspective, there is significant value in the license data available from the multiple 6-day licenses, including license purchasing patterns and temporal distribution of NRA waterfowl hunting activity in the province. As a result of the ability to collect these data and the apparent lack of multiple license abuse, Alberta has decided to retain the 6-day NRA waterfowl hunting license with hunters having the option of purchasing multiple licenses for hunting more than six days. As in all jurisdictions, Alberta periodically reviews regulations and licensing regimes within overarching population and harvest management objectives. Hunter response to the 6-day license and data generated by license sales will be monitored to evaluate any impacts on NRA hunter participation and opportunity.

This information was provided to California Waterfowl Association:

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