



GAO

Accountability \* Integrity \* Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

---

B-323892

September 14, 2012

The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
Chairman  
The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
Chairman  
The Honorable Edward J. Markey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural 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 (Interior), Fish and Wildlife Service, entitled "Migratory Bird Hunting; Final Frameworks for Early-Season Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations" (RIN: 1018-AX97). We received the rule on August 29, 2012. It was published in the *Federal Register* as a final rule on August 30, 2012. 77 Fed. Reg. 53,118.

The final rule prescribes final early-season frameworks from which the states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands may select season dates, limits, and other options for the 2012-13 migratory bird hunting seasons. Early seasons are those that generally open prior to October 1, and include seasons in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Enclosed is our assessment of Interior'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 of the procedural steps taken indicates that Interior complied with the applicable requirements.

Section 808(1) of title 5, United States Code, exempts any rule that “establishes, modifies, opens, closes or conducts a regulatory program for commercial, recreational, or subsistence activity related to hunting, fishing, or camping” from the 60-day delay in the effective date otherwise required by section 801(a)(3)(A). This is a rule relating to hunting and, therefore, the 60-day delay is not applicable. This final rule is effective on August 30, 2012.

If you have any questions about this report or wish to contact GAO officials responsible for the evaluation work relating to the subject matter of the rule, please contact Shirley A. Jones, Assistant General Counsel, at (202) 512-8156.

signed

Robert J. Cramer  
Managing Associate General Counsel

Enclosure

cc: Ronald W. Kokel  
Wildlife Biologist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Department of the Interior

REPORT UNDER 5 U.S.C. § 801(a)(2)(A) ON 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-AX97)

(i) Cost-benefit analysis

Interior relied on the economic analysis that was prepared for the 2008-09 season, because it made no changes to the season frameworks from the previous season. For that reason, Interior stated that it did not conduct a new economic analysis, but instead included the analysis for the 2008-09 season in the record. Interior estimated a consumer surplus of \$205-270 million.

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

Interior determined that this final rule will have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. Interior relied on a small entity flexibility analysis that was last updated in 2008. The primary source of information about hunter expenditures for migratory game bird hunting is the National Hunting and Fishing Survey, which is conducted at 5-year intervals. The 2008 analysis was based on the 2006 National Hunting and Fishing Survey and the U.S. Department of Commerce's County Business Patterns from which it was estimated that migratory bird hunters would spend approximately \$1.2 billion at small businesses in 2008.

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

Interior certified that this final rule will not impose a cost of \$100 million or more in any given year on local or state government or private entities.

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

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

Interior published a series of proposed rules relating to migratory bird hunting from April 17, 2012, to July 20, 2012. 77 Fed. Reg. 23,094 (April 17, 2012); 77 Fed. Reg. 29,516 (May 17, 2012); 77 Fed. Reg. 42,920 (July 20, 2012). Interior received

comments on these proposed rules to which they respond in the final rule. Interior found “good cause” under section 553(d)(3) of title 5, allowing this final rule to take effect immediately upon publication.

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

There are no new information collections under this final rule that would require the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) approval. OMB has approved the existing information collection requirements of the Migratory Bird Surveys and assigned control number 1018-0023, which expires on April 30, 2014. OMB has also approved the existing information collection requirements of the Alaska Subsistence Household Survey, an associated voluntary household survey used to determine levels of subsistence in Alaska, and assigned control number 1018-0124, which expires on April 30, 2013.

#### Statutory authorization for the rule

Interior promulgated this final rule under authority of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. §§ 703-711.

#### Executive Order No. 12,866 (Regulatory Planning and Review)

OMB determined that this rule is a significant regulatory action and, therefore, has reviewed the rule under Executive Order 12,866.

#### Executive Order No. 13,132 (Federalism)

Interior determined that the regulations that prescribe frameworks from which the states make selections regarding the hunting of migratory birds do not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a federalism assessment.