

# Atlantic Population (AP) Migrant Canada Goose FAQ

## **1. Why are we reducing the hunting season length and daily bag limit when we have so many geese in Vermont?**

The geese you see in Vermont during the summer and early winter months are resident geese that nest in state and migrate only to MA, NY, CT and NJ. We manage resident geese as a separate population from the Atlantic population or what we call migrant geese. The Atlantic population geese nest along the Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay coasts of northern Quebec, Canada. Atlantic population geese begin showing up in Vermont in late September and the majority usually have passed through the state by early November, depending on weather conditions. The restrictive season is being used to increase the population size of the Atlantic population. The season changes will not affect the resident Canada goose season held in September.

## **2. Will the hunting season dates and/or bag limit for AP Canada geese change for the 2019-2020 hunting season?**

The 2019-20 hunting season dates will remain as published in the Vermont Hunting Regulations Syllabus. All 2019-20 migratory game bird seasons and bag limits went through the annual public review and comment period in March and April 2019. These public comments were used to finalize the season selections which were then forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS then reviews the seasons and finalizes them by publication in the Federal Register.

## **3. How are AP Canada goose seasons and bag limits determined?**

The USFWS uses an AP Canada goose harvest strategy, developed by the Atlantic Flyway Council, to set season and bag limits for the flyway states. This harvest strategy utilizes a 3-year average of the estimated number of breeding pairs of geese to determine the hunting season recommendation. Breeding pair estimates are calculated from the results of aerial surveys that are flown every June throughout the primary nesting grounds along the Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay coasts of northern Quebec, Canada. After a long (15 year) period of relative stability and “moderate” hunt packages, the breeding pair estimates have declined in recent years resulting in a “restrictive” hunt package recommendation for the 2019-20 season.

## **4. What does a restrictive hunt package mean for Vermont’s 2019-20 AP Canada (migrant) goose hunting season?**

A restrictive hunt package means that Vermont can have a 30-day season with a daily bag limit of two Canada geese in the Lake Champlain and Interior Vermont Hunting Zones. The season can be

divided into no more than two segments and must be held between October 10 and February 5. The department's annual public review process will be used to determine where hunters would like to see the 30 hunting days positioned for the 2019-20 hunting season. The September resident Canada goose season will remain unchanged.

#### **5. Why will a restrictive hunt package be implemented for the 2019-20 season?**

While the 3-year breeding pair average (155,000) was slightly above the Harvest Plan threshold for a restrictive season (150,000), a strong downward trend in the number of breeding pairs coupled with extremely poor reproduction in summer 2018 (due to a very late spring thaw) caused Atlantic Flyway biologists and Council to preemptively recommend a restrictive hunting season for 2019-20. It is worth noting that in seven out of the last ten years, AP Canada goose reproduction has been below average. While this below average reproduction is due to late spring thaws on the nesting grounds, a restrictive hunting season protects breeding adults that are key to population recovery.

#### **6. Will other Atlantic Flyway states be affected by the implementation of a restrictive hunt package for AP Canada geese?**

The AP Canada Goose Harvest Strategy used by the USFWS to set season and bag limit frameworks applies to all Atlantic Flyway states that have AP Canada Goose hunting zones. There are four regions [New England (VT, CT, MA), Mid-Atlantic (NY, PA, NJ), Chesapeake (MD, DE, VA), and North Carolina] specified in the Harvest Strategy. Under the restrictive package the New England and Mid-Atlantic Regions will have a 30-day season with a daily bag limit of two birds. The Chesapeake region will have a 30-day season with a daily bag limit of one bird. North Carolina's season will remain unchanged as they generally implement a more restrictive season (15 days/1 bird).

#### **7. How long will Vermont be in a restrictive harvest package for AP Canada Geese?**

By preemptively moving to a restrictive season Atlantic Flyway and USFWS biologists hope to reduce the amount of time spent in a restrictive harvest package. However, recovery of the number of breeding pairs to a level capable of sustaining moderate harvest will depend on favorable weather conditions for nesting and subsequent growth of the population.

#### **8. What can I do to help the recovery of the AP Canada goose population?**

Seasons and bag limits use the best scientific information available to accomplish the goal of long-term conservation of the species in question. Hunters who wish to do more can always voluntarily restrict their own harvest. Habitat based management practices such as leaving standing row crops in the field, planting cover crops, and limiting disturbance to roost areas will help ensure that geese leaving Vermont will be in the best possible physical condition. Energy reserves acquired during migration stop overs will help geese that arrive on the wintering ground.