

New regulations might boost teal bag limits to 6

Written by Brian Albert Broom

Jun. 29, 2013 9:07 PM |

clarionledger.com

For the first time since the season was opened in 1965, early-season teal hunters could see a six-bird limit this year. “The three flyways that have teal seasons put forth a recommendation for a 16-day, six-bird bag limit season,” said Jim Kelley, Mississippi Flyway representative for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In a meeting last week, that proposal was accepted by the service and is now headed toward the last steps before a final ruling is made. “That will not be finalized until August, after public comment,” said Kelley. “Once we receive and process public comment, we will issue a final rule.”

If the final ruling says states in the three flyways with early teal seasons, such as Mississippi, can expand their daily bag limits to six birds, there is still one hurdle to go. The six-bird limit would be an option for states, not a rule. So individual states have the right to adopt the limit set by the service, or opt for a lower bag limit.

According to Houston Havens, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks’ Waterfowl Program Leader, if history repeats itself, teal hunters will likely get the benefit of the six-bird limit if it is offered by the USF&W.

“As far as bag limits go, we have typically gone with the maximum allowed in the past,” said Havens. “I would imagine it would be very popular if it does go through.”

Popular does not quite describe Ramsey Russell’s enthusiasm over the prospect of more bluewings in the bag. “Boy, that would be fantastic! That’s super,” said Russell, owner of GetDucks.com.

Russell hunts waterfowl around the globe, but said his favorite duck hunting is the early teal season in Mississippi. “I’m excited about it because it’s putting adaptive science management into play to the benefit of sportsmen,” he said.

“I’ve wondered for years why we didn’t have a six-duck limit,” said Russell. “Last year the population was higher than it has ever been. It’s been building at an unprecedented rate, yet we seemed to be stuck at an arbitrary four.”

“What a great encouragement to get people out there hunting this early season,” said Russell. “Mississippi and Southern hunters should be excited.”