

Changes in spring hunts considered

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Officials of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service collected comments recently in Kotzebue on proposed changes to international migratory waterfowl treaties which could pay the way for legalizing spring and summer subsistence hunting of migratory fowl.

According to the F&WS's Bob Leedy, the U.S. presently has treaties with Japan, Canada, and Mexico which prohibit spring and summer waterfowl hunts, although the F&WS has not had a policy of enforcing the ban in rural Alaska. A treaty signed with the Soviet Union a few years ago does permit such

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(BARTZ ENGLISHOE Photo)

● waterfowl bag limits

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hunting by rural residents for nutritional and other essential needs, but the treaties with Japan, Canada, and Mexico would have to be brought into line with the Soviet treaty before the hunts would be legalized. This would be accomplished by the proposed changes.

Leedy said that the F&WS wanted to legalize the spring and summer waterfowl hunts so that they could be regulated. Although the hunts are technically illegal now, the F&WS non-enforcement policy has effectively produced no regulation at all. According to Leedy, the service feels that some important migratory waterfowl species are declining and hopes that effective regulation would help to reverse the decline.

Leedy said the Service is well aware of rural Alaskans' need for the spring and summer hunts and would formulate its regulations only after a thorough public information effort, including the collection of comments from rural Alaska. He said regulatory measures might include seasons and bag limits.