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News

The News-Herald

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Groups vow to fight dove hunting law

By Jennifer Mitchell, The News-Herald

PUBLISHED: August 11, 2004

LANSING — They might have lost the battle, but they aren't giving up the fight.

As Michigan's first mourning dove season since 1905 approaches, the many groups that spoke out earlier this year against the bird hunt have banded together for a petition drive.

The groups, which include the Songbird Protection Coalition and the Michigan Audubon Society, pledged Thursday to collect signatures from 158,000 registered voters.

That number allows the groups to put a dove hunt referendum on the 2006 ballot to reverse a law signed in June by Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

Groups such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and The Humane Society of the United States also are joining with state groups to try to make the first dove hunting season the last.

Together, they are calling themselves the Coalition to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban and they are seeking volunteers to collect petition signatures.

A hunting season for the bird has yet to be set, but opponents say they fear it could begin in early September.



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During its July meeting, the state Natural Resources Commission directed the state Department of Natural Resources to draft dove hunting regulations.

Those regulations are to be presented to the commission tomorrow.

A 30-day public comment period follows, and the commission is expected to approve the regulations at its Sept. 9 meeting.

One of the biggest concerns of opponents is the environmental hazard they say killing the birds poses.

The lead shot used to knock the birds from the air and perches can bioaccumulate in the food system, said James Bull of Lincoln Park, president of the Detroit Audubon Society.

"Mourning doves are a valuable food source for many predators, including eagles and raptors," Bull said Thursday at a Lansing press conference. "Injured doves full of lead shot would be prime targets for those predators and scavengers."

Peggy Ridgway, president of the Michigan Audubon Society, calls it an environmental issue.

She said the use of toxic lead shot adds another heavy weight to "our already burdened environment."

Bull added that dove hunting could have a drastic impact on the species' population.

"Since many doves are still nesting in mid-October, a fall hunting season would leave countless orphan nestlings to die of starvation or exposure," Bull said.

Proponents of hunting the bird, such as Sam Washington of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, say the decision was based "on the scientific management of resources."

Besides Michigan, 39 other states have legalized mourning dove hunting.

To provide comment to the NRC, fax comments

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to Teresa Gloden, commission secretary, at 1-517-335-4242 or e-mail her at glodent@michigan.gov

Comment also can be submitted by mail to Gloden at the Stevens T. Mason Building, 530 W. Allegan, Lansing, MI 48909.

For more information on the petition drive, call 1-517-321-DOVE (3683) or visit the coalition Web site at www.stopshootingdoves.org

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