

Vitenskapskomiteen for mat og miljø  
Postboks 222 Skøyen  
0213

Oslo, 15.03.2022

Your ref.:

Our ref.:  
2022/2264

Contact person:  
Nora Nedkvitne

## Assessment of risk and risk-reducing measures on biodiversity and animal welfare when practicing spring hunting as part of the Sami tradition

The Norwegian Environment Agency (NEA) refers to the collaboration agreement as signed between NEA and the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment (VKM) on 31 January 2019, and hereby asks VKM to make an assessment of risk and risk reduction measures on biodiversity due to spring duck hunting.

### **Background:**

Spring hunting of ducks is part of the Sami hunting and trapping culture with traditions far back in time. Traditional practices, including practices native to the Sami culture, however, is not necessarily in accordance with newer principles for species management. Spring hunting is contrary to the Wildlife Act's principle that no hunting time should be set for a species during the breeding and nesting season. This is a principle that is recognized internationally, and which is expressed, among other things, in the Bern Convention and the EU's Birds Directive<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, hunting times have been set on several occasions with quotas for a number of species, as part of the Sami tradition and hunting practice. The hunt is authorized in the Wildlife Act §15 as an exception provision and has been implemented since 1994 as temporary trial schemes, with various adjustments to species and numbers in some of these periods.

In 1995 and 1996, the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA) submitted reports that assessed the population ecological effects of spring hunting and summarized, the first of a three-year experimental scheme with spring hunting. The conclusion from this study was that the vulnerability to hunting varied greatly between species. Indirect effects on hunting were that many ducks left the hunting area and that grazing females became more stressed. The nesting was not found to be less successful in the local populations, however increased

disturbance and stress can contribute to spring hunting being an unfavourable harvesting strategy in comparison to autumn hunting.

After a few years without spring hunting, the practice was reintroduced in 1999 and since then the hunt has been carried out with multi-year permits. The last permit was valid from 2013-2022, with a quota of maximum 150 ind/year and for 3 species, Mallard, Red Breasted Merganser, and Tufted Duck.

The NEA has on several occasions put forward arguments against continuing spring hunting in our professional assessments in advance of new hunting periods determined by the Ministry of Climate and the Environment. Our assessments have been that spring hunting is an additional mortality factor for the birds that are being hunted. In the spring, the birds will nest to produce new offspring that can be harvested sustainably within the limit of the population size. The fact that the stocks produce a harvest-worthy surplus of offspring is the very mainstay of wildlife management. Moreover, the general disturbance and misharvest of non-target species during the nesting season is of concern.

The results from this assignment to VKM will be used together with an overall assessment of the Sami cultural traditions, and the significance of spring hunting for the practice of Sami culture in light of international obligations of indigenous peoples' rights.

**Assignment:**

1. The NEA asks VKM for an assessment of risk and risk-reducing measures on biodiversity and animal welfare when conducting spring hunting of ducks.
2. In this assessment, VKM shall point out risk-reducing measures, in different scenarios for withdrawals, both species selection and the number of individuals allowed to be shot.

**Legal background:**

- Act on the Management of Nature's Diversity (Nature Diversity Act)  
<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2009-06-19-100>
- Act on hunting and trapping of game (the Wildlife Act)  
<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1981-05-29-38>
- Regulations on quota-regulated spring hunting of ducks from 2013-2022, Kautokeino municipality, Finnmark <https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2013-06-03-573>
- Norwegian Supreme Court Appeals Committee Decision  
<https://www.domstol.no/globalassets/upload/hret/avgjorelser/2021/april-2021/hr-2021-863-u.pdf>

**Relevant reports / websites etc:**

Jaren, Vemund. 1984. Andefuglundersøkelser og jakt i Kautokeino våren 1983. Rapport nr. 6. Fylkesmannen i Finnmark

Vårjakt på ender i Kautokeino/Guovdageaidnu. Utredning fra et utvalg nedsatt av Direktoratet for vilt og ferskvannsfisk 14.08.84

Bustnes, J.O. & Nilsen, S. 1996. Three-year experimental scheme with spring hunting of

ducks in Kautokeino: a summary. - NINA assignment report 445: 1-23

Bustnes, J. O. & Nilsen, S. 1995. Population ecological assessments around spring hunting of ducks in Kautokeino - NINA Assignment report 379: 1-24

NOU 2004: 28. Act on the conservation of nature, landscape and biological diversity. Kap. 21 Challenges related to indigenous peoples and local people.

**Conditions:**

The risk assessment report must be written in English with a Norwegian summary. The report is published in dialogue with the NEA. We also refer to the collaboration agreement between the NEA and VKM.

The deadline for submission of the report is 1.10.2022.

**Contact persons in the Norwegian Environment Agency:**

Jo Anders Auran, Senior Advisor, Wildlife Section

Knut Morten Vangen, section leader, Wildlife Section

Best regards

Norwegian Environment Agency

*This document has been signed electronically*

Janne Øvrebø Bohnhorst  
seksjonsleder

Nora Nedkvitne  
rådgiver

Vedlegg

- 1 VKM assignment spring hunt english
- 2 Assessment of risk and risk-reducing measures on biodiversity and animal welfare when practicing spring hunting as part of the Sami tradition