

Authority under fire over duck hunt call

No public consultation

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The public will be shut out of consultation for next year's duck shooting season in Victoria, in a move slammed by wildlife advocates.

The regulator, the Game Management Authority, said it would rely instead on new modelling before making its recommendations to the state government about the scope of the native bird-hunting season.

Animal Justice MP Georgie Purcell described the authority as "incompetent".

"Giving them this power without any involvement from other key stakeholders is like the fox guarding the henhouse," she said.

The 2024 season was mired in controversy when a parliamentary inquiry recommended the outlawing of duck shooting but the government went ahead anyway. The season ran from April 10 to June 5.

The cabinet decision earlier this year was described by Ms Purcell as an "ultimate betrayal" to voters.

Groups that normally make public submissions include Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting, Animals Australia, Wildlife Victoria and shooter groups such as Field & Game Australia and the Victorian Duck Hunters Association.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting spokeswoman Kerrie Allen said that by cutting consultation, the regulator was saying it wasn't interested in impacts of hunting on threatened species or regional communities.

"Significant sums of taxpayer dollars are being spent on helping the regulator ensure hunting is sustainable, so it's disappointing the process is not better than it is," Ms Allen said.

She said declining bird populations meant it was not the



Animal Justice Party MP Georgie Purcell and anti-duck-hunting campaigner Laurie Levy.

time "to be experimenting with new models".

The new model, called Adaptive Harvest Management, collects data from previous harvests and game duck populations, as well as assessing habitats.

Ms Purcell told the Sunday Herald Sun that consultation on the duck-shooting season was always part of setting the arrangements.

"It is vital when our native waterbirds are experiencing rapid population decline.

"The Adaptive Harvest model is a flawed and expensive failure. Relying on it and nothing else is guaranteed to cause devastation to our native waterbirds."

The Game Management Authority chief executive Graeme Ford said in a statement: "The new Adaptive Harvest Management process will allow government to set sustainable duck season arrangements each year backed by evidence on duck populations and previous harvest trends."

The controversial decision this year prompted an anti-shooting protest, with dozens of dead birds dumped outside the Premier's office.

The latest uproar comes as the Game Management Authority completed three weeks of aerial surveys on Friday across Victoria. The survey recorded the numbers and species of game ducks at more than 850 water bodies across the state.