



*North American Waterfowl
Management Plan*

*Plan nord-américain de
gestion de la sauvagine*

*Plan de Manejo de Aves
Acuáticas de Norteamérica*

North American Waterfowl Management Plan 2011/12 Plan Revision

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP or Plan), first signed in 1986, has remained a leading model for other international conservation plans. In large measure, this is because it is a living and evolving document that is updated periodically with engagement of the broad waterfowl conservation community. That important work is getting underway again with a target date of 2011/12 for completion.

Today we face greater pressures on waterfowl populations and habitat than ever before. It is urgent, given these challenges, that stakeholders in waterfowl management review and re-establish their fundamental conservation goals – something that has not been done in a quarter-century. This is our opportunity to provide the template for a more coherent waterfowl management system that will in turn enable us to focus on the things that matter most to achieving our renewed conservation goals.

The Plan Committee is committed to accomplishing this revision in a timely manner while using a measured process to ensure that we do not sacrifice stakeholder consultation in this important undertaking.

In March 2009, the Plan Committee formed a NAWMP Revision Steering Committee to serve as a focal point for gathering, vetting and synthesizing ideas from the waterfowl management community and to advise the Plan Committee on the content of the Plan Revision. As a first step in meeting that charge, the Steering Committee prepared a scoping report for the Plan Committee's consideration.

At its August 26, 2009 meeting, the Plan Committee reviewed the Scoping Report and committed to engaging stakeholders in generating the initial fundamental goals using a facilitated process to ensure consistency in approach across stakeholder groups. We will hold a special Plan Committee meeting this fall to define a process that will be used for stakeholder consultation beginning later in 2009 and continuing over the next year or so.

Why Change? Why Now?

- To address the environmental challenges of our time
- Because science and public policy have advanced to the point that we can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our conservation actions
- To be more accountable to the multiple objectives important to stakeholders and funders
- To continue to lead advancements in wildlife management in North America

An Expanded Purpose

In 2004, the Plan community agreed to the following over-arching statement:

The purpose of the Plan is to sustain abundant waterfowl populations by conserving landscapes, through partnerships that are guided by sound science.

Abundant waterfowl populations were thus described as the ultimate goal for the Plan, which, in turn, acted through science-based habitat conservation. In the 2011/12 Plan Revision, a more inclusive purpose for waterfowl conservation will reflect the full range of fundamental goals of Plan stakeholders. In the interim, the Plan Committee proposes the following expanded purpose statement, which we believe is consistent with the implicit rationale of the original 1986 Plan:

The purpose of the Plan is to sustain abundant waterfowl populations while preserving the traditions of wildfowling and achieving broad benefits to biodiversity, ecosystem processes and the people of North America. Plan goals will be accomplished by partnerships that conserve habitats and sustain populations, guided by sound science.

A Vision for Integrated Waterfowl Management

This revision of the Plan will seek to implement a unified system of waterfowl conservation that features explicit and coherent objectives to guide habitat and harvest programs, and the means for coordinated actions to realize those objectives. Such a fully coherent management system would feature:

1. a set of widely supported fundamental goals for waterfowl conservation that clearly reflect stakeholder values;
2. a decision framework that allows managers to understand and balance tradeoffs among these multiple fundamental goals; and
3. managers using that decision framework to efficiently allocate resources to achieve those goals.

Derived from those broad fundamental goals and underpinning such a system would be:

- Population objectives that are attainable and will satisfy hunters and other stakeholders.
- Habitat objectives that achieve the population sizes and stakeholder experiences we desire, along with other ecological values from conserved habitat.
- Stakeholder participation and satisfaction sufficient to sustain habitats, populations and conservation activities at mutually desired levels.

The decisions supported by such a coherent framework would be mainly about allocation of human and financial resources for the attainment of agreed-upon goals. Such decisions would be made at multiple scales – local, regional, state/provincial, national and international. Developing the means to inform such decisions at all these levels will take time and both technical and administrative support. Full realization of this ambitious vision cannot be fully accomplished during this Plan Revision. We can, however, make important strides in this direction, and we recommend, therefore, that Plan partners commit to the following:

Desired Outcomes for the 2011/12 Revision

- 1) Achieve broad consensus on the fundamental goals of waterfowl conservation.
- 2) Reach collective agreement on the desired future state of waterfowl management, comprising:
 - a) Clearly articulated objectives and a general integrated framework for making population, habitat, harvest and hunter management decisions. This decision framework should include example protocols for integrated monitoring and assessment.

- b) Achieve sufficient progress in creating this decision framework to develop the momentum needed to conclude and fully implement such a framework.
- 3) Make measurable progress toward integrated models and decision frameworks for scaup, northern pintails and black ducks.
- 4) Provide an informed estimate of the timeline and resources needed to complete the coherent integration of waterfowl management.
- 5) Review progress with regard to the recommendations in the 2007 NAWMP Continental Assessment and define actions needed to advance those recommendations that remain of high priority.

Process

A critical first step to advance a coherent decision framework through the 2011/12 Plan Revision is to achieve consensus about the fundamental goals of waterfowl management; i.e., at the highest level what does the waterfowl conservation community want to achieve for waterfowl populations, habitats, and people? To achieve broad consensus, a fundamentally different approach to the consultation process than has been used in past updates (in which writing teams produced drafts for peer review) must be considered. All stakeholders should be engaged in generating the initial fundamental goals.

This goal building process, which has already begun, should be iterative, highly transparent and well documented. It must engage an essential array of agreed-upon waterfowl conservation stakeholders (flyway councils, joint ventures, and many others). It should draw upon well-developed decision processes that will allow stakeholders to collectively identify and clarify fundamental goals and available management actions at the highest strategic level. We should then develop basic and easy-to-communicate models that can predict the consequences of alternative actions, and formally and openly identify and evaluate tradeoffs in pursuing multiple objectives. The results should be broadly supported goals for waterfowl management that lead to development of an effective suite of integrated conservation actions for achieving those goals.

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