U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
PUBLIC MEETING
ON RESIDENT CANADA GOOSE POPULATIONS
April 1, 2002
Dallas, TX
APPEARANCES

Facilitator:
Phil T. Seng, Vice President
DJ Case & Associates
607 Lincolnway West
Mishawaka, Indiana 46544

Presenter:
Ron Kokel, Wildlife Biologist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division on Migrating Bird Management
Arlington, Virginia
MR. SENG: Well, good evening. I'd like to welcome you to tonight's meeting on Resident Canada Goose Management.

My name is Phil Seng. I'll be the facilitator at tonight's meeting. I work with DJ Case & Associates, a communications consulting firm based up in Indiana. and when I was talking to someone this afternoon about this meeting tonight and they found out that I was from Indiana, they said: Well, you're probably really going to ramrod that meeting and speed it up so you can go see Indiana University play for the national championship in basketball tonight. But I had to be quick to point out that as a Purdue graduate, I really have no love for Indiana University, although I must admit that now Bobby Knight has come down to Texas, it's much harder to hate them than it used to be.

But in any case, there's really no conflict of interest --

VERNON BEVILL: And he's doing a fine job. I might add.

MR. SENG: -- we'll take as much time as we need to.
We were contracted by the Fish and Wildlife Service to facilitate 11 of these public meetings around the country to take public input on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that the service has developed on management of resident Canada geese, and tonight is the first of these 11 meetings.

Following tonight's meeting, we will go to Palatine, Illinois; Waupun, Wisconsin; Franklin, Tennessee; Bloomington, Minnesota; Brookings, South Dakota; Richmond Virginia; Danbury, Connecticut; New Brunswick, New Jersey; Denver, Colorado; and we will finish on May 30th in Bellevue, Washington, in Washington State.

The procedure tonight is very straightforward. We are going to have a brief slide presentation by Ron Kokel, who is a wildlife biologist with the Division of Migratory Bird Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, on the Draft EIS, and then we're going to turn it over to the public for your input.

When you came in, you should have received a numbered card like this. We will just take public comment in this order, starting with Number 1 and going till there's no cards left. And
also, if you choose not to make public comment tonight, but you think of something later you'd like to say, there's an address on back, both snail mail and e-mail addresses where you can send comments. And the current deadline for public comment is May 30th, and that's written on here as well.

When it comes time for public comment, I would ask that you come to the floor mike here in the center for two reasons: Number one, so everyone can hear what you have to say; and also, so that our court reporter, Jamie, can make sure we get everything verbatim that you had to say as well.

I would ask when you come to the mike if you would state your name and spell your name, unless it's immediately obvious how to spell it, also state whatever organization you represent, if any, and where you're from.

And the meeting -- as most of you know, the meeting is designed for the Service to take input. It's not -- the format is not set up for a give-and-take or debate discussion, so please keep that in mind as you come to the mike.

And I'll reiterate some of these
things when we come back to the public comment period. We have signup sheets that I will pass around while Ron's talking.

DAVE CASE: If you're confident that you'll get the Final EIS, you don't need to sign up. This is for people to get the Final DEIS.

MR. SENG: There's a check box on there that says you're already on the mailing list or you're not. So if you've gotten a copy of the Draft EIS, which looks like this, and you're on the mailing list, you'll get a copy of the Final when it's done.

If you haven't gotten a copy and you'd like one, please check the appropriate box. Or if you'd like to be taken off the list and you've got one and you don't want the Final, write something to that effect in there and we'll take you off the list.

With that. Ron Kokel, wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

MR. KOKEL: Thanks, Phil.
Good evening. Again, my name is Ron Kokel. I'm a wildlife biologist with the Division of Migratory Bird Management with the Fish and Wildlife Service, stationed in Arlington, Virginia. And on behalf of our director, Steve Williams, I'd like to welcome all of you to this public meeting.

If I could get the lights and the slides.

This is the first of the 11 public meetings held across the country for the purpose of inviting public participation and input into our process of developing an environmental impact statement for Resident Canada Goose Management.

The Draft EIS was developed in full cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services.

Why are we here? Well, we're here to explain the DEIS, its proposed action and to listen to your comments. The Draft EIS considers a range of management alternatives for addressing expanding populations of locally breeding Canada geese, and as such, we're here to listen to you and invite your comments on the Service's recommended management of these birds.

First, a brief explanation of
NEPA. NEPA requires the completion of an EIS to analyze environmental and socioeconomic impacts that are associated with any significant actions. And second, NEPA also requires public involvement, which includes a scoping period before the draft and a comment period after the draft.

We began this process in August of 1999 when we published a Federal Register notice that announced our intent to prepare the EIS.

Then in February of 2000, we held nine public scoping meetings designed to seek public input into the process. Scoping ended in March of 2000. In response to scoping, we received over 3,000 comments, and we had over 1,250 people attend the nine public meetings.

During scoping, we found that the top issues of concern were property damage and conflicts, methods of conflict abatement, sport hunting opportunities, economic impacts of resident Canada geese, human health and safety concerns and the impacts to Canada geese.

NEPA also outlined a specific format for EIS. There's a purpose and need section, an alternative section, the affected environment, and finally, the environmental consequences.
The purpose of the EIS is to evaluate alternative strategies to reduce, manage and control resident Canada goose populations in the U.S.

Second was to provide a regulatory mechanism that would allow state and local agencies, other Federal agencies, and groups and individuals to respond to damage complaints or other damages.

And third, it was to guide and direct resident Canada goose population management activities in the U.S.

The need for the EIS was an increasing resident Canada goose population, coupled with growing conflicts, damages and socioeconomic impacts equal to reexamination of the Service's resident Canada goose management. Alternatives. The Draft EIS examined seven management alternatives.

There's Alternative A, which is no action: Alternative B, nonlethal control and management, which includes nonpermitted activities: Alternative C, which is lethal control and management, including permitted activities: Alternative D, expanded hunting methods and
opportunities; Alternative E, integrated depredation order management; Alternative F, State Empowerment, which is the proposed action here; and Alternative G, which is general depredation order.

Under the "No Action" alternative, there would be no additional regulatory methods or strategies. We would continue the use of all special hunting seasons, the issue of depredation permits and the issuance of special Canada goose permit.

Under the second alternative, the nonlethal management, which includes nonpermitted activity, we would cease all lethal control of resident Canada geese and their eggs. Only nonlethal harassment techniques would be allowed. No permits would be issued, and special hunting seasons would be discontinued.

Under Alternative C, the nonlethal management, which would include permit activities, we would cease all permitted lethal control of resident Canada geese; we would promote nonlethal harassment techniques; there would be no depredation or special Canada goose permits issued. Egg addling would be allowed with permit, and special hunting seasons would be continued.
The fourth alternative, expanding hunting methods and opportunities, we would provide new regulatory options to increase the harvest of resident Canada geese. These would include authorizing additional hunting methods, such as electronic calls, unplugged guns and expanded shooting hours. These seasons would be operational during September 1 to 15 period; they could be experimental during September 16 to 31; and they would have to be conducted outside of other open seasons.

The fifth alternative, we termed it Integrated Depredation Order Management. This alternative consists of an Airport Depredation Order, a Nest and Egg Depredation Order, an Agricultural Depredation Order, and a Public Health Depredation Order.

Implementation would be up to the state wildlife agency. Special hunting seasons would be continued also, as would the issuance of depredation permits and special Canada goose permits.

The Airport Depredation Order would authorize airports to establish a program which would include any indirect and/or direct population
control strategies.

The intent of the program would be to significantly reduce goose populations at airports. Management actions would have to occur on the premises.

The Nest and Egg Depredation Order would allow the destruction of resident Canada goose nests and/or eggs without a permit. The intent of the program here would be to stabilize breeding populations.

The Agricultural Depredation Order would authorize land owners, operators and tenants actively engaged in commercial agriculture to conduct indirect and/or direct control strategies on geese depredating on agricultural crops. Again, the management actions would have to occur on the premises.

The last depredation order is a Public Health Depredation Order, which would authorize state, county, municipal or local health officials to conduct indirect and/or direct control strategies on geese, when recommended by health officials that there’s a public health threat. Again, management actions would have to occur on the premises where there was a public health threat.
health threat.

The sixth alternative is our proposed action, which we termed State Empowerment. Under this alternative, we would establish a new regulation which would authorize state wildlife agencies or their authorized agents to conduct or allow management activities on resident goose populations.

The intent here would be to allow state wildlife management agencies sufficient flexibility to deal with problems caused by resident geese within their respective state.

We would also authorize indirect and/or direct population control strategies, such as aggressive harassment, nest and egg destruction, gosling and adult trapping and culling program.

We would also allow implementation of any of the specific depredation orders, which we just talked about in Alternative E.

Additionally, during special hunting seasons, we would expand methods of take to increase hunter harvest like we talked about in Alternative D. These would be authorized: additional hunting methods, such as electronic calls, unplugged shotguns, expanded shooting hours.
Again, these would be operational during September 1 to 15 seasons. It could be experimental during the September 16 to 31 seasons, and they would have to be conducted outside of any other open season.

Additionally, this alternative would establish a Conservation Order, which would provide special expanded hunting opportunities during a portion of the treaty closed period, that's August 1 to 31, and a portion of the treaty open period, September 1 to 15.

Under the Conservation Order, we would authorize additional hunting methods such as electronic calls, unplugged guns, expanded shooting hours, and liberalized bag limits. And again, these would have to be conducted outside of any other open seasons.

Under this alternative, the Service would annually inspect the impact and the effectiveness of the program. There would be a provision, though, for possible suspension of the regulations, and that's only the Conversation Order and/or the regular season changes when the threat was no longer present.

We would also continue all special
and regular hunting seasons, continue the issuance of all depredation permits.
And under this alternative, the only state requirements would be to annually monitor spring breeding populations and annually report any take under any authorized activities.

The last alternative is the General Depredation Order, which would allow any authorized person to conduct management activities on resident geese either posing a threat to health and human safety or causing damage.

It would be available between April 1 and August 31. It would provide expanded hunting opportunities as explained under Alternative D. There would be continued use of special and regular hunting seasons, and the issuance of depredation of special Canada goose permits. And under this alternative, the authorization for all management activities would come directly from the Service.

Affected environment. Under the affected environment, we divided it into a biological environment and a socioeconomic environment.

In the biological environment, we
looked at resident Canada goose populations, water
green quality and wetlands, vegetation and soils, wild
life habitat and federally listed threatened and
endangered species.

Under the socioeconomic economic
environment, we looked at migratory bird program
managemeht. This includes both the sport hunting
program, the migratory bird permit program, social
values and considerations, economic considerings,
such as property damages or agricultural crop
damages, human health and safety and program costs.

Environmental consequences. The
environmental consequences forms the scientific and
analytic basis for comparison of the alternatives.
It analyzes the environmental impact of each
alternative in relation to the resource categories.
And the "No Action" provides a baseline for all the
analysis.

Under the "No Action," what we would
expect is the populations with continued growth.
We would expect the Atlanta Flyway to approach of
about 1.6 million in 10 years; the Mississippi
Flyway, 2 million in 10 years; Central Flyway, 1.3
million in 10 years; and the Pacific Flyway,
450,000 in 10 years.
We would also expect continued and expanded goose distribution problems and conflicts, increased workloads and continued impacts to property, safety and health.

Under the proposed action, we would expect a reduction in populations, especially in problem areas; we would expect increased hunting opportunities; we would expect a significant reduction in conflicts; decreased impacts to property, health and safety; initial workload increase, but long-term workload decreases; and we would maintain viable resident Canada goose populations.

Some recent modeling suggests that to reduce the four Flyways' population from approximately 3.5 million to 2.1 million would require for 10 years a harvest of an additional 480,000 geese annually; the take of an additional 852,000 goslings annually; nest removal of about 528,000 nests annually; or a combination of additional harvests of 240,000 geese annually and a take of 320,000 goslings annually.

We believe that the only way to possibly attain these numbers is to give states the flexibility to address problems within their
respective state; also to address population reductions on a wide number of available fronts. And since states are the most informed and knowledgeable local authorities on wildlife conflicts, the primary responsibilities and decisions of the program should be placed with them.

What comes next? First is the development of a new regulation to carry out the proposed action. This should be forthcoming in April. Second, the public comment period on the Draft ends May 30th, 2002. And third would be the publication of the Final EIS and Record of Decision, which we anticipate for fall of 2002.

As I stated, the public comment period is open till May the 30th, and Phil has already outlined the various methods that you can use to submit your comments. These include any oral or written comments that you may submit tonight, or you may subsequently send. The address, again, is printed on the back of the card that you received when you arrived.

Additionally, we've set up an electronic site where you can send e-mail comments and access other information which is pertinent to
the EIS process. The Draft EIS should be available on the website now.

On behalf of the Fish and Wildlife Service, I'd like to thank all of you for attending the meeting, and particularly, any of those who provide comments.

Questions or comments?

MR. SENG: Thank you, Ron.

Well, now, the main thing we're interested in is to hear what you have to say. Again, I'll just reiterate quickly, we're going to go in numerical order, one through however many there were. Please come to the mike there in the center, state and spell your name, organization you represent and where you're from. And if you don't care to comment, when I call your number, just say "pass" so we can just move right along.

Card Number 1?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pass.

MR. SENG: Card Number 2?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pass.

MR. SENG: 3? Card Number 3?

(No response.)

MR. SENG: 4?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pass.
MR. SENG:  5?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
MR. SENG:  6?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
MR. SENG:  7?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
MR. SENG:  8?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
MR. SENG:  9?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
MR. SENG:  10?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
MR. SENG:  11?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
MR. SENG:  12?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Pass.
MR. SENG:  14?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  I'll pass.
MR. SENG:  15?
MR. VANDEL:  Oh, I can't miss an opportunity.
MR. SENG:  Okay. We have a taker.
MR. VANDEL: No. I just think the presentation was good. I have a lot of work to do yet on the EIS to look into the details, but at least from a state perspective, it does appear like you gave the states what they asked for. So from that standpoint, I guess pending further review, I'd support the EIS and the preferred alternative.

THE REPORTER: Name. Name.

MR. VANDEL: George Vandal, South Dakota.

MR. SENG: Can you spell it, please?

MR. VANDEL: V-a-n-d-e-l.

MR. SENG: Thank you.

Card 16? Card 17 -- 16? Did you -- no comment?

17?

(No response.)

MR. SENG: 18?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pass.

MR. SENG: 19?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pass.

MR. SENG: 20?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pass.

MR. SENG: 21?

(No response.)
MR. SENG: 22?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pass.
MR. SENG: 23?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No comment.
MR. SENG: 24?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No comment.
MR. SENG: 25?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pass.
MR. SENG: Okay. That's everybody.

That's all the cards we handed out.

Was there anyone that didn't have a card that would like to make a comment? No. Okay.

Again, as Ron mentioned, the deadline for comment is May 30th. The signup sheet -- where is the signup sheet that went around? If any of the new-comers haven't signed the signup sheet and you'd like to receive a copy of the EIS, please make sure you sign it and check the appropriate box, and you'll get a copy of the revised version when it comes out.

With that, we stand adjourned.

Thanks for coming out and enjoy the game. Go IU.

(End of proceedings.)
THE STATE OF TEXAS   X
COUNTY OF DALLAS   X

This is to certify that I, Jamie K. Israelow, a Certified Shorthand Reporter in and for the State of Texas, Registered Professional Reporter and Certified Realtime Reporter, reported in shorthand the proceedings had at the time and place set forth, and that the above and foregoing pages contain a full, true, and accurate transcript of the said proceedings.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND on this the _____ day of April, 2002.

Jamie K. Israelow
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