

Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) Task Force

Guidelines

January 20, 2003

The AHM Task Force was established in December 2002 by Brent Manning, president of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Mission

The mission of an AHM Task Force is to foster understanding and support for continued strategic development and implementation of AHM. The Task Force will focus primarily on policy issues, recognizing of course that strategic direction must be consistent with capabilities for science-based monitoring and assessment of the waterfowl resource. Any strategic guidance for AHM also will acknowledge the dependency of waterfowl population abundance on both harvest and habitat availability, the need for direct involvement of the Flyway Councils, and the need for comprehensive, integrated approaches to migratory bird conservation.

Tasks

The AHM Task Force will focus on the following key policy topics:

- (1) Harvest-management objectives: Currently, the basic management objective of the AHM process is to maximize cumulative harvest over an infinite time horizon (recognizing that long-term resource conservation is required to accomplish this objective). In one case (midcontinent mallards), an additional objective is to maintain population size at or above the goal of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). Are the size of the harvest and NAWMP population goals sufficient for defining the objectives of duck harvest management, or should the objectives be broadened to include other interests such as hunter satisfaction, the distribution of hunting opportunity, or the frequency of regulatory changes?
- (2) The set of regulatory alternatives: Because AHM helps ensure resource protection through an optimal use of specified regulatory alternatives (whatever they may be), proposals to modify the set of regulatory alternatives primarily involve social trade-offs. In this light, how many regulatory alternatives should there be? Among the alternatives, what are desirable or acceptable ranges of season lengths, bag limits, and framework dates? How often should the set of regulatory alternatives be reviewed and what are appropriate criteria for modifying them?
- (3) The specification of management scales: The harvest potential of duck populations is highly variable among years, across space, and among species. The degree to which AHM accounts for these sources of variation is largely a subjective decision, but one that can strongly influence both the benefits and costs of management. The challenge for managers is to decide what level of management resolution is appropriate given extant monitoring and assessment programs, acceptable regulatory mechanisms, the desires of hunters, and legal mandates for species conservation.
- (4) Communications: The other major element of the Task Force's agenda will involve communication efforts designed to facilitate the development of useful policy guidance. Pro-active communication efforts have been critical to the success of AHM and were the

principal focus of the original AHM Task Force in 1995. The Task Force would be responsible for helping to identify stakeholders and target audiences, key messages, necessary actions, and required funding to enhance the long-term success of AHM.

The Task Force will review alternative approaches to these issues and make recommendations to the USFWS and Flyway Councils for further consideration.

Task Force Composition

Individuals have been appointed to the Task Force based on their ability to contribute to the group's mission. Experience with the history and institutional mechanisms of waterfowl management were prerequisites. The Task Force is relatively small, open-minded, and able to embrace a nationwide perspective. The Task Force will look for strategic approaches that can be embraced across Flyways. Members include:

- *Wayne MacCallum*, Atlantic Flyway (MA Division of Fish & Wildlife)
- *Roy Grimes*, Mississippi Flyway (KY Dept. Fish & Wildlife Resources)
- *John Cooper*, Central Flyway (SD Game, Fish & Parks Department)
- *Don Childress*, Pacific Flyway (MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks)
- *Ken Babcock* (Ducks Unlimited)
- *Rollie Sparrowe* (Wildlife Management Institute)
- *Ken Williams* (USGS Cooperative Research Units)
- *Ralph Morgenweck* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
- *Dave Case*, facilitator (D. J. Case & Associates)

The Task Force will seek the input of others as needed to carry out its work.

Operating Procedures

The AHM Task Force will be analogous to the AHM technical Working Group, in that it will be an advisory body without decision-making powers. Like the AHM Working Group, the Task Force will assemble information, review and discuss alternative approaches, and make non-binding recommendations to the IAFWA and Flyway Councils. The Task Force will rely heavily on the AHM Working Group and technical/study committees of the Flyway Councils for help in assessing the biological and regulatory implications of alternative policy choices. The Task Force also will work closely with the IAFWA and Flyway Councils to establish priorities and timetables for deliverables.

The Task Force will coordinate closely with WMI, which has initiated a federal-aid project to help understand the relationship between waterfowl hunting regulations and hunter satisfaction and participation. An important goal of the project is to determine how this information can be used to support conservation programs like AHM. The project will involve formation of a "think tank" to help frame the issue and to create a sense of direction for future work. As manager of the WMI project and as facilitator of the Task Force, Dave Case will ensure that the two efforts are closely coordinated and mutually reinforcing. The WMI project already is being coordinated closely with the AHM Working Group.