

Common Questions about the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council

Question: Are migratory birds managed under ANILCA?

Answer: *No. Migratory birds are not managed under ANILCA. Management of migratory birds is through the migratory bird treaties between the United States of America, Canada, Japan, Great Britain, and Mexico.*

Question: What was the purpose of the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)?

Answer: *In the early 1900s, migratory bird hunting in North America was not Federally regulated and commercial market hunting of birds took its toll on population numbers. The 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada sought to stem the rapid declines noted in some bird species. The treaty prevented market hunting, opened regulated sport hunting of “game” species (primarily waterfowl), and protected birds during the nesting season, March 10 through September 1. Similar migratory bird treaties were subsequently signed between the United States and Mexico (1936), Japan (1972), and Russia (1976). To implement these treaties in the United States, Congress passed the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918 with later amendments).*

Question: Why did the U.S. negotiate the 1997 Protocol Amendments to the MBTA?

Answer: *The traditional harvest of migratory birds by northern peoples during the spring and summer months was not taken fully into account during the legal negotiations for the treaties with Canada and Mexico. This harvest, which had occurred for centuries, was necessary to the subsistence way of life in the north and thus continued despite the closed season. To remedy this situation, the United States negotiated Protocols amending both the Canadian and Mexican treaties to allow for spring/summer subsistence harvest of migratory birds by indigenous inhabitants of identified subsistence harvest areas in Alaska. The U.S. Senate ratified the amendments to both treaties in 1997.*

Question: How did the treaty amendments lead to the formation of the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council (AMBCC)?

Answer: *The amended treaty with Canada calls for creation of management bodies to ensure an effective and meaningful role for Alaska’s indigenous inhabitants in the conservation of migratory birds. AMBCC was created as a statewide body to develop, implement, and promote a co-management program between Alaska Native, Federal and State governments in recognition of the subsistence use and conservation of migratory birds in Alaska, as part of the national migratory bird conservation system. According to the Letter of Submittal, management bodies are to include Alaska Native, Federal, and State of Alaska representatives as equals.*

Question: Who is the AMBCC comprised of?

Answer: *The AMBCC is 13 member council comprised of one Federal representative designated by the Alaska Regional Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, one State representative designated by the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, and eleven representatives from the Alaska Native non-profit partners. Each faction is entitled to one vote.*

Question: What is the AMBCC's purpose and what are the responsibilities of the council members?

Answers:

1. *To ensure the conservation of migratory birds; and to perpetuate the continuation of the customary and traditional harvest of migratory birds by indigenous inhabitants;*
2. *To promote the co-management of migratory birds;*
3. *To develop recommendations for spring and summer subsistence seasons, methods, means and bag limits which are consistent with the customary and traditional uses of migratory birds and their eggs by Alaska's indigenous inhabitants;*
4. *To recommend law enforcement policies and to assist in their implementation;*
5. *To develop cooperative programs to monitor migratory bird populations and harvests;*
6. *To promote, recommend and assist in migratory bird research and incorporate traditional ecological knowledge in migratory bird research projects;*
7. *To promote and recommend habitat protection policies;*
8. *To provide education and information to the public, appropriate management agencies, and other interested parties;*
9. *To provide guidelines within which the regional bodies can recommend harvest regulations and conservation measures, and;*
10. *To coordinate with other migratory bird groups, joint ventures, and teams regarding issues of common concern.*

Question: Are the regulations voted on by the AMBCC final?

Answer: *No, the regulations voted on at the AMBCC are not final. The AMBCC is part of a larger system of both national and international migratory bird management. The council will provide advice, recommendations and information regarding subsistence use*

and the conservation of migratory birds in Alaska. The Council recommendations are forwarded to the Service Regulations Committee who acts on them and makes the final recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior.

Question: **When are the council meetings and what are they about?**

Answer: *There is a fall meeting that is held for the primary purpose of providing background information and guidelines to the regions to develop regulatory and other recommendations for migratory birds.*

A spring meeting is held prior to the Flyway Council meetings to review and vote on regulatory recommendations that are forwarded to the AMBCC by each of the regions or the public. The Council will accept public comment on all regulatory and non-regulatory matters prior to any vote. The council package is sent to the four flyway councils to maintain communications and cooperation between the flyways. The package is ultimately sent to the Service Regulations Committee for their action during the meeting to act on late season proposals.