

NAWMP Science Support Team Mission:

To help strengthen the biological foundations of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and facilitate continuous improvement of Plan conservation programs.

Specific Objectives:

- 1. To foster continuous improvement in the effectiveness of NAWMP actions through the establishment of iterative cycles of planning, implementing and evaluating conservation programs at both the continental and joint venture levels.**

The key conceptual shift is to view planning, implementation and evaluation as integral components of management. Accomplishing this objective will require the adoption of adaptive management at both the joint venture and continental levels. The NSST will strive to institutionalize such continuous improvement in management performance. At the JV level, this will result in the establishment of management cycles that assess the costs and benefits of various conservation techniques, test key planning assumptions, and monitor progress toward attainment of JV goals and objectives. Necessarily, JV technical teams will lead these efforts supported by advice and coordination from the NSST. Strong, effective JV technical teams and management boards will be essential for success. Establishing a body like the NSST at the JV level is one option for the Joint Ventures to consider.

- 2. To conduct large-scale studies of landscape variation and waterfowl demography.**

Relatively little assessment has been accomplished by the NAWMP partners at scales larger than individual Joint Ventures. Redressing this shortcoming will be an important step in strengthening the biological foundations of NAWMP, and this will become a high priority for the NSST. coordination of JV monitoring and assessment activities, both within and among countries, will be necessary to ensure a coherent, consistent approach to biological planning and evaluation, and essential for analysis of waterfowl/habitat relationships at large spatial scales (e.g., the prairie pothole region, or the mid-continent wintering grounds). Such coordination will have the added benefit of facilitating sharing of ideas, experience, and perhaps resources among the involved JVs.

Key activities for the NAWMP partner agencies to accomplish include monitoring waterfowl populations (e.g., breeding pair estimates, survival rate estimates); monitoring habitat trends throughout North America, but especially in regions vital to waterfowl populations; facilitating tests of key biological assumptions

underlying Plan activities; and testing hypotheses about the general relationships between variation in landscape attributes and waterfowl population dynamics.

The NSST, with support from the Plan's National offices, will lead this effort. In the United States, the AMAT group of the USFWS is strongly positioned to provide leadership and some resources to accomplish these tasks, but AMAT will require assistance from the Canadian and Mexican federal wildlife agencies and other JV partners.

3. To report annually to the NAWMP Committee and the Plan partners generally on the status of the biological foundations of the Plan, evaluation results and implications for future conservation activities.

An important annual task of the NSST will be to report to the Plan Committee and other Plan partners on the biological effectiveness of Plan activities. These reports will draw on both reports of progress by the JVs and original and commissioned research by the NSST. Other special analyses may be undertaken from time to time on behalf of the Plan Committee. Conversely, the NSST will serve to elaborate and reinforce any biological guidance from the Plan Committee to the Joint Ventures.