

# North American Waterfowl Management Plan



**SCIENCE SUPPORT TEAM**

[www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP/NSST](http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP/NSST)

## Venturing Forward

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**Winter 2008**



North American Waterfowl Management Plan Science Support Team

Venturing Forward

The NAWMP Science Support Team's newsletter, "Venturing Forward" is published quarterly and distributed to all NAWMP partners interested in progress relative to the NAWMP's science foundations.

The NAWMP's Plan Committee, the NAWMP Science Support Team's (NSST) Executive Committee and the NSST Committee Chairs all contribute regular updates and news to this newsletter for the benefit of all NAWMP partners and stakeholders as we strive to "Venture Forward."

Contributors are invited to submit news items, photos, articles, comments, etc. to the editor of "Venturing Forward":

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- NSST Executive Committee (Tim Jones, Chair)
Joint Task Group Report Review Committee (Jorge L. Coppen, Chair)
JV Implementation and Evaluation Plan Review Committee (Mike Brasher, Chair)
Landscape Monitoring Committee (Tim Jones, Chair)
NWI Working Group (Rex Johnson, Chair)
Alternative Performance metrics Working Group (Pat Devers, Chair)
Regional Population Abundance Objective Committee (Mark Petrie, Chair)

NSST Action Groups

- Pintail Action Group (Jim DeVries, Chair)
Scaup Action Team (Jane Austin, Chair)

PHOTO CREDITS
Front Cover: Lesser Scaup by Dave Menke
Back Cover: Greater Scaup flock by Donna Dewhurst



## Next steps in the “game changer” for waterfowl; developing the vision into the possible

By Basile VanHavre and Paul Schmidt

In the fall issue of this newsletter, we wrote to you about the “**game-changing**” nature of the outcome of the Future of Waterfowl Management Workshop (August 26-28, 2008 in Minneapolis). At that workshop, more than 200 participants were highly engaged and came together in a groundswell of support to better link our population and habitat management programs and to incorporate a stronger human dimensions component in our work.

Reaching that consensus may have been the easy part! While the results from the Minneapolis workshop, the Joint Task Group’s recommendations and from the 2007 NAWMP Continental Progress Assessment provide us with clear objectives and a strong theoretical foundation, there is much work ahead to move from the conceptual model to on-the-ground implementation of an improved approach. We want to develop this new approach, using the opportunity of the NAWMP 2010 Update to catalyze the work.

At the present time, many in the NAWMP Community as well as those responsible for the wise management of waterfowl harvest, are considering how they can best contribute to further develop the vision. We, as the NAWMP Co-Chairs, are now speaking with many of you to gain the commitment of your agencies and organizations to put your skills to work in this major undertaking.

The Plan Committee has proposed to form a broad-based NAWMP International 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 update. There are still many unanswered questions about the proposed

approach, such as who will be the members and how will they coordinate with other waterfowl groups? It is clear that the NAWMP International Steering Committee membership will need to reflect a wide range of expertise (technical, policy, administration). The answers to these and other questions will become clearer as we move thoughtfully through this process.

The initial task for the Steering Committee is seen to be a scoping process to accomplish four things:

- Review existing technical information, and through consultation, identify additional technical work and resources needed.
- Propose to the Plan Committee a process for consulting with stakeholders on a still-to-be-determined suite of alternative waterfowl management objectives that will be developed during the 2010 update process.
- Propose to the Plan Committee an approach for reviewing existing waterfowl management processes and institutions in light of the new unified framework to be developed during the update.
- Provide the Plan Committee with a proposed work plan and schedule for completion of the 2010 update. Recommend additional appointments or sub-committee structures as necessary.

It is our hope that the International Steering Committee members will be named in early December, and that they will be able to begin scoping the task in as soon as possible. We very much look forward to the next several months of significant progress.



Paul Schmidt is Assistant Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service responsible for the Migratory Bird Programs and currently serves as a Plan Committee Co-chair.



Basile VanHavre is Director - Population Conservation Management Division Canadian Wildlife Service -Environment Canada and currently serves as a Plan Committee Co-chair.





## NSST NEWS

### NSST Chair's Message

As I begin my term as Chair of the NSST, I am simultaneously daunted by the tasks that lay ahead and comforted by the knowledge that the waterfowl community has numerous individuals that are more than capable of finding novel solutions for the difficult issues we face. Our biggest challenge over the next year will be engaging with the Adaptive Harvest Management and the Human Dimensions Working Groups to chart a course that allows us to overcome the technical hurdles brought about by coherence as laid out this past August in Minneapolis.

In addition to facing these technical challenges we also are entering a period of austere budgets. This may impact our ability to have face-to-face meetings, so we must embrace new technologies, such as webinars, in order to keep making progress within all of our subcommittees. We all need to keep this in mind as we make meeting plans over the next several months and look for every opportunity to minimize cost to participants.

I have been a member of the NSST now for six years and am impressed on the transformation that has occurred over the past three years. This is due in part to the hard work of my predecessors but more importantly to the tireless dedication of Jorge Coppen. However, we are still some ways away from having all of our members fully engaged in our subcommittees. We also need to continue to reach out to the Joint Ventures, including the species joint ventures, not fully engaged with the NSST and find out how we can become more relevant to them.

I believe this new year we just entered is going to be exciting! We are embarking on the next update to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the next North American Duck Symposium will be held in Toronto, Ontario, on 17 - 21 August 2009. Personally, I am excited about the upcoming NSST Population Objectives Workshop being held in February. I think Mark Petrie and his subcommittee has pulled together a stellar group of minds and I eagerly await their recommendations. The next full meeting of the NSST has not been scheduled, but we are hoping to have a joint meeting with the Plan Committee this coming summer.

Sincerely,

*Tim Jones*



### BULLETIN BOARD

#### Meetings of Interest



**Plan Committee meeting  
Sacramento, CA  
Jan. 27-29 2009**



**NSST Regional Population Abundance Objectives Committee  
Workshop  
Ducks Unlimited Headquarters  
Memphis, TN  
February 3-5, 2009**



**Scaup Conservation Planning  
Workshop  
Patuxent Wildlife Research Center  
Laurel, Maryland  
February 2-6, 2009**



**North American Duck Symposium  
Toronto, Ontario  
17 - 21 August 2009**





## NSST Work Planning and the NSST Role for the Next Plan Update:

By Jorge L. Coppen

As the NSST discussed the Plan Committee's efforts to form a NAWMP International Steering Committee (ISC) to steer the next Plan Update, many questions were raised for the ISC to ponder on behalf of the NSST: What mix of talents will we need to accomplish our tasks? Will we need a mix of Adaptive Harvest Management Working Group and NSST participants and perhaps academic or agency personnel? What will be the scope of the work required? What is the collective vision as this effort proceeds? What additional policy-level direction is required to enable technical progress? How would you see the PC and the NSST (and perhaps other bodies) working together to move such an update ahead?

We discussed whether the ISC should function primarily as a "steering committee"- providing oversight - or whether it should be more involved in the actual technical work. Hopes were to keep the ISC membership limited and productive. We already have a Plan Committee that oversees NAWMP direction so the ISC role needs clarification. If that role will include "heavy lifting", more ISC participants will be required. In any case, the ISC will need to set up clear direction for the next steps stemming from the work of the JTG Report & the results of the Future of Waterfowl Workshop.

The Plan Committee needs to firm up concrete, explicit thoughts on the scope, depth and details of technical work necessary to support the NAWMP update process. The NAWMP needs to establish a clear "charge" prior to ISC assembly, to include providing leadership and guidance to those entities that will grapple with the actual tasks.

The NSST has already recruited its own members to be considered for ISC membership. These NSST members also would form the nucleus of an NSST committee to address key technical issues identified for the NAWMP update at the NSST level.

These members are:

- NSST JTG Report Review Committee reps (J. Coppen, G. Soulliere and R. Holbrook)
- NSST Executive Committee members (J. Coppen, T. Jones, R. Johnson, M. Gloutney, K. Dickson, M. Pertie)
- NSST members (D. Howerter P. Devers)

Other potential participants identified as having the appropriate technical expertise were:

Key original Joint Task Group (JTG) members (M. Anderson, M. Runge)

A good starting point to commence deliberations on the task for the NSST entails revisiting the NSST JTG Report Review Committee's *JTG Report Scoping Document* which laid out strategies to address JTG report recommendations under six "issue areas" in order to compartmentalize the work into more manageable bites. But, the NSST awaits ISC direction before it conducts a first team conference call.

Also, there are other priority NAWMP Assessment needs to be included in the next update and to round out the next NSST Work Plan to include:

- o Regional Population Abundance Objectives Workshop - next steps
- o Alternative Performance Metrics Workshop - next steps
- o Net landscape change (upland & wetland assessments)

Effectively developing these items in the next work plan will require that we wait until spring 2009 when each group's white papers will have been completed.

Jorge L. Coppen is the National Coordinator of the NAWMP bird initiative and serves as the primary NSST representative to the Plan Committee. He currently chairs the Joint Task Group Report Review Committee.





## Joint Venture Implementation Plan Review Committee Quarterly Update

By Mike Brasher

By the time you read this update your committee will have completed its reviews of the 4 Implementation Plans (IPs) received earlier this year (i.e., Sonoran, East Gulf Coastal Plain, Appalachian Mountains, and Rio Grande Joint Ventures). With the completion of these 4 reviews and having no other IPs whose arrival and review needs are imminent, we look forward to a little “down time” for this committee over the holiday season.

Despite our recent review achievements, several folks have observed in various conversations over the past months that we continue to suffer from an incomplete understanding of how NSST reviews are contributing to NAWMP endorsement and USFWS funding decisions for new JVs. These issues were discussed in some detail at the NSST meeting in Saskatoon and are expected to appear as an agenda item at the upcoming Plan Committee meeting in Sacramento, CA. Of particular importance will be receiving a definitive communication from the Plan Committee on what is intended to be connoted by “NAWMP endorsement” of a Joint Venture. It is my opinion that only upon understanding the full context within which NSST reviews are used and valued can we truly appreciate the utility of our efforts.

Discussions also emerged at our recent NSST meeting in Saskatoon about the potential for this committee to also perform critical reviews of “significant” revisions to existing JV IPs. Indeed, it is important to avoid placing excessive review demands on the NSST membership, but we also must consider the value-added nature of these reviews. It was noted that IP revisions occur infrequently, and because JVs embrace a framework of iteratively refining biological planning models and conservation delivery strategies, reviews of revised IPs may be more important and informative than those conducted on draft IPs. A decision on whether and how these reviews may take place is expected sometime after the January NAWMP (Plan) Committee meeting.

In closing, I again extend sincere thanks to the following individuals that contributed their time and intelligence to NSST reviews of JV IPs: Greg Balkcom, Carol Beardmore, Tim Bowman, Steve Cordts, Faye McNew, Duane Pool, Mike Rabe, Ryan Reker, Ron Reynolds, Greg Soulliere, and John Tirpak.

**Happy Holidays to You All!**



**Mike Brasher, a Ducks Unlimited employee, is the Gulf Coast Joint Venture's Science Coordinator and is stationed at Lafayette, Louisiana.**



**Excerpts from: The Future of Waterfowl Management Workshop: Framing Future Decisions for Linking Harvest, Habitat, and Human Dimensions**

The Future of Waterfowl Management Workshop was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota on August 26-28, 2008. The workshop was an important step in the evolution of waterfowl management in North America. Throughout its history, the waterfowl management community has shown great capacity for innovative thinking and action in the interest of improving waterfowl management according to specific objectives, as demonstrated by creation of the Flyway Councils, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM), and the National Duck Hunter Survey.

The Workshop marks yet another key point in the continuing development of a scientifically-based and socially-responsive management framework. Conducting this workshop (or a “policy summit”) was one of six specific recommendations for improving waterfowl management in the 2007 Joint Task Group Report *Clarifying North American Waterfowl Management Plan Population Objectives and their Use in Harvest Management*.

<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/reports/ahm07/Final%20Report%20of%20the%20Joint%20Task%20Group.pdf>

The need to develop such improvements had been identified previously in documents such as the NAWMP *Continental Assessment Report*

<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP/files/FinalAssessmentReport.pdf>

and the IAFWA *Adaptive Harvest Management Task Force Report*.

<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/mgmt/AHM/taskforce/AHM%20TF%20Final%20Report%20draft%203-11-05%20final.pdf>





The objectives of the Workshop were that, as a result of attending the Workshop, participants would:

- Know enough about the features and workings of a coherent framework to understand how enhanced coherence could lead to increased benefits for administrators, managers, and hunters.
- Feel that they have a stake and a responsibility in the outcome, and should play a role in enhancing coherence in waterfowl management.
- Help identify and support decisions and actions necessary to advance habitat, harvest, and human dimensions components of a coherent framework.

Planning for the Workshop was overseen by a Steering Committee composed of administrative and technical experts in waterfowl management and conservation. The Committee consulted with the broader waterfowl management community and incorporated suggestions and addressed concerns to ensure its recommendations for the Workshop had broad support.

Prior to the workshop, a website was setup (<http://www.djcase.com/futureworkshop/>) to share information and background materials with participants, and a Web-based survey of pre-registrants was used to solicit feedback and help inform refinement of meeting objectives and the final agenda.

In total, 192 attendees represented a cross-section of waterfowl management administrators, technicians, scientists, and stakeholders attended. The National Flyway Council, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies sponsored the Workshop. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. served as the Workshop's host, coordinating the registration process and providing on-site logistics management. DJ Case and Associates provided facilitation and recording for the Workshop, including moderating the introductory presentations, facilitating full group discussions and overseeing breakout groups.

The Workshop, which consisted of both plenary and facilitated breakout sessions, was designed to help achieve pre-established objectives and to maximize participation by all attendees. Overall, 80 percent of attendees felt the Workshop met the objectives set forth at the outset.

The term "Coherent framework" refers to a structured approach for making waterfowl management decisions that integrates current scientific understanding of waterfowl population dynamics, the collective ability to provide suitable habitats, and consideration of human dimensions elements such as hunter participation and satisfaction.

Such a framework would require identification of meaningful, measurable objectives that connect goals for habitat conservation, harvest management, and stakeholder support and help the waterfowl management community use human and financial resources as efficiently as possible.

The Workshop was intended to improve the "status quo" approach of making disjunctive decisions on harvest regulations, habitat conservation strategies, and hunter retention and recruitment in the face of current trends and issues including:

- Declining waterfowl hunting participation
- High commodity prices, loss of CRP acres and potential reduction in waterfowl production
- Continuing fragmentation, degradation, and loss of wetlands and grasslands
- Long-term effects of climate change and near-term effect of energy development
- Imperatives for efficient and cost-effective conservation investments
- Growing monitoring requirements and limited budgets
- Proliferating single-species harvest management strategies, e.g. scaup, pintails, western mallards

The Workshop was not designed to resolve all of these issues; however, it was hoped that consensus achieved at the Workshop would set the course for creative work in waterfowl management for the next several years.





The NAWMP update should be used to develop more coherent goals for waterfowl harvest and habitat management. (88 percent agreed or strongly agreed.)

At the conclusion of the Workshop, a significant majority of participants agreed that two key recommendations born in Workshop discussions should be pursued as immediate next steps:

A group or venue be created to continue the work of the Human Dimensions Working Group (94 percent agreed or strongly agreed)

In the weeks following the Workshop, DJ Case and Associates and the Workshop Steering Committee worked to prepare this final report, including recommendations on how to move forward on the two major issues identified above by a large majority of Workshop participants. It is important to note that the specific actions and tasks below are the recommendations of the Steering Committee alone. They are, however, based generally on ideas and discussions from the Workshop as captured in the breakout session notes, TurningPoint results, and memories of the Steering Committee members.

To move forward with the next major NAWMP update, the Plan Committee (or a Plan Committee sponsored work group) should serve as a focal point for gathering, vetting and synthesizing ideas from throughout the waterfowl management community on the content of the update. The Committee will need to consider a wide range of expertise and institutional affiliations and individuals with technical expertise and experience in policy and administration will be required. Clearly, the Committee will need the ability to liaise with core elements of the waterfowl management community across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

The initial task should be a scoping process to accomplish four things:

- Review existing technical information
- Consult with the NSST, Adaptive Harvest Management Working Group (AHMWG), and the Human Dimensions Working Group (HDWG)
- Identify additional technical work and resources needed to advance coherent waterfowl management modeling frameworks.

Collectively, this information should serve as keystones for the 2010 update.

Propose a process for consulting with stakeholders on a still-to-be-determined suite of alternative waterfowl management objectives that will be developed during the 2010 update process. This proposal will be subject to and take into account the country-specific requirements of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Propose an approach for reviewing existing waterfowl management processes and institutions, in light of Workshop results, to generate a new unified framework during the update.

Develop a work plan and schedule for completion of the 2010 update.

To assure the necessary and appropriate consideration of human dimensions elements in a unified framework, capacity for survey, assessment, and modeling of social attitudes related to waterfowl hunting and habitat conservation must be expanded. Progress to date, including the work of the Strategy Team for Waterfowl Hunter Recruitment and Retention

<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/reports/ahm04/Think%20Tank%20Final%20Report%20FINAL%205-21-04.pdf>

and the National Duck Hunter Survey

<http://ducksurvey.com/>

has provided initial results that identify important factors for consideration. Further work is needed to develop reliable metrics of hunter participation, satisfaction, and other elements of social support for harvest and habitat management that can be integrated with population and habitat data to support coherent goals for waterfowl management. The HDWG should be expanded to include the additional expertise necessary for an expanded focus in support of a unified framework.

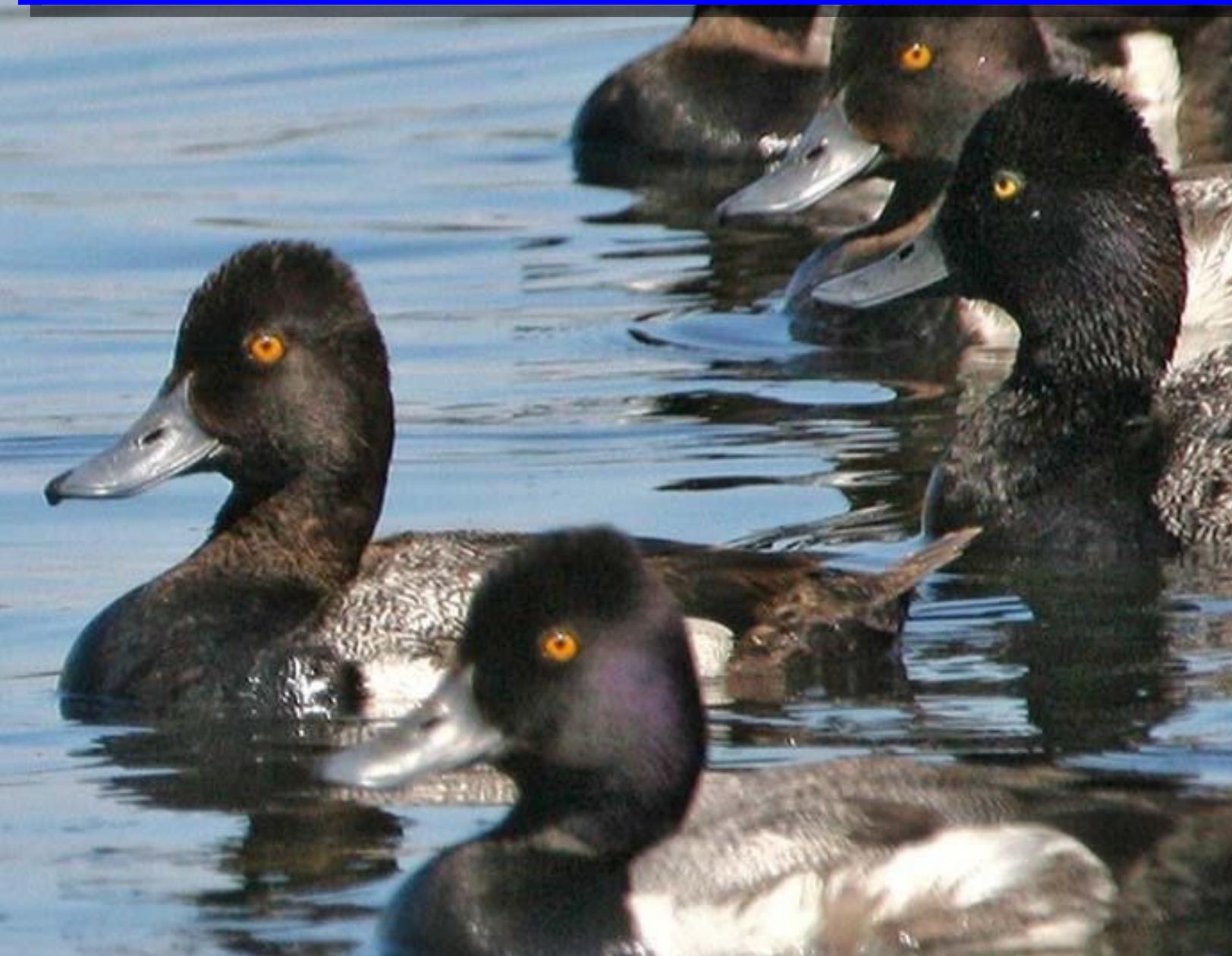




# North American Waterfowl Management Plan

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**Science Support Team**



**The NAWMP Science Support Team's mission:**  
*To help strengthen the biological foundations of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and facilitate continuous improvement of Plan conservation programs.*