



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### U.S., CANADA MARK PROGRESS ON EFFORTS TO RESCUE DECLINING WATERFOWL

With wild ducks facing another year of drought on vital breeding areas, the U.S. and Canada are moving ahead rapidly with a continent-wide effort to rescue declining waterfowl and save key habitats.

"We are making progress toward putting the North American Waterfowl Management Plan into effect," said Frank Dunkle, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which leads Federal participation in the international plan.

"Habitat conservation projects are under way in six areas of the United States and in Canada. People have been assigned to direct and coordinate these projects, some money has been raised, and we have signed a new waterfowl conservation agreement with Mexico."

Accomplishments under the North American Plan so far include:

- o Establishment of six "joint ventures" in important waterfowl habitat areas of the United States. These joint ventures are combined efforts by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state

Service, state wildlife agencies, private hunting and conservation organizations, and others. The six U.S. joint ventures are aimed at preserving and restoring habitat in California's Central Valley, the prairie pothole region, the Gulf Coast, the Lower Mississippi Valley, the Atlantic Coast, and the Lower Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin region. Specific project proposals are being developed for each joint venture. Congress appropriated \$6 million to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for FY 1988 to get the joint ventures started.

- o Initiation of four joint ventures in Canada. The Canadian Prairie Habitat Joint Venture and the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture will focus on conserving and restoring important waterfowl nesting and migration habitat, while two other joint ventures, for Arctic geese and black ducks, will involve significant research and monitoring efforts.

- o The pending transfer to Canada of the first U.S. funds raised for the "First Step Project" of habitat restoration in the Quill Lakes region of Saskatchewan and important waterfowl breeding areas of Alberta and eastern Canada. The "First Step Project" evolved as a matching grant effort to demonstrate the good faith of the United States toward funding projects in Canada. In an unprecedented move, 12 U.S. states contributed from \$50,000 to \$150,000 each towards this project. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. matched this \$1 million. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a private organization established by

Foundation, a private organization established by Congress, is providing \$2 million in matching funds, making a total of \$4 million in U.S. dollars available for Canadian projects, and coordinated transfer of the funds to Canada. The Canadian Government is providing another \$4 million in matching funds, bringing the total available to \$8 million (\$10 million Canadian dollars). A committee of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, chaired by Gary Myers, executive director of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, was instrumental in encouraging the state participation. The contributing states are New York, New Jersey, South Carolina, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, Oregon, and California.

- o Signing on March 16 of the first trilateral agreement for waterfowl conservation among the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The new memorandum of understanding will contribute to the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan by improving conservation of waterfowl wintering in Mexico.

- o Appointments of key U.S. staff to the organization that will implement the North American Plan. Harvey Nelson, a career waterfowl biologist and Fish and Wildlife Service employee, has been named executive director for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in the U.S. and has a seven-person staff headquartered in Minneapolis. Project coordinators have been named for the six joint ventures.

- o Formation in late April of a U.S. Implementation Board for the North American Waterfowl Management plan. The Implementation Board is a group of private organizations that have agreed to work toward putting the plan into effect. Members currently include the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Wildlife Management Institute, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., The Nature Conservancy, the Izaak Walton League, the National Audubon Society, the North American Wildlife Foundation, the National Rifle Association, the Berry Brooks Foundation, the National

Izaak Walton League, the National Audubon Society, the North American Wildlife Foundation, the National Rifle Association, the Berry Brooks Foundation, the National Association of Conservation Districts, the National Wildlife Federation, the American Forest Foundation, and The Wildlife Society.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan was signed in May 1986 by Secretary of the Interior Don Hodel and Canadian Environment Minister Thomas McMillan. The plan outlines international cooperation needed to restore waterfowl populations to the levels of the 1970's and to preserve key habitats.

Numbers of important duck species have declined dramatically during the 1980's. Prolonged drought and intensive farming practices in prairie nesting areas and continued destruction of wetlands throughout the continent have contributed to the decline.

As the North American Plan has taken shape, according to Dunkle, it has become increasingly clear that waterfowl conservation efforts must go beyond traditional government approaches.

"A great deal of important waterfowl habitat is privately owned, and there is no way government agencies can acquire all the habitat needed to preserve birds that use much of our continent during their life cycles," Dunkle said. "Consequently a major focus of our effort must be to work more effectively with private landowners to conserve and restore waterfowl habitat on their lands.

"To do this, we will be making full use of the conservation provisions of various agricultural programs, as well as trying to devise new incentives that will make raising ducks as attractive as other land uses," Dunkle said.

"We also have a challenge ahead of us in showing people that what is good for ducks is also good for songbirds, shorebirds, endangered species, and our sport and commercial fisheries.

"We need the help of sportsmen across the country to support the joint ventures here and in Canada and to spread the word about the North American Plan to their hunting and non-hunting friends.

"The North American Plan can dramatically improve prospects for our waterfowl and other fish and wildlife resources in the 21st century," Dunkle concludes. "We need everyone's help now, because we may not get another chance."