



NEWS

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PRESIDENT CLINTON FORMALLY SUBMITS MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY AMENDMENTS TO SENATE FOR RATIFICATION

President Clinton has formally submitted amendments to the U.S.-Canada Migratory Bird Convention to the U.S. Senate for the "advice and consent" required under the Constitution before ratification.

The amendments, signed by the United States and Canada last December, would provide fairness in the regulation of waterfowl harvests to Alaskan natives and Canada's Aboriginal peoples and improve the management of birds that migrate between the two countries.

Clinton said the amendments to the Convention "should further enhance the management and protection of this important resource for the benefit of all users. The amendments to the Migratory Bird Convention correct an oversight in the Convention, originally signed in 1916 and among the world's first international wildlife conservation treaties.

In barring migratory bird hunting between March 10 and September 1, the original treaty failed to recognize the traditional harvests of migratory birds by northern peoples during the spring and summer months. These harvests have gone on unabated for centuries and continue to this day, despite the 1916 treaty. In many cases, they are vital as a food source for northern peoples and an important part of their cultural tradition.

The amendments recognize these ongoing harvests as legal and provide a process to establish a management regime through appropriate regulations. Because no new harvests are being established, the Service expects the amendments to have little or no impact on the number of birds flying south.

Under the amendments, exchanges and data collection among the United States, Canada, and Aboriginal and indigenous peoples will be increased, expanding the scientific base for migratory bird management.

The United States and Mexico are negotiating similar amendments to the U.S.-Mexico migratory bird treaty to legalize the Alaska harvests. That convention currently prohibits the harvest of ducks between March 10 and September 1.

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Were the migratory bird convention not amended, the U.S.-Canada treaty would probably have to be abrogated because the Canadian constitution guarantees a legal harvest for Canadian aboriginal people.

This would effectively end 80 years of cooperation between the governments of Canada and the United States in managing these migratory birds. Without a Convention, management of migratory birds in Canada would revert to the Provinces. Eventually the lack of strong cooperative and coherent management at the Federal level could reduce bird populations.

While the amendments provide for a legal spring and summer harvest for some far northern peoples, the Canadian and American Federal governments can in some circumstances require restrictions on this migratory bird harvest when appropriate to do so.

In addition, the two countries will work with Aboriginal and indigenous peoples to manage their harvest of waterfowl using cooperative management bodies, an approach that has been successful with big game and other species in Canada.