

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Charles Baxter
Date of Interview: January 17, 2007
Location of Interview: NCTC
Interviewer: David Smith

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 30+
Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Joint Venture Coordinator for the Lower Mississippi Joint Venture 18+ years
Most Important Projects: Coordinator for the Lower Mississippi Joint Venture
Colleagues and Mentors: Gary Meyers, Harold Benson, Seth Mott, Steve Wilson, Scott Yakes, David Paschelly, Tim Wilkins, Umberto Berlanga
Most Important Issues: North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Joint Ventures

Brief Summary of Interview: introduction and involvement in the Joint Venture program of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan; new measures of success that looked at biological outcomes, population responses, landscape sustainability, partnerships, and focus on inventory and monitoring; pro-active conservation; continued usefulness of environmental regulations; history of Joint Ventures in general and Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Joint Venture in particular including – funding, integration w/other projects and programs, developing biological linkages between habitat objectives and population goals; relationship between National Wildlife Refuge System and the Joint Ventures; formal up-dates of the NAWMP in 1994, 1998, and 2004; changes the Joint Ventures and NAWMP have made to the larger forums of the conservation community; challenges Joint Ventures will face in next 10 to 15 years – science based conservation planning, biological objectives and goals, eco-regionalism, energy development and conservation, climate change, bio-fuels, carbon sequestration; a changed conservation target – from the resource management view of developing and designing plans and programs for more protection / restoration / management to the emerging concepts of landscape ecology, ecosystem management, conservation biology, sustainability of systems and landscapes and new standards of measurable biological outcomes and responses to / within relationships / landscapes / habitats / other activities; “passion” as the external manifestation of internal feeling responsibility for conservation and resources.

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[Tape #4, Side A](#)

[David Smith](#) -- My name is David Smith and I am here today to interview Charles Baxter, currently the Joint Venture Coordinator for the Lower Mississippi Joint Venture. He was the first one, and still the only one in that position, from the inception of that Joint Venture. And he has made major contributions to the North American Plan, both in the United States and continentally, in some special assignments dealing with up-dates and assignments with the Fish & Wildlife Service. So, what we want to talk about today, going back in the beginning, some of the things that were going on, Charles, and all the way through today. Want to capture some of your views, and thoughts, and philosophies, on what's gone on. First thing I want to ask you is: what is your first recollection of the Plan? When you first saw the Plan, and what did you see in it that made you take a second look?

[Charles Baxter](#) -- Well, when, of course, you know the document's only like 29 pages long. Not very large for us bureaucrats. And basically, when I read that document, and then re-read it, and read it some more, I saw three things that to me were pretty much a distinct departure from the past. Now I'll admit that it took me a while to be able to articulate these three things maybe in quite the way I'm going to do it now, but I nonetheless saw them. I saw them from the first time that I read it. And the first thing was this notion that the Plan seemed to be saying that success ... we were going to have new measures of success for conservation. Success was going to be measured by population responses on a continental scale. and it was going to be measured by landscape sustainability at eco-regional scales. And of course, what got ... what made me see that was the mere fact that there were population objectives in the Plan, and traditionally, conservation hasn't been driven by biological outcomes. You know, it tends to be driven by activity sort of objectives. And so I saw a new measure of success - - population response, landscape sustainability. And then I saw, of course, partnerships. I think that's what most people saw when they looked at the Plan. That somehow protection / restoration / management was going to be coordinated through formal

partnerships. And it seemed pretty clear to me that implicit in that was that, whatever this coordination was, that the whole was going to exceed the sum of the parts. That somehow we were going to have to coordinate well enough that the whole exceeds the sum of the parts. And then the third thing that I saw was related to this notion of refining those biological goals and objectives. It was the notion that the waterfowl community, in fact, I viewed it as somewhat of an admonition -- that the waterfowl community was going to focus on inventory and monitoring more than it'd done in the past. But it was going to be inventory and monitoring for the express purpose of being able to refine those biological goals and objectives. And so those three things -- new measures of success, new kinds of partnerships, new focus on inventory and monitoring -- to me that was no small departure from the past. And those were the things that I guess really got my attention as to -- this is new. This is not of the ordinary.

[David Smith](#) -- Now let me ask you Charles, what were you doing professionally when you first heard about the Plan, or read about the Plan? I'm assuming you weren't the Joint Venture Coordinator. And did any of these things affect your desire, or decision, to change? Or what was happening right in there?

[Charles Baxter](#) -- Well, I was physically located in one of those areas that the Plan identified as, you know, waterfowl areas of, not just concern, but highest concern. That being the Mississippi alluvial valley. And so I had spent the past, I don't know, six / eight years of my career, basically worrying with conservation issues in the Mississippi alluvial valley. But worrying about them from the standpoint of trying to prevent / mitigate the effects of water resource development. And so, when I saw that Plan, I basically ... I saw an opportunity to one: pursue conservation in a pro-active sense. And I had never seen that sort of opportunity before. But not just pursue conservation in a pro-active sense, but pursue it at broad spatial scales. And so I was pretty much in love with the resource issues and problems of the Mississippi alluvial valley, and along came the North American Plan. It put a circle on the map around that part of the world that I had been worrying about, and it gave me an opportunity to think about conservation at

broad scales, in a pro-active sense. And I'd worked for the Service for 15 years and had never seen that kind of opportunity before. And that got my attention.

David Smith -- Would it be an overstatement to say that the your view of ... you ... as you have described the Plan at that time, brought context to your career and conservation effort that you hadn't ... that you had not had before?

Charles Baxter -- I think that's a good way of saying it. You know in many even, though I thoroughly enjoyed my role in conservation at that point in time, it was nonetheless, dealing with the dark side of conservation. You know, the world's largest flood control drainage project, and the impacts associated therewith. And suddenly there was a new context to, you know, to exercise the things that made me enter this profession to begin with.

David Smith -- For the people that are out there, still today, fighting regulatory battles and working with our brothers and sisters in the Corps of Engineers, and whatnot, and I'm asking kind of 'white hat / black hat' regulatory, pro-active, do you have a perspective on the relationship, the interdependence, of the wetlands regulatory approach versus the pro-active approach through the Joint Venture that you have kind of split your career on?

Charles Baxter -- Well, you know, there's been a lot of talk, trying to think of some more eloquent way to say it than 'talk,' but there's been a lot of talk in the conservation community of the past few years that, well, we don't need environmental regulation, and that's the way of the past, and that's not important, etcetera, etcetera, and it's all partnerships. And I pretty much reject that. I think you have to have both. I mean, this nation is going to develop its land and water resources. Congress saw fit that we worry about that from a conservation standpoint. And I think it has to be a key part of what the conservation community worries about. But, you know, even though in the '70s we were very comfortable with environmental regulation as the solution to problems, they're still

a piece of the solution. But there are now other opportunities, other solutions, and I think the North American Plan captured some of those opportunities.

[David Smith](#) -- Okay. Could you describe when you became Joint Venture Coordinator, and some of the initial activities back, in say, the first six to 12 months of start up. What was going on? What did you have to do? What were some of the bigger challenges -- obstacles -- to overcome? How did you get funding? Just a brief outline of those.

[Charles Baxter](#) -- Of course, you're testing the memory of an old man. Some of the new Coordinators are surprised when I tell them that for the first year I was an unfunded Joint Venture. And you know, there was no federal funding. And basically the funding for my position in the first year came from Tennessee Wildlife Resources, through a Federal Aid Administrative grant. And in many respects, I've always worked for Gary Meyers, because of his leadership in bird conservation. But there was a period that he was providing the funding for a full time Fish & Wildlife Service position. And therein lies much of the strengths of the North American. It kind of prompts and supports that non-traditional thinking. But the initial impetus was on getting an Implementation Plan done. That was the initial impetus for all the Joint Ventures. And so that first couple of years was bringing the partners together, trying to do some critical thinking about what an Implementation Plan would be, how we would start to flesh out the goals and objectives. Because, particularly on the wintering grounds, the ... that little 29 page document did not have a bunch of clear, explicit objectives as to things that we were supposed to do. You know, it just pointed us in directions. You know, private lands, acquisition, increase carrying capacity on the system of state and federal management areas. And so, the first year was pretty much a traditional, opportunity based approach to conservation. But at the same time that was going on, because of those new things that I saw in the Plan and that imperative to link populations to habitat, we immediately started trying to lay the foundation for -- how are we going to move past this opportunistic approach to conservation and actually think about defining - on the ground - habitat objectives that have some kind of biological linkage to the Plans population objectives. So, kind of step one -- get that Implementation Plan done. It was done in October of 1990, which would

have been not quite two years after I became Coordinator. And then we immediately started worrying about how can we become more science based in terms of our waterfowl conservation programs.

[David Smith](#) -- Okay. Well, let me ask you Charles, from the start up and the characteristics of the Plan in the first place, and your experience ... 1988, that's almost 18 years isn't it?

[Charles Baxter](#) -- Just remarking to some other folks today, and I didn't realize it until this morning, I became Joint Venture Coordinator on January 17, 1988, ...

[David Smith](#) -- No kidding?

[Charles Baxter](#) -- ... which is 18 years ago today.

[David Smith](#) -- Well, congratulations.

[Charles Baxter](#) -- So, that was ... anyway ...

[David Smith](#) -- So, you've come of age?

[Charles Baxter](#) -- Only old men relate to those kinds of things.

[David Smith](#) -- You've come of age? You're an adult now and you can sign your own contracts.

[Charles Baxter](#) -- There you go.

[David Smith](#) -- And cut you free. That's super. What, given today, 18 years later, what's your vision as to the role of Joint Ventures, and what they're supposed to do - as far as implementing the North American Plan?

Charles Baxter -- Well, that question pretty much captures the essence of the challenge that I think faced any new Joint Venture Coordinator. It's, you know, what is my responsibilities to the implementation of the Plan? What is this partnerships responsibilities to the implementation of the Plan? And we define those responsibilities that they're basically a function of those new things that we saw in the Plan. In other words, how

End Tape #4, Side A

Begin Tape #4, Side B

Charles Baxter -- I felt it was the responsibility of the partnership to create that biological linkage between on-the-ground objectives, habitat objectives and population goals. I viewed that as part of what I was paid to do and what this partnership that I was coordinating was intended to do. The Plan talked about sustainable landscapes. And so I said 'well, we have to have some way of characterizing the landscape sustainability.' And so that's ... that imperative, or that need, has driven much of what we've done -- and is the answer to why we've done it. We have in-kind inventory and monitoring programs. And so, you know, we had to start thinking about -- well, you know, how do you go about monitoring increases in carrying capacity across a 24 million acre eco-region? And then much of what affected my thinking, and to some extent this is one of the early impediments to the Plan, is there was a tendency among everybody -- all the partners to some extent -- inside the Service in particular -- to see the Plan as a program. And when I saw those new things in the Plan, in my mind this was not a government program. I mean, the mere concept of Joint Ventures says we're going to take what we're doing right now, as a private / state / federal community, and were going to coordinate it better, and were going focus it better, and were going to leverage it better. And so that told me, you know, you don't sit around waiting on new money to show up. You start figuring out what can you do with the considerable resources that the conservation community has right now, and focus it, and leverage it. And that drove

much of my thinking as a Coordinator, on the need to establish a strong biological foundation for what we were doing, in order to get more out of our existing resources.

David Smith -- Okay. And that would characterize the role of a Joint Venture, then and now. Let me ask you, going back to your Joint Venture the Lower Miss. in particular, you've mentioned at least one person already, can you name some of the individuals who've really made a significant contribution to the Joint Venture? You've already mentioned Gary Meyers, for example. We just want to capture ... there **[indecipherable]**

Charles Baxter -- And of course those are dangerous questions because I'll leave out lots of ... I'll leave out some. But certainly Gary Meyers. Gary does not think like a normal person. **[Laughter]** Praise the Lord. And so Gary was always pushing us and pushing the envelope. More personal would have been Harold Benson. In that my immediate supervisor, who was Harold Benson, Harold had a personal interest in the success of the North American Plan. And his management style was such that he came to basically every meeting that the Joint Venture had. And many of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture's as well. And so I always had a supervisor that understood what I was doing, even though it wasn't real clear what I was doing and what I needed to do. And ... but there was great comfort in having somebody up the chain of command that had a clear sense of what you were doing. And the problems that you were dealing with. And you know and then there's just the cast of characters in that part of the world. You know, there was the **Babcock's**, and Steve **Wilsons**, and Scott **Yakes**. And later on, when we started dealing with other birds, you know, David **Paschelly**. And we had some innovative Refuge Managers, in terms of helping us move towards private lands programs. Tim **Wilkins** at Yazoo, or what's now Theodore Roosevelt in particular. And then I had an excellent Assistant Coordinator that, you know, somewhat ... that being Seth **Mott**. And Seth provided a great deal of stability and focus and direction that my mind would have just overlooked, or not found.

David Smith -- Appreciate that. You mentioned Refuges, and at least one Manager. What has been the relationship between the National Wildlife Refuge System and the Joint Venture in your part of the world? That varies around the country.

Charles Baxter -- You weren't supposed to ask that question. It has been schizophrenic, in that on one hand you could point to a lot of strong support when we first started worrying about how to step down North American population goals to on-the-ground habitat objectives. Lot of Refuge Managers were involved, and some of them were supportive. And those that weren't supportive, at least weren't fighting it. But then, you know, pretty early on in the life of the North American Plan, the Service went into the ecosystem approach. And in many respects, that diverted a lot of energy away from the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, internal to the Service. Didn't divert any energy among the partners. But it diverted much energy inside the Service. And, as strange as it may seem, made pursuing an ecological approach to waterfowl conservation -- probably a little more difficult than it would have otherwise been, just because there was a period of time there that we were very inward focused, as an agency, in terms of eco-system management, and what is it, and how do we do it.

David Smith -- So that slowed things down.

Charles Baxter -- It really did.

David Smith -- Let me ask you this Charles, you've been part of the Plan through each of its formal up-dates. There've been three -- 1994, '98, and 2004. And, in fact, in 1998 you were part of a team that was pulled together to help formulate that one over what - a year, 18 months. How have these up-dates shaped the Plan, the larger conservation community, and I also want to ask -- shape your views of conservation? A three part question.

Charles Baxter -- Okay. To me, one of the several geniuses of the Plan was the mere fact that it called for up-dates. And I say 'the mere fact.' In calling for up-dates, the Plan was

basically a precursor to adaptive management. I mean, it said 'we don't know exactly what the population goals, we don't know exactly what the habitat objectives are, and we've got to get better, as time goes on.' But beyond that, if you go back and look at those three up-dates, in 1994 the issue was 'is this going to continue to be the North American Waterfowl Plan or is it going to be the North American Wetlands Plan?' And there was strong impetus, in many quarters, to make it a 'Wetlands Plan,' in that it would be more broadly appealing, etcetera, etcetera, focuses on habitat, etcetera. And I was adamantly opposed to making the Waterfowl Plan a Wetland Plan. And the reason I was goes back to one of those three strengths that I saw in the initial Plan -- that being that the Plan focused on measurable biological outcomes, in terms of population response and sustainability. And if we had went to a Wetlands Plan we would have went away from what ... we would have lost much of the imperative to strengthen the biological basis of waterfowl conservation as a means of conserving wetlands. And so in '94, that was the issue. It got resolved in the way I hoped it would. Nineteen ninety-eight ... to me the benefit of that up-date, you know, by then Partners In Flight had come along, other aspects of the bird conservation community were trying to replicate the success of the Plan, and the issue was in the greater bird conservation. And how do we meld and mesh non-game conservation with game conservation. And of course, as you well remember, the '98 up-date created the forum for discussions resolving that issue. And it was a pretty intense forum on occasion. But taking the Plan through that formal 1998 up-date gave us the forum, and the opportunity as a conservation community, to think about integrating game and non-game bird conservation, in ways that we otherwise wouldn't have thought about it. And again, you know, we didn't dilute the Plan. We stayed focused on waterfowl. But as a Waterfowl Plan, we said, you know, we have to reach out to these other emerging bird conservation initiatives. Joint Ventures were going to be the vehicle for integrating. Two thousand four -- that focus was basically back on the science. You know, the biological foundation for the Plan. It's what led us to the North American Plan Assessment. And if there's been anything that has been ... I don't know of anything that's been more healthy for the Plan than going through the up-dates. And then specifically, that Plan Assessment that the Plan Committee set in motion. And so, it's forced us to rethink what we were doing; why we were doing it. It's forced us to rethink

our relationship within the larger bird conservation community. And, as a result, I think it's helped us stay young. And it's helped us stay vibrant. Its helped old men like me stay a little younger than maybe I already would. Probably you too.

[David Smith](#) -- Okay. So up-dates. Let me ask a follow up, you mentioned this Continental Assessment that's just now wrapping up. How do you feel ... if the bottom line is that acknowledges that for 20 years the Waterfowl Plan has put millions of acres on the ground protected, restored, we've done a reasonable effort of counting those acres, and a good job counting dollars, yet, for all that, we can't come up with a cause and effect relationship to how that work ... to what it has benefited waterfowl in the continent, if at all, if directly? how do you personally feel about that, having invested nearly 20 years, nearly two decades, half of your career, at least, in this, and still not certain about the scientific contrib. ... the scientific being able to document the contribution of all that work? How do you put that in perspective?

[Charles Baxter](#) -- In a ... from a selfish standpoint, I tend not to worry about it too much, because in the Mississippi alluvial valley, where we have put a strong emphasis on science, we are in a reasonably good position to answer those questions. But we're not continentally. That doesn't bother me if -- if and only if -- we, the waterfowl conservation community, will start to think more critically about why that is. And here, you know, I have so many subjects, some pretty strong opinions as to why. And my opinion would basically be this -- that Plan was at least 20 years ahead of its time when it, basically, created those new measures of success. Gave us biological measures of success. Population response. Landscape sustainability. It was 20 years ahead of its time, because it doesn't matter whether you're a federal wildlife agency, a state wildlife agency, or NGO, we don't operate under business models that allow us to deal with measurable biological outcomes. We don't take that approach to conservation. And my hope is that, out of the Plan Assessment, out of the realization that we don't know near as much as we should, that there will be some more critical thinking as to, you know, what is the business model that we need to be operating under, that will take us further down the road on doing good biological planning, establishing goals and objectives, that reflect

measurable outcomes, testing assumptions, refining our science, etcetera, etcetera. If it leads to that -- it'll be good and it'll be healthy. If it just leads to us throwing up our hands, or the cynics saying "naa naa, naa naa naa, I told you so" then, you know, nothing good will come out of that.

David Smith -- Let me ask about the other side of the same coin. Notwithstanding the accountability framework -biological accountability framework - and where we are, understanding we're making a lot of progress, most people in the conservation community would say the North American Plan has been an unparalleled success. To the extent many people are trying to emulate it -- whether it's a fish habitat initiative, or other bird organizations, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, or Riparian Joint Venture in the West. So I want to ask you a question. What do you see has been the primary contribution of the Plan to the larger conservation community?

Charles Baxter -- To some extent it has been as simple as the Plan has engendered a culture of partnerships that otherwise probably wouldn't have existed, and it has create ... I don't know how to say it other than a culture of partnerships. It has created a partnership culture within the conservation community that otherwise wouldn't be there. But, however, I think that the most enduring legacy of the Plan is going to go back to those concepts of population based approaches to conservation. The concept of sustainability as our target. And that those two concepts have been reiterated, and reinforced, and underscored, in all of those subsequent bird conservation plans -- in Partners In Flight, in the Shore Bird Plan, in the Northern [\[indecipherable\]](#) Conservation Initiative, etcetera. and so I think that the most long lasting contribution of the Plan is not going to be in partnerships, it's going to be in - when we look back and say, when did this paradigm shift start? This paradigm shift that made us think about measurable biological outcomes? That made us think more adaptively? When did it start? And I'm going to say it started May 14, 1986.

David Smith -- That's good. Well, a follow up ... one of our colleagues from Mexico who you know well, once said that the North American Bird Conservation initiative,

NABC for short, was spawned out of that whole 1998 up-date process that you participated in -- Umberto **Berlanga**, that was his view. Certainly from a Mexican perspective, it seem[ed] [to] stimulate discussion on bird conservation in Mexico like nothing else had. Do you think there's any validity to that observation north of Mexico? In the US or Canada or across the continent?

Charles Baxter -- I was remarking to Bob Streeter, at lunch, a while ago, that these bird plans that have come subsequent to the North American Plan, and that have subsequently coalesced as NABC, I think those plans have helped keep the North American Plan younger and more vibrant than it otherwise would have been. And I think those plans have helped bring non-game conservation more into the realm of that we grew up in, of game conservation, where, you know, it's populations, it's habitat, etcetera, etcetera. I remember Scott **Yakes** saying, once upon a time, when we were in some of those NABC discussions that you're talking about, that before Partners In Flight came along, non-game bird conservation was nature trails and backyard wildlife. And that's not what it is anymore. It's habitat. And it's putting habitat on the ground. And it's increasing productivity. And it's engendering population responses. Etcetera, etcetera. And so I think each and every one of those initiatives that have come subsequent to the Plan have kept the Plan young, have kept us more vibrant, and have made bird conservation stronger. And so, yes, I would agree with Umberto's ... I think Umberto's assessment could certainly be applied to our side of the border.

David Smith -- Thank you. What are some of the principle challenges that Joint Ventures will need to address in the next ten to 15 years? Lower Miss. and other Joint Ventures, the collective.

Charles Baxter -- When I think of Lower Miss., and I think this challenge will pretty much apply to most other Joint Ventures, if not all other Joint Ventures, the challenge is going to be how well we can integrate conservation planning -- science based conservation planning. Not just how can we integrate waterfowl with other birds. It's going to be, how can we integrate bird conservation planning with state wildlife

conservation planning, and those processes that, each of those 50 states, just went through. Because the situation I've seen in my part of the world, and in talking with Joint Venture Coordinators in some other parts of the world, many of those state partners that now have their state wildlife conservation plans laying in front of them, they are seeing a need to think about implementation on a eco-regional scale -- not just of their state boundaries. They have seen a need to focus on monitoring and evaluation, and improve the science. And so, we've ... I think our biggest challenge is going to be how we integrate with those state wildlife conservation plans.

[David Smith](#) -- And that's going to happen all over this country, at least.

[Charles Baxter](#) -- It's going happen in all 50 states, and some number of territories.

[David Smith](#) -- Let me ask you another question about the next ten to 15 years. It's been observed by some people that while the waterfowl community has some expertise in, and a good track record in, influencing many agriculture practices and USDA programs, and your Joint Venture, in particular, has done cutting edge work on carbon sequestration, including establishing the ground rules for credits and species that might be counted toward credits, and some of the ground rules, what do you think would be a role for Joint Ventures here in the next ten to 15 years, with issues related to energy, bio-fuels, climate, climate change, transportation -- some of these issues that may completely overwhelm all our direct conservation programs? Do you think Joint Ventures are going to have a role in that? And if so, what might that role be?

[Charles Baxter](#) -- You going to ask [an] easy question, before we get through?

[\[Laughter.\]](#) Okay, on one hand our role ... all those pressures are going to intensify the need for the bird conservation community, for the waterfowl conservation community, to be able to articulate what a sustainable landscape is. And what our biological goals and objectives are. Because, you know, many times, we in the conservation community, will throw out the words of 'sustainable development' or 'landscape sustainability' pretty quickly and not think about the fact, well, who's job is it to define 'landscape

sustainability'? And I submit it's our job. And if we don't define it -- it won't get done. And so, all of these pressures that you were rattling off there, to me, are going to make it more an imperative that we be able to define 'sustainable landscapes,' and predict, and characterize, and assess, 'sustainability' at any point in time, to the best extent our science - at that point in time, will allow us to do it. We've got to be able to do that. And if we can't do it, then it's just going to be like me in the old days -- fighting the corps of engineers. It's going to be a losing battle. The second thing would be, you know, the conservation community has done a pretty good job of dealing with agricultural policies. You know, by no means a perfect job, but a pretty good job. And on one hand, we can pat ourselves on the back and be proud, but now it's energy development in the Peance Basin to the Intermountain West; it's carbon sequestration everywhere. And so, we're going to have to enter some of those policy arenas that were not used to.

[David Smith](#) -- In five more years I'm going to come back and ask you how to design and evaluate policy initiatives. But we won't do that today. But you should be thinking about that. Let me ask, what advice would you have to the next generation of Joint Venture Coordinators, managers, staff? The core people that you just laid out are going to have to build this landscape vision and communicate it to people that are influencing these landscapes? What would you tell them?

[Charles Baxter](#) -- It's so simple that it's nearly hard to understand. I tell them first, this the conservation target has changed. And what I mean by that, my generation was educated in resource management. You know, we were wildlifers, foresters, rain scientists, agronomists, etcetera, etcetera. Our conservation target was always, basically, more. More protection. More restoration. More management. And the emerging concepts of landscape ecology, ecosystem management, conservation biology, are basically telling us that the target is now sustainability of systems. And that target has been highly institutionalized within our bird conservation world. And, again, it began with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The target is landscapes capable of sustaining priority species, range-wide, at prescribed levels. And that target is going to force different business models. It's going to force different thinking in terms of

monitoring and evaluation. It's going to force different thinking in terms of how we specify our goals and objectives. It can't be -- buy two hundred thousand acres of bottomland hardwoods, anymore. Or restore X acres of marsh. We're operating under a new target. And the generation of conservationists that are coming out of schools right now are being educated just that way. And so, they've got to remember their education. Those of us that are still around, we've got to remember that the targets changing. I don't know how to say it other than that.

David Smith -- Thank you. We're winding down here. Is there anything else you'd like to add Charles, that we haven't covered, that's on your mind? Heart?

Charles Baxter -- I'm quite sure that when the microphone is turned off, and we go back that, there'll be a thousand things that will come to me -- not a thousand. There'll be several, that'll come to my mind. I can't think of it right now. It's, you know, in many respects, we speak often of the "passion" that we feel for this -- for our chosen discipline. But I've always believed it's ... the passion is just the external manifestation of something that's deeper. And what's deeper is the burden. We were given a burden for conservation. and so, much of the joys and pleasures of this job is being able to work with people that feel that burden, and that share that burden, in carrying it.

David Smith -- It's a lot easier to carry a burden with somebody else than by yourself.

Charles Baxter -- Isn't that the truth. And beyond that, I'm going to miss you.

David Smith -- Well, congratulations on 18 years today, Charles.

Charles Baxter -- Thank you.

David Smith -- I've enjoyed it. Thank you

Charles Baxter -- I have too.

David Smith -- And let's cut it right there.

Charles Baxter -- There you go.