National Heritage Team of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Oral History Program
Subject: North American Waterfowl Management Plan Panel Discussion
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Interviewed by: John Cornely

John Cornely: Good afternoon. This is John Cornely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Heritage Committee, and we're continuing a series of panel discussions around the history of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

This particular discussion is taking place on April 4, 2011, in the Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex Office. And we're here, we're concentrating pretty much on the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture and it's various versions through the years. So we have Dick Dyer with us, who was the first coordinator of the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture. We have Ray Whittemore, who worked with Dick, and is now with Ducks Unlimited. And we have Dave Sharp, who was a member of the original North American [Waterfowl Management] Plan Office staff. Dave was the population specialist, worked for our mentor and friend Harvey Nelson and Bob Streeter, who was Harvey's deputy at the time.

So we're going to talk a little bit in general about the relationships and coordination between the Plan Office, which started out in Minneapolis and later was moved to Washington, D.C. We've had some discussions and interviews up to this point where we're talking more about the individual Joint Ventures. Now we're going to start off with Dave and have him talk a little about the Plan Office and how it coordinated with the various Joint Ventures. And I think today Dave will especially talk about the original five, and give us you're thoughts and recollections of the early days. And if you would like, you can go back a little bit, you know, earlier in the office before maybe the Joint Ventures were up and running and what was happening here at the National [Plan Office].

Dave Sharp: The North American Plan, as it was signed in 1986, was indeed a monumental time in terms of North America and the future of management of waterfowl populations. It came at a time when waterfowl populations were stressed across all of North America. Populations levels were indeed not only lower than they had been in the past, but had shown long-term declines. And there was actually a belief and a thought among many people in America that populations could never respond to any kind of actions that could be taken place in their behalf, and it was going to take something very special to have these populations recover.

As such, I think it was the impetus for the signing of the plan in 1986. And indeed, it was quite a different a plan in that it was international in scope, it covered the entire annual cycle of birds breeding, migration, and wintering. And more importantly, it was a blueprint, a focus, a place that we could work together as Americans across the continent, in various places, in various times, all doing our individual small parts to help the collective better of good of the waterfowl resource. The whole idea of being able to

make something like this even become accomplishable was going to require an approach that was quite different.

The approach that was undertaken was a continental plan that was very large in scope, but would be implemented at the ground level through a concept that we call Joint Ventures. And from that standpoint, the plan was very different than anything else that had ever been undertaken.

When the plan was signed in 1986, it was very political at that point. It was a negotiation between, at that point, two countries. A year later a third country, Mexico, was brought into the mix. But at that point, two countries and conservation agencies and people interested across all of North America.

So, the challenge before us was indeed very difficult. The U.S. office, as John just described, was formed and shortly after the signing of the plan the first executive director in the United States was selected, that was Harvey Nelson. There was a Canadian office and a director also established at the exact same time. And my focus will be on the U.S. office and basically the U.S. Joint Ventures that came about after that.

I was originally hired in March of 1987. Prior to that I had worked with Harvey in the U.S. office as a part of the Office of Migratory Bird Management in the later part of 1986. However, in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at that point there was no budget and until Harvey came on, there was no staff. Harvey was the first staff member that was actually in place.

In March of 1987, even though there was no budget at that point, there was the first initial meeting of folks in Minneapolis to say, "Okay, how are we going to take off in terms of implementation?" And that's where the concept of Joint Ventures came about, and that's where we all began to talk about how we would "stand these ventures up," help them get a start in terms of bringing things together. Harvey's job was to work with the director of the Fish and Wildlife Service in terms of trying to find dollars to get some initial coordinators hired. There was not budgets. And quite frankly, our director at that point simply reprogrammed money to begin the process, advertising for the Joint Ventures. John, you talked about the number at that point, the first five Joint Ventures that it was decided that we would actually work very strongly to try to get up and running. We would need a coordinator for each one of those, there ultimately could be some staff that would be associated with that. But quite frankly, the only part of that, that the Fish and Wildlife Service was going to be able to support were those five coordinators.

In October of 1987, the first dollars came down, in terms of a budget, for the Fish and Wildlife Service. And that budget included money to each of our partnered regional offices for those five Joint Ventures and some money for operating expenses for those five coordinators and the funding for the U.S. Office at that point, and the U.S. Office was essentially four. Harvey Nelson was the executive director, Bob Streeter was the deputy, I was the population specialist, and Carl Madsen was the habitat specialist.

So, at that point John, we started the staff for the U.S. Office. What our primary role was, at that point, was staff for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee, which was international in scope. There were two implementations offices, one in Canada and one in the United States, and I worked in the United States of that particular office.

So the regional offices were going to take, without question, the total weight for putting in place the partner regions for these initial five Joint Ventures, and it very quickly began to morph; it went to six, went to seven, went to eight. I don't know what the number is today, but I think it numbers nearly 30 or so. But the bottom line, this was the initial phase and this was the feeling that where we could start.

Canada, a little different story; two Habitat Joint Ventures in Canada were the primary start. Again, they have increased in number up there. At the same time, we wanted to launch efforts into two species Joint Ventures; the Arctic Goose and the Black Duck Joint Venture.

So our role in the U.S. office part was to focus in on helping empower these Joint Ventures. To build plans, to put together management awards, to give some "general guidelines" and how we thought they could maybe begin to take this work on. However, each Joint Venture was going to have a life of its own, it was going to depend upon the partners and the partnerships that were being built out there in the field. So all of them were going to be somewhat different, and that was fine, no one cared as long as they worked.

So that's basically how we got started and where we went at that point.

As the Joint Ventures coordinators came on, our office basically functioned only long enough to give them enough guidance and support, so someone they could look to if they had questions. But our job was never to get in the way of those Joint Ventures, but rather to empower, work through our regional office staff to make sure the Fish and Wildlife Service had a role. But those Joint Ventures were not Fish and Wildlife Service Joint Ventures. They were Joint Ventures of our partners that were out there. So our role was very minimal once the Joint Ventures got started.

John Cornely: So the budget that you talked about that came down through the regions was the reprogramming of funds from wherever initially.

Dave Sharp: Until 1987, that's correct.

John Cornely: I will ask Dick and then, in turn, Ray, talked a little about this one in individual interviews that we have done, but to just follow up with that and, you know, from the Joint Venture coordinator and assistant coordinator role, how you interacted and what did you ask of the Plan Office certain things? Or just what was there, as Dave described, kind of facilitation of role and I guess one question, did you get what you needed from it?

Dick Dyer: I think we did, absolutely. And the key to it all was the flexibility that they provided to us. I think if it had some rigidality, if that's a word, we probably would not have been as successful. I'm a "Yankee" from the state Maine, and I can tell you what works in Maine is different from what works in South Carolina, it's different from what works from other parts of the country. And that's just our cultural values and approaches.

But we always had good support. We had points of differences also, to be quite candid. But there was no question, they were always there to support us and give us the support and flexibility that we needed. I was dumb and young when I applied for the position as Joint Venture coordinator. People said, "What's that?" We didn't know. It was sort of the seat of the pants kind of thing. The concepts were wonderful, the blueprint and the plan was wonderful. But in terms of making it happen on the ground, which was where we needed to get to, to make a difference, we were flying by the seat of our pants in many perspectives. But I was always thankful for the support and the latitude that they gave us, the flexibility. We had some discussions. I remember talking to the Plan Office with the first Joint Venture Plan we submitted; they said, "Well, that's not what we want." I said, "Well, that's going to be the way it is." Because our management boards primarily comprised of state directors and heads of agencies and organizations. They put a lot of input into it. But obviously it worked, the bottom line, and I think for that I will always be grateful.

John Cornely: Ray, do you want to follow up from that.

Ray Whittemore: I don't really have much to add to what Dick said. Actually, he had more interaction, I think, directly with the U.S. Office than I did because he was supervising me. So, I was connected basically through Dick in terms of any guidance and anything informational that was coming through that office. So, we met occasionally as a group nationally, and I always enjoyed that interaction with Harvey and Bob and the rest and David. So, from my perspective, they certainly didn't hinder us any and I think that certainly through, as Dick mentioned, they're largely supportive of what we're doing.

Dick Dyer: Well, I think also too, the group you facilitated, the Joint Ventures themselves getting together, I mean it wouldn't happen without you guys direction and support, Dave. And that was critical. Because I mean we were out there sort of on our own and "Are we doing the right thing? Are we not doing to the right thing? How do you approach this? And so we had a number of meetings with all the Joint Venture coordinators and the Plan Office folks, just talking about, "How's it going? Are we doing the right things?" Those discussions were always very fruitful and very helpful.

Dave Sharp: One of the things John is there was no cookbook. There was no document that we handed to a Joint Venture coordinator and said, "You now have the job as coordinator, here's your book. Go to page one, and by the time you're at the last page you will have it done." There was no cookbook. We were learning as we went.

One of the things that we tried to do was when things were working successfully in one area in an approach that was working, we wanted to make sure that all Joint Ventures were aware of how that worked in terms of pulling those partnerships together.

This was really important when it came to the Ag[riculture] Programs in terms of what was happening out there, because agriculture was, indeed, one of the most important limitations to the future of waterfowl and their management in North America. Not just in our country, but across the border. And what affected the birds on the prairies ultimately affected the birds in our Migration Joint Ventures and Wintering Joint Ventures.

So the birds were the connective tissue for all of our Joint Ventures across North America. It was those birds that were the connective tissue that kept us all working together as one piece. Because quite frankly, if you were in Prairie Canada you really didn't care what Dick Dyer was doing on habitat in Massachusetts, you really didn't care. But the birds did, and the birds were the connective tissue. Now you supported what they were doing in Massachusetts because maybe that was important migration or wintering habitat, but it was the bird that was the connective tissue.

My job in the office was a population specialist. So my job was to look after those birds and try to find those linkages among our Joint Ventures; breeding, migration, and wintering. To help with the birds and the annual cycle. So even though you were working on habitat in a very small part of the whole annual cycle, if you were doing your part for waterfowl, what you were basically doing is empowering and helping waterfowl that were using that piece of the world. To either go back and breed successfully, or to finish their migration if that was necessary, or to complete their wintering phase of the cycle. But the point is, the annual cycle of waterfowl was driving all of us in terms of waterfowl and what was happening.

You know, I can't emphasize enough, there was no cookbook. There was nothing that we were following to get there. We were collectively all learning together. Many things that we had to accomplish, we didn't know how to accomplish in 1986, when that plan was written. To try to take resources from the United States and direct those into a foreign country for protection of habitat. To try to enhance habitat in a foreign country was not things that we were used to doing, or even could envision how we would actually accomplish that. Those were very difficult tasks to even think about how we could possibly do that. To talk about influencing farm programs in a foreign country was also a little bit beyond where we... Wars are fought over things like that. That is not things that we normally were ready to tackle.

My point is, none of us had a cookbook, and we were about to embark on things that had never been done before. So none of us knew how to do it. I think it was daunting. I was not ever a Joint Venture coordinator as Dick and Ray were. But it would have scared me, thinking about taking on a job of which I had no clue on how I was going to absolutely accomplish those tasks that were in front of me.

Dick Dyer: But there are those of us out there that want that!

Ray Whittemore: And those are the gunslingers that came in and did, you know, because that excited people like us, you know. We didn't want the borders, you know. Let us, as professionals working with other professionals, there's a lot of other seasoned professionals out there with a great wealth of knowledge and desire to make this happen. And it did.

Dave Sharp: Yep. But also, I do have one more comment John, and it has to do with the role of the office, I do. And it has to do with the role of the office, and not so much what the office was doing but Harvey Nelson. Harvey Nelson was a member of the Directorate Team within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And as such, Harvey could help influence our regional offices in terms of, and their regional directors, in terms of the focus and the role. And I just want to say this, in with Fish and Wildlife Service, our Joint Venture coordinators knew this, they had the complete support of our director, including our regional directors, to go forward with whatever mission it was that they were going to do. Not so much that we had the resources to pull that off, but they had the full support of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service behind them. That was an important element, because that was the glue that kept our refuge people strong with our Fisheries people, strong with our ES people. Strong, so that it was the entire Fish and Wildlife Service that was going forward with the help of the implementation of the North American through our Joint Ventures. That was so very important down the road.

The Fish and Wildlife Service stayed strong through the next couple years because our budgets and support for our regional offices did not go away, did not stabilize, but actually increased each and every year as we strengthened, as we took on more Joint Ventures. So that strength within the Service, I think, was very important. And Harvey, because he was a member of Directorate Team, I think helped pull that off.

John Cornely: Well it's interesting, because this is, we've talked a lot about one of the reasons Joint Ventures were successful is that because they were kind of ground up and got partners that came together, but you focused in on habitat issues at a local level, and you kind of worked from that standpoint. But you're talking about, and something that we've talked about before that doesn't often work very well, is top down. You're talking about a different top down. You're talking about support from the top, you know, to go out and do something unique and, you know, a plan that hadn't really been tried or implemented before, and it's kind of like a trust thing.

Dick Dyer: The guidance that I got John was, "Go and do what you think needs to be done." And that was about it!

Dave Sharp: That's all we need to hear.

Dick Dyer: That's all, that's all you needed to hear. I've told this story, I could have gotten on a plane and gone to Hawaii for three weeks and nobody would have questioned it, I mean...

Dave Sharp: I might have!

Dick Dyer: You would have, you would have! But that's the support and flexibility that we had, and it was... I regret not going to Hawaii, but...

John Cornely: Well one of, and I would like all of you to comment on this, and I think through the years got to know all of the original coordinators. You, just now, you know today, it seemed to me that it's a pretty diverse group that you have. Folks, I've known Paul Hartman for a long time, and he was kind of like Ray, he was in that role for a relatively short period of time. But he got the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture up and running and handed it off in good shape. But you had, you know, Charles Baxter and Paul and you and I've known Jerry Johnson for quite awhile and Gary Kramer I knew, we were refuge biologists together way back. You're talking about some very different people here. Am I right?

Dick Dyer: Absolutely. But that's a reflection of America too, you know. And I think that was one of our strengths is that we had that diversity, different backgrounds we all came from. But the thing that brought us together was focusing on the resource and populations needs, what was happening in waterfowl around the country. That was the, that was the thread. The birds were the thread, but it was the passion of the individuals around the table. I think it all comes down to the personalities of those people. Without the right personality, it would not have happened. You had to have the right people in the right place at the right time and we were fortunate enough to have that occur.

Dave Sharp: I also think Dick, it was an evolution that was going on. In your first days as a joint venture coordinator, going out there without your cookbook. And you're going to try and implement this joint venture and get things rolling, from the first days that we all went to work, until the days that were later in our careers when all of us worked different lengths of time, I believe there was evolution in terms of what your roles were and how you made it work. And all of us in those very first days of the North American Plan, we had a very difficult communication challenge in front of us. We had an entire North American population that sat out there, that hadn't heard of this North American Plan. Yet we had to almost sell it. We had to go on the road, we had to talk to people, we had to explain what we were doing. And more importantly, we had to convince some of those individuals, some of those organizations, that it was important enough to come join us. Come fight with us. Come help us tackle this very issue that was out there.

I was accused of a lot of things in those early days, of being a snake oil salesman to a used car salesman, and I think there was a lot of that going on, because all of us had no choice but to go out there and explain to the world what this new program was. But more

importantly, why we needed to do it and why we could not not do it. And that one was an important time for that.

So I think our role, maybe of all our collective roles changed a little bit over time. Once we began to tell the world what this North American Plan was, from a communication standpoint, we had a real identity problem in those early days. We didn't have automatic knowledge out there in terms of what this plan was and why it was important. So we had to sell it first and then we had to figure out how to turn some soil and begin to implement it and see some progress in terms of tackling these issues. So, it changed a little bit over time.

Dick Dyer: Good point, because it was "Where are you going to have an organization within the Fish and Wildlife Service?" I think we had to do a lot of internal communication because there was a lot of... Fish and Wildlife Service is often referred to as a conglomeration of special interest groups. And we had to reach out to our own organizations and programs in many ways and get them to understand. But, you know, the plan sort of... the strategy was so well thought out, the North American Plan. What was happening to waterfowl populations, what was happening to wetlands in that country, it sort of sold itself a little bit, you know. It was an easy sell. It was enjoyable thing to do, get out and explain to people, 'this is what's happening to waterfowl in our country, we're losing wetlands, we've lost wetlands, and we need to collectively come together to turn it around.' It sort of sold itself

Dave Sharp: And what was unique in terms of that position, I thought John, was that although you were Fish and Wildlife Service representative, this was not a Fish and Wildlife Service plan. You had to, you had to be careful when you tried to educate and be passionate in speaking about this, that your own professional opinion from a Fish and Wildlife employee didn't try to lead them down a path that they didn't want to go. But, you know, it's like anything in any business, I mean any conservation group or whatever, it's all about relationships and building those relationships. And what I found out of that whole plan, and it's made my life so much richer, is the people that I met and the friends that eventually developed over that and the camaraderie that came about. Because we all were working for a common goal, and it wasn't about, "It's Fish and Wildlife Service flag or the State of New York flag," you know, it was the North American flag. And everybody rallied around that flag and it worked. It was really great to be a part of that. It's a plan that worked, and it's still working.

Dick Dyer: And the whole approach from the beginning was if we would have gone out there and said, "This is the Fish and Wildlife Service's plan, this is what we want to do, come help us do it." You had to turn that right around. "How can we help you accomplish this?" And it's an entirely different perspective on how you approach things, how you deal with people, how you develop partnerships.

And that was sort of the approach that we took, and I think it was sort of unanimous throughout the Joint Ventures, is "What can the Fish and Wildlife Service do for you"

kind of thing in terms of strategies for putting these projects together on the ground. In some cases we had a real significant role in the project, some cases we didn't, that's fine.

Dave Sharp: I think, John, one of the things, in 1986, when the plan was signed, we had been involved with Waterfowl Conservation for many years before that. And really, you can go back as far as you want to, you can go back to the signing of the treaty. But more importantly, you can go back to 1930's, when we had drought across North America. A very, very important legislation was passed back in those early days; things like the Duck Stamp Law, trying to put together Pittman-Robertson [Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act] in 1937, in 1934 for the Duck Stamp. So that period of time was very important to put something legislation in place.

Why did that fail? Why did North American populations go down? Why did we have to do something different in 1986? And that's a question that I think we all had to reflect on. And here is my take on that, and this is just my take, I believe that in 1986, enough people realized that no one entity could do this. No one organization could pull this off. But rather, a collective force of all of us working together maybe had a chance to make this work. That's why it wasn't a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Plan, but rather a plan for North America that would help turn "this waterfowl resource thing" around. And I think that's important.

Dick, you said it, it wasn't a service plan. But more importantly, the Fish and Wildlife Service could not do this alone, could not happen, it wasn't going to happen.

That's what went wrong for the 75 years prior to that, and why in 1986 we had to have a different direction, a different way to tackle this beast. Otherwise, I'm afraid that those populations would have continued to go down. And they have not, populations.

I, thank goodness, now sit back and look in retrospect, and I will take all the credit for doing this. I have single-handedly turned around North American populations, and they're in good shape now. And that's just simply not true, as anybody knows. But on the other hand, we have seen a response in North American waterfowl populations. I don't know, I'll be honest with you, if any one particular effort in any one Joint Venture turned the tide or anything like that. My guess is probably not, with maybe one exception, that might be the agricultural programs that we've had in place have had a tremendous influence on North American populations, which had something to do with North America, but not directly, in terms of what was going on, at least in terms of our implementation efforts. It sure made our implementation a lot easier when you knew a cover was out there and baby ducks were walking out of the cover.

But my point is John, something had to change in 1986, and it was not a Fish and Wildlife Service Plan. We could not do it alone.

John Cornely: Let me follow up on that. First, I want to thank you for, you know, doing such a wonderful thing. I've got some depredations orders I'd like you to draft

because we've got too many of these Canada Geese, especially, and I want you to do something about that since you've been so successful!

But, we talked about this in some of our prior discussions. The general public, if they know anything about the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and some of our colleagues and the Service and other places because we've had this, you know, issue for years of outreach and that sort of thing. So, a lot of people just think all of the sudden this plan came out of nowhere. But we had, you know, we had lots of plan through the years and Flyway Plans and so on. We even had a U.S. Waterfowl Plan.

The right people on both sides of the border aren't with us anymore to answer some of these questions, but how did this happen that finally, instead of two countries and then three deciding to, you know, do their own thing? Even though they're dealing with the same resources and they have treaties to protect these resources, can you shed any light Dave on how Canada and the U.S. came together and got on the same page? Because it seems to me that it would have been maybe just another one of those plans that went on the shelf if we hadn't been able to come together across the boarder and largely get on the same page.

Dave Sharp: I've given a lot of thought to it, and I think I can do it succinctly as possible John. This is not easy for me, I will try. And I have thought about it a lot, because in 1986, as you just said, there was not a lightening bolt that said the world will begin today with the signing of the North American Plan. Indeed, it had a long history leading up to a point where we could actually put the plan in place.

I think that the real starting point for me, and I spent some time with Harvey writing the history down. This part of the forward of one of the revisions of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and what my research shows, the first Flyway Waterfowl Management Plan was signed in 1948, it was the Atlantic Flyway Council, that put the first Flyway Waterfowl Management Plan in place, Atlantic Flyway Waterfowl Management Plan.

Shortly thereafter, the other four flyways, each of them put in place a Waterfowl Management Plan for their flyway.

I went back and re-read those particular documents, and what those documents had in there was really a habitat plan for acquisition, not management. Acquisition of habitat to create national wildlife refuges within that flyway that was deemed important for that flyway. That was based upon some research coming out of Illinois by the name of Frank Belrose, who was talking about a complex of refuges, from the breeding grounds, to the wintering grounds. As a stepping stone to get the birds through migration. That was what was really driving the whole idea. So those were really acquisition plans as best I could tell.

Everything sort of went along from the 1940s, and quite frankly, I went back and looked, high success. Most of those refuges that were identified in those initial plans were

acquired. In my particular flyway, I worked in the Central [Flyway], all were acquired. Every one of those were ultimately acquired through Duck Stamp funds. And so that part was probably pretty good. It didn't work.

In 1967, there was a meeting at the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center that was formed in 1965. At that particular meeting it was determined, and I just re-read the minutes before this meeting, that indeed, what we had done wasn't going to really work because what we needed was something international in scope. It had to encompass all of the breeding grounds, all of the migration, and all of the wintering grounds in order for it to work on an annual cycle standpoint. It talked about the need for some kind of a plan and some mechanism for implementation at a very broad scale. And it's kind of neat, because it talked about needing a blueprint, it talked about needing an overriding plan, but this plan wouldn't be the thing to direct the individual actions at the local level.

Interesting, what they described in 1967, was what the North American Plan was ultimately going to be.

Things got fairly quiet through a period of time, and I think the reason was it had to do with the populations of waterfowl. In the United States, our public does things all the time whenever there is a need to, stress to, a reason to react. That's when we react. And we did in the 1930s. Through our time, if you just look at what we did, we always did that. The 1980s was a time when those populations were going down, so that was the impetus to do something and do it now instead of waiting.

In 1982, John alluded to this, finally the U.S. Waterfowl Management Plan was signed and that was put in place. The idea was to then put a companion document into place, the Canadian Waterfowl Management Plan and indeed, there was a writing committee and they went ahead and began the work on the Canadian plan once the U.S. plan was put into place in 1982. And to be honest with you, the Canadian's said because of this urgency that they could not wait. And why write a Canadian plan? The best thing to do would be just forget that plan and move right forward with the North American Plan. And, indeed, the writing team was pulled together, I just looked at the negotiating team that met in Florida the year before the plan was ultimately signed.

And so the impetus was there, waterfowl populations were dwindling, there was a feeling of urgency, that we had to move forward very, very quickly. But the planning process, in my view, actually went back to the late 1940s.

So it had a long history, and I don't know all of the details of what happened and who the players were through time, but it was not a lightening bolt in 1986 that caused the North American Plan to get written with some very smart people to put some words on paper and said this will work. But, indeed, it had a long evolution and a long history to get to where it was at.

John Cornely: I didn't know that.

Dick Dyer: We make it up, I think he makes it up! No. He comes up with something new.

Dave Sharp: Sometimes I think we kind of give ourselves too much credit though too. Certainly, the North American Plan was the catalyst. But there were a lot of moving parts and pieces in that time in our history. And I think certainly the early 1980s, you know this better than I [ ] with some populations of waterfowl species.

Dick Dyer: In 1982.

Dave Sharp: And then we surpassed the goals in the North American Plan, but it wasn't just the plan. I think the [U.S.] Farm Bill, Agricultural Policy had played just as critical a role. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act was crucial. The Wetlands Conservation was helping to drive the North American Plan, but it wasn't, there were other things happening around them. And we got lucky on the Prairies, we got lucky, you know, things are cyclic. We happened to hit it right. The moon and the stars have got to align to make things happen. That's not what happened with the North American Plan. But then we started to put things on the ground and sort of built the momentum and it just grew from there.

But let's recognize there were a lot of other things happening, an agricultural policy, the future of wildlife will always be on private land and that, to me, was one of the keys and it happened to fall into place and I hope it stays that way.

Dick Dyer: Well, it is very fragile. Fragile situation and circumstance. There's no question about that because it was easy. Not easy, but as quick as it was put in place it can evaporate. And when you've got 30 million acres of grasslands that disappear, that's not going to be a good thing. All of the water in the world is not going to help those ducks hatch if you don't have the grass settle with it. So it's a combination.

Johnny Lynch wrote it brilliantly many, many years ago. I think we've all read that paper once or twice.

John Cornely: I think that's, that's very true. Dave mentioned this earlier, that this is the time that I came back to the Prairies and the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture got started and populations had been low since the early 1980s, a 10 year drought, very low populations. And because we knew that we lost a lot of habitat all along the way, in spite of new refuges and all of these other things, we were having these discussions about, 'Well, can ducks recover?' I mean, have we finally gone over, you know, past the tipping point? And, maybe we can bring them back up a little bit, but can we ever get back up to where we want to be, which may not be record, you know, all time record highs, but.

Dick Dyers: Haven't we done that in recent years thought? Out there working hard for mallards?

Ray Whittemore: Yeah, yeah. But I think John's right though Dick. When we were going to the field, up through 1988, populations continued to slide, from the signing of the plan through 1988. And during that period of time, when I was out and talking to people, there was a persistent belief out there among some people that they can't recover. That we have gone too far. Habitats are too far degraded. We have converted too many. Water quality is too low, drainage is too high. That there's just no way we can recover. It seemed daunting.

When you think about the Central Valley of California, and you think about the importance for waterfowl in that one little piece of the world. And we'll just give the Pacific Flyway their time in the light for a minute. But that Central Valley was over 95 percent drained at that point, we had less than 5 percent of the habitat left in terms that we could work with, in terms of salvaging this waterfowl resource.

There were people saying, "You guys are dreamers, you can't possibly turn this around." And I'm not saying we have. Because I think you've got to think of all of the things in the long term, and maybe we did get a few breaks in the last years, and we certainly did, and there's no question about that. But I think we have made a difference. I don't know if we "recovered" North American populations. Although we have reached record high levels with some populations, some species, in some areas, that they're doing quite well. But we also have some very troubled species that are still out there; Lesser Scaup and Pintails have not recovered.

John Cornely: Well, I want to follow up on saying what Ray said there too, because we've seen this in the northern prairies anyway. You can never relax, you just can never relax because in the last 10-15 years, we've seen native prairie in the Dakota's plowed up and put to agricultural uses. That if you were to asked us in the '80s that that would ever happen, like to make McDonald's french fries.

Ray Whittemore: Ethanol.

John Cornely: Ethanol

Dick Dyer: Which is going to feed China, India, etcetera.

John Cornely: And so, you know...

Dave Sharp: John, you're point is exactly right, you're right on. It was an evolution, we were at a point, but the North American Plan is not done. That we are in the phase of implementation and unfortunately, and this is bad news for Congress, we will never be done with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. We can put in place all of those activities. But you're right, we've got to be ever-vigilent. And Dick said it earlier, the signing of a pen on a document can very much change where waterfowl go. And actually, a change in agricultural, or ag[ricultural] programs right now, the farm bills and so on that come for up reauthorization, could very much change where we're going with waterfowl. The funding for the 'Act' we call "The Act", but NAWCA [North

American Wetlands Conservation Act], if indeed that funding somehow went away or was declined very dramatically, sure it could change things very quickly. So you're right, we have to be ever-vigilent. But I think the point is, the plan was signed in 1986. Today, as we sit here, it's not done, it will never be done.

John Cornely: Well, I want to have one other little discussion here, and I think we can probably start to wind this panel down, but when we were talking with Dick this morning and we were talking about habitat goals, and you made a comment that I want to follow up on. That as you got you're management work together and you got the technical folks together and you started looking at you're focus areas, that you suddenly came up with much more acres than what originally was say assigned to the Atlantic Coast. And that reminded that when after we went through, and Dave can maybe weigh in here, I can't, I'm not going to be able to tell you exactly how many years, but when we... One of the planned updates when we looked at the original goals, and we looked at we accomplished and we said, "We were way short on what we set out to do." And so Dave, you were involved in some of that stuff and, you know, we know we didn't have the tools when we first started. We did the best we could with the best minds available to try and come up with those acreage figures, but can you follow up on that a little bit.

Dave Sharp: A little bit of it I can John, not all, but I'm going to have to go to Dick here. But very quickly, the original acreage objectives that were put in the North American Plan were based upon the work that was done in 26 identified habitat areas of importance in North America. Each of those areas had what they called a Concept Plan that was written for each one of those. There was one written for the Prairie Pothole Region. In there were acreage numbers, so when the plan was written, there was simply a roll up of what those 26 individual habitat areas had in there. And then specifically, for Joint Ventures, each Joint Venture had some goals that were put in there. You could call it a shot in the dark if you want to, or a guess, that's fine. You call it anything you want to. But there was some biology, some thought put into it, but there was never the refined look at what it was going to take to make that work. That the Joint Ventures would be able to empower once they built their individual plans and began to bring those forward.

So, in a step-down process, even though there were acreage goals that were written in the original plan, as the Joint Ventures came to be, Dick's group/this next part of, when they actually looked at what they were going to do, they're acreages didn't always match what was in the original plan. So, indeed the acreages did go up.

But I'll be honest with you, I actually trust Dick and his people that were working at that Joint Venture level, because no one knew it like they did. And if this is what they said they needed to get it done, I was ready to say, "You're right, and I want to help you get there." So, I think those goals kind of replaced some of the original goals that were in place, and I think that is why some of the acreage changed. Dick, I don't think any of them went down, I think most of them went up, did they not?

Dick Dyer: I think geographically it expanded significantly, I think we almost doubled the goals, quite frankly, that were written in terms of habitat protection,

restoration management. We increased them significantly. And that called for a lot of angst and anxiety between us.

Dave Sharp: Well, when's enough's enough?

Dick Dyer: Are we discrediting the North American Plan? But it was a function of rolling up the state, individual states areas as well. And, you know, the State of New York or the State of... Wherever it was, New Jersey. And then, we've got 10 areas and we need to protect so much in each of these areas, and we roll up the total and comes to this and said, "That's what it is." You pick the one or two projects that you want to make up in your state, and those were always within the original boundary. Well, maybe with the exception of West Virginia.

Ray Whittemore: I think what we had John was top-down planning initially, bottom-up planning later on. And the two did not exactly match. But, someone said it earlier, I bet if you look in there, you will find those original focus primary areas still in there, regardless of how you shuffle some...

Dick Dyer: ... those historically significant areas for waterfowl, and that hasn't changed. The landscape in which they used to exist changed.

J**ohn Cornely:** Well this, this has been an excellent discussion, as these always are, and I would ask each one of you, and I'm going start with Ray, if you have any additional comments you would like to add before we close this up.

Ray Whittemore: Only to say that working on the plan and being a part of it was one of the highlights of my career. Again, I'm so much richer for it professionally and personally. And it is, and I've been involved with a lot of plans and worked on refuges, and so this is one plan that actually went to work and got it done, and I was very proud and pleased to be a part of it.

John Cornely: David?

David Sharp: Just, maybe just a final comment; we talked a lot about habitat, talked a lot about the birds and so on, but I think there's one part, and Dick mentioned it, so I'm going to steal his thunder just a little bit here. A lot of this had to do with people. The whole plan, in terms of where we came from, all the way back to the '40s, to where we're at today, had to do with a whole bunch of people who cared an awful lot and who could contribute one little piece of this puzzle to help make it work.

So I really do think probably one of the most important parts of the plan was pulling together these people, that through time we could make lists of right now in terms of who they are, where many of them have gone, are not with us any longer. But the whole point is, it was a plan about people as much as it was about waterfowl.

Dick Dyer: Good point David. No question, I think if you look back at the personalities that were involved and often much what it comes down, you've got to have the right people at the right place at the right time. I can look at each of the projects that we implemented and I can go and name each project and each person; you made that happen, you made that. You were the catalyst. You played a significant role while making it up.

I will always look back at it as probably the most rewarding part of my career with 37 years of Fish and Wildlife Service. I think you can never replace things like Pittman-Robertson [Act] and Dingell-Johnson [Act] and what they did for our country in the grand conservation picture. But I would put the North American Plan and the associated efforts with it and right there, in my experience, with most probably significant conservation movements in our country.

John Cornely: I agree with what you've all said and I would add another observation that's kind of one that we don't think about, but I mean the Prairie Potholes, the duck factory, you know, even folks on the Atlantic seaboard here had heard of places like that for a long time. Whether we're fighting over money or not. But did you guys ever here of the rainwater basins in Nebraska? Did you hear of the playa lakes in the Texas Panhandle and in the surrounding states?

One of the things we knew a lot about the marshes in Louisiana and the Texas Gulf, but some of these other critically important areas got a lot of outreach and introduced to a lot of people that never would have heard of them, I don't think, if it hadn't been for this big overall effort and all of you guys getting together and learning about each others areas.

I went to one North American Plan-related meeting in Quebec City, and we went out to see where the Greater Snow Geese come in on the Saint Lawrence River at Cap-Tourmente I think is one of the places we went. I never heard of the place, of course locally that's one of the most famous places around.

So I think even though biologists are really bad at outreach and stuff like, this plan, because of these used car salesman, partly, and you as well, we educated a lot of new people about the importance of these places.

So with that, I think we'll cut it off for today.

KEY WORDS:
People: John Cornely; Dick Dyer; Ray Whittemore; Dave Sharp; Harvey Nelson; Bob Streeter; Carl Madsen; Paul Hartman; Charles Baxter; Jerry Johnson; Gary Kramer; Frank Belrose; John Lynch; Senator Key Pittman; A. Willis Robertson; Senator Edwin Johnson; Representative John Dingell;

Places: Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex Office; Quebec City; Saint Lawrence River; Cap-Tourmente;

Books:

Divisions/Titles/Programs/Studies: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Heritage Committee; North American Waterfowl Management Plan [NAWMP]; Atlantic Coast Joint Venture; North American Wetland Conservation Act [NAWCA]; executive director; deputy; population specialist; habitat specialist; Canada Habitat Joint Ventures; Arctic Goose Joint Venture; Black Duck Joint Venture; Agriculture Programs; Wintering Joint Ventures; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Directorate Team; Prairie Pothole Joint Venture; refuge biologist; Waterfowl Conservation; Duck Stamp Law; Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act; Flyway Waterfowl Management Plans; Atlantic Flyway Council; Atlantic Flyway Waterfowl Management Plan; Acquisition Plans; Canadian Waterfowl Management Plan; U.S. Farm Bill; Pacific Flyway; Central Valley of California; Concept Plan; Prairie Pothole Region; Dingell-Johnson Act;

Wildlife/Critters: Lesser Scaup; Pintails; Greater Snow Geese;