

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

news release

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U.S.-CANADIAN BIRD TREATY AMENDMENT WILL RECOGNIZE OFF-SEASON SUBSISTENCE HUNTING

Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus and Canadian Minister of Environment Len Marchand have initialed an amendment to the 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty allowing subsistence hunting of waterfowl outside of the normal sport hunting seasons.

The ceremony took place in Ottawa, Canada.

The amendment was required because Canadian and Alaskan subsistence users depend on spring waterfowl hunting to provide fresh food after the long northern winter. Under the original language, though, such hunting was legally barred.

Subsistence users are people who live in isolated rural areas and live off the land through hunting, fishing and gathering.

While the majority of such people in Alaska are Eskimo, Indian and Aleut, the Administration is on record as opposing racial definitions of subsistence eligibility in Alaska.

The Administration will continue this policy in legislative documents that will be sent to Congress in order to put the amendment into force. The government will retain the authority, as usual, to regulate hunting to protect the health of bird populations.

The original treaty was developed in an era when biologists became aware that spring hunting was having a serious impact on migratory bird populations as the birds flew north to breed. At that time, little was known of the food requirements of year-round dwellers of the North.

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