



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### U.S. AND CANADA SIGN INTERNATIONAL PLAN TO AID CONSERVATION OF DUCKS AND GEESE

In recognition of the need for greater international efforts to conserve waterfowl, Secretary of the Interior Don Hodel and Canadian Environment Minister Thomas McMillan met May 14 in Washington, D.C., to sign the North American Waterfowl Management Plan--A Strategy for Cooperation. The plan outlines far-reaching efforts that need to be undertaken to protect waterfowl habitat, build up declining waterfowl populations, and enhance waterfowl research and management.

"Habitat is the key to conserving our waterfowl," Secretary Hodel said. "Despite the many accomplishments of the past 50 years, we are still losing too many waterfowl nesting and wintering habitat areas. If we want to have abundant waterfowl in the year 2000, Americans and Canadians must start now to expand current efforts and initiate new ones."

Hodel added that the signing of the North American plan does not constitute a commitment by the national governments of Canada and the United States to fund all aspects of the plan. "Even working together, the national governments of our two countries cannot carry out an effort of this scope without assistance. We need the participation of State, provincial, territorial, and local governments; private conservation groups; businesses; and individual members of the public, whether they be hunters, naturalists, landowners, or subsistence users. The North American plan represents a guide, and a challenge, for all of us who want to conserve waterfowl."

The North American plan establishes goals for waterfowl populations and habitat conservation, and recommends actions to solve problems of international concern. The plan extends to the year 2000 and will be reviewed every 5 years beginning in 1990. It will be implemented through action plans developed at the national, flyway, provincial, territorial, and State levels, which will set out the specific management details required for waterfowl conservation in both countries. Although Mexico is not currently included in the plan, the U.S. and Canada will encourage Mexico's participation. The North American plan does not change the means by which Canada and the United States establish waterfowl hunting regulations.

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The North American plan focuses primarily on protection of important waterfowl habitat in the United States and Canada. This would be accomplished through various means, including fee acquisition of important habitat areas, private sector efforts, agreements with landowners, and efforts to change land-use practices to make agriculture and waterfowl production more compatible.

One major recommendation is for public and private organizations in Canada and the United States to cooperate in joint ventures to improve waterfowl habitat by changing land use practices on 3.6 million acres of mallard and pintail habitat in prairie Canada. This program would emphasize agreements with private landowners to benefit duck production and would cost an estimated \$1 billion over 15 years. Special authorization and appropriation of funds would be required before the governments of Canada or the United States could participate in such a venture, and the document does not commit either of the two federal governments to expend funds beyond its borders or to bear the total cost or responsibility for the plan's execution. Rather, it calls upon the various public and private agencies in each country who value ducks to contribute to a large-scale effort to restore declining populations.

The plan also recommends efforts in both countries to protect and improve additional waterfowl nesting, migrating, and wintering habitats in other areas, with emphasis on conserving the habitat of species whose numbers have been declining such as mallards, pintails, and black ducks.

The habitat conservation goals are designed to help rebuild waterfowl populations to their average levels of the 1970's. The North American plan sets population goals for individual waterfowl species, with the objective of rebuilding duck numbers to a breeding population index of 62 million and a fall flight index of 100 million. (By comparison, in 1985 duck populations were the lowest recorded in 30 years, with a breeding population index of 31 million and an estimated fall flight index of 62 million.) Geese and swans are generally faring better than ducks. The North American plan's goals for these species are aimed at maintaining current populations and increasing several West Coast goose populations whose numbers are presently low.

Copies of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan may be obtained by writing to the Office of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Matomic Building, Room 536, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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