



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES SIGN
HISTORIC WETLANDS CONSERVATION AGREEMENT**

Calling it the "most extensive and successful wetlands and wildlife conservation program ever," U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Mexico's Secretary of Social Development and Environment Carlos Rojas Gutierrez today signed the **1994 Update to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (Plan)**, entitled "**Expanding the Commitment.**" The document was signed as part of the Bi-National Commission meeting held in Mexico City.

"With Mexico now as a full partner, along with Canada, we are truly 'Expanding the Commitment' to protect some of the North American continent's most precious natural resources -- its migratory birds and wetlands," said Babbitt. "Having identified its most critical wetland areas, Mexico will now be better able to protect them and thus avoid some costly mistakes made by its neighbors to the north."

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, originally signed in 1986, is an agreement to reverse the continent's loss of wetlands and stem the decline in populations of waterfowl and other migratory birds. Recognizing that these goals exceeded the

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capability of government wildlife agencies alone, the plan calls for unprecedented partnerships and the pooling of resources by public and private agencies, corporations, landowners, and others.

To date, such partnerships have invested \$500 million towards the protection, restoration, or enhancement of two million acres of wetlands, providing vital habitat for a rich diversity of wildlife species. The Plan is recognized in the United States as a model for ecosystem management and conservation partnerships.

Wetlands in Mexico, as is also true in Canada and the U.S., provide the basis for many sustainable development activities including fishing and tourism, as well as providing improved water quality and flood control. Conservation of wetlands often proves to be the most cost-effective, long-term strategy.

Mexico has been included as a participant in the Plan but now becomes a full partner with the other two countries. Studies and management plans for key wetland areas in Mexico are being conducted, supported in part by grants of \$1.2 million from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, matched by \$1.4 million from partners with universities, foundations, and conservation agencies in the U.S. and \$1.1 million from similar entities in Mexico. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act specifically mandates funding for wetlands projects in Mexico and Canada.

Canada is expected to sign the "Update" later this month.

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