

What's so important about attending the workshop on The Future of Waterfowl Management

The National Flyway Council, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee, the FWS Regulations Committee and leaders of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies have all endorsed the concept of conducting a Waterfowl Policy Summit as recommended in the 2007 Joint Task Group report. That report (commissioned by NAWMP and the NFC) proposed adoption of a more cohesive waterfowl management framework with meaningful, measurable goals that integrate habitat conservation, harvest management, and stakeholder interests.

The purpose of the workshop is to identify the institutional needs and policy decisions necessary to improve the current approaches and mechanisms for waterfowl habitat and harvest management in North America. The need to develop such improvements has been identified previously in documents such as the NAWMP Continental Assessment Report and the IAFWA Adaptive Harvest Management Task Force Report. The Pacific Flyway Council is on record (Recommendation 10, July 2007) as supporting "a waterfowl management policy summit". The Central Flyway Council has stated "We concur that a policy summit involving the primary waterfowl management bodies is the most important next step..." (July 27, 2007 memo to National Flyway Council).

The need for improvement in the "status quo" approach of making disjunctive decisions on harvest regulations, habitat conservation strategies, and hunter retention and recruitment seems evident in the face of current trends and issues including:

- Declining waterfowl hunting participation
- High commodity prices, loss of CRP acres and potential reduction in waterfowl production
- Continuing wetland loss and degradation
- Potential effects of climate change
- Imperatives for efficient and cost-effective conservation investments
- Growing monitoring requirements and limited budgets
- AHM strategies for scaup, pintails, western mallards

Some desired outcomes of this meeting will be:

- A collective understanding of how a more coherent management framework could produce meaningful benefits for administrators, managers, and hunters;
- Identification of key concerns and uncertainties (technical or policy-level) and how they can be adequately resolved;
- Agreement on a process for addressing longer-term issues, such as the remaining Joint Task Group recommendations, or other needs as identified by participants;
- Policy decisions or process changes that should be considered by agencies and organizations with the appropriate authority.

The August Workshop certainly will not resolve all of these issues; however, it is likely that the consensus achieved in Minneapolis will set the course of creative work in waterfowl management for the next several years. Come to Minneapolis and help us chart that course.