

THE YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA GOOSE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The goal of this plan is to restore populations of cackling Canada geese, emperor geese, Pacific white-fronted geese, and Pacific brant to prescribed levels. The parties to the plan are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Department), the Association of Village Council Presidents (Association), the Association's Waterfowl Conservation Committee (Committee), and the California Department of Fish and Game. These parties agree that continued cooperation is essential to achieve the stated goal and to maintain the affected populations at levels that provide for hunting and other beneficial uses of the species throughout their ranges. Cooperative efforts have been identified in annual versions of this plan implemented each year since 1984. The plan has been effective in achieving reduced harvest and increased populations of the four species of Arctic nesting geese.

A. POLICY

- A.1. The Service, in consultation with the State of Alaska and other interested parties, including Alaskan Native entities, will make a good faith effort to reach agreement with Canada on the protocol amendment to the Migratory Bird Treaty and to pursue its ratification and implementation.

- A.2. All participants recognize that the issue of the standard to which the Secretary of the Interior may exercise his discretionary authority is of importance to Alaskan Native people and their respective governments and has not been addressed in this plan.

A.3. This plan will in no way amend, alter, or abolish the agreements between the Service and village corporations for biological studies at Kokechik Bay.

A.4. Special attention will be given to the protection of cackling Canada geese, emperor geese, Pacific white-fronted geese, and Pacific brant. These species have suffered severe population declines in recent years and need special protection. In order to protect these geese, priority will be given to monitoring, enforcement and verification designed to support the following principles:

- No taking of cackling Canada and emperor geese at any time;
- No taking of Pacific white-fronted geese or brant during the nesting, brood-rearing, and flightless periods;
- No taking the eggs of any of the above four species of geese; and
- No use of charter or private aircraft for direct purposes of hunting the four species of geese.

A.5. Use of game for dire emergency may occur with no penalty.

B. CONSERVATION

- B.1. The Association, its Waterfowl Conservation Committee, and Nunam Kitlutsisti will be supplied with annual population and harvest data and will be included in resource discussions involving Arctic-nesting goose biology, regulation, research, and management.
- B.2. All parties support the acquisition of additional wintering habitat in the Pacific Flyway, designation of some of this habitat as sanctuaries where no hunting would be allowed, and special efforts to develop or maintain high water quality.
- B.3. All parties shall refrain from unnecessarily disturbing the four goose species of concern during their nesting, rearing, molting, staging, and pre-migration periods.
- B.4. Appropriate Federal and State resource agencies, and other interested parties will continue to cooperate to improve scientific research on the four species of geese, and will cooperate in securing public and private funds to carry out this research.

- B.5. The Regional Office and Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge staff shall meet with the Waterfowl Conservation Committee and other interested parties no later than April 15 to review an annual biological research plan for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (Delta).
- B.6. The Service will identify specific research needs, flyway-wide, in addressing current problems of Arctic-nesting geese including:
- a. Sources of migratory waterfowl mortality;
 - b. Identification of habitat changes, potential impacts and mitigating measures;
 - c. Environmental contaminants and diseases;
 - d. Predation, and
 - e. The effects of air pollution on waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway with regard to the four species of geese.
- B.7. The Service will coordinate with all interested parties to finalize and consolidate comprehensive management plans for the four goose species by the end of November 1988.

B.8. The Service will coordinate with all parties to develop and implement strategies in a five-year action plan to rebuild populations of the four goose species to objective levels identified in D.4.

C. FINANCES

C.1. The Service and State of Alaska will cooperate fully with the Committee in designing budget requests and allocating funds that would meet the agreed-to conditions of this plan.

D. ALLOCATION AND HARVEST

D.1. The Service periodically will supply information on the harvest levels of black brant in Mexico, and if a significant harvest is occurring, all parties will make every effort to achieve a reduction of harvest in Mexico.

D.2. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game will conduct a survey of fall harvest of geese throughout Alaska. The Service will conduct a survey of fall harvest of geese throughout the Pacific Flyway. Results of both surveys will be provided to the Association and the Committee.

D.3. As agreed upon by the Association, the Committee and local village governments, the Service may conduct surveys of spring, summer and fall harvest of geese on the Delta.

D.4. The Service and the Pacific Flyway Council, in consultation with all parties, will establish minimum and optimum population levels in the Flyway Management Plans for the four goose species. Suggested population objectives and management strategies are presented below:

	<u>Cackling Geese</u>	<u>White- fronted Geese</u>	<u>Pacific Brant</u>	<u>Emperor Geese</u>
Population objective	250,000	300,000	185,000	150,000
Minimum population levels	80,000	95,000	120,000	60,000

No Hunting when populations fall below minimum levels.

Hunting is possible again when populations rise above the following levels:

110,000 120,000 140,000 80,000

(All population levels are based on a three-year running average of annual index counts for each species--spring for emperors, winter for the other three species.)

D.5. If populations of any of the four species approach the minimum population levels or reach the harvestable population levels addressed in D.4. above, all parties agree to closely analyze the biological significance and develop further management strategies to include appropriate harvest opportunities and/or restrictions.

D.6. No hunting is allowed for cackling Canada or emperor geese at any time throughout the Pacific Flyway.

D.7. Pacific Flyway harvests of black brant and white-fronted geese will be maintained at reduced levels to achieve population increases toward objectives identified in D.4.

E. COMMUNICATIONS

E.1. All parties will cooperatively develop and implement a comprehensive education and information program to educate all appropriate parties in the flyways on reasons for the current population declines, on cooperative efforts in place to reverse these long-term declines, and to attain population level objectives in the Arctic-nesting geese populations of concern.

E.2. Outside observers: Requests from outside observers to visit Native owned lands on the Delta to make observations or prepare articles on activities related to the plan shall be referred to

the Committee. The Committee will review such requests and forward them to the villages that control the land along with a recommendation as to whether the visit should be approved. The village will have final say on approval.

F. MONITORING, VERIFICATION AND ENFORCEMENT

The following procedures have been developed for monitoring, verifying and enforcing compliance with Sections A.4., D.4., and D.6. of this plan.

F.1. Information and Education. The parties to the plan will cooperate closely in designing and implementing an intensive joint information and education program. A major purpose of this program is to explain the plan and the need for compliance with it to residents of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

F.2. Monitoring Compliance. Monitoring of the closed season especially in regard to cackling Canada geese, emperor geese, Pacific white-fronted geese, and Pacific brant will be a cooperative effort between the Service, the Department, the Association's Waterfowl Conservation Committee, Nunam Kitlutsisti, local village governments, and residents of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

a. Reporting Incidents. Violations of the plan should be reported to the Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, as soon as possible after they have been observed. The Refuge Manager will record the reported incident on Incident Report forms and will provide copies of Incident Reports to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Association, and Nunam Kitlutsisti.

F.3. Verifying Occurrence of Violations. Representatives of the Service, the Department, the Association, and Nunam Kitlutsisti or the Committee will travel together and coordinate with village governments in investigating reports of violations as soon as possible after they are reported. In the event that no representatives of other participants to this plan are available, the Service will investigate to the extent possible and report its findings to other participants as soon as possible.

a. Summarizing Investigations of Incidents. Results of visits to villages will be summarized in writing and appended to original Incident Reports.

b. Other Verification of Compliance. An additional method of verification will be through periodic village visits, conducted jointly by representatives of the Service, Department, Association, and Committee. The purposes of these trips will be to:

- 1) Evaluate the effectiveness of the cooperative information and education effort;
- 2) Provide support for implementation of the plan; and
- 3) Evaluate compliance with the plan.

F.4. Enforcing the Closed Season. If compliance does not occur despite efforts described above, additional steps of enforcement will be necessary. The Service and the Department intend to confiscate any of the four species of geese and/or their eggs taken in blatant violation of the principles described in section A.4., and will collect all necessary information on the incident. Although the Service is responsible for enforcement of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the parties to this plan will be informed by the Service of any steps taken regarding blatant violations. The Service will consult with Nunam Kitlutsisti, the Association, the Committee, the Department, and the village prior to issuing any citations. The Service intends to issue citations under the following circumstances:

- Blatant violations observed directly by Service or Department personnel;
- Reports from other parties of blatant violations;
- Requests from local village governments regarding recurring non-compliance or blatant violations;
- Use of charter or private aircraft to assist in hunting.

F.5. Summary Report. The Service, in cooperation with the Department, the Association, Nunam Kitlutsisti, and the Committee, will compile a written summary report of all documented incidents and any enforcement actions taken. This report will be provided to all parties to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Goose Management Plan.

We, the undersigned, hereby concur with and support the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Goose Management Plan:

Concur: Gene Peltola Sr. April 26, 1988
Gene Peltola, Sr., President
Association of Village Council Presidents

Concur: Paul Manumit Sr. for April 26, 1988
Jack U. Williams, Chairman
Association of Village Council Presidents
Waterfowl Conservation Committee

Concur: Walter O. Stieglitz April 26, 1988
Walter O. Stieglitz, Regional Director
Region 7
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Concur: Don Collinsworth 5.4.88
Don W. Collinsworth, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Concur: Peter Bontadelli April 27, 1988
Peter Bontadelli, Director
California Department of Fish and Game