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Data Sources and Methods: Habitat Secured for Waterfowl Indicator

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1 Introduction

The Habitat Secured for Waterfowl indicator is a part of the Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators (CESI) (<http://www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/>) program, which provides data and information to track Canada's performance on key environmental sustainability issues.

2 Description and rationale of the Habitat Secured for Waterfowl indicator

CESI reports the amount of Canadian wetland and associated upland habitat that has been secured through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) for the benefit of waterfowl, as a measure of Canada's efforts to protect migratory birds.

The NAWMP is a tri-national (Canada, United States of America and Mexico) partnership comprised of federal, state, provincial and municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, industry and private individuals. NAWMP habitat securement activities are planned and delivered by habitat joint ventures, which involve partners from different organizations. In addition to securement, the partners enhance and restore habitat to increase, manage and maintain its carrying capacity for wetland-associated migratory birds and other wildlife.

While focused on the links between loss of wetland habitat and waterfowl declines, the NAWMP recognizes the other benefits of maintaining these valuable and productive ecosystems. Wetland preservation helps maintain wildfowling traditions, biodiversity and ecosystem processes. The NAWMP has developed an understanding of the habitat characteristics needed to sustain waterfowl populations through sound science and diverse partnerships, making it a model for other conservation initiatives.

Funding for wetland protection in North America comes from a variety of sources. One major contributor is the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* (NAWCA) (<http://www.wetlandscanada.org/nawca.html>). The NAWCA is American federal fund-generating legislation enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1989 to "conserve North American wetland ecosystems and waterfowl and the other migratory birds, fish and wildlife that depend upon such habitats." The NAWCA also established the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (NAWCC (U.S.)) to implement the Act. Canadian proposals seeking NAWCA funding are endorsed by the NAWCC (Canada) before they are sent to the NAWCC (U.S.) for funding consideration. Under the NAWCA, U.S. federal funding provided to Canadian proposals must be matched one-to-one. Matching funds are composed of American non-federal funding and up to 50% Canadian funding (federal or non-federal). In addition to NAWCA-generated funds, NAWMP projects in Canada are funded by a multitude of Canadian and international partners. For more information on how the NAWCA and other funds contribute to Canadian wetland conservation, see the NAWCC (Canada) website (<http://www.wetlandscanada.org/nawca.html>).

3 Data

Environment Canada's Wetlands Office uses the NAWMP National Tracking System to track hectares secured through the NAWMP partnership. The tracking system is updated by partners each quarter and figures are published annually in *Canadian Habitat Matters* (<http://www.nawmp.ca/>).

4 Methods

The indicator is the sum of the waterfowl habitat area (hectares) secured by the four Canadian habitat joint ventures: Pacific Coast (Canada portion only), Canadian Intermountain, Prairie Habitat and Eastern Habitat. Under the NAWMP, secured wetland and upland habitat is protected, either through acquisition or long-term (at least 10 years) legally binding agreements with landowners. Examples of securement include land purchases, donations, easements and transfers of title from the Crown to management agencies. For each year, the cumulative habitat secured is calculated by adding newly secured hectares and subtracting expired agreements from continuing securements.

5 Caveats and limitations

- Partners are responsible for reporting the number of hectares secured by their projects to the NAWMP National Tracking System. To improve the accuracy of reporting, a review and update of the tracking system is underway.
- The Pacific Coast joint venture is international in scope, but only the hectares secured in Canada are reported here.
- The status of the Western Boreal Forest region of the Prairie Habitat joint venture is currently under review and hectares secured within that region are not reported or included in the national total.
- Though habitat securement, enhancement and management is carried out with the goal of waterfowl population recovery and/or sustainability, these indicators do not specifically track waterfowl populations. For further information on waterfowl populations in Canada, see Population Status of Migratory Game Birds in Canada (<http://www.ec.gc.ca/Publications/default.asp?lang=En&xml=0E5C278E-492F-49A6-A8F9-CA3F7E45FEF7>).
- The original 1986 NAWMP program goals for habitat protection with the aim of subsequent population recovery/sustainability are updated regularly through an adaptive management process. This ensures that NAWMP activities take into account new scientific evidence and continued environmental degradation when determining conservation needs. The 2004 NAWMP update¹ included habitat securement goals for the joint ventures with the exception of the Canadian Intermountain joint venture. Collectively, the securement goal for the three other Canadian habitat joint ventures (Eastern, Pacific Coast (Canada) and Prairie) was 3.4 million hectares. A revised NAWMP with updated goals for habitat protection is expected in 2012.
- Though habitat in joint ventures is chosen for securement because of its conservation importance or “priority”, this indicator is simply a measure of the quantity of habitat secured with no specific reference to its state (e.g. pristine, requiring restoration). Within the habitat secured, some areas may require specific management activities for improvement or enhancement.

6 References and further reading

Canadian Habitat Matters Annual Reports
(<http://www.nawmp.ca/>)

¹ North American Waterfowl Management Plan (2004) Strategic Guidance: Strengthening the Biological Foundation. Retrieved on 09 May, 2011. Available at: http://nawmp.ca/eng/pub_e.html

North American Waterfowl Management Plan
(http://nawmp.ca/eng/index_e.html)

North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Canada) (NAWCC (Canada))
(<http://www.wetlandscanada.org/>)

North American Wetlands Conservation Act
(<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/index.shtm>)

North American Bird Conservation Initiative
(<http://www.nabci.net/>)

Environment Canada - Wetlands
(<http://www.ec.gc.ca/eau-water/default.asp?lang=En&n=27147C37-1>)

Population Status of Migratory Game Birds in Canada
(<http://www.ec.gc.ca/Publications/default.asp?lang=En&xml=0E5C278E-492F-49A6-A8F9-CA3F7E45FEF7>)

Habitat Joint Ventures
(<http://www.ec.gc.ca/pch-hjv/Default.asp?lang=En&n=472DE156-1>)