

# Follow-up of the Review of the Migratory Birds Program

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***Audit and Evaluation Branch***



Environment  
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### **Report Clearance Steps**

Follow-up process implemented	June 2000
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### **Acronyms used in the report**

CWS	Canadian Wildlife Service
EC	Environment Canada
MC	Memorandum to Cabinet
NABCI	North American Bird Conservation Initiative
TB	Treasury Board

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## Follow-up of the Review of the Migratory Birds Program

This follow-up was begun 3 years after the report on the Review of the Migratory Birds Program was completed. The follow-up was done in order to determine the level of implementation of the recommendations made in the original report. Follow-ups are important, as they give senior management a crucial indicator as to the implementation rate of recommendations and adjustments made in relation to the management responses.

### Context and Current Status

The 1997 Review of the Migratory Birds Program was national in scope and included the activities on migratory birds in all five of Environment Canada's regions, as well as headquarters and the National Wildlife Research Centre. The review focused on three main areas: program delivery, capacity, and the role of science in the Migratory Birds Program

The principal recommendation of the review was to increase functional direction of the program through the development of a common tactical framework for the Migratory Birds Program to augment both program cohesion and direction. Five other recommendations were developed from the findings. These are related to data management, human resources, declining funds from permits, new partners and communication.

The follow-up has found that:

- The CWS has developed a strategic plan which involves the highly-partnered North American Bird Conservation Initiative in Canada (NABCI). Although this strategic plan does have a strong migratory birds component, it does not contain sufficient operational details to permit it to act as a tactical framework which connects all bird activities. However, currently a strategic plan for Migratory Birds is underway jointly with the regions and Headquarters and will be available in June 2002.
- Some work has been started in the areas of data management and data integration but an integrated and comprehensive approach is not underway.
- Although there is no separate human resources plan in place for the Migratory Birds Program, there is a plan to approach human resources within the context of other ecosystem-oriented efforts in EC. Specific reports on the scientific skills required in the areas of Migratory Birds have been prepared for the CWS Executive; this information is also being consolidated into a Wildlife Research Task Force. Additional human resources planning will likely be tied to the possible development of an MC for NABCI.
- Although the socio-economic cause of the permit decline has not been formally studied, its root causes have been postulated. CWS intends to carry out a formal survey when resources permit. The annual shortfall of revenues from permit sales (\$220K annually) has been recognized. To facilitate the issuance of permits, CWS plans a pilot project to link federal and provincial systems under the Government-On-Line initiative. As well there are plans to investigate the decoupling of CWS A-base from permit sale revenues.
- CWS managers realize that the Migratory Birds Program requires additional funding if effective program delivery is to be sustained. Continuing pressures related to the Department's migratory bird regulatory responsibilities and needs emerging from the

North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), emphasize the importance of developing a strategy to address this issue of Migratory Bird Program funding the ensure that the limited resources are used for the highest priorities.

## Areas requiring attention

The program has demonstrated progress, but incomplete recommendation implementation has been identified in several areas: 1) tactical framework; 2) data management and integration; 3) human resources; 4) revenue generation; and, 5) communication.

## Risk

Several of the management actions proposed in response to Review of the Migratory Birds Program (1997) still remain outstanding. However, the work on Migratory birds is being subsumed within the broader Natural Legacy Agenda and thus should not pose undue risk to the department. Although progress in specific areas has not occurred there is still intention for improvement being expressed to address areas of weakness over the longer term. Further attention will be given to this program area when development of a Results-based Management and Accountability Framework will be required.

Work is still required to provide more tactical direction in order to connect the operational and strategic levels of the program. Data management improvements have not entirely been addressed but are being subsumed under Government-On-Line and knowledge management initiatives. The lack of detailed human resource planning at the Migratory Birds Program level may pose problems in meeting the needs of the program which has the potential to affect its delivery. Without addressing the causes or implications of reduced revenue due to declining permit sales, there is the potential for impacts on further conservation efforts.

### Recommendation 1 - **Anticipated to be met**

Recommendation	Actions taken
There is a need to develop connections between the operational and strategic levels by developing a tactical framework which overarches all "bird" activities.	CWS has developed a strategic plan that does have a strong migratory birds component. However, the plan is very broad encompassing all of the CWS responsibilities and therefore does not advance a tactical framework that outlines specific connections between the operational and strategic levels to overarch all bird activities. A major new multi-stakeholder effort has begun to implement the North American Bird Conservation Strategy Initiative in Canada. A separate strategic plan for Migratory Birds is underway jointly with the regions and Headquarters and will be available in June 2002. The CWS intends to develop the necessary tactical framework for bird activities in the MC and TB submission that is anticipated for NABCI.

Recommendation 2 - **Improvements required**

Recommendation	Actions taken
The review recommends that improvements in both data management and data integration be undertaken nationally and between regions to minimize duplication and maximize efficiency in developing tools and analyses.	The Birds of Canada project is underway but has not directed any resources to data management for birds within Environment Canada. The Government-On-Line initiative and the draft Report: "Knowledge Management for Wildlife in Environment Canada" indicates that there has been work on problem-identification related to the issue of data management and data integration in CWS, but no new national or inter-regional data management effort has been undertaken since the Migratory Bird Program review. A pilot project on national management of seabird databases as well as CWS committee work on knowledge management has begun.

Recommendation 3 - **Anticipated to be met**

Recommendation	Actions taken
In order to address the human resources component of the program, a comprehensive plan should be developed to assess the staff skills, expertise, plan for succession and address human resource gaps.	Although the CWS strategic plan does identify areas of expertise where new hiring needs to take place, there are insufficient details to provide for planning. A strategic plan specific to Migratory Birds planned for June 2002 may supply necessary additional information. An effort was made to plan human resources and address shortfalls for migratory birds during the Program Integrity exercise, however, this component did not proceed. Specific reports on the scientific skills required in the areas of Migratory Birds have been prepared for the CWS Executive; this information is also being consolidated into a Wildlife Research Task Force. Additional human resources planning expected to be taking place for migratory birds is tied to the possible development of an MC for NABCI.

Recommendation 4 - **Anticipated to be met**

Recommendation	Actions taken
An assessment of the impact of declining permits, some \$60,000 annually (based on \$3.50 per permit loss), needs closer investigation. A clear statement of the implications of such revenue reductions on conservation efforts for sustaining bird populations by the Migratory Bird Program needs to be prepared.	Although the socio-economic cause of the permit decline has not been formally studied, its root causes have been postulated. CWS did develop a survey plan to investigate the issue, but this study has yet to be conducted due to funding pressures. CWS intends to carry out that survey when resources permit. The annual shortfall of revenues from permit sales (now \$220K annually in 2001; was \$60K in 1997) has been recognized. To facilitate permit issuance, CWS plans a pilot project to link federal and provincial systems under the Government-On-Line initiative. As well there are plans investigate the decoupling of CWS A-base from permit sale revenues.

Recommendation 5 - **Met**

Recommendation	Actions taken
A plan needs to be developed on how CWS wants to achieve new, renewed and enhanced partnerships, including the harmonization with provinces.	Although no specific plan has been developed, participation in the NABCI is an extensive partnering arrangement between American, Canadian and Mexican governmental agencies and private organizations. The initiative includes many partners and is in the process of building business and industry linkages. The CWS Strategic Plan also makes a commitment to renewed federal-provincial-territorial and international cooperation.

Recommendation 6 - **Improvements required**

Recommendation	Actions taken
There is a need to develop mechanisms for frequent communication at a national level, improve national coordination mechanisms for operational levels and establish processes for sharing experiences.	There are many general communication mechanisms in place in EC, mostly not particular to the Migratory Birds Program. The CWS Executive Committee provides for communications on national policy decisions, while formal mechanisms are in place for certain work areas such as the development of regulations.

## CONCLUSION

No further follow-up is recommended; future work is being subsumed within the broader Natural Legacy Agenda and thus should not pose undue risk to the department.