

1st Canada Goose Stakeholder Group Meeting – 9/3/2015

Welcome and thank you for taking time to attend meeting

Three meetings to occur in Pierre: today, in middle, and end of planning period. Department will present final draft of the plan to the Commission for their adoption at the April 2016 Commission meeting.

Introductions:

- Chad Switzer (GFP, Pierre) – supervise field staff, wildlife program manager, works on management plans
- Jack Broome (Regional Advisory Panel Member) – Central SD
- Chris Hesla (SD Wildlife Federation) – provide input for plan
- Mark DeVries (SD Stockgrowers, Belvidere)– Chair of SD Stockgrowers wildlife committee, represent hunters, familiar with WDM program
- John Johnson(Regional Advisory Panel Member in Northeast) – farm and ranch operations
- Brad Johnson (USFWS, Waubay) – Refuge goose management
- Mike Elsen (SD Farm Bureau, Brown Co.) - works with crop damage, interested in kill permits for producers
- Rich Grosz (USFWS, Bismarck) – Law Enforcement supervisor, Federal regulations
- Paul Dennert (Brown Co.) – GFP Commissioner
- Spencer Vaa (SD Waterfowl Association) – retired GFP waterfowl biologist, worked on last plan
- Rolf Kraft (Regional Advisory Panel Member, western SD) – retired USFWS manager for Lacreek NWR, county commissioner, worked with GFP on goose management in past, maintain population in Western part of state, concern with overhunting in early part of season
- Jacquie Ermer (GFP, Webster) – regional wildlife manager, input and insight from the field
- Mark Grovijahn (GFP, Watertown) - Waterfowl biologist, goose banding
- Rocco Murano (GFP, Brookings) – senior waterfowl biologist- worked on last plan
- Paul Mammenga (GFP, Aberdeen) – waterfowl biologist, worked on last plan
- Scott Lindgren (GFP, Watertown) – Regional Supervisor, communicate between hunters/general public and landowners regarding final season recommendations
- Keith Fisk (GFP, Pierre) – Wildlife Damage Program Administrator
- Tom Kirschenmann (GFP, Pierre) – Chief of Wildlife
- Nathan Baker (GFP, Ft. Pierre)– regional wildlife manager
- Cindy Longmire (GFP, Pierre) – Human Dimensions Specialist, aid with public communication
- John Kanta (GFP, Rapid City)– Regional wildlife manager
- Emmett Keyser (GFP, Sioux Falls) – Regional Supervisor
- Stacey Bork & Greg Wolbrink(GFP, Sioux Falls)– Wildlife Damage Specialists
- Paul Coughlin (GFP, Pierre) – Habitat Management Program Manager, public and private lands

Presenter: Chad Switzer, PowerPoint Presentation – 1st Canada Goose Stakeholder Group Meeting

Presentation

- Discussed purpose, objectives, authority, roles, and responsibilities of stakeholder group – see handout from meeting
- Discussed GFP's roles and responsibility as an agency
 - Agency's mission goal, mission statement, and values
 - Balance between hunting, fishing, and trapping with biological structure and land use
 - Strong partnership and importance of land owners to provide quality habitat
- Stakeholders will help put the puzzle together and are represented by agriculture, general public, and hunters
- most of [Chad's] time is spent managing the public and working with people, incorporate the needs and desires of stakeholders while managing wildlife
 - Chad overall feels that the agency is doing a good job with public perception and wildlife population balance
- Management Plan
 - Goals, objectives, strategies, evaluation
 - What worked and what didn't, why?
 - Where are we, where do we want to be, how to get there, did we make it?
 - Strategies are used to meet objectives
 - Annually evaluate what and why objectives got accomplished and what failed
 - Guiding document for season recommendations
 - Provide transparency to public on why GFP is doing what it's doing
- Stakeholder group
 - Diverse group
 - Have broad array of issues to address and discuss
 - Includes sportsman, general public, agriculture, landowners
 - Hope this group provides enough representation of public users
 - Members are encouraged to express opinions, thoughts, and concerns
 - Discussions will be shared with public to offer transparency
- Objectives of Stakeholder Group
 - Important link between agency and the public
 - Identify challenges and opportunities regarding geese
 - Promote discussion points to take back to the public and other organizations
 - Voluntary presence, members have a voice, but don't have authority over official decision making, budgeting, or personnel management
- Stakeholder Member Responsibilities
 - Commitment to attend
 - Offer thoughts and ideas
 - Participate with respect
 - Serve as sounding board
 - Receive recognition at commission
- GFP Division of Wildlife Responsibility
 - Information sharing on goose topics and background information

- Serve as facilitator
 - If you feel GFP is not doing the job you think it needs to do with facilitating, let GFP staff know so that it can be addressed
- Schedule meetings and provide facility
- Provide meeting notes that will be made public after review process
- State can reimburse stakeholder members for travel as appropriate, turn in I-9 form

Presenter: Rocco Murano, PowerPoint Presentation – Giant Canada Goose Management in South Dakota

Presentation

- Historically, Giant Canada Geese found in SD in suitable habitat
- Dense areas in east and less dense along Missouri River
- Market hunting, egg gathering, year round hunting with no regulations wiped out South Dakota population by 1900s
- In 1950s, some authorities declared Giant Canada Goose extinct
- Remnant population found at Waubay and Ft Sisseton
 - Waubay flock was golden standard for last wild genes of giant Canada geese
- Map depicts where geese were released and how many geese were released in each county
 - Places with history of depredation did not have any restoration efforts
 - Geese in depredation areas where from natural or transplanted populations
- Season structure
 - Seasons existed before restoration, but hunting was primarily targeting migrants along the Missouri River corridor
 - Restoration efforts were meant to target increasing breeding goose populations
 - Liberal harvest strategies began after population recovery and increase in population
- Scans of old handbooks and goose units
 - Dramatic change from late 70s in which hunting was aimed towards migrants
 - Into 1980s and 1990s, some closures still existed to protect breeding populations
 - By late 1990s almost done with restoration, some counties still couldn't harvest geese
 - 2000s removed all closures
 - Had 4 units for most of 2000s
 - Current hunting season structure has 2 units and special unit in Bennett County
 - New portion of Unit 2 in 2015 – Metro area added around Sioux Falls

Discussion (Rolf Kraft)

- The special Bennett county season in the 1970s operated by a tag system
 - 1 tag per goose, 2-4 tags per season
 - Had lots of interest, and public excited
 - During the 1970s and 1980s you would see 16-18 pounders being harvested, but now a days geese are smaller in Bennett county
 - Origin of Bennett county geese - escaped restoration birds that started a flock

Back to Presentation

- South Dakota was the first state to have an early fall goose season which began in 1998
- Daily bag has since gotten more liberal and open to more areas
- Lots of birds are being harvested, but losing participation as years go on
- August Management Take (AMT) is a relatively new management tool that has been in use over the last 5 years
 - AMT is allowed by permission of US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to help alleviate local population issues to human health or depredation
 - AMT season has expanded into more counties, but has been consistent over the past couple of years
 - AMT shows same pattern as other goose seasons – lots of geese harvested but declining hunter participation
 - Increased limits over the 5 year period
 - Harvest numbers picked up in 2012, but AMT harvest rate is relatively consistent
- It is not mandatory for hunters to report birds harvested, it's a voluntary hunter harvest survey system
- Primary population control tool - regular hunting season
 - Use full number of hunting days allowed by USFWS → longer season
 - Liberal bag limit

Discussion (Mike Elsen, Richard Grosz, & Spencer Vaa)

- Is there a chance for a spring season? – potential way to combat hunter numbers going down
- Would have to take a Federal legislative act to allow a spring Conservation Order (meant to target migrant geese and not resident breeding birds)
 - It took Act of Congress for Snow Goose Conservation Order to go through
 - Snow geese do not nest in South Dakota so Conservation Order is allowed
- There are other ways to take Canada geese outside of hunting season that can occur year round
 - Break eggs, kill permits
 - These other methods require a separate regulation and these methods are another way to manage the resident breeding population in specific areas
- If habitat is here, geese are going to nest here
- The problem birds are typically resident birds that nest in South Dakota, not in Canada
 - Any actions we take [through a spring hunting season] probably won't push these resident birds out of the state because South Dakota has the habitat these geese are looking for
- USFWS has looked at a spring season in the past and has said no for a resident Canada goose hunting season in spring or spring Conservation order for Canada geese
- Canada geese have a different population structure than snow geese in South Dakota
- A Conservation Order is meant to target migrant birds (below are some concerns for a Canada Goose Conservation Order)
 - Hunters would not be able to determine which geese are migrants vs residents
 - Hunters would see flocks of both migrants and residents

- Giant Canada geese migrate but not as far as non-resident Canada geese
- Conservation Order would not be able to target the problem resident Canada geese

Back to Presentation

- First goose management plan (1998) set population objective at 50,000 breeding birds based on three-year average of USFWS May Breeding Waterfowl Survey
- Updated plan set population objective of 80,000 – 90,000 breeding Canada geese

Question

- Was there a demand to increase the goose population?
 - South Dakota goose population was significantly higher than 50,000
 - Goose population was already higher than population objective before plan was written

Back to Presentation

- One change we are considering for this new Plan
 - Decision making matrix – displays plan of action at the intersection of objectives and tools
 - Population objective 'X' triggers 'X, Y, Z' tools
 - Tools include full framework season, bag limit, open/close more seasons for early hunts
 - Stakeholder group will help to populate the rows and columns of the matrix
 - Matrix is meant to be prescriptive so no guess work
- Population index developed from the USFWS May Breeding Waterfowl Survey has bounced around over the years
 - 2010 showed an exponential increase in Giant Canada goose population due to lots of water and quality habitat
 - There was a concern that South Dakota's liberal harvest management tools could not control the growing population
- What is causing the population to drop now?
 - Poor habitat now?
 - Cycle of muskrats caused a boom in muskrat population in 2012-2013
 - More muskrat huts increased goose nest locations and likely an increase in nest success
 - 2013 had a severe spring which dropped the goose population
 - Widespread nest failures
 - Giant Canada geese breed their 3rd year so we might be seeing a missing year class from 2013 in our current goose population
 - There are so many variables that could impact goose populations
 - Potential variables: hunter harvest across flyway, changing bag limits, muskrat population, weather
 - Harvest pressure has remained relatively constant throughout the peaks and dips of goose population
 - External (man-made) factors help take the "top off" of population

- We don't know which ones are having the biggest impacts
- 3-year trends of goose populations
 - 3-year trend line and population index have always been above the 80,000 – 90,000 population objective (2 white lines on graph)
 - 3-year average line is meant to smooth out highs and lows
- Goose banding is the primary way to monitor goose populations
 - Band recovery data comes from hunter harvest records, or recaptures by banding teams
 - The Central Flyway Banding Program operates throughout the Central Flyway in order to simultaneously gain data on harvest rates, survival rates, movements, and determine future banding needs
 - There is strong participation in the banding effort up and down the Central Flyway
 - Once the analysis is complete in 2016 should aid managers on how to manage the Central Flyway goose population
 - Kansas and Nebraska don't have May breeding waterfowl survey of geese
 - These states don't know how many breeding geese are in their state
 - The 1st year's banding information will provide survival estimates soon
 - Banding analysis movement and harvest rates have been calculated

Discussion (Spencer Vaa)

- Banding data will not replace the USFWS May breeding pair survey
- Banding survey will give an independent estimate of the goose population
- States that don't have a May survey will get an estimate
- once the banding data is compiled, states will get flyway info, differential harvest estimates for all states
- USFWS pilots are counting ducks and geese to get these estimates
- Banding and harvest numbers provide direct survival rates
 - These numbers should be pretty close to actual survival rates because not much else kills adult geese

Back to Presentation

- 2014 Direct Recoveries Map
 - Birds are banded in July during molting phase
 - Map shows post-molt movements
 - Lot of harvest occurs in Kansas
 - Over half the Canada geese harvested in South Dakota would have been harvested during the August Management Take and the Early Fall Canada Goose season in September.
- Waterfowl Opportunity maps visually show data from field staff on relative opportunity of potential to harvest Canada geese across the state
- South Dakota Research
 - Band recovery analysis to get harvest rates, movement, and survival rates
 - Strong correlation of breeding and wintering locations
 - Research has shown increases in harvest rates through time

- Projects focusing on damage to estimate size of damaged field and if deterrents were working
- Evaluate sprays as deterrent
- Current study on best management practices on the only spray that acted as deterrent = Anthraquinone
 - Anthraquinone causes upset stomach when geese consume sprayed vegetation

Discussion (Rolf Kraft & Rocco Murano, and Group)

- There is research on reproduction prevention for mammals, is there a chemical that can be used to cause infertile eggs for birds?
- There are chemicals that can disrupt bird reproduction, but we have to be careful so other birds are not impacted
 - These chemicals are currently being used for park ducks and geese to halt their breeding
- Any data on population centers for geese?
- Are hunters primarily going to honey holes or moving all around?
 - Most goose hunters are very mobile and not scared to drive a few hours for good hunting
 - Provide maps of where highest hunting pressure is occurring
 - Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Area is hunted by people coming out from the east
 - Focused hunting around 100 mile radius of human population centers

Presenter: Keith Fisk, PowerPoint Presentation – Canada Goose Depredation

Presentation

- Map – Resident Goose Spring Population Index
 - Yellow line is trend line for 3-year average
 - Goose population is dropping but trend line is still increasing over time for the last 10 years
 - You can't focus on individual years
- All wildlife is public resource
 - Most wildlife is raised on private land
 - 80-85% of South Dakota is privately owned
 - Hunters rely heavily on private land – percentages based on 2009 survey
 - 73% for pheasant hunting
 - 62% for waterfowl hunting
- Wildlife Damage Management (WDM) services
 - Allow GFP to manage for higher wildlife populations while helping to help build social and landowner tolerance of problem species
 - WDM keeps GFP from having to directly pay for damages
- 1998 Law allows \$5 surcharge to go towards WDM
 - Cooperating landowner has to sign an agreement to get assistance which allows free, reasonable access to non-family members on their property for hunting
 - Reasonable access – agency has decided that as long as some people are allowed, its reasonable

- Landowners receiving assistance cannot charge a fee for hunting access for Canada geese
- Volume of requests for WDM service
 - Variable from year-to-year depending on goose population, weather, and tolerance
 - Use hunting season as a tool
 - WDM program service is responsive to landowner/producer needs
- Chart - History
 - Left axis displays spring population index which is tracked in red
 - Right axis displays request for WDM services which is tracked in blue
 - They are really linked to each other
 - 2013 shows a drop but there will always be some damage so goose program is not going away
- Damage from birds that are here during summer during flightless period
 - These birds have a strong need to replenish their body's needs and crops offer easy walk up access
- Average complaint size for goose damage is 3 acres
- GFP's efforts are efficient but often the damage has already occurred by the time staff is notified
- Some damage near wetlands is caused by excessive water (flooded soil or crops), but geese definitely cause substantial damage
- Landscape and number of birds impact the amount of damage and when landowners ask for help, electric fences are effective during flightless stage
 - Geese are having a big impact
- Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15)
 - WDM worked with 450 landowners to address 600 requests
 - most of WDM goose activities occurred in northeastern part of state and around Brookings and Kingsbury counties where there is a high density of agriculture and wetland concentrations
 - Can have multiple complaint areas for one landowner
 - Birds are starting to expand west
 - 32% of WDM's FY15 budget was spent on geese which was approximately \$384,000 for geese
 - Most of WDM expenses used to be spent on deer and elk damage, but with the recent population declines in these species, WDM funds are switching to goose complaints
 - Since 2000, \$5.6 million spent on goose damage, worked with over 1,600 landowner/producers

Discussion (Group)

- Are WDM staff working with landowners that have repeat problems?
 - Recommending vegetative management practices?
 - Yes we are working on this, but it could be pushed more
- Been getting calls from hunters that they are repeatedly getting denied access to private land
- In Brown County – goose damage has been done before August Management Take begins
 - Request for season to start sooner when birds are causing damage

- Keith – GFP tried an early season in past but it happened to coincide with a late hatch year so hunters complained that no birds were available because birds couldn't fly by the season opening.
- GFP tries to balance an early season that helps producers and doesn't upset hunters
- What has GFP been doing to manage public land?
 - Try to use public lands to bring birds onto
 - Provide feeding sites on public lands to attract damage species
 - This helps eliminate damage on neighbors when goose populations are low but does not work when goose population are high
- Should we grow one crop for one species to help reduce damage?
 - This has been tried in the past and works when populations are low to attract problem species, but when populations are high, it's not effective
- Would a spring season be the best way to manage goose damage financially?
- Don't plant soybeans right next to water, landowner and GFP would be better off using money to put buffer strips around water to act as barrier for flightless geese

Back to Presentation

- Hunting is most effective population and damage management tool
 - Able to target specific areas
 - Liberal regulations
 - Donate Canada geese to feed the hungry (Sportsmen Against Hunger)
 - How can we keep utilizing hunters to harvest throughout the season?
- Abatement techniques
 - Electric fence is most often used
 - Temporary or permanent
 - Food plots and buffer strips
 - Buffer strips provide place for geese to feed and acts as a visual barrier to geese who do not cross the barrier, buffer strips can then become a protective barrier

Discussion (Group)

- Buffer Strips
 - Wheat is a temporary buffer strip
 - In 2011, implemented program to plant warm season grasses as a permanent buffer strip
 - Only 2 people have used these permanent strips
 - Have tried to use this program over the last 5 years, but not good enough incentive for landowners
 - Program did not come out at the best time, commodity prices were high so it wasn't worth it to producers
 - Commodity prices are dropping so, permanent buffer strips may become more successful
 - What happens when water goes down around crops (when permanent buffer is put in) and farmer now has extra area to plant crops?

Discussion (Mike Elsen & Group)

- Permanent strip is expensive to maintain and grow
- Permanent buffer strips would be hard to manage for producers
- Not great for landowners who are responsible for weed spray which is expensive
- Permanent strips may not be the great solve all
- Length of term for permanent buffer is 10-15 years in order to piggy back on Federal CRP programs
- Native grass is expensive
 - Takes 2-3 years to establish and needs some maintenance costs
 - Who covers these costs?
- It's not a practice for every landowner, but permanent/perennial buffers should be made available and promoted to landowners as an option

Back to Presentation

- Abatements
 - Install permanent fence, with cost share assistance
 - Effective technique
 - Not a whole lot of use but it is effective for those that do it
 - Feeding sites were used
 - Throughout the summer would have to place a lot of grain on the ground
 - Could be considered baiting during AMT season if not cleaned up
 - In southern part of state, attracted lots of birds to a regular food source
 - Attracted too many birds and once took food away, these birds would move into neighboring areas and cause damage
 - Hazing techniques work for a short duration
 - Person would have to be out there every other day for a long period of time to be successful
- Landowner Sub-permits
 - Have used special permit from US Fish and Wildlife Service for past 3 years
 - Allowed to take up to 9,000 birds and 2,500 nests on a species shooting/kill permit
 - Able to sub-permit landowner to shoot geese on problems areas where they see damage
 - Very restrictive
 - Kick back from hunters that they don't want landowners to shoot geese
 - Keep loosening up landowner shooting restrictions so landowners are able to take more birds
 - May be able to shoot a few birds and haze the rest
 - Started with 3 permits and now offer 350 permits
 - 10 birds per permit
 - Kill permit ends a few days before AMT so that we don't have any safety concerns for hunters
 - This permit is not a hunting season, it has very strict restrictions
 - GFP found that landowners don't shoot many birds

- Approximately 4 birds lethally removed per landowner
- If landowners fill their permit (10 birds), simply call GFP office to get a new permit
- Not impacting the number of birds available to hunters

Discussion (Group)

- Landowner kill permit
 - USFWS permit states the carcasses have to be burned, buried, or donated. Due to the heat, condition of carcass, etc. GFP has decided to only allow burn or bury.
 - Bad public image to see corpses in fields
 - Usually harvested in warmer months so not safe for human consumption
 - Fewer donation sites; participating meat processor not always close to harvest site
 - ND allows landowners to burn and bury birds
 - As time moves on, both of the Dakotas have been establishing the same regulations to avoid donations during warmer months
 - States have pushed the USFWS to make regulations and allow kills to happen
 - The Dakotas have spearheaded the landowner kill permit movement
 - other states are starting to consider/use landowner kill permits
 - USFWS wants to take baby steps so that they can be cautious and see how things work out so that other programs are not jeopardized
 - Landowners can get a kill permit and sub-permit designees on their permit to kill the birds
 - Up to 2 designees per landowner permit
 - Mike Elsen recommended an online sign-up program for landowner
 - Landowner able to change who the sub-permittee is
 - Changing the permittee is pretty easy to change, just a phone call to GFP staff and a new signature
 - GFP anticipated individuals were going to be able to harvest 10 birds per permit
 - GFP requested 9,000 bird limit goal to be set in 2013 by USFWS
 - GFP could request an increase in the number of birds harvested via permits if we ever got close to the 9,000 harvested birds per year limit
 - USFWS would consider a request to increase harvest numbers by kill permits
 - USFWS not going to increase the permit harvest number until South Dakota reaches the 9,000 Canada goose limit
 - For the Spring Canada Goose Program, can we open restrictions on who landowners can donate to?
 - Burn and bury is currently required so that GFP isn't perceived as promoting wanton waste or letting the public see corpses left in fields/wetlands
 - Balance between biological population drop and not getting a black eye perception from the public
 - Currently you cannot donate to your neighbor or anyone other than South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunter (SAH)

- Need some kind of check and balance system for donations from law enforcement perspective so that we know birds are being harvested legally and responsibly
 - Also a form of quality control at donation centers
 - Currently only 7-8 SAH goose sites across the state
 - Big game has approximately 40 processors participating with SAH
 - Goose SAH sites require separate facilities that are regulated by FDA
 - Geese are also harvested during most SAH site's off season
 - Concern that donating to neighbor will still be waste if they don't consume the bird
 - Public has more support for donating to SAH instead of burning and burying
 - Not a whole lot of meat on a summer goose
 - SAH tracks where bird came from, where it was processed, and where meat was delivered
 - SAH willing to take donations if regulations are lifted
 - Need to have some accountability and checks and balance of where the meat is going
 - Permittees are not going to take the time to collect the birds and deliver to SAH location when out checking crops
 - Spring Canada Goose Program is currently not being implemented as a management tool
- Increase marketing for landowners to learn about landowner kill permits
 - Landowner kill permit program is meant to be one of the last resorts to deal with goose damage
 - May be worth promoting if it increases tolerance of geese by landowners
 - Currently, landowner has to request a permit or GFP staff mention to landowners that have had problems in the past
 - Comment was made that Brown County landowner never been offered option of getting a landowner kill permit and also wanted Brown CO. included in the Spring Canada Goose Program; GFP response: Brown County was not in the geographic area open to the Spring Canada Goose Program for 2013 and 2014 because the program centered around majority of damage complaints.
 - GFP Region 4 (northeast part of state) sent each landowner a letter about the landowner kill permit to any landowner who had requested goose assistance in 2013 and/or 2014 so some landowners could have been missed.
 - Offer an online application to get permit that day?
 - GFP staff would have to be accountable and make sure we are handing out permits to areas with a history of goose damage
 - Conservation Officers need that face to face contact to form good relationship with landowner to improve compliance

Back to Presentation

- Spring Canada goose program

- Implemented in spring 2013 and 2014
- USFWS permit, sub-contract from GFP's permit to program participants
- Strict restrictions
- Able to donate birds to Sportsmen Against Hunger (SAH)
- Open from April 1 – April 30
- Focused on areas with history of crop damage
- Online registration for voluntary hunters
- Program was discontinued after 2014

Discussion (group)

- Brown County was not part of the Spring Canada Goose Program for either year because Brown County was not in an area of high complaint volume
 - 8-9 times as many complaints in Day and Clark county
 - GFP wanted to see how the program would work before it spread to other counties

Back to Presentation

- Spring Canada Goose Program
 - Most birds were harvested in Day and Minnehaha counties
 - Lots of geese harvested in Minnehaha County with fewer permittees
 - Close to home for hunters, harvest more birds
 - Lots of geese harvested in Day County, but also lots of permittees
 - Weighed harvested birds to determine if bird was resident or migrant
 - 90% of birds were resident geese
 - Difficult to evaluate success of program
 - Initial objectives of program: haze birds away from problem areas, lower population at local level, reduce damage and GFP expenditures
 - Good public support from landowners and sportsmen
 - Learned that we can specifically target resident birds
 - Able to work with USFWS support
 - Able to feed the hungry
 - Hard to measure if birds were successfully hazed from problem areas because so few birds were harvested
 - 9,000 birds were permitted per year and only 820 birds were harvested

Discussion (group)

- Chances of other counties getting included such as Brown & Marshall?
 - Program is no longer in use due to low harvest numbers
 - Spring goose program did not happen in 2015
 - The previous years did not have the desired effect
 - Some sportsman supported the program by signing up, but there was some negative feedback as well
 - Had to send out a news release that 2015 program was not going to happen
 - No survey of actual sportsman response to the program
 - Lots of requests for going with a 2015 season and adding new counties

- GFP had expected to harvest 2-3,000 geese each year
 - Did not see the harvest numbers and participation expected
 - Restrictions, other hunting seasons occurring at same time, and weather were all contributing factors to low harvest and participation

Back to Presentation

- Lethal Take (combination of all non-hunting season goose harvests)
 - USFWS permit
 - Nest addling up to 2,500 nests
 - Take up to 9,000 birds a year
 - Goose population numbers correlate with numbers of birds harvested under Lethal Take permit
- Additional Research
 - Chemical spray that makes leaves unpalatable to geese
 - Positive preliminary results
 - Started a spin off program in Clark County
 - Participating landowners came in and sprayed their lands, but EPA came in with restrictions and shut down the project until further studies occur on safety to humans
- Transparency and Accountability
 - Publish annual reports for WDM program
 - GFP is not trying to hide anything
 - Look in report or give staff a call if you have questions
 - Need to display where money is being spent

Presenters: Rocco Murano, Chad Switzer, Keith Fisk, Paul Coughlin, Power Point Presentation – second half of 1st Canada Goose Stakeholder Group meeting

- See slides for current management plan goal and 4 main objectives

Discussion & Slides (Group)

- Objective A: maintain Canada goose spring population index with a 3-year average of 80,000 - 90,000 birds
 - We have always been above this goal
 - Was it realistic goal?
 - Should plan shift away from this objective?
 - 2015 has been the closest year to reach goal since plan was developed
 - Is Objective A an exclusively biological objective?
 - No, it's a social objective, not a biological objective
 - No habitat constraints exist for geese today
 - Some overlap with Objective A & C
 - If we had 50,000 birds for spring population goal, would it greatly impact Objective C?
 - Goose complaint battles are based on Objective C, population goal may be too high

- Strategy A-1 – use USFWS May Breeding Population survey to determine spring Canada Goose population
 - May surveys are broken up into strata
 - look at page 25 of management plan for strata groups
 - Monitor spring population trends – accomplished
- Strategy A-2 – restore, create, retain wetlands to provide habitat
 - GFP provides assistance to public and other agencies to help promote habitat for wildlife
 - GFP does on the ground work to create, enhance, and restore public and private land
 - GFP also works in policy arena to advocate for wetland protection
 - Not as big of a concern for geese any more since population is booming
 - Wetlands are valuable to other wildlife species
 - Created wetlands/ponds can increase cattle range conditions
 - Creating wetlands can increase goose numbers but creating wetlands is primarily geared towards cattle ranching and not crop fields
 - GFP assisted wetland projects are going into grassland locations, not in cropland
- Strategy A-3 - minimize other causes of mortality
 - This is an ethical component more than biological
 - Lead poisoning is an issue
 - South Dakota was national leader on implementing lead shot regulations
 - Botulism and wounding are other issues
 - GFP Staff hold shooting workshops to reduce wounding loss
- Objective B: provide maximum hunting opportunity
- Strategy B-1 – use tag system to limit hunting pressure where it needs to be limited to ensure a quality hunting experience
 - Recommendation brought to GFP Commission to dissolve Unit 3 (Bennet County) into Unit 2
 - Commission withdrew proposal
 - Bennett County still has tag limit
 - Local public expects hunting pressure to increase early on if Unit 3 change occurs, but over the years, hunter numbers will drop back to where they are with the current tag system
 - Request to make Unit 3 season more like turkey system where you can buy goose tags over the counter and make tags available locally
 - Pick up tags until they were sold out
 - Local support for this
 - Commission did not pass Unit 3 change because they wanted to clean up the convoluted licensing terminology
 - Bennett County issue could come up again
 - Make whole licensing system more fluid before Unit 3 change passes through
- Strategy B-2 – Use full federal framework for early goose seasons with maximum bag limits, consider August Management Take
 - USFWS is in charge of migratory bird management and regulations
 - State can be more restrictive, but cannot be more liberal than federal rules

- USFWS has been working with GFP to loosen restrictions on Canada Geese
- Strategy B-3 – Use full federal framework for early goose seasons with maximum bag limits
- Strategy B-5 – Use post-season hunter survey to collect and monitor harvest data for early goose seasons
 - GFP uses harvest surveys to monitor number of hunters and hunting pressure
 - Currently lumps all goose seasons together
 - Starting to add confidence intervals to survey reports
 - Surveys are not 100% accurate but provide the best data available
- Strategy B-7: standardized banding program with analysis
 - Wrapped up efforts with banding in 2015
 - Start to utilize trend data to estimate survival and population model efforts
- Objective C: Reduce crop damage and nuisance problems caused by locally-breeding geese
 - Keith’s presentation discusses most of these strategies
- Strategy C-3 – Trap and Transfer
 - How much trapping and releasing of geese going on currently?
 - GFP does none now
 - Surplus birds have been moved in the past
 - Trap and transfer urban geese into other parts of the state but limited numbers
 - Worked with city council
 - Last time this happened was in 2012
 - Agency doesn’t want to cause issues to other areas so no longer trapping and releasing
 - If GFP has to transfer birds, should be to public areas
 - When this was done in past, birds were released in public land not close to agricultural operations
 - Should remove Strategy C-3 from next plan
- Strategy C-5 – consider using ‘Management Take’ provision of the ‘Final Rule for the Control of Resident Canada Goose Populations’ when established hunting seasons and WDM programs are unsuccessful
 - States that South Dakota will not be able to hunt geese in Spring
 - AMT was final ruling
 - USFWS is not going to change this regulation

Break out Session Groups to identify current issues/challenges/opportunities to incorporate into next Goose Management Plan

Group 1 – Rocco Murano & Paul Coughlin

- (B) Hunting Access – challenge of sportsmen’s dollars going to damage program, but hunters are not getting access to these private areas
- (A) Population Index – try to get more realistic population index that is more in line with what is possible
 - South Dakota has never been able to get a good estimate
 - Graph on page 8 of current Management Plan
 - Population goal was way below the actual population

- (B) Kill permits and egg addling program
 - Concern to loosen regulations on kill permit
 - Keep control over program and be accountable for where birds are going
 - Egg addling → no longer available for harvest, sportsmen upset
- (D) Habitat improvement – public land/benefit additional species
- (D) Hunting Access – good habitat

Group 2 – Jacquie Ermer

- (A) Use additional measures/data to improve population index
 - Another way to estimate population and trend?
 - Validity of the breeding population index
 - Actual number vs breeding population index
 - Request for a hard number within each strata
 - What is realistic goal for each strata
 - Should be an easier or better way to estimate numbers
 - How is index actually being used?
 - How where strata generated
- (A) Need better awareness of depredation tools
 - Kill permits offered online
 - Easier to use
 - Re-evaluate spray studies
 - Re-evaluate spring program with different dates
 - Look into federal regulations
- (E) Something in plan to address disease issues (e.g., bird flu)

Group 3 – Keith Fisk

- Population objective
 - Defensible measure of what success looks like
- (B) Rather than make changes to population objective now, get to current objective and then evaluate for future
- (C) Discuss management tools (AMT, early September, general)
 - Potential to reduce bag limit for each goose season
 - Does AMT harvest impact limits for later seasons
 - Eliminate AMT?
- (F) Urban goose management
 - Where we are and what we are doing
- (G) SAH donations in general
 - Currently, the donation of Canada geese ends the day before the youth waterfowl season as set by the USFWS.
 - Allow donations later on in season
- (C) If hunting isn't getting population down, what other tools can be used?
- (H) Non-consumptive users – photographers, bird watchers
- (I) WDM Surcharge increase to help out program
 - Last added in 1998?

- (I) Evaluate non-resident fees associated with goose hunting
 - Currently not too high

Break out Session Topic Groups (Stakeholders were given 2 stickers and asked to identify their priority topics/issues)

- A. Population Index goal (8 votes)
- B. Depredation Tools (3 votes)
- C. Additional Tools/Management Tools (1 vote)
- D. Habitat/Access (3 votes)
- E. Disease
- F. Urban Goose Management
- G. Sportsmen Against Hunger Donations
- H. Wildlife Viewing
- I. License Fees/Surcharge (1 vote)
- J. Population Index method

Break out Session Discussions – entire group

Topic A: Population Objective

- South Dakota goose population has never been at the 80,000-90,000 population goal since the first management plan was developed in 1998.
- The objective should be able to get to the current population goal first before changing it again
- How does the public feel about where we are today with the population
 - Crop Damage vs hunters?
 - Assess how people feel about the way it is now before we set an arbitrary number
- If everyone feels that the population is good, set the population goal to what actual population is now
- Landowner wants a hard number to hold people accountable
 - Farmers are number people.
- 3 year average right now is 192,000
 - 80,000-90,000 is not realistic
 - 120,000-140,000 is more realistic
 - Hunters would not like to go down to 80-90,000, this number is pretty low.
 - 80,000-90,000 goal was set in first plan to react to agricultural depredation issues
 - Cannot justify where the 80,000-90,000 goal came from
 - Waterfowl staff looked at breeding pairs and managing population for the breeding component
 - What could the state accept as a breeding population?
 - Conversation switched over to an index number
 - This is only useful if you see the trend
 - An index number is not a real number
 - How are we going to use the number
 - Is it the breeding population in the spring or the goose population in South Dakota during the fall?

- Management plan is meant to manage breeding geese not all geese that utilize South Dakota throughout the year
 - What is the population objective?
 - How many geese are really on the ground or the trend
- We are going to have to use the USFWS spring index
 - Plan states that the 80,000-90,000 value is what the spring population goal is
 - Plan number should be an attainable number
 - Too much water on landscape for population to drop
 - It's going to take time to get goose population down
 - In 5 years, may need to change number again
- Is the number biological or social?
 - Both, more social than biological
 - Two sides to social
 - What the sportsmen and women want
 - How many geese will the landowners tolerate?
- Tools have changed over the last 5 years
 - Amount of damage 5 years ago is significantly higher than what it is today
 - Complaints also down now from 5 years ago
 - Complaints and population index mirror each other well
 - GFP has added lots of tools over the last 5 years to manage populations
 - We have tools that are successful to help landowners and provide adequate numbers for hunters
 - 3 acres of damage is average now, 5 years ago it was 5+ acres of damage
 - Not saying that this level of damage is acceptable
 - What level is acceptable to landowners?
 - Northeast GFP region has about half the staff working on WDM in 2015 than in 2011
 - Through tools, we are getting close to that acceptable tolerance of damage
 - The WDM program can always get better, but WDM is working
 - What do hunters want?
 - Hunters were really happy 3-4 years ago
 - We know that hunter satisfaction has declined as goose populations decline
- Hunter Satisfaction
 - At what point do you start to see a decline in waterfowl stamps sold
 - This is declining, nationally
 - Fall migration is geared more towards migrant geese, not resident geese
 - What is hunter satisfied with?
 - No AMT season?
 - Change in bag limit?
 - We should have a goose population where all of the extra management seasons are not necessary
 - If hunters have access to the geese, hunters are going to come out to hunt
 - AMT and Early Fall season not going to satisfy hunters

- Problem lies with people taking sportsmen's dollars to halt depredation, and hunters can't get access to those fields
- 20 years ago compared to now, it's not worth the hassle to try to get access now
 - Hard to get access now
 - GFP doesn't see geese in fields that the public can't access
 - Landowner allows access to one hunter and he locks out public from using nearby fields
 - Too many requests for not enough fields
 - Requests to hunt are coming all for the same time
 - Landowners may be turning people down because they have already granted access to someone else and limit access for safety concerns
 - Landowner liability to let someone on your land
- 80,000-90,000 goal is too low and unobtainable
 - Should range be bigger to account for fluctuation in population?
 - 90,000-140,000 range?
 - Group agrees that we need a larger range
 - No matter what number we pick, it's going to be arbitrary.
 - USFWS uses a 10% error range
 - 30,000 bird range is more agreeable
- Need to do a better job of defending how population goal was developed
 - Science of how USFWS collects index is not precise enough to set a 10,000 bird range
 - If you get below range have to consider increasing population, if above then drop population
 - Cannot always be changing the window of population
 - Use range size to account for population fluctuations
- Recognize that this number is a landowner tolerance and hunter tolerance value, not a biological number
 - Hunters would likely not accept 80,000-90,000 bird number if actually achieved
 - Not meant to set number today, just want a discussion on what stakeholders want
 - Don't let agriculture get too big of an influence in decision
- 20 years ago getting one goose was exciting, now you get 15 a day to get excited
 - Hunters are not going to be happy as population goes down
 - Some sportsmen can have a great hunt and not shooting any birds
 - "Life's a bugger and then you die".
 - Generation of hunters get spoiled and won't be satisfied with lower numbers
 - Should not have to manage for 15 birds a hunter
 - If hunter can shoot guaranteed 15 geese a day and GFP has the funding capacity to make landowners happy, you have your number
- We have at least turned the corner and population has hopefully topped out
 - Can we "shoot" our way out of this?
- Stakeholder Opinion Database(SOD) is collecting information (landowners and sportsman) on wildlife complaint perception
 - Data collected by Conservation Officers and Wildlife Damage Specialists
 - SOD is not representative of population as whole, more opportunistic

- 150 entries related to geese so far
- Provide explanation in new plan that this number is not a biological number
 - Be transparent that this number is meant to find a happy medium between landowners and sportsmen and women

Topic B: Depredation Tools

- If people could get more access, would depredation be reduced?
- Educational outreach on kill permits
 - If landowners know that there is assistance and tools out there, maybe there would be greater utilization and help bring down numbers and depredation
 - May also help with tolerance
 - Brown county was not included in the experimental Spring Canada Goose program
 - All Depredation tools are available to every county.
 - Spring Canada Goose Program was limited to a select group of counties, but no longer in operation
 - Everyone that had a complaint in the 2014 season received a letter in 2015 about depredation tools
 - Use media outreach and online access more
 - Make it easier so that landowner can get permission to use tools from home
 - We've doubled the amount of depredation tools from now to 2010
 - Some might work now and some might not
 - Does staff know all of the depredation tools available?
 - Staff that deal with these programs do
- \$300-400,000 is what is being spent on WDM program annually
 - Agency is comfortable with this expense
- Kill permits were a last resort for depredation tool box
 - Is agency ready for kill permit to be openly available?
 - GFP would prefer faces on the ground working with landowner and agency
 - Need checks and balances so that GFP is being responsible to sportsmen
 - New landowners would not get as quick of access as landowners that have had history of goose damage
 - Wildlife Damage Specialists should have to come out and check the land
 - Meeting the landowner is very important
 - Need to assure that landowners are following the rules
 - Face to face opportunity allows option to stress going over with landowner the rules
 - If GFP uses the landowners as sub-permittees and they fail to comply, GFP could lose statewide permit to harvest geese from USFWS
 - Good point that landowners know tools are available
 - Advertise in GFP Landowners Matter Newsletter
 - Some of these people would not qualify for the kill permit program
- Use vegetative management as a tool
 - Historically wasn't lucrative enough for landowners, but maybe it is now
 - Incentives are great but landowner is still responsible for weed control

- If you rent land and plant crop on it, landowner doesn't have to take care of weeds, the renter does
- With CRP, have to manage land more
- If land isn't in compliance, CRP gets pulled and receive late or no payment
- Landowner doesn't get paid until fall
- If landowner rents it out, the renter has to take care of the land and he pays the landowner right away, doesn't have to wait until the fall
- Buffer incentive program had bad timing when it was rolled out, now is good time for another promotion of the buffer program
- Include in plan who should be pushing buffer program
 - Get involvement from partner groups?
- Will work for a few producers, but not others
- Some people only want to farm, they don't want to be part of the program
- Is this buffer incentive program a viable strategy?
- Push information out to the landowner
- 180% increase on rental property money if in CRP and WIA bonus for this program
- 100% rental from CRP and 40% from GFP for WIA

Topic C: Additional Tools

- Current Walk-In Area (WIA) program
 - Standard area is \$1/acre. CRP incentives and other incentives increase by \$5/acre
 - Multiple year contract adds even more money
 - On working lands with agriculture production = \$1/acre
 - Look at increasing charge for working lands to help persuade people to sign up
 - Way to increase access?
 - If this is a higher priority, increase the WIA payment?
 - Waterfowl access is \$3-5/acre depending on quality of habitat
 - Lot less than what you get paid for private hunting access
 - 1.2 million acres of WIA access signed up
- August Management Take
 - Changed AMT so much that it's hard to estimate its impact
 - Largely appears that harvest rates of birds have remained constant before and after AMT was implemented and between seasons with AMT counties and without AMT open counties
 - Only way to know is to remove AMT and see what happens

Topic D: Habitat Access

- Maximum access for hunters
 - What tools can we implement to increase access?
- Can more funding be used to provide better access on working lands?
- Spending limit is set by commission
- With lower deer populations, WDM program is able to spend more money on geese
- Previously, WDM program had to cannibalize from other programs to cover damage costs

Action Items

For Stakeholders Members

- Get your constituents thoughts on what we have discussed and things we may have missed in this discussion
- Is there anything GFP staff can do to improve the Stakeholder Group meetings?
- Get constituent response and opinion about current population goal of 80,000-90,000 geese

For GFP staff

- Bullet list of 4-5 things to have stakeholders bring to next stakeholder meeting
- Send slides electronically
- Provide PDFs of research projects for group to read
- Forward stakeholders with staff to contact for more info
- Increase staff interactions with landowners
- Send out the 15 comments that were received when current plan was sent out for public comment on new plan
- Public opinion
 - Want a hunter and landowner satisfaction survey
 - Satisfaction survey will not be part of this plan, but should be part of next revision
- Send out comments from 2012 wildlife on private land survey
 - 2,000 landowners responded
- Advertise more on availability of programs
 - Buffer strips
 - Landowner kill permit
- Get a list of all of the depredation tools