

Appendix B. International Treaties and Other Conservation Initiatives

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitats (Ramsar, Iran 1971) is the first modern global intergovernmental treaty on conservation and wise use of natural resources. Popularly known as the Ramsar Convention, originally it emphasized the conservation and wise use of wetlands primarily to provide habitat for water birds. Over the years, however, the treaty has broadened its scope to cover all aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, recognizing wetlands as ecosystems extremely important to conserving biodiversity conservation, and to the well-being of human communities.

As of February 2000, 118 contracting parties world-wide took part in the treaty, and 1016 sites had been designated to protect almost 73 million hectares of wetlands. In 1987, the Refuge Complex was designated as a “Wetland of International Importance.” It is one of only 18 sites in the United States to have received that designation.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, adopted in 1986, establishes cooperation among the United States, Canada, and Mexico to reverse declines in waterfowl populations and their habitat throughout North America. The 1986 plan establishes continental breeding population goals for all North American species of ducks, and habitat objectives to achieve those goals. Breeding population goals were based on 1970–1979 levels of duck populations. It also establishes winter population goals for all species of geese.

The plan bases its habitat objectives, expressed in numbers of acres of wetland habitat to be protected, restored, and enhanced, on the assumption that “Restoring waterfowl populations to the levels of the 1970s would require continental habitat characteristics [acreages] similar to those present during the 1970s.” This generally parallels one of the building blocks used to derive waterfowl management objectives.

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) is a partnership among government and private organizations to meet objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Wetlands are a focus area of ACJV. As a wetlands focus area, the Refuge Complex contributes to achieving the primary goal of ACJV, which is to “provide for the long-term conservation of wetland habitats and their associated wildlife” on the Atlantic Coast. Another major goal of ACJV is to restore and maintain migratory bird populations at 1970 levels.

Partners In Flight is a voluntary collaboration of governmental and private organizations in North, Central, and South America. Like the Ramsar Convention and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners In Flight formed to address migratory bird conservation at an international level. Its primary goal is to improve the monitoring, research, management, and education programs involving native, non-game landbirds and their habitats. Its national conservation strategy provides the framework for preparing habitat-based bird conservation

plans that set conservation priorities and specific objectives for bird populations and habitats for every state.

North American Colonial Water Bird Plan.—This plan is in development.

The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, now in draft form, is a collaboration among researchers, land managers, and education specialists to advance the effective conservation of North American shorebird species through cooperation with colleagues from Mexico and Canada (Manomet Center for Conservation 2000). The plan, which has three main components (habitat management, research and monitoring, and education and outreach), has three main objectives:

1. Develop a standardized, scientifically sound system for monitoring and studying shorebird populations, which will provide practical information to researchers and land managers for shorebird habitat conservation;
2. Identify principles and practices upon which all levels of management plans (local, State, Federal) can effectively integrate shorebird conservation with multiple species strategies; and,
3. Design an integrated approach for increasing public education about shorebird and wetland conservation.

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