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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT

of

PUBLIC MEETING

May 29, 2002

Location:
Colorado Division of Wildlife
NE Region Service Center
6060 Broadway
Denver, Colorado

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. CASE: I think we'll go ahead and get
3 started. You guys don't have to sit way in the back
4 there. There's room up front. Come on up.

5 My name is Dave Case, and I'm the facilitator
6 for tonight's meeting. I guess we don't really need a
7 facilitator. We could all sit in a circle and talk. But
8 we'll still go through the formal process.

9 As you know, the purpose of the meeting tonight
10 is to take public comment, on the
11 Draft Environmental Impact Statement that the U.S. Fish
12 and Wildlife Service has prepared in relation to resident
13 Canada goose overabundance.

14 The process we're going to go through is pretty
15 simple. I'll go through that in a minute. First, I would
16 like to introduce Ron Kokel, with the U.S. Fish and
17 Wildlife Service. He's largely responsible for putting
18 together the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

19 Also I would like to thank Jim Gammonley from the
20 Colorado Division of Wildlife for help in setting this up,
21 and also the other Colorado Division of Wildlife folks for
22 making it tonight.

23 When you came in we handed out cards, the
24 numbered cards. And we'll go in order. So there's some
25 who get to go early on and some will have to wait until

1 later.

2 When you come up, we'll let you use this podium,
3 just state your name. If you could spell your last name
4 for us so we get it right for the court reporter, we sure
5 would appreciate it. We are recording this and will have
6 a full record.

7 I normally say I apologize in advance if you
8 take too long and I have to cut you off, but I don't think
9 we'll worry about it tonight.

10 I do have a sign-up sheet. If you would like to
11 get a copy of the Final Environmental Impact Statement,
12 sign up on this. There's a box there to check if you
13 received the first one. Check that. If you've not
14 received one before, then check that one, just so we make
15 sure we don't send you two copies.

16 So with that, I would like to introduce again
17 Ron Kokel. He's going to give a brief presentation on the
18 components of the Environmental Impact Statement, and then
19 we'll open it up for comments.

20 So, Ron.

21

22

23 MR. KOKEL: Thank you, Dave. And a good evening,
24 everybody. Again, I'm Ron Kokel. I'm with the U.S. Fish
25 and Wildlife Service, Division of Migratory Bird

1 Management, and I'm stationed in Arlington, Virginia. And
2 on behalf of our director, Steve Williams, I would like to
3 welcome everybody that's here tonight.

4 This is the tenth of eleven public meetings
5 that are being held across the country for the purpose of
6 inviting public participation and input into our process
7 of developing an Environmental Impact Statement for
8 resident Canada goose management. This DEIS was developed
9 in full cooperation with the U.S. Department of
10 Agriculture's Wildlife Services.

11 First off, why are we here? Well, we're here
12 for a couple reasons. We're here to explain what's in the
13 draft, its proposed action, and to listen to your
14 comments. The draft considers a range of management
15 alternatives for addressing expanding populations of
16 resident geese.

17

18 As such, really we're just here to listen to
19 you and to invite your comments on what our recommended
20 management is.

21 First, a brief explanation of the National
22 Environmental Policy Act. The National Environmental
23 Policy Act really governs this whole process that we're
24 in. It requires completion of an EIS to analyze
25 environmental and socio-economic impacts associated with

1 any significant Federal action.

2 And, secondly, NEPA requires public involvement,
3 which includes a scoping period before the draft is issued
4 and a comment period after the draft is issued.

5 We began this process in August of 1999 when we
6 published a notice that announced our intent to prepare
7 this draft. Then in February of 2000 we held nine public
8 scoping meetings across the country, one of which was held
9 here in Denver, designed to seek public input into the
10 process. Scoping ended in March of 2000.

11 In response to scoping, we received over 3,000
12 comments and over 1250 people attended the nine public
13 meetings.

14 What did we find during scoping? We found that
15 the top issues of concern were property damage and
16 conflicts caused by resident geese, the methods of
17 conflict abatement that are available, sport hunting
18 opportunities on resident geese, the economic impacts
19 resident geese cause, human health and safety concerns,
20 and the impacts to the Canada geese themselves.

21 NEPA also outlines a specific format for an
22 environmental impact statement. There's a purpose in each
23 section: An alternative section, an effective environment
24 section, and an environmental consequences section.

25 But, first, what exactly are we talking about

1 when we talk about resident Canada geese? We define
2 resident Canada geese in the EIS as those geese which nest
3 within the lower 48 states in the months of March, April,
4 May, or June, or reside within the lower 48 states in the
5 months of April, May, June, July, or August.

6 The purpose of the EIS was threefold: First was
7 to evaluate alternative strategies to reduce, manage, and
8 control resident goose populations in the U.S.

9 Second, to provide a regulatory mechanism that
10 would allow state and local agencies, other federal
11 agencies, and local groups and individuals to respond to
12 damage complaints or damages caused by resident geese.

13 And, thirdly, to guide and direct the resident
14 Canada goose population management activities in the
15 United States.

16 The need for the EIS was two-fold:
17 Increasing resident Canada goose populations, coupled with
18 the growing conflicts, damages, and socio-economic impacts
19 that they cause, has resulted in a reexamination of the
20 Services' resident Canada goose management.

21 The EIS looked at seven alternatives.

22 Alternative A was no action. This is the
23 baseline for all the analyses.

24 Alternative B is a nonlethal control and
25 management alternative which only includes those

1 non-Federally permitted activities.

2 Alternative C is also a nonlethal control and
3 management, but does include some Federally permitted
4 activities.

5 Alternative D is expanded hunting methods and
6 opportunities.

7 Alternative E, we termed it integrated
8 depredation order management.

9 Alternative F is the proposed action, termed
10 state empowerment.

11 And, lastly, Alternative G is a general
12 depredation order.

13 Under Alternative A, the no-action alternative,
14 we wouldn't have any additional regulatory methods or
15 strategies. We would continue to
16 use those special hunting seasons, the issuance of
17 individual depredation permits, and the issuance of any
18 special Canada goose permits.

19 Under the second alternative, nonlethal control
20 and management, which includes non-Federally permitted
21 activities, we would cease all
22 lethal control of resident Canada geese and their eggs.
23 Only nonlethal harassment techniques would be allowed, the
24 Service wouldn't issue any permits, and all special
25 hunting seasons on resident geese would be discontinued.

1 Under the third alternative, nonlethal control and
2 management, which includes some Federally permitted
3 activities, we would cease all permitted lethal control
4 of resident geese, with several exceptions. Included
5 among these would be promotion of nonlethal harassment
6 techniques. There would be no depredation or special
7 Canada goose permits issued. Egg addling of Canada goose
8 eggs would be allowed with a Federal permit, and special
9 hunting seasons would be continued.

10 Under the fourth alternative, expanded hunting methods
11 and opportunities, we would
12 provide new regulatory options designed to increase the
13 harvest of resident Canada geese. We would authorize
14 additional hunting methods, such as electronic calls,
15 unplugged guns, and expanded shooting hours.

16 These seasons could be operational during
17 September 1 to 15, they could be experimental during
18 September 16 to 30, but they would have to be conducted
19 outside of any other open season.

20 The fifth alternative is termed integrated
21 depredation order management. And actually this
22 alternative consists of four different depredation orders.
23 There's an airport depredation order, a nest and egg
24 depredation order, an agriculture depredation order, and a
25 public health depredation order.

1 Implementation of any of these orders would be
2 up to the individual state wildlife agency. Special
3 hunting seasons would be continued and the issuance of all
4 depredation permits and special Canada goose permits would
5 also be continued.

6 More specifically, the airport depredation order
7 would authorize airports to establish and implement a
8 controlled program, which could include indirect and/or
9 direct population control strategies. The intent of this
10 program would be to significantly reduce Canada goose
11 populations at airports.

12 The nest and egg depredation order would allow
13 the destruction of resident Canada goose nests and eggs
14 without a permit. The intent of this program would be to
15 stabilize resident Canada goose breeding populations.

16 The agriculture depredation order would
17 authorize landowners, operators, and tenants that are
18 actively engaged in commercial agriculture to conduct
19 indirect and/or direct control strategies on geese that
20 are depredating on agriculture crops. Again, with this
21 alternative, as with the other ones, management acts would
22 have to occur on the premises.

23 The last depredation order is a public health
24 depredation order, which would authorize state, county,
25 municipal, or local public health officials to conduct

1 indirect and/or direct control strategies on geese when
2 it's recommended by health officials that there's a public
3 health threat. And with this one, management actions
4 would also have to occur on the premises.

5 The sixth alternative is our proposed action,
6 which we term state empowerment. Under this alternative,
7 we would establish a new regulation which would authorize
8 state wildlife agencies or their authorized agents to
9 conduct or allow management activities on resident goose
10 populations.

11 The intent of this program is to allow state
12 wildlife agencies sufficient flexibility to deal with the
13 problems caused by resident geese within their respective
14 states.

15 The program would authorize indirect and/or
16 direct population control strategies, such as aggressive
17 harassment programs, nest and egg destruction, gosling and
18 adult trapping programs, and would allow implementation of
19 any of those specific depredation orders that I went over
20 under Alternative E.

21 Additionally, during existing special hunting
22 seasons we would expand the methods of take to increase
23 hunter harvest, as I explained under Alternative D. We
24 would authorize additional hunting methods.

25 Again, these seasons would be operational during

1 September 1 to 15, they could be experimental during
2 September 16 to 30, but they would have to be conducted
3 outside of other open seasons.

4 In addition, we would establish a conservation
5 order which would provide special expanded harvest
6 opportunities under a portion of the Migratory Bird Treaty
7 Closed Period. That is August 1 to 31 and a portion of
8 the Treaty Open Period of September 1 to 15.

9 Like with the additional hunting methods
10 identified under Alternative D, we would also authorize
11 those. And, again, those would have to be conducted
12 outside of any other open season.

13 Under the program, the Service would annually
14 assess the impact and the effectiveness of the program,
15 and there would be a provision for possible suspension of
16 the regulations, that is, the conservation order and/or
17 the special hunting season changes, when the need was no
18 longer present.

19 We would also continue all special and regular
20 hunting seasons. We would continue the issuance of
21 depredation and special Canada goose permits. The only
22 state requirements under the program would be to annually
23 monitor the spring breeding populations and to annually
24 report on authorized activities.

25 The last alternative is a general depredation

1 order for Canada geese. Under this alternative we would
2 allow any authorized person to conduct management
3 activities on resident geese that either pose a threat to
4 health, human safety, or of causing damage. It would be
5 available between April 1 and August 31. It would provide
6 some expanded hunting opportunities like under Alternative
7 D.

8 We would also continue to use the special and
9 regular hunting seasons in the issuance of depredation and
10 special Canada goose permits. And unlike Alternative F,
11 under Alternative G the authorization for all management
12 activities would come directly from the U.S. Fish and
13 Wildlife Service.

14 Under the effective environmental study we
15 looked at two things. We looked at the biological
16 environment and we looked at the socio-economic
17 environment.

18 Under the biological environment, we looked at
19 the resident Canada goose populations, water quality of
20 wetlands, vegetation and soils, wildlife habitat, and any
21 Federally listed threatened and endangered species.

22 Under the socio-economic environment we looked
23 at the migratory bird program, including the sport hunting
24 program, the migratory bird permit program, social values
25 and considerations, economic considerations, such as

1 property damages and agricultural crop damages, human
2 health and safety issues, and the program costs.

3

4 The environmental consequences section
5 forms the scientific and the analytic basis for a
6 comparison of the alternatives. It analyzes the
7 environmental impacts of each of those alternatives in
8 relation to the different resource categories. And,
9 again, the no-action alternative provides the baseline for
10 all this analysis.

11 Under the no-action alternative, what we would
12 expect to happen is that the populations of resident
13 Canada geese would continue to grow. In the Atlantic
14 Flyway we would expect about 1.6 million within 10 years,
15 in the Mississippi Flyway, 2 million within ten years, in
16 the Central Flyway, 1.3 million in ten years, and in the
17 Pacific Flyway, around 450,000 within ten years.

18 We would also expect continued and expanded
19 goose distribution problems and conflicts, increased
20 workloads, and continued impacts to property, safety, and
21 health.

22 Under the proposed action, we expect there to be
23 a reduction in Canada goose populations specifically in
24 more specific problem areas. There would be increased
25 hunting opportunities. There would be significant

1 reduction in those conflicts. We expect that there would
2 be a decreased impact to property, safety, and health.

3 While there would be some initial workload
4 increases as the program starts, as populations decrease
5 we believe that there would be long-term workload
6 decreases, and the program would maintain viable resident
7 Canada goose populations.

8 Some recent modeling that's been done in the
9 Mississippi Flyway, when expanded to the rest of the
10 nation, suggests that to reduce the four Flyways
11 populations from current levels of about 3.5 million down
12 to the Flyways' established objectives of 2.1 million,
13 would require one of these options annually for ten years:

14 The harvest of an additional 480,000 geese annually, or
15 the take of an additional 852,000 goslings annually, or
16 the nest removal of 528,000 nests annually, or a
17 combination of an additional harvest of 240,000 geese
18 annually and the take of 320,000 goslings annually.

19 Each one of these would have to occur annually
20 for ten years over and above what is occurring right now.

21 Thus, we believe that the only way to possibly
22 attain these kinds of numbers is to give the states the
23 flexibility to address the problems within their
24 respective state. The population reductions should be
25 available on a wide number of fronts. And since states

1 are the most informed and knowledgeable local authorities
2 on wildlife conflicts in their state, the primary
3 responsibilities and decision of program implementation
4 should be placed with them.

5 What comes next?

6 First is the development of a new regulation to
7 carry out the proposed action. And this should be
8 forthcoming real soon.

9 Second is the public comment period on this
10 draft ends tomorrow, May 30.

11 And third would be the publication of a Final
12 EIS, the Service's record of decision, and a final rule,
13 which we anticipate for this fall.

14 As I just stated, the public comment period ends
15 tomorrow. And I think that Dave may have already gone
16 over some of the ways you can submit your comments, but I
17 would draw your attention to the fact that printed on the
18 back of the card that you received when you came in
19 tonight is an e-mail address and an address where you can
20 send mail comments. And these would include any comments
21 that you give tonight or any that you may subsequently
22 send in.

23 And on behalf of the Service, I would like to
24 thank everybody for attending this meeting and
25 particularly anybody that provides comments.

1 And that concludes my part of the presentation.

2 If you could get the lights.

3 MR. CASE: Thanks, Ron. If you're going to send
4 in written comments, those have to be postmarked by
5 tomorrow or e-mail sent by tomorrow night.

6 With that, I'll go ahead and take comments.

7 Did everybody get to sign up on the sign-up
8 sheet that's going around?

9

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11 AUDIENCE: No, it was dark and I didn't see it.

12 MR. CASE: Okay. Sorry about that. We'll go
13 ahead and start with No. 1.

14 MR. DIGGERS: I'm No. 1. But I really just came
15 here to voice my opinion for Alternative F. And, in fact,
16 I've already done it electronically.

17 MR. CASE: Why don't you come on up, so that way
18 we can do it officially. Go ahead and stand at the
19 podium. Make sure you state your name and where you're
20 from and spell your last name.

21 MR. DIGGERS: My name is Earl Diggers. I'm from
22 Liberal, Kansas. I own and operate American Pigeon
23 Control.

24 I am for Alternative F for resident Canada
25 geese.

1 AUDIENCE: State again what Alternative F is.

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4 MR. DIGGERS: What is it?

5 It's a resolution for Canada goose control. I can't

6 remember all the letters. But I'm for it.

7 We've got to do something. I've had calls in

8 Kansas. This is the closest meeting that I could attend.

9 I've got stage fright.

10 MR. CASE: Okay.

11 MR. DIGGERS: I came to listen and learn. And

12 I'm here with some thoughts on the subject, but really

13 just to listen. But I am for Alternative F.

14 Thank you very much.

15 MR. CASE: Thank you. No. 2.

16 MR. SEUBERT: I'm John Seubert. I'm a wildlife

17 ecologist.

18 MR. CASE: Would you spell your last name for

19 us.

20 MR. SEUBERT: S-e-u-b-e-r-t. I've been involved

21 for many years in the problem of bird hazards to aviation.

22 And starting in 1966 I got together with Dave Sharp. And

23 I realized somehow that -- at that time I'd just heard

24 about the big increase in the Canada geese population.

25 And I said, whoa. So Dave Sharp lived about five minutes

1 from me, and he was very kind in putting together the
2 goose information. We're always a year behind. But it
3 was good enough.

4 And so I put together a little paper that I gave
5 out in Phoenix at a meeting of the Bird Strike Committee
6 of the United States, which is held each year. I revised
7 it from 1988 through '97.

8 And what I did in that paper was to try to
9 summarize. It just isn't controlling Canada geese or why
10 do we have more Canada geese. And not much has been said
11 about this. But I got hold of the U.S. Census Bureau, the
12 population reference bureau which analyzes the data.

13 And the human population, in case you haven't
14 noticed it, is growing, particularly in Colorado. We've
15 added a million people to Colorado in the last ten years.
16 And they make projections on the population growth. I
17 presented those figures.

18 I got the figures from ATA on the amount of air
19 traffic for the last about 20 years. And that curve keeps
20 going up.

21 And I got hold of an insurance broker in London,
22 who always analyzes data on what the need is for new
23 aircraft. And, for example, in the paper given in 2000,
24 people with the Boeing Company are saying in like the next
25 12 years they need 9,000 new aircraft.

1 So the bottom line is, if you have more geese
2 and more aircraft, more landings, more takeoffs, logic
3 would dictate -- and I've always been a sucker to believe
4 in logic -- it's going to create a high degree of
5 potential hazard. And that's what my interest is.

6 And when it comes to the EIS, which I've seen
7 before, my primary recommendation, and I don't remember
8 all the letters or numbers, is that when there's a serious
9 threat to human safety, I'm concerned now about the
10 airport problem or even the in-flight problem, the
11 priority has to be to try to control the problem.

12 So I believe in the integrated goose management,
13 what you laid out, which was a variety of things. And I
14 would recommend that, when there's a serious problem and a
15 hazard potential, and we can document it, we've got all
16 kinds of data on near misses, there shouldn't be any
17 doubt.

18 I mean, you handle the problem any way you can,
19 which would include population reduction, trapping the
20 young during their flightless period, or removing geese
21 from the airport by shooting, like Jim Cooper has done in
22 part up in Minneapolis. It should be done. It's as pure
23 and simple as that.

24 I just gave our guests here a report on goose
25 strikes for the last 11 years put out by the Fish and

1 Wildlife Service. And if any of you are interested in
2 getting that, he's got a website that you can climb on and
3 get a copy. It has all of the strikes, and it gives
4 examples of near misses.

5 We've had several cases where aircraft have
6 taken off from LA on their way to Japan, taken birds in,
7 and just by the grace of God they were able to get up and
8 get around in time to land. I don't like the idea of near
9 misses.

10 I think they've done a heck of a good job with
11 the EIS. I think they've been very careful and very
12 scientific. And I hope the thing comes out in a way that
13 will relieve some people of the potential hazard with
14 these geese.

15 Thank you.

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24 MR. BROWN: My name is Jerry P. Brown. I'm the
25 manager of golf courses for the City of Fort Collins here

1 in Colorado, and I've been very interested in Canada geese
2 issues for a very long time.

3 I have to be a little bit careful from a
4 political perspective, because the City of Fort Collins --
5 I cannot speak for the city government itself. I didn't
6 get a resolution or any document from the government.

7 But as the manager of the golf courses in Fort
8 Collins and also part of the parks and recreation
9 department, we have a lot of Canada geese on our
10 facilities. And the biggest problem isn't a safety
11 hazard, like the previous gentleman has talked about. And
12 technically it may not be a health hazard by legal
13 definition, but it's clearly a nuisance and a problem of
14 interacting geese with the urban population.

15 The three golf courses I manage, probably in the
16 23 years I've been managing them, Canada geese complaints
17 is the highest amount of complaints I do receive. And
18 it's strictly a matter of the fact that the golfers are on
19 the golf course, they pay good money to be there, and it's
20 our job to maintain the golf courses to the highest
21 quality level that we can.

22 Canada geese pooping on the greens, especially,
23 makes that difficult. We end up cleaning two and three
24 times a day. It costs us quite a bit of money.

25 Obviously, during the season when they're

1 nesting they become quite territorial, and golfers get
2 near the geese nests with their golf balls and, of course,
3 the geese chase them, and it becomes kind of interesting.

4 I'm not really against Canada geese so much as
5 I'm against having them on my golf courses. And I've
6 talked to golf course managers throughout the front range
7 of Colorado, and we all experience similar problems.

8 We in Fort Collins have been harassing legally
9 through DOW permits and all of the various things that we
10 have to do for at least 20 years, if not more.

11 By harassment, I'm saying we're just chasing
12 them off. We're trying to move them from one place to
13 another. I have used everything from, you know, shotguns
14 to cracker shells, to chasing them in carts, to putting up
15 barriers around my lakes, to all sorts of things, whatever
16 is available.

17 You know, I didn't read the entire
18 Draft EIS, but I read what affects our flyway and our
19 region. And I felt that was a very excellent document. I
20 agree again with you. It just seems like it covered a lot
21 of the issues.

22 We are in the process of getting
23 dogs to go on our golf courses. That's a separate issue.
24 I had to get a legal change in our city code from the city
25 council to allow dogs off leash in order to chase the

1 geese. I know what the rules are, that I can't do that
2 between April 1 and July 31. So generally all the experts
3 I talked to told me March is a great time to do that.

4 So we're going to do everything we can to harass
5 them off the golf courses. There's even a laser product
6 on the market that's being used in our area that shoots a
7 laser at them and kind of scares them and they go.

8 We learned yesterday it doesn't work when
9 they're in the water. It does work on land for some
10 reason.

11 Again, we're trying to get them off the golf
12 course, because the purpose of the golf course isn't an
13 open space, it isn't a natural area. It's for golf and
14 golf courses. And we spend millions of dollars to do
15 that.

16 So from my perspective, I can't again come here
17 and say I think we need to kill them or wipe out the
18 species, or something of that nature.

19 In looking at Options A all the way down, as I
20 recall, F talked about a 55 percent reduction in the bird
21 population in the Flyway. And if nothing is done, like
22 some people might advocate, I understand the geese
23 population will double in this Flyway by 2005. And that's
24 just unacceptable.

25 We're having so much interaction in Fort Collins

1 with geese and people it's becoming very difficult. I see
2 geese now in places I never used to see them: In
3 driveways, in apartment complexes and driveways. I was
4 just amazed. I always expect to see them in an open area,
5 but never in those closed areas where they can't get away.

6 So, anyway, I just simply want to go on record
7 from Jerry Brown's perspective, as the manager of public
8 golf courses, I would really like to see Option F
9 implemented.

10 Again, I can't speak for the City of Fort
11 Collins. I know my golfers just want to get rid of the
12 geese off the courses. It's not -- I don't think that
13 they're advocating mass destruction.

14 But the fact of the matter is there's too many
15 geese, and we need to do something about it. And I do
16 think Option F is pretty good.

17 Thank you very, very much.

18 MR. CASE: Thank you. Is there anybody else
19 that would like to make comments that hasn't had a chance?

20

21 Okay. Then, with that, I'll adjourn the meeting
22 and open it up. There's plenty of time for questions. If
23 you have questions for Ron, you can come up and do that.
24 But from the official meeting standpoint, we'll close the
25 meeting.

1 And thank you for coming. I appreciate your
2 taking the time and not being able to watch the hockey
3 game as we speak.

4 Okay. Thank you. And we'll go ahead and open
5 it up for questions.

6 (The public hearing was concluded at 7:45 p.m.)

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