

Mississippi Flyway Discussion on IIC Work Plan – Prepared by Andy Raedeke

Discussions regarding the IIC work plan and proposed objective setting process took place in three committee meetings attended by most Technical Section members and in two presentations with Council – one focused on the HDWG and the other on the IIC.

Work Plan:

The overall work plan was presented in the Technical Section Habitat Committee meeting.

- It didn't generate much discussion. In part, it was a matter of time. We only had about 20 minutes.
- I think there was some uncertainty who would be doing these work items and what role the flyways would play.
- "Integration" seems to have some baggage with individuals having diverse perspectives of what it means for waterfowl management.
- Although uncertainty remains, the flyway wants to be engaged in the process of implementing NAWMP. Technical Section members indicated they did not feel they were provided as much opportunity to be engaged in the NAWMP revision as desired.
- It was noted that NAWMP and perhaps this work plan is really focused more on ducks than all waterfowl.

Draft Objectives

The proposal to develop draft objectives was discussed in the Technical Section Adaptive Harvest Management Committee along with the specific population objectives. It generated considerable discussion. We did not have time to discuss the draft habitat and people objectives to any extent in the Tech. Section.

- The Council approved a Technical Section recommendation to support travel for the chairs of the AHM, Habitat, and Human Dimensions committees to participate in a meeting to draft population, habitat and people objectives.
- Some participants inquired how arbitrarily choosing this range of dates differed or was better than using the 1970s as the benchmark for population objectives.
- The range proposed may not reflect the range of environmental conditions that could influence duck populations.
- Could similar lower population thresholds be established for some species to provide more flexibility in management among species
- Would lower thresholds for some species to provide more flexibility in management of multiple species similar to the approach taken for Canada geese?
- What is the utility of establishing population objectives for individual species when few decisions are linked to individual population objectives?

- Have population objectives for individual species such as green-winged teal, been used for any decisions harvest or habitat related?
- It was noted that in some cases, population objectives do not have a significant influence on habitat objectives (e.g., coastal wetlands are being lost at an alarming rate and the need for protection is there regardless of waterfowl population objectives).
- It was noted that these objectives focused on ducks.
- Questions were raised about participation from Canada because changes in harvest regulations like black duck regulations and 3-year regulatory cycles are not incorporated.
- There were questions about the utility of population objectives in the past and what use they will be in the future.
- Do hunting regulations and habitat objectives for NAWMP have anything at all to do with duck population size? We've got record duck numbers with declining habitat. Are factors beyond our control larger drivers of populations than our habitat management and harvest regulations?
- Key questions remain about the relationship between harvest objectives and population objectives.
- There remains a lot of confusion over the need and function of revising population objectives.

Human Dimensions Work Items

The IIC work items that included an HD element were discussed in the Technical Section Human Dimensions Committee and in a presentation to Council. Both the Technical Section and Council were generally supportive of HD work items.

Mid-Continent Mallard Double Looping and Harvest Management

Double-looping was discussed in the Technical Section AHM Committee.

- The Technical Section and Council support this effort
- Some see this as an effort to update AHM models, others see it as something broader
- Opinions range from “if it’s not broken, why fix it” to a desire to think more broadly about overall harvest objectives.

Council Input

- The Council reacted favorably to the human dimensions presentation (see flyway report)
- I presented a slightly revised version of the IIC presentation to the MFC. It didn't generate much discussion. It could have been a function of time.