

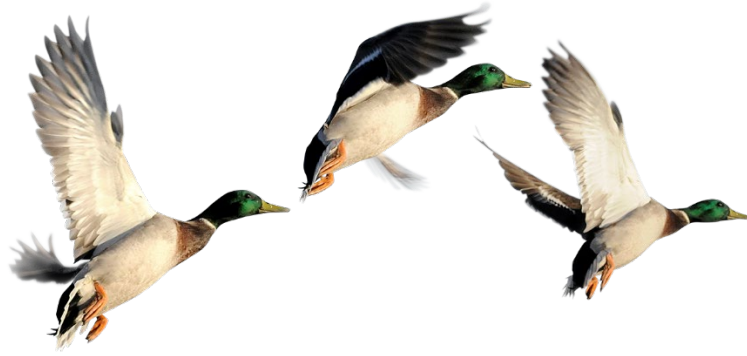
# North American Waterfowl Management Plan

## **2021 Communication Strategy**

August 24, 2021



*North American Waterfowl  
Management Plan*



*Waterfowl habitats like wetlands and grasslands are among North America's most important ecosystems. They are key to clean water, clean air and abundant healthy wildlife.*

*For 32 years, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) has been the most powerful and effective mechanism to safeguard these habitats. As environmental issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenge conservation efforts in new ways, continuing to deepen the legacy and impact of the NAWMP is critical.*

*Developing a communication strategy that celebrates the accomplishments, emphasizes the need and showcases the wide-ranging benefits of NAWMP is an important step in securing its future—and the future of millions of migratory birds that depend on it.*

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## **Background**

While NAWMP is a highly successful international conservation program, there is a perception that it has “lost its luster” over the decades. A recent report from the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation also highlighted a lack of understanding of NAWMP investments and their impacts on waterfowl habitats.

The NAWMP Communications Committee was established to develop and guide the implementation of a broad communications strategy that will promote the continued—and enhanced—support of NAWMP. This plan is designed to identify key audiences and messages to help ensure that NAWMP remains relevant in the future. Its tactics will showcase the importance of conserving waterfowl and wetland ecosystems and the benefits hunters, bird watchers, all wildlife enthusiasts and the public derive from these conservation activities.

Key challenges/threats to the continued success of NAWMP include:

- Decreased financial support for Joint Ventures and NAWMP infrastructure
  - Decreased relevancy of migratory bird programs.
  - Viewed as “well established” (victim of our own success).
  - Political churn of individuals in higher levels of governments (impedes the ability to build strong relationships with “champions” who can advocate on behalf of NAWMP).
  - Lack of understanding of NAWMP and related enterprises by both U.S. and Canadian federal administrations.

- Concerns pointed out in McGraw Foundation report
  - Lack of awareness of NAWMP
  - Need for better information sharing amongst partners and key audiences about NAWMP and why it is important.
  
- Political challenges resulting from lack of understanding about NAWMP that exists at all levels— from government leaders to duck hunters.
  - NAWMP is seen as diametrically opposed to the objectives of the agricultural industry, in some jurisdictions.
  - The environment is increasingly seen as a partisan issue in an increasingly divisive political system.
  
- The looming waterfowl crisis
  - While ducks and wetlands are not currently in a state of crisis as compared to other species and issues, we continue to lose wetlands and the benefits associated with them.
  - Climate variation and its potential impact for shorter/warmer winters could reduce runoff to wetlands (despite increased precipitation) and cause droughts to be longer or more frequent. Because of this, it is more important than ever to continue the success of NAWMP and protect our wetlands.

### **Strategic Goals**

The NAWMP Communications Committee will enhance communications through working groups, NAWMP partners, primary and secondary audiences (outlined below) and the public. It will re-affirm the Plan Committee’s role as the international voice and champion for waterfowl and wetland conservation and management, specifically by:

- Delivering engaging and expanded communication with upper levels of federal agencies
  
- Engaging the waterfowl community about NAWMP science and policy issues



Ultimately, the goal is to influence government decision makers to increase funding in support of NAWMP goals. From there, the goal is to encourage other audiences to support increases in funding initiatives/programs for NAWMP. Tangible actions of this might include getting conservation-minded North Americans to communicate the importance of NAWMP to decision makers (e.g. writing letters, signing petitions, lobbying) and voting for decision makers who support NAWMP.

## **Audiences**

**Primary:** *Government decision makers:*

- *Agency directors*
- *Leadership*
- *Legislators*

Through our communication efforts, we want them to:

Think...

- NAWMP is the continental leader in waterfowl and wetland management communities.
- NAWMP is worth participating in.
- NAWMP's impressive track record showcases the power of partnerships beyond government.
- NAWMP provides bipartisan support.
- NAWMP efforts provide ecological services that address significant environmental issues (flooding, water supply, carbon sequestration etc.)
- Healthy wetlands and waterfowl rely on NAWMP funding, and the current need for NAWMP is as great as its ever been.

Feel...

- NAWMP is a way to achieve important policy objectives beyond waterfowl conservation.
- NAWMP supports the economic success of their local states and provinces.
- They are meeting obligations of previous NAWMP Tri-lateral agreements.
- They are being responsive to public interest by supporting NAWMP.
- They are part of an integral, proven and successful conservation program and community.
- That the waterfowl community can be a part a solution to the crisis marked by the decline of three billion birds in North America.

Do...

- Increase NAWMP funding and staffing in the U.S. and Canada from **\$X** in 2018 (base year) to **\$Y** by FY2024.
- Engage and actively support the NAWMP enterprise.

**Secondary:** *Decision-maker influencers*

These groups will provide the necessary public support for government decision-makers:

- Waterfowl hunting community.
- Conservation community (in particular, broader bird/wildlife/wetland conservation community).
- Outdoor industry groups.
- Outdoor recreationists.
- Private landowners and groups representing private landowners.

Through our communication efforts, we want them to:

Think....

- NAWMP is relevant, reputable and successful.

- NAWMP is delivering tangible solutions to today's conservation issues that benefit wetlands and waterfowl, hunters, conservationists, landowners and more.
- Healthy wetlands and waterfowl rely upon NAWMP funding, and the current need for NAWMP is as great as its ever been.

#### Feel

- NAWMP aligns with their personal values.
- Satisfaction in personally/actively contributing to conservation; being part of the solution.
- Supporting NAWMP is in the best interest of the resources and the people who care about them.
- Urgency about the rate of habitat/wetland loss and the crisis surrounding the loss of three billion birds in North America.

#### Do...

- Engage in discussions with local decision makers about NAWMP funding.
- Support habitat conservation organizations implementing the NAWMP.
- Communicate the importance of NAWMP to other wildlife conservation communities

### **Creation of a NAWMP Marketing/Communications Campaign**

The foundation of the NAWMP communication strategy will be the creation of a targeted marketing and communications campaign that engages the key audiences noted above and motivates them to take supporting actions.

The campaign will be developed with sensitivity, understanding various governments' perceptions on NAWMP. Some entities are not yet convinced that NAWMP is the best solution.

Quiet diplomacy at the highest level and flexibility at the operational level is an effective way to bring the entrenched positions together. A dedicated communications campaign sets the stage for this.

### **Overview of Tactics**

- Develop a comprehensive package of communication assets, with key messages, for partners to use and choose from at every "newsy" opportunity (e.g., funding being passed, a big NAWMP project being completed, NAWMP awards bestowed). Assets will include:
  - Print materials
  - Social media content
  - Video assets
  - Website content
- Host and participate in high-level summits or events to create awareness and enthusiasm.
- Leverage conservation recognition/award programs to communicate NAWMP messages and success stories.

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*Anyone who has spent time in the bow of a canoe watching the sun rise, anyone who enjoys walking along the shore of their favorite lake or casting a fishing line...or watching songbirds through a pair of binoculars has benefitted from NAWMP.*

*The habitat conservation delivered through this pioneering continental approach has an amazing ripple effect. The quality of our water, the ability to adapt to a changing climate and the future of species at risk are all influenced by NAWMP.*

*While waterfowl may be the heart of NAWMP's success story, they are only the beginning. This communication strategy will share these diverse stories of conservation excellence with North Americans from all walks of life.*

