

contained in the draft EIS described in the **ADDRESSES** section of this document.

The objective of this proposed rule is to allow State wildlife management agencies sufficient flexibility to deal with problems, conflicts, and damages caused by resident Canada geese and guide and direct resident Canada goose population growth and management activities in the conterminous United States. The program established by this rule should contribute to human health and safety, protect personal property and agricultural crops, protect other interests from injury, and allow resolution or prevention of injury to people, property, agricultural crops, or other interests from resident Canada geese. Further, the means must be effective, environmentally sound, cost-effective, flexible enough to meet the variety of management needs found throughout the flyways, should not threaten viable resident Canada goose

populations as determined by each Flyway Council, and in accordance with the mission of the Service. Formulating such a national management strategy to reduce, manage, and control resident Canada goose populations in the continental United States and to reduce related damages, safety, and public health concerns was a complex problem, and Flyway input was essential for incorporating regional differences and solutions.

As such, we note that the overall population objectives established by the Flyways were derived independently based on the States' respective management needs and capabilities, and in some cases, these objectives were an approximation of population levels from an earlier time when problems were less severe. In other cases, population objective levels were calculated from what was professionally judged to be a more desirable or acceptable density of

geese with respect to conflicts and concerns. We further note that these population sizes are only optimal in the sense that it was each Flyway's best attempt to balance the many competing considerations of both consumptive and nonconsumptive users. As with any goal or objective, we believe that these population objectives should be periodically reviewed and/or revised in response to changes in resident Canada goose populations, damage levels, public input, or other factors. Current resident Canada goose population estimates and population objectives for each Flyway are shown in Table 1. We note that over the last three years (2001–03), the total number of temperate-nesting Canada geese, or resident Canada geese, has averaged approximately 3.2 million in the U.S. and 1.1 in Canada for a total spring population of 4.3 million (Moser and Caswell, in press).

TABLE 1.—RECENT RESIDENT CANADA GOOSE POPULATION ESTIMATES (2001–03 AVERAGE) AND POPULATION OBJECTIVES ON A FLYWAY BASIS

Current resident Canada goose population <sup>a</sup>	Atlantic flyway	Mississippi flyway	Central flyway	Pacific flyway
U.S. ....	1,148,536	1,292,298	528,948	218,311
Canada ....	269,439	152,434	343,286	372,686
Total .....	1,417,975	1,444,732	872,234	590,996
Resident Canada goose population objective	Atlantic flyway <sup>b</sup>	Mississippi flyway <sup>c</sup>	Central flyway <sup>d</sup>	Pacific flyway
U.S. ....	620,000	989,000	368,833–448,833	<sup>e</sup> 54,840–90,900
Canada ....	30,000	180,000		<sup>e</sup> 35,750–56,250
Total .....	650,000	1,169,000		<sup>e</sup> 90,590–147,150

<sup>a</sup> Moser and Caswell, in press.

<sup>b</sup> Atlantic Flyway Council Section 1999.

<sup>c</sup> Population objective numbers are draft and are not final at this time (Giant Canada Goose Committee 2000).

<sup>d</sup> Only U.S. States provided population objectives (Gabig 2000).

<sup>e</sup> Lower end of the Pacific Flyway population objective for the Pacific Population of Western Canada geese derived from "Restriction Level" and upper end derived from "Liberalization Level" as shown in Management Plan for the Pacific Population of Western Canada Geese (Subcommittee on Pacific Population of Western Canada Geese 2000). While the cited report refers to numbers of pairs, nests, and individual geese, the numbers shown here have been converted to numbers of individual geese.

### Potential Causes of Population Growth and Past Attempts to Slow Growth

The rapid rise of resident Canada goose populations has been attributed to a number of factors. Most resident Canada geese live in temperate climates with relatively stable breeding habitat conditions and low numbers of predators, tolerate human and other disturbances, have a relative abundance of preferred habitat (especially those located in urban/suburban areas with current landscaping techniques), and fly relatively short distances to winter compared with other Canada goose populations. This combination of factors contributes to consistently high annual production and survival. Further, the virtual absence of waterfowl hunting in

urban areas provides additional protection to those urban portions of the resident Canada goose population. Given these characteristics, most resident Canada goose populations are continuing to increase in both rural and urban areas.

We have attempted to curb the growth of resident Canada goose populations by several means. Expansion of existing annual hunting season frameworks (special and regular seasons), the issuance of control permits on a case-by-case basis, and a Special Canada goose permit have all been used with varying degrees of success. While these approaches have provided relief in some areas, they have not completely addressed the problem.

Normally, complex Federal and State responsibilities are involved with Canada goose control activities. All control activities, except those intended to either scare geese out of, or preclude them from using, a specific area, such as harassment, habitat management, or repellants, require a Federal permit issued by the Service. Additionally, permits to alleviate migratory bird depredations are issued by the Service in coordination with the Wildlife Services program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (Wildlife Services). Wildlife Services is the Federal agency with lead responsibility for dealing with wildlife