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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PUBLIC HEARINGS TO DISCUSS EIS  
ON RESIDENT CANADA GOOSE MANAGEMENT

May 7, 2002

Franklin Cool Springs Marriott  
Conference Center  
700 Cool Springs Blvd.  
Franklin, Tennessee 37076

APPEARANCES:

Mr. David J. Case  
CASE & ASSOCIATES  
607 Lincolnway West  
Mishawaka, Indiana 46544

Mr. Ron Kokel  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Arlington, Virginia

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1                   MR. CASE: We'll go ahead and get  
2 started. Although there's not a normal  
3 sequence, we'll go through the motions to make  
4 sure everything is on the up and up.

5                   My name is Dave Case. I'm the  
6 consultant here for tonight's meeting. As you  
7 know, the purpose is to take comments on the  
8 Draft Environmental Impact Statement that the  
9 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared in  
10 relation to resident Canada geese.

11 Ron Kokel is going to do a presentation on the  
12 Environmental Impact Statement and on some of  
13 the background on it. Then you got cards  
14 when you came in. We'll just have you come up  
15 to the microphone, and you can make comments.

16                   Vicki is our court reporter.  
17 She'll be capturing everything, so there will be  
18 a formal record. And if you could, when you  
19 come up, spell your last name. Give us your  
20 name and spell your last name so we get it  
21 correct; and if you represent an organization  
22 officially, then let us know that as well.

23                   On the Environmental Impact  
24 Statement, if you want a copy of the final  
25 Environmental Impact Statement, go ahead and

1 sign up on that. If you do not want to be a  
2 recipient, check that off there so we don't  
3 duplicate your name. If you haven't received a  
4 copy before, just check the other one.

5                   So with that done, I think we'll  
6 go ahead and get started. I'd like to introduce  
7 Ron Kokel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Ron?

8                   MR. KOHEL:

9 Thank you, Dave, and good evening,  
10 everybody. Again, I'm Ron Kokel. I'm with the  
11 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Division of  
12 Migratory Bird Management; and I'm stationed in  
13 Arlington, Virginia. And on behalf of our  
14 esteemed director, Steve Williams, I'd like to  
15 welcome everybody here.

16                   This is the fourth of eleven  
17 public meetings being held across the country  
18 for the purpose of inviting public participation  
19 into our process of developing an Environmental  
20 Impact Statement for resident Canada geese  
21 management. The DEIS was developed in full  
22 cooperation with the U.S. Department of  
23 Agriculture's Wildlife Services.

24                   Why are we here? Well, we're here  
25 to explain the DEIS's proposed action and to

1 listen to your comments. This draft EIS  
2 considered a range of management alternatives  
3 for addressing expanding populations of locally  
4 breeding Canada geese. And as such, we're here  
5 to listen to you and invite your comments on  
6 recommended actions.

7                   First, a brief explanation of the  
8 National Environmental Policy Act, which governs  
9 the whole process. The National Environmental  
10 Policy Act or NEPA requires the completion of an  
11 EIS to analyze environmental and socioeconomic  
12 impacts that are associated with federal  
13 significant actions.

14                   NEPA also requires public  
15 involvement, which includes a scoping period  
16 before the draft can be completed, and a comment  
17 period after the draft.

18                   We began this process in August of  
19 1999 when we published a Federal Registry notice  
20 and announced our intent to prepare this draft.  
21 Then in February of 2000, we held nine public  
22 scoping meetings, one of which was held in  
23 Nashville. It was designed to seek public input  
24 into this process. Scoping ended in March of  
25 2000. In response to scoping, we received over

1 3000 comments, and we had about 1250 people  
2 attend the nine public scoping meetings.

3                   While in scoping, we found that  
4 the top issues of concern were the property  
5 damage and conflicts caused by resident Canada  
6 geese; methods of conflict abatement; sport  
7 hunting opportunities on resident Canada Geese;  
8 economic impacts; human health and safety  
9 concerns associated with geese; and the impact  
10 to the geese themselves.

11                   NEPA also outlines the specific  
12 format of an EIS. There's a purpose and need  
13 section, an alternative section, a safe  
14 environment section, and environmental  
15 consequences section.

16                   In the EIS, we define resident  
17 Canada geese as those geese which nest within  
18 the lower 48 states in the months of March,  
19 April, May, or June, or reside within the lower  
20 48 states in the months of April, May, June,  
21 July, or August.

22                   The purpose of the EIS was, one,  
23 to evaluate alternative strategies to reduce,  
24 manage, and control resident Canada goose  
25 populations in the U.S; two, to provide a

1 regulatory mechanism that would allow state and  
2 local agencies or other federal agencies and  
3 groups of individuals to respond to Canada geese  
4 damage complaints; and third, to guide and direct  
5 resident Canada goose population management  
6 activities in the U.S.

7                   The need for the EIS was twofold:  
8 One, increasing resident goose populations  
9 coupled with growing conflicts, damages, and the  
10 socioeconomic impacts; and for a re-examination  
11 of the Service's resident goose management.

12                   We looked at seven management  
13 alternatives. Alternative A, no action, which  
14 is the baseline; Alternative B, nonlethal  
15 control or management, which would only be those  
16 federally nonpermitted activities; Alternative  
17 C, a nonlethal control and management, which  
18 would include federally permitted activities;  
19 Alternative D, expanded hunting methods and  
20 opportunities; Alternative E, integrative  
21 depredation order management; Alternative F,  
22 state empowerment, which is the proposed  
23 action; and Alternative G, which is the general  
24 depredation order.

25                   Under the no action alternative,

1 there would be no additional regulatory methods  
2 or strategies authorized. We would continue to  
3 use the special hunting season, the issuance of  
4 depredation permits, and the issuance of special  
5 resident Canada geese permits.

6 Under the second alternative, the  
7 nonlethal management, which would include  
8 nonfederally permitted activity, we would seek  
9 all legal control of resident Canada geese and  
10 their eggs. Only nonlethal harassment  
11 techniques would be allowed; no permits would be  
12 issued; and all special hunting seasons would be  
13 discontinued.

14 Under the third alternative,  
15 nonlethal control or management, which would  
16 include federally permitted activities, we would  
17 cease all permitted lethal control of adult  
18 resident Canada geese. We would promote  
19 nonlethal harassment techniques. No depredation  
20 of special Canada goose permits would be issued;  
21 and  
22 special hunting seasons would be discontinued.

23 The fourth alternative is  
24 expanded hunting methods and opportunities.  
25 Under this alternative, we would authorize

1 additional hunting methods to increase the  
2 harvest of resident Canada geese. Such method  
3 could include electronic calls, unplugged guns, and  
4 expanded shooting hours. These seasons could be  
5 operational during September 1 and 15 seasons.  
6 They could be experimental during September 16  
7 to 30 seasons; and they can't be conducted  
8 outside of any other open seasons.

9                   The fifth alternative, we termed  
10 integrative depredation order management. This  
11 alternative consists of an airport depredation  
12 order, a egg and nest depredation order, an  
13 agricultural depredation order, and a public  
14 health depredation order. Implementation would be  
15 up to the individual state's wildlife agencies.  
16 Special hunting seasons would be continued; and  
17 the issuance of depredation permitting for  
18 special Canada goose permits would also be  
19 continued.

20                   The airport depredation order  
21 would authorize airports to establish and  
22 implement a program which could include indirect  
23 or direct population control activities. The  
24 intent of this program would be to significantly  
25 reduce goose populations at airports.

1 Management actions would have to occur on the  
2 premises.

3                   The nest and egg depredation order  
4 would allow the destruction of resident Canada  
5 goose nest and eggs without a federal permit.  
6 The intent of the program would be to stabilize  
7 the breeding populations.

8                   The agricultural depredation order  
9 would authorize landowners, operators, or  
10 tenants to actively engage in commercial  
11 agriculture to conduct direct or indirect  
12 control activities on the geese depredation on  
13 agriculture crops. Management actions would  
14 also have to occur on the premises.

15                   And lastly, the public health  
16 depredation order would authorize states,  
17 counties, and municipal or local public health  
18 officials to conduct direct or indirect control  
19 strategies on geese when recommended by health  
20 officials, if there was a public health threat.  
21 Management actions would also have to occur on  
22 the premises.

23                   Our proposed action was the sixth  
24 alternative, which we term "state empowerment."  
25 Under this alternative, we would establish the

1 new regulations, which would authorize the  
2 states' wildlife agencies or their authorized  
3 agents to conduct or allow management activities  
4 on resident goose populations. The intent of  
5 this alternative would be to allow state  
6 wildlife management agencies sufficient  
7 flexibility to deal with the problems caused by  
8 resident geese within their state. It would  
9 authorize indirect or direct population control  
10 strategies such as aggressive harassment, nest  
11 and egg destruction, gosling and adult trapping  
12 programs; and would allow  
13 implementation of any of the specific  
14 depredation orders that were identified in  
15 Alternative E.

16                   During existing special hunting  
17 seasons, we would expand methods of taking to  
18 include hunter harvests like I talked about  
19 under Alternative D. Such additional hunting  
20 methods could include electronic calls,  
21 unplugged guns, and expanded shooting hours. Again,  
22 these seasons would be operational during  
23 September 1 to 15. They could be experimental  
24 from September 16 to 30; and they would have to  
25 be conducted outside of any other open seasons.

1                   In addition, we would establish a  
2   conservation order, which would provide special  
3   expanded hunting opportunities during a portion  
4   of the treated closed period, August 1 to 31;  
5   and the open period, September 1 to 15.  
6   Additional hunting methods could be used such as  
7   electronic calls, unplugged guns, expanded  
8   shooting hours, and liberalized bag limits.  
9   Again, these would have to be conducted outside of  
10  other open seasons.

11                   The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
12  would annually inspect the impact and  
13  effectiveness of the overall program; and there  
14  would be a provision for possible suspension of  
15  the hunting regulations under the conservation  
16  order for the regular season changes as far as  
17  methods when the need was no longer present.

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

25                   The last alternative is the

1 general depredation order. This alternative  
2 would allow any authorized person to conduct  
3 management activities on resident geese, which  
4 were posing a threat to health and human safety  
5 or causing property damage. It would be  
6 available between April 1 and August 31. It  
7 would also provide expanded hunting  
8 opportunities such as that under Alternative D.  
9 We would continue to use the special and regular  
10 hunting seasons, and the issuance of depredation  
11 of special Canada goose permits. And the  
12 authorization for all management activities  
13 would come directly from the Service.

14                   Under the impacts to the  
15 environment, we looked at two subparts. One is  
16 the biological environment. Under the  
17 biological environment, we looked at the  
18 resident Canada goose populations, water quality  
19 in wetlands, vegetation and soils, wildlife  
20 habitat, and federally listed threatened and  
21 endangered species.

22                   Under the socioeconomic  
23 environment, we looked at the Migratory Bird  
24 Program, which would include the sport hunting  
25 program, and the permit program; social values

1 and considerations; economic considerations such  
2 as property damage and agricultural crop damage  
3 caused by resident geese; human health and  
4 safety issues; and the program costs.

5                   The environmental consequences  
6 section forms the scientific and analytic basis  
7 for a comparison of the different alternatives.

8 It analyzes the environmental impacts of each  
9 alternative in relation to the resource  
10 categories. And as I said earlier, the no  
11 action alternative provides the baseline for  
12 this analysis.

13                   Under the no action alternative,  
14 we expect several things: One, populations for  
15 resident Canada geese would continue to grow.  
16 In the Atlantic Flyway, we estimate there'd be  
17 about 1.6 million in ten years; in the  
18 Mississippi Flyway, two million in ten years;  
19 the Central Flyway, 1.3 million in ten years;  
20 and the Pacific Flyway, about 450,000 in ten  
21 years. We also would expect continued and  
22 expanded goose distribution problems and  
23 conflicts; increased workload both on state,  
24 federal, and local levels; and continued impacts  
25 of the resident Canada geese to property,

1 safety, and health.

2 Under our proposed action, we  
3 would expect a reduction in goose populations,  
4 especially in specific problem areas. There  
5 would be increased hunting opportunities. There  
6 would be a significant reduction in conflict;  
7 decreased impacts to property, safety, and  
8 health. While there would be an initial  
9 workload increase, we believe that long term,  
10 there would be a workload decrease.  
11 And above all, it would maintain viable resident  
12 Canada goose populations.

13 Some of the recent modeling that's  
14 been done suggests that to reduce four flyway  
15 populations from the current level from about  
16 three and a half million down to the flyway  
17 established goal of 2.1 million would require  
18 annually for ten years, the harvest of an  
19 additional 480,000 geese; or take an additional  
20 852,000 goslings annually, or the nest removal  
21 of 528,000 nests annually, or the combination of  
22 an additional harvest of 240,000 geese, and the  
23 take of 320,000 goslings annually. All these  
24 would have to be on top of what is already  
25 occurring.

1                   Thus we believe this is the only  
2 way to possibly attain these kind of numbers,  
3 and to give states the flexibility to address  
4 the problems within their respective state. We  
5 also believe that the population reduction  
6 should be addressed on a wide number of  
7 available fronts. And since states are the most  
8 informed and knowledgeable local authorities on  
9 wildlife conflicts, the primary responsibilities  
10 and decisions of the program should be placed  
11 with them.

12                   Well, what comes next? First is  
13 the development of a new regulation to carry out  
14 this proposed action. This should be  
15 forthcoming this month. Second, the public  
16 comment period on the draft ends May the  
17 30th. And third, the publication of a final  
18 EIS, a record of decision, and a final rule  
19 which we anticipate for this fall.

20                   As I just stated, the public  
21 comment period is open until May the 30th; and  
22 Dave has outlined the various methods that you  
23 can use to submit your comments. These include  
24 any oral or written comments that you submit  
25 tonight, and any that you may subsequently send

1 in to us. The address is printed on the back of  
2 the card that you received when you came in.  
3 Also we've set up an electronic site where you  
4 can e-mail comments, and all the other  
5 information that's pertinent to the EIS process  
6 is there including the EIS. And on behalf of  
7 the Service, I'd like to everybody here for  
8 attending.

9 MR. CASE: Thanks, Ron. As I  
10 mentioned, we're going to take  
11 comments from people in the order that you came  
12 in. Again, if you could give us your name.  
13 Spell your last name for us, and if you could,  
14 speak into the microphone so everybody in the  
15 back can hear you and so Martha can hear you. So  
16 No. 1.

17 MR. BANKSTON: My name is Ray  
18 Bankston, B-a-n-k-s-t-o-n, and I'm a goose  
19 hunter. I have been for about 60 years.

20 My one comment is that I believe  
21 the state empowerment part of this is the way to  
22 go. There's no doubt about that. But the one  
23 word that's missing in there, I think you're  
24 going to have to address. To get geese out of  
25 protected areas to where the hunters can shoot

1 them is to bait them. We've got -- I'm speaking  
2 of the local areas -- we've got many, many, many  
3 areas that we can identify that geese are on and  
4 are never shot. They never leave these  
5 residential areas, the park areas, or whatever.  
6 And to get them to leave, you're going to have  
7 to bait them. How this could be done, I don't  
8 know. I would say it would have to be site  
9 specific and person specific, a permit for a  
10 person at a site during a time frame. Other  
11 than that, I think the other part of it will  
12 work. But the unplugged gun and the calls  
13 aren't going to help you if the geese -- they're  
14 just not going to come to that general area at  
15 all. That's my only comment I'll make.

16 MR. CASE: Thank you. Number 2?

17 NUMBER 2: I pass.

18 MR. CASE: Number 3?

19 NUMBER 3: I pass.

20 MR. CASE: Number 4?

21 NUMBER 4: I pass.

22 MR. CASE: Number 5?

23 NUMBER 5: I pass.

24 MR. CASE: I'd like to  
25 congratulate you on the shortest resident Canada

1 goose meeting, and the most pleasant Canada  
2 goose meeting that we've had in the past two  
3 years. If there are no other comments, then  
4 we'll adjourn the meeting. Thank you.

5 \* \* \* \* \*

6 I hereby certify the foregoing to be a  
7 true and accurate transcript of the proceedings.

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VICKI S. GANNO, RPR  
9 Court Reporter

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