

Oregon Geese Control Task Force

Jan. 12, 2010

Meeting Notes

Task Force Members Present:

Senator Betsy Johnson (D, Scappoose)
Representative Mike Schaufler (D, Happy Valley)
Mike Borman, OSU Dept of Rangeland Ecology and Management
Bob Trost, Pacific Flyway Representative, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Marie Gadotti, farmer, Scappoose
Ron Dobbins, farmer, Hillsboro
Donald Coon, farmer, Shedd
Dave Smith, goose hunter, North Plains
Mark Knaupp, goose hunter, Richmond
Ronald Anglin, Wildlife Division Administrator, ODFW

Not present:

Bob Flowers, farmer, Klamath Falls

Group decides Senator Betsy Johnson to serve as committee chair. Johnson asks members of Task Force to explain their position and experience with geese problems.

Senator Johnson: SB 622 came as a result of conversations with my constituent and friend Marie Gadotti and trying to figure out how to deal with the increasing problem of geese in Oregon. It started out as a more aggressive bill but it changed and took a few steps down. It's still important and people are watching what we are doing. I would like to come back to 2011 Legislature with recommendations backed by task force that would become new regulations.

Dobbins: Canada geese are now problem in Washington County that didn't exist in the mid-1980s. They used only be a problem until April 22 and then in September but now resident geese creating a problem every day of the year. Geese are in fields at harvest time and take a lot of time from regular farming activities. Worked with Flight Control product (a spray that is distasteful and irritating to geese) but EPA pulled it. Hunters effective but geese seem to know when season closed. Need help streamlining kill permit process.

Gadotti: Provided list of what Geese Control Task Force should look at and five-page document presented to House and Senate during SB 622. While large migration is in May, I spend summer chasing geese off my crops and lost \$60,000 last year.

Coon: My hope is to see that NW Oregon number of geese more closely reflect goals of USFSWS. Cites Pacific Flyway Council documented dated March 16, 1997-98. Population should not exceed 130,000. Recognize needs of valley too, not just needs of

subsistence hunters and dusks. Extend hunting days to make it possible for hunters to keep them moving. Reduce resident population.

Borman: OSU Dept. Rangeland Ecology and Management asked to document goose impact on crops. Established methods to do that and did two studies, one on Sauvie Island and one in Willamette Valley, on winter wheat and grass seed. Did document reduced yield, timing and intensity was factor that influenced impact.

Knapp: My major frustration is the seeming impossibility to do anything to really solve problem. I have watched problem evolve from 30,000 geese to many more. It's just as frustrating from a hunting standpoint and to have hunters tell you, why bother with geese. Things can be done to make seasons more hunter-friendly and produce a result. Agencies tell you nothing we can do but we need to write a plan that has solutions to problems.

Smith: From a goose hunter's perspective, the problem we see is that originally the objective was to lower goose numbers without impacting dusks and we were on board. Geese are easy to hunt compared to big game. When we went to two cackler limit, some hunters quit shooting cacklers altogether because we wanted to see numbers come back. So we're trying to shoot as few cacklers as possible and meanwhile every farmer we talk to is at their wit's end. So it's two problems: not enough and too many geese.

Trost: I came here in 1995 and problem already existed. We developed NW Oregon-SW Washington Goose plan (cooperative document approved by Pacific Flyway Council in 1998) and in that plan is genesis of where I hope this group chooses to go. For the few years that it had funding for the plan we were able to make some inroads. I've worked in goose management throughout the United States in all four flyways, and I will freely admit the situation we face here is the most complex I've dealt with.

Rep. Schaufler: Interested in learning more about Flight Control and about funding. We need to shoot more of these animals and that's all there is to it. I would love to have dusks but my priority is you all making a living on your property and maintaining a strong economy in this state.

Sen. Johnson: I wear two hats, as a State Senator representing territory being damaged by geese and also for some years as a commercial helicopter pilot with husband in commercial aviation. The danger of geese and planes was no more clearly driven home than Hudson River event. At my airport, I chase them with car and horn honking and they barely look up, they come up like a black cloud. Droppings are also a health hazard. In anticipation of dropping bill, hired an avian biologist and he produced initial report. Marie didn't like some of the management tools presented. Don't want the result of this task force to be call for more collaboration, hope to come out with something practical, doable and agreed upon by Task Force to go to legislature with. Disagreement at the witness table does not sit well with the legislature. Also don't be afraid of using other people's good ideas and be mindful that no one is being compensated and be respectful of each other's time.

Anglin: We also want solutions and we share same frustrations as landowner community. No one here from Klamath Basin but what they are facing is just as significant with even more birds. I am Oregon representative on Pacific Flyway Council so any recommendations that come out of here, I can take to them.

Bortner: None of us want to see this problem go on, both of us have been at it for many years and are frustrated with it. The most complex goose management issue in North America. There is a lack of resources for implementation of plans we have come up with. Funding that has been obtained was dependent on support of Alaska natives subsistence harvest.

Trost reviews history of treaties and MBTA. MBTA generally a great success—done good job at conserving resources held in public interest and don't have problems that have arisen in salmon management, for example. Handle things cooperatively through Flyway Councils. Hunting seasons can only be authorized Sept. 1-March 10 and total number of huntable days is limited to 107.

Discussion of whether Oregon is maxed out on hunting days. Goose hunting in NW Oregon not open every day due to inability to staff check stations (to check for dusks) every day and due to restrictions to protect cacklers and dusks. Shooting hours are restricted for better lighting conditions so hunters can identify dusks which are often first ones into decoys and very vulnerable to hunting. Anglin says ODFW runs check stations, we have them due to concerns about dusky population and limiting their harvest so don't get listed, spending \$300K per biennium for check stations.

Dusky Canada geese history (Trost): In 1964, earthquake caused major environmental change that made dusks vulnerable to predation. Beginning in 1980s, harvest regulations were imposed largely to protect dusks. In last 4-5 years, seen steady almost unprecedented decline due to recruitment rates not hunter harvest. The specter of ESA comes into play; last year's count of 6,700 was low and should they continue to decline they may petition for ESA listing. It's conceivable that dusks would not be listed because problem is not man made; No doubt in anyone's minds that that severely complicates an already complex situation and that is why we do what we do to keep it from happening. This year there are more harvest restrictions including check stations in Alaska. Knapp, Gadotti others frustrated that hunting limited when problems not man made.

Cackling Canada geese (Trost): For cacklers, there is a considerable subsistence harvest among 40,000 Alaska natives. Bag limits not part of cultural heritage, hunters provide community with food, do have season dates and those kinds of regulations. In the late 80s and early 90s, cacklers shifted from wintering in California to wintering almost entirely in the Willamette Valley and Columbia Basin.

Other geese management issues: In southern Oregon and Klamath Basin, white-fronted geese are issue. Birds across North America are wintering farther north, it could be climate change driven. Slim to none chance of getting birds to change their flight paths;

been involved in those programs and spent millions but cannot get birds to go where you want them to go. So potential is here for birds to move into Oregon in greater and greater numbers in the future. Wrangel Island snow geese and Ross' geese are also here. Aleutian Canada geese are increasingly wintering around Tillamook, once listed as endangered species but now recovered.

Tasks:

- Invite congressional delegations staff to meetings or at least make sure they are aware (Sen. Johnson) but let's find out what we can do in state and then do it (Rep. Schaufler). Invite Fitz Graham at Wyden's office and Schrader's office in Oregon City.
- Get copy of state fire marshal permit for purchase, storing of cracker shells and investigate whether different standards on obtaining permit (Bortner/USFWS responsible)
- Hunting day matrix showing what days can hunt for geese specific to NW permit zone (ODFW responsible)
- Run down of depredation permit process for landowners that need to kill geese and whether USFWS might be willing to waive fees (Bortner/USFWS responsible)
- Pricing of past plans to deal with problem to determine cost benefit ratio (Bortner and Trost/USFWS responsible)
- 1997 ODA damage survey (ODFW)
- Hunting regs in 1950s-60s (per Rep. Schaufler) especially bag limits and harvest for cacklers and dusks back in 1965 (ODFW responsible)
- Consultant report Senator Johnson ordered before SB 622 (Sen. Johnson responsible)
- Species plans for various geese (ODFW and USFWS)
- EIS for controlling resident geese to determine what can be done to control them differently than migratory (Trost responsible)
- Briefing on Flight Control product to be provided by someone at ODA or Dave Anderson and Clover Commission
- Gadotti's five-page document presented to House and Senate during SB 622 and one pager 18 points (Gadotti responsible)
- Pacific Flyway Council document dated March 16, 1997-98. (ODFW and USFWS responsible)
- OSU studies on geese impact to yield (ODFW from Mike Borman)
- NW Oregon-SW Washington Goose plan approved 1998 (ODFW and USFWS)

Sen. Johnson in closing: Let's make recommendations and then find out what the obstacles are in getting there. Start to develop a more concrete list and find out who has to authority to make that decision. We all have our sphere of influence: farmers talk to other farmers, hunters to other hunters, I will talk to aviation. Need recommendations by fall, then review with constituent groups and submit in December for January session. I see a maximum of three meetings. Remember Legislature can see 4,000 bills in ordinary session; we have got to have our bill in good shape.

Next meetings: **March 18, 10 am – 2 pm** and **May 12, 10 am – 2 pm**. Refine recommendations at May meeting, send them to legislative council, draft back in July then have another meeting to look at and circulate among interest groups. Tee up for a late fall hearing with one of the committees and have it ready for 2011 Legislature. .

Public testimony

Al Elkins, Oregon Hunters Association: OHA works closely with Farm Bureau on kill and damage permits for deer and elk. ODFW crafted a system just for Jackson County. Maybe we should craft a model that would take away landowners' frustrations?

Anderson: Farmers and landowners are not responsible for feeding wildlife. Please recognize the amount of forage it takes to feed waterfowl and geese. We know 600K white-fronts come up from California; I wish agencies would think about where all the feed is going to come from when they make predictions.

(Some members of the public arrived late for the meeting due to incorrect times being published in the Albany and Corvallis papers. Members of the Committee met with these publics to hear their concerns and gave an overview of what had been discussed over the course of the meeting)

OSU Extension Agent discusses Flight Control product.

Members of the task force were interviewed by KGW, while KEZI conducted a phone interview with ODFW.

Next Meetings – Please note

Lunch will not be provided at the next meetings. Participants are asked to bring their own food as we will continue to meet through the lunch hour.

A special call in number will be created that will allow the public to call in and listen to the meeting. This number will be posted on our website prior to the next meeting, included in the next news releases and emailed/sent to all work group members.