



**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

600 South Walnut / P.O. Box 25  
Boise, Idaho 83707

C.L. "Butch" Otter / Governor  
Cal Groen / Director

December 3, 2008

Steve Birrer  
Idaho Waterfowl Association  
3383 Chimney Peak  
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83404-8233

Dear Mr. Birrer:

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (Department) has compiled a summary of Department activities and programs which benefit waterfowl and waterfowl hunters in Idaho for the period July 2004 through July 2008. Department activities are broken down into 11 categories. We hope you will find this information meaningful and that you will share it with members of the Idaho Waterfowl Association. Our conclusion is that the Department spends considerable resources to improve and protect wetlands and provide hunting opportunities for waterfowl hunters. Nonetheless, we would like to do even more should additional resources become available.

For the purposes of this summary:

- License funds are resultant from licenses purchased by resident and non-resident waterfowl hunters
- Federal funds are matching revenue provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or other federal funds provided as mitigation for development projects
- Other organization funds come from conservation partners and often include a matching contribution from the Department

**Waterfowl Habitat Maintenance**

The Department is involved in the maintenance of important waterfowl habitat throughout Idaho. Some properties are owned by the Department. Other properties are maintained via conservation easements, leases, or other agreements. Idaho's Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are a key example where waterfowl habitat is maintained. All of these properties typically require annual operating and personnel expenditures.

*Keeping Idaho's Wildlife Heritage*

Fiscal Year	Acres	License funds used	Federal funds used	Other organization funds used
2005	95,585	X	X	X
2006	95,977	X	X	X
2007	97,369	X	X	X
2008	99,176	X	X	X

### Waterfowl Habitat Protection

The Department continually seeks to protect essential waterfowl habitats in Idaho. These are properties that should be conserved in public ownership to protect them from degradation and development. Some of these properties require less active management and maintenance.

Fiscal Year	Acres	License funds used	Federal funds used	Other organization funds used
2005	56,635	X	X	X
2006	57,026	X	X	X
2007	57,946	X	X	X
2008	59,753	X	X	X

### Waterfowl Habitat Acquisition

The Department pursues opportunities to acquire waterfowl habitat when a property meets the mission, goals, and objectives of the Department's strategic plan, *The Compass*. The acquisition may be in conservation easement or fee title. Sometimes it is more appropriate for another agency or non-government organization to hold the easement or title. Acquisitions require a considerable outlay of capital funds and often take many months or even years to complete. In many instances, conservation partners are enlisted to help provide the acquisition funds.

Fiscal Year and number of acquisitions	Acres	License funds used	Federal funds used	Other organization funds used
2005 - 0	0			
2006 - 4	391		X	
2007 - 5	1,392		X	X
2008 - 4	1,808		X	

### Waterfowl Habitat Restoration

Often, acquired or protected properties require significant and costly efforts to restore damaged or lost waterfowl habitat. Ditches, dikes, and water control structures may need to be repaired, replaced, or developed. Noxious weeds may need to be controlled and nesting cover planted. These restoration projects typically require multiple partners, considerable planning, and labor-intensive implementation. A major source of Department funds for restoration projects come from the Department's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP).

Fiscal Year	Acres	License funds used	Federal funds used	Other organization funds used
2005 HIP	2,201	X	X	X
2006 HIP	16,980	X	X	X
2007 HIP	217	X	X	X
2008 HIP	716	X	X	X

The following is a sample of HIP-funded public waterfowl hunting area projects:

- Chester Wetlands: Wetland restoration and water delivery system improvements after acquisition of Chester Wetlands complex.
- Camas National Wildlife Refuge (NWR): Drilled a new well and installed an irrigation pump to restore and enhance wetlands for Sandhole Lake.
- Pend Oreille WMA / Albeni Cove: Wetland construction.
- Bear Lake NWR: Contributed \$50,000 to the North American Wetland Conservation Act grant for Bear Lake NWR wetland restoration projects. Approximately 14,150 acres enhanced.
- Deer Flats NWR: Wetland enhancement and seeding of adjacent waterfowl nesting cover.
- Sand Creek WMA: Repair of leaking dams on pond complex.
- Montour WMA: Wetland restoration and installation of water control structures.
- Canada wetland restoration projects: HIP has contributed over \$500,000 since 1987 for wetland creation and restoration in Alberta, Canada.

#### Current project:

- Pack River delta restoration in Panhandle region: \$100,000.

**Access Yes! Properties for Waterfowl Hunters**

*Access Yes!* is the Department’s program designed to improve sportsmen's access to private land or through private land to public land by compensating willing landowners who provide access. Ultimately, the goal is to provide access to 1,000,000+ acres of private land along with access through private land to thousands more acres of public land. More funding will be required to reach this goal. Waterfowl hunters can access information about each enrolled property via the Department’s internet web site.

Fiscal Year	Number of properties open to waterfowl hunting	Number of open properties with ponds, marshes, or river access	License funds used	Federal funds used	Other organization funds used
2005	33	13	X	X	
2006	38	15	X	X	X
2007	44	19	X	X	X
2008	38	14	X	X	X

**Public Access Sites for Waterfowl Hunters**

In addition to managing 34 WMAs which provide waterfowl hunting access, the Department manages a number of smaller access sites throughout Idaho designed to provide access to a publicly-owned body of water to benefit hunters and anglers. Many of these sites have boat ramps, restrooms, and handicapped facilities. Often, waterfowl hunters use these access sites to reach a portion of a river or lake to hunt.

Fiscal Year	Number of sites	License funds used	Federal funds used	Other organization funds used
2005	332	X	X	X
2006	332	X	X	X
2007	332	X	X	X
2008	332	X	X	X

**Events Where Waterfowl Hunting Instruction Was Provided**

Department employees are eager to share their knowledge of waterfowl hunting. They have typically done so via mentored youth hunts and waterfowl hunting workshops. Often, partners are enlisted to help implement the events. The Department would like to conduct more of these events as staff time and resources allow.

Fiscal Year	Number of events	Department administrative region	License funds used	Federal funds used	Other organization funds used
2005	3	1	X	X	X
	1	3	X	X	X
	1	4	X	X	X
2006	3	1	X	X	X
	2	3	X	X	X
2007	3	1	X	X	X
	2	3	X	X	X
2008	3	1	X	X	X
	1	3	X	X	X
	1	4	X	X	X

**Events Where Waterfowl And / Or Wetland Habitat Education Was Provided**

The Department also participates in events where wetland habitat education was provided but where waterfowl hunting was not the purpose of the event. Nonetheless, the Department believes that all public education which seeks to improve understanding of the value of wetland habitat and the necessity for wetland conservation is beneficial to waterfowl hunters. An example of such an event is the annual Migratory Bird Day celebration held in the Upper Snake Region.

Fiscal Year	Number of events	Department administrative region	License funds used	Federal funds used	Other organization funds used
2005	1	1			X
	1	6	X	X	X
2006	1	1			X
	2	3	X		
	1	6	X	X	X
2007	1	1			X
	1	6	X	X	X
2008	1	1			X
	1	4	X		X
	1	6	X	X	X

**Technical Assistance**

Many Department employees are involved in assisting others with assessing the impacts of potential developments on waterfowl and working to minimize negative impacts. Environmental

staff biologists (ESBs) working around the state benefit waterfowl hunting and waterfowl in many ways. ESBs are the Department's primary force working with:

- Wetland protection with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to keep wetland fills and degradation from occurring on private land,
- Water rights protection to maintain fresh water systems to emergent and open-water habitats and avoid water right developments that might harm waterfowl habitat,
- Reviewing federal agency habitat and management actions, on a large scale, to assure that Best Management Practices are pursued to avoid wetland encroachment and degradation,
- Reviewing and developing appropriate motorized access plans for federal properties managing waterfowl habitat such as BLM and USFS,
- Addressing stream channel and wetland dredging, the protections wetlands receive against these impacts,
- Coordinating with IDEQ to assure that water quality standards in all state water bodies are adequately addressed in 303D stream and water listings, and are protected through Best Management Practices during construction and other activities,
- Protecting waterfowl interests during negotiations regarding both hydropower development and energy corridor development,
- Cooperating with habitat staff to find funding opportunities to develop waterfowl impoundments in appropriate areas, and
- Pursuing permitting requirements of our habitat management actions benefiting waterfowl on state-managed properties.

### **Waterfowl Population Monitoring**

The Department works closely with the USFWS and other states to monitor waterfowl populations and production. This data is shared throughout the Pacific flyway and is used to help set waterfowl harvest regulations.

The surveys typically conducted by the Department include:

- Midwinter waterfowl surveys
- Canada goose pair counts
- Canada goose nest surveys
- Wood duck nest surveys
- Harlequin duck surveys
- Duck breeding pair surveys
- Duck brood surveys
- Weekly migration summaries

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### **Waterfowl Disease Monitoring**

The Department is actively involved in monitoring waterfowl for a variety of diseases including:

- Avian cholera
- Botulism
- Avian Influenza (H5N1)  
Statewide October-January  
600 samples

### **Waterfowl Hunting Enforcement**

Idaho Conservation Officers enforce flyway waterfowl hunting regulations statewide. Officers conduct check stations on WMAs. Waterfowl hunters are often checked at hunter check stations on major highways. Undercover officers work to catch poachers on routine operations and special investigations.

### **Conclusion**

The Department currently provides considerable resources toward the effective management of waterfowl in Idaho. However, there is much more that could be done to benefit waterfowl and waterfowl hunters with additional resources.

We would greatly appreciate your signed letter of support for the Department's proposed revenue increase. Thank you for your interest and support of waterfowl management.

Sincerely,



Jeff Gould, Chief  
Bureau of Wildlife

JG:clc

cc: Virgil Moore, IDFG  
Jim Unsworth, IDFG  
Bill Hutchinson, IDFG  
Regional Supervisors, IDFG