

PHJV - Policy in Action

Additional Policy Achievements

Over the last three decades agricultural policy adjustments in western Canada have resulted in significant changes to upland and wetland habitat, which means a considerable increase in nesting habitat for migratory waterfowl. Positive results have occurred in the following areas:

- annually cropped cultivated land decreased by approximately 6 million acres since 1986,
- pasture and hayland increased by 2.4 million acres and 3.7 million acres respectively since 1986.

PHJV partners were instrumental in attaining conservation easement legislation in Canada. Almost 140,000 acres have been secured by PHJV partners using this tool, which only became available in the last few years.

Influencing Future Policy

Policy development is one of the most important habitat conservation tools available to the PHJV. A key component is the use of Environmental Goods and Services (EGS) to increase the scale of societal investment in natural land stewardship and to reverse trends in habitat loss at broad scales. PHJV partners are already exploring the use of EGS mechanisms to help achieve the PHJV waterfowl and other bird habitat goals.

Since inception, the PHJV planned for a unique mix of land management programs and policy work. These initiatives combined with habitat treatments are critical to achieving NAWMP success in this vast PHJV area.

Waterfowl conservation efforts provide society with a wide array of ecological services, including clean air and water, food and fiber, and carbon storage on top of many direct economic benefits provided by waterfowl hunting. These socioeconomic benefits are crucial factors in effective policy and program development and will be central to protecting and restoring healthy prairie landscapes and waterfowl populations.

With so many mutually beneficial results between waterfowl conservation and human needs, ecological goods and services initiatives have the potential to make the achievement of PHJV habitat objectives more realistic in a shorter time frame.

Broad landscape change that benefits waterfowl is vital to achieving the goals of the PHJV. With momentum building in EGS policy/program development in Canada, the future is bright for significant gains on the landscape. Producer groups, governments and other stakeholders alike realize the tremendous potential of Canadian agri-environmental programming. Through committed efforts with agricultural and watershed groups, the PHJV partners can build a prairie landscape that provides economic benefit while enhancing waterfowl production.



The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV) partnership was established to deliver the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) on the Canadian prairies. NAWMP remains the PHJV's key focus today.

Originally signed in 1986, NAWMP has provided a continental response to waterfowl habitat conservation and has received strong commitments from the United States, Canada and Mexico.

North America's Prairie Pothole Region, found largely in Canada, is recognized as the most important breeding area for continental waterfowl and it is important for many other bird populations as well.

The PHJV's broad-based partnerships and conservation activities are crucial to achieving the continental NAWMP goal of restoring waterfowl populations to the levels of the 1970s.

PRIORITY GOALS

- Sustain average waterfowl populations of the 1970s.
- Stop further wetland loss.
- Stop further loss of native lands, especially native grasslands.
- Restore lost wetlands, especially small basins.
- Restore function of upland habitats in landscapes conducive for maintenance of bird populations.

CONTACT:

Email: phjv@ec.gc.ca

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Conservation friendly public policies and programs are critical to the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture's (PHJV) success in achieving healthy waterfowl populations. A variety of policies impact how the Canadian prairie landscape is managed. PHJV partners promote decisions that improve the ecological health of the landscape and its duck production potential while balancing the needs of other land users.

Broad landscape change has long been recognized as a vital component to achieving the goals of the PHJV. The policy initiatives undertaken by PHJV partners will contribute to attaining these goals. *See sidebar.*

Emerging opportunities through Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) and growing awareness and acceptance of the value of natural capital and ecological goods and services are making way for more effective habitat conservation and protection across Canada.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada recently accepted a proposal from Ducks Unlimited Canada to include wetland restoration planning and wetland restoration as two new beneficial management practices (BMP). Once APF Environment Working Groups in each province accept these BMPs, agricultural producers can receive technical and financial assistance to restore wetlands to their original size, depth and ecological function.

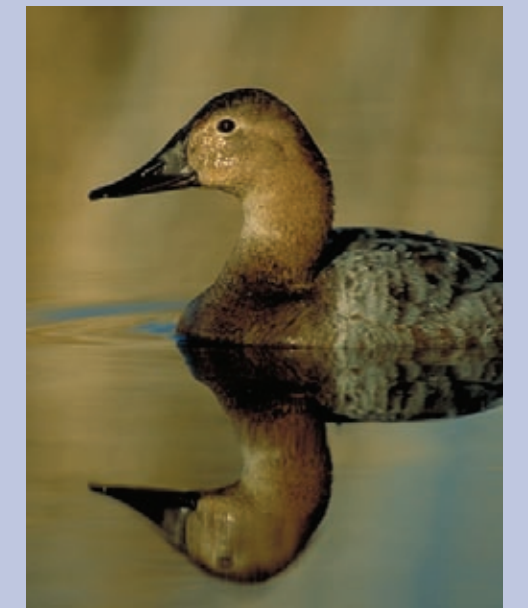


Ecological Goods and Services

Ecological goods and services (EGS) represent the benefits humans derive from ecosystem functions. Healthy rural landscapes, which include waterfowl habitat, provide important EGS such as air and water purification, groundwater recharge, flood and erosion control, carbon sequestration, biodiversity and tourism.

Public policies that reward landowners for restoring and maintaining wetlands and other habitats will help ensure a stable habitat base.

The PHJV fully embraces the concept of payment to landowners for EGS, and is working with governments to make EGS a reality in Canada.



Public Policy and Program Development: Comparing Canada and the United States

One of the major differences between Canada and the United States is its population. Canada is home to approximately 32 million people, which is less than the population of California and approximately one-tenth of the population of the United States. Compared to the U.S., Canada has access to limited public dollars. As well, Canada exports over 50% of its agricultural products.

When comparing public conservation programs between the two countries, Prairie Canada has a very limited national wildlife refuge system, and no significant equivalents in agriculture to the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetland Reserve Program and the Conservation Security Program. Canada does not have stringent wetland protection policies comparable to those of the U.S.

Implementation of Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework (similar to the Farm Bill in the U.S.) over the last four years signaled a major shift and new opportunities for adjustments to land-based policies. Canadian agricultural policy is now developed in a more holistic manner and landscape conservation issues are receiving increasing attention.

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Policy changes have resulted in a number of benefits on the landscape for waterfowl and other wildlife. These impacts have resulted in:

- increased acres converted from croplands to haylands and pastures,
- increased recognition and conservation of wetlands,
- increased conservation of native wildlife habitat,
- increased payments for agricultural beneficial management practices,
- increased tax credits for conservation practices in Manitoba, and on a pilot project in Saskatchewan.

The PHJV and its partners have been extremely influential in provincial water strategies. In Alberta, PHJV partners were successful in adding wetlands to the list of water resources to be conserved and protected in the Water for Life Strategy. This significant achievement directly contributes to the PHJV goal to stop further wetland loss.



Researcher in winter wheat crop.

PHJV partners have worked with farm organizations to determine appropriate compensation options for beneficial management practices that complement PHJV goals. Some options are now available to producers but additional options are being negotiated throughout the PHJV. In the years ahead, the partners will pursue policy development guided by the emerging recognition of ecological goods and services provided by natural and farmed landscapes, a concept that places a monetary value on the benefit derived from ecosystem functions that also benefit migratory birds, other wildlife and the quality of life for Canadians.

By developing implementation plans guided by sound science, the PHJV is influencing policy and programs to achieve desired waterfowl population objectives.



PHJV partners contributed to policy reform by engaging in planning committees, sharing research, preparing discussion papers, participating in public and private consultations on policy reforms, and initiating key program and policy reforms on the Canadian Prairies. Programs in which the PHJV participated include:

- **National Soil Conservation Program** – supports soil conservation management by promoting winter wheat and other cropping practices that contribute to increased habitat for waterfowl.
- **Permanent Cover Programs I and II (PCP)** - reduces soil degradation by converting marginal cropland into permanent cover which also benefits waterfowl and other wildlife. See *Figure 1*.
- **Agricultural Policy Framework** – includes environmental components in all federal agriculture policies.
 - **Greencover Canada** – provides funding for producers to improve grassland-management practices, promote water quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance biodiversity and waterfowl/wildlife habitat. PHJV partners have been instrumental in the development of this five-year program. See *Figure 1*.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's three programs to convert environmentally sensitive land to perennial cover have secured 255,144 acres in NAWMP target areas and 942,817 acres outside target areas but within key priority areas, thus providing additional nesting habitat for waterfowl.

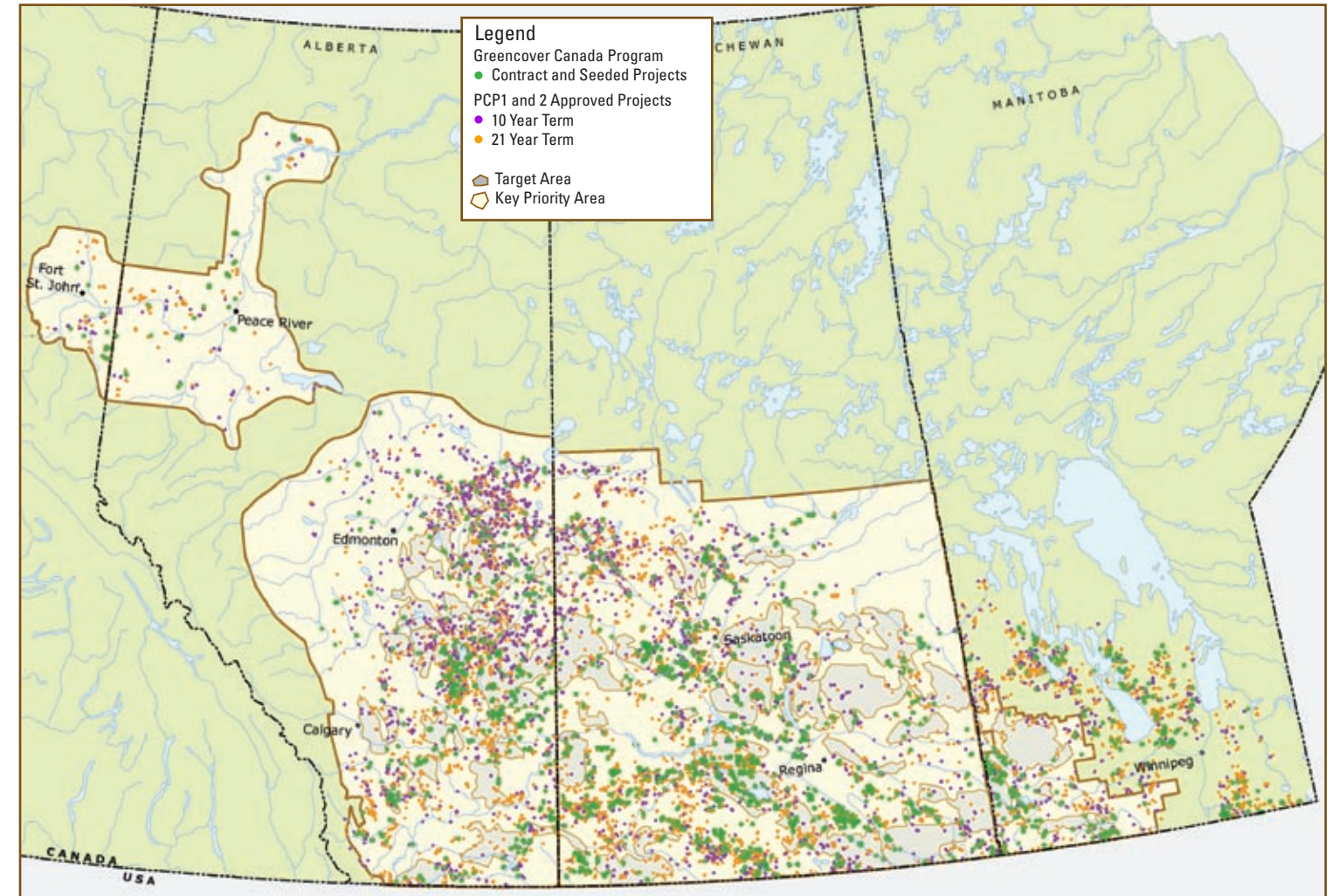


Figure 1. Permanent Cover Programs I and II and Greencover Canada acres secured within NAWMP target and key priority areas.

- **Saskatchewan Wildlife Habitat Protection Act** – protects 3.4 million acres of uplands and wetlands through provincial legislation. The Act prevents the government from selling designated Crown land, and restricts land use on these Crown lands.
- **Saskatchewan Agriculture Conservation Cover Program** – converted cropland to permanent cover. Over 1/3 of all farmers participated, converting well over one million acres between 2001 - 2003.
- **Rural Tax Assessment** – demonstrates public benefit from conservation activities on private land through tax credit pilot programs in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.
- **Western Grain Transportation Act** – the Act provided a subsidy to farmers to move their grain to sea ports. This Act has been removed, reducing the amount of annually cropped cultivated land, resulting in increased haylands and pastures.
- **Drainage and Flood Control Programs** –work with appropriate agencies to revise drainage and flood control programs to reduce wetland drainage.
- **Prairie Wetland Policies** – one of the four habitat goals of the PHJV is to stop further wetland loss. By emphasizing the importance of watersheds and wetlands and their effect on water quality and conservation issues, PHJV partners are shaping policies and programs centering on the aquatic health of individual watersheds. With the support of PHJV partners, the following wetland policies are in development throughout Prairie Canada:
 - Alberta: Water for Life Strategy (2003)
 - Saskatchewan: Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2002) (and currently under review)
 - Mandate of source water protection
 - Manitoba: Department of Water Stewardship (2003)
 - Water Protection Act (2004)