**Joint Ventures: Celebrating 25 Years of Bird Habitat Conservation**

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*What Do Joint Ventures Do for Birds?*

“Joint venture” is a term most commonly used to describe a cooperative business enterprise. However, wildlife conservationists adopted the term in the late 1980s to describe the public-private partnerships that would be needed to implement waterfowl conservation across the continent with the signing of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in 1986.

Today, these Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, or “JVs,” are collaborative, regional partnerships of government agencies, non-profit organizations, corporations, tribes, academia, and individuals that conserve habitat for priority bird species within specific geographic areas in the United States and Canada. JVs share a vision of a landscape where native birds thrive, and believe that human well-being depends on healthy lands, waters, and wildlife. By bringing together diverse partners, joint ventures protect the landscapes that birds -- and people -- rely on for survival.

This year, 2012, the Joint Ventures celebrate 25 years of bird habitat conservation.

Joint Ventures bring partners together to protect and restore landscapes that support healthy bird populations, sustain livelihoods, and provide nature’s benefits to people and wildlife. JVs use state-of-the-art science to ensure that diverse habitats are available for birds and other wildlife.

Their actions include biological planning, conservation design and prioritization; project development and implementation; monitoring, evaluation, and applied research; communications, education and outreach; and funding support for projects and other activities. These actions form an iterative cycle known as strategic habitat conservation, a science-driven framework for making management decisions about where and how to deliver conservation efficiently to achieve specific biological outcomes.

*How did JVs Evolve?*

Joint Ventures were born out of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), a landmark agreement signed in 1986 by the U.S. and Canadian governments to restore continental waterfowl populations to the levels of the 1970s. In 1994, Mexico became a signatory to the NAWMP, completing the continental partnership for waterfowl.

The NAWMP’s framers realized that the two federal governments alone could not halt the decline in waterfowl populations, and that the only viable option was to encourage a network of regionally based, self-directed partnerships committed to strategic waterfowl habitat conservation. Today, a virtually seamless network of JVs exists across the United States, as well as portions of Canada and Mexico.

*How Do JVs Work?*

Joint Venture partnerships are supported with base funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Canadian Wildlife Service, and an array of additional federal, state, and private funds. For JVs with approved implementation plans, FWS has committed to seek funding for a coordinator and establish base capacity for planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Nationwide, 18 habitat-based JVs address bird habitat conservation issues within their geographic areas. Additionally, three species-focused JVs—all with an international scope—work to further the scientific understanding needed to effectively manage sea ducks, American black duck and Arctic geese.

In Canada, four JVs cover the entire country from the western boreal forest to the Eastern maritime provinces.

Joint Ventures have been widely accepted as the model for conservation in the 21st century. The U.S. Congress has strongly supported the work of JVs over the last 20 years. This is not surprising—JVs have a 25-year history of success in leveraging public and private resources by bringing together partners to focus on regional conservation needs. Over the course of their history, JV partnerships have leveraged every dollar of Congressional appropriations 35:1, helping to conserve 18.5 million acres of habitat.

JVs are partnerships that operate under the old adage—*the partnership is stronger than the sum of its parts*.

The expanded scope of JVs fits well with the locally based habitat work of many partners—those that work not just to conserve wetlands, but also forests, grasslands, coastal and marine environments, and chaparral and desert ecosystems.

JVs provide an excellent forum to advance the bird and habitat objectives of a wide variety of agencies and organizations across the country, benefitting a host of other wildlife species and people, as well.