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Goose management plan is on schedule

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that a wildlife share-the-wealth plan to distribute Wisconsin's gagles of wild geese throughout the Mississippi Flyway is underway.

The joint federal-state plan is being fo-

tered by the Service and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to reduce the massive concentration of Canada geese at Horicon Marsh, a private waterfowl complex in east-central Wisconsin.

The crux of the management strategy is to make government wild lands less attractive to geese habitat. Although the plan is not expected to be completed before 1980, early changes are beginning to appear in the marsh, officials said.

The Horicon complex is a traditional way station for Canada geese that invade Wisconsin every fall after migrating from summer territories near James and Hudson Bay, Canada.

The geese no longer obey their ancestral migratory timetable," said Ellis Klett, assistant regional director of refuge and wildlife resources for the Service in Minneapolis.

Klett said the flock is in jeopardy because the area's attractiveness has created an artificial holding pattern that is not working for the best interests of the birds.

"The area is so attractive as goose habitat it holds the flock, by voluntary self-restriction, from seeking other feeding and nesting areas in Wisconsin and the Mississippi Flyway. The upshot is that, annually, an artificial holding pattern exists as a threat to the geese."

The potential of a disease outbreak in the flock is becoming increasingly likely, the agencies claim. Encouraging the geese to move out of the area sooner should not adversely affect consumptive and non-consumptive use of the wild resource, they added.

Early stages of the plan have been in motion at Horicon this summer. Around 700 acres of government land traditionally planted in winter wheat and corn were left unseeded this year, thus eliminating attractive agricultural crops.

"Natural, moist soil plants are now growing on the 700 acres," Klett said. "This fall, the geese will be less inclined to linger at the dinner table and they're expected to move out sooner in search of other food sources."

To further discourage a fall "residential pattern" at Horicon Marsh, the Service has initiated drawdown operations to lower the marsh water supply, Klett said.

Water management is recognized as a useful and available tool in waterfowl management. We're making adjustments in the water supply with care," he said, adding that both water and land management practices will be changed in transitional stages of the program.

The management arithmetic calls for a reduction in the goose concentration in east-central Wisconsin from current fall levels of 200,000 geese to 100,000 by 1980.

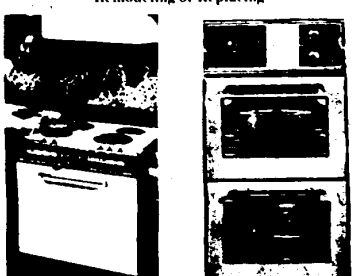
The agencies have indicated available tools to carry out the plan also include their knowledge of waterfowl information amassed over years of study.

Klett admitted there are no panacea solutions for the Wisconsin goose problem.

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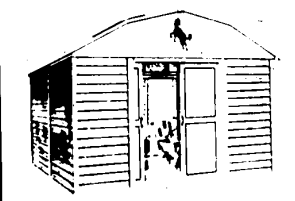
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