

INTERIOR ACTS

PUBLIC LAW 106-108—NOV. 24, 1999

Public Law 106-108
106th Congress

An Act

Nov. 24, 1999

[H.R. 2454]

Arctic Tundra
Habitat
Emergency
Conservation
Act.
16 USC 703 note.
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To assure the long-term conservation of mid-continent light geese and the biological diversity of the ecosystem upon which many North American migratory birds depend, by directing the Secretary of the Interior to implement rules to reduce the overabundant population of mid-continent light geese.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) **FINDINGS.**—The Congress finds the following:

(1) The winter index population of mid-continent light geese was 800,000 birds in 1969, while the total population of such geese is more than 5,200,000 birds today.

(2) The population of mid-continent light geese is expanding by over 5 percent each year, and in the absence of new wildlife management actions it could grow to more than 6,800,000 breeding light geese in 3 years.

(3) The primary reasons for this unprecedented population growth are—

(A) the expansion of agricultural areas and the resulting abundance of cereal grain crops in the United States;

(B) the establishment of sanctuaries along the United States flyways of migrating light geese; and

(C) a decline in light geese harvest rates.

(4) As a direct result of this population explosion, the Hudson Bay Lowlands Salt-Marsh ecosystem in Canada is being systematically destroyed. This ecosystem contains approximately 135,000 acres of essential habitat for migrating light geese and many other avian species. Biologists have testified that one-third of this habitat has been destroyed, one-third is on the brink of devastation, and the remaining one-third is overgrazed.

(5) The destruction of the Arctic tundra is having a severe negative impact on many avian species that breed or migrate through this habitat, including the following:

(A) Canada Goose.

(B) American Wigeon.

(C) Dowitcher.

(D) Hudsonian Godwit.

(E) Stilt Sandpiper.

(F) Northern Shoveler.

(G) Red-Breasted Merganser.

(H) Oldsquaw.

(I) Parasitic Jaeger.

(J) Whimbrel.

(K) Yellow Rail.

(6) It is essential that the current population of mid-continent light geese be reduced by 50 percent by the year 2005 to ensure that the fragile Arctic tundra is not irreversibly damaged.

PUBLIC LAW 106-108—NOV. 24, 1999

- (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are the following:
- (1) To reduce the population of mid-continent light geese.
 - (2) To assure the long-term conservation of mid-continent light geese and the biological diversity of the ecosystem upon which many North American migratory birds depend.

SEC. 3. FORCE AND EFFECT OF RULES TO CONTROL OVERABUNDANT MID-CONTINENT LIGHT GEESE POPULATIONS. 16 USC 703 note.

(a) FORCE AND EFFECT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The rules published by the Service on February 16, 1999, relating to use of additional hunting methods to increase the harvest of mid-continent light geese (64 Fed. Reg. 7507-7517) and the establishment of a conservation order for the reduction of mid-continent light goose populations (64 Fed. Reg. 7517-7528), shall have the force and effect of law.

(2) PUBLIC NOTICE.—The Secretary, acting through the Director of the Service, shall take such action as is necessary to appropriately notify the public of the force and effect of the rules referred to in paragraph (1).

(b) APPLICATION.—Subsection (a) shall apply only during the period that—

- (1) begins on the date of the enactment of this Act; and
- (2) ends on the latest of—

(A) the effective date of rules issued by the Service after such date of the enactment to control overabundant mid-continent light geese populations;

(B) the date of the publication of a final environmental impact statement for such rules under section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)); and

(C) May 15, 2001.

(c) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—This section shall not be construed to limit the authority of the Secretary or the Service to issue rules, under another law, to regulate the taking of mid-continent light geese.

SEC. 4. COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN.

16 USC 703 note.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than the end of the period described in section 103(b), the Secretary shall prepare, and as appropriate implement, a comprehensive, long-term plan for the management of mid-continent light geese and the conservation of their habitat.

Deadline.

(b) REQUIRED ELEMENTS.—The plan shall apply principles of adaptive resource management and shall include—

(1) a description of methods for monitoring the levels of populations and the levels of harvest of mid-continent light geese, and recommendations concerning long-term harvest levels;

(2) recommendations concerning other means for the management of mid-continent light goose populations, taking into account the reasons for the population growth specified in section 102(a)(3);

(3) an assessment of, and recommendations relating to, conservation of the breeding habitat of mid-continent light geese;

(4) an assessment of, and recommendations relating to, conservation of native species of wildlife adversely affected by the overabundance of mid-continent light geese, including the species specified in section 102(a)(5); and

(5) an identification of methods for promoting collaboration with the Government of Canada, States, and other interested persons.

PUBLIC LAW 106-108—NOV. 24, 1999

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$1,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2000 through 2002.

16 USC 703 note.

SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) MID-CONTINENT LIGHT GEESE.—The term “mid-continent light geese” means Lesser snow geese (*Anser caerulescens caerulescens*) and Ross’ geese (*Anser rossii*) that primarily migrate between Canada and the States of Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

(2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(3) SERVICE.—The term “Service” means the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Approved November 24, 1999.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 2454:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 106-271 (Comm. on Resources).

SENATE REPORTS: No. 106-188 (Comm. on Environment and Public Works).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 145 (1999):

Aug. 2, considered and passed House.

Nov. 8, considered and passed Senate, amended.

Nov. 10, House concurred in Senate amendments.