

To Whom It May Concern,

A story about Canada geese that was published in the New York Times on July 23<sup>rd</sup> (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/24/nyregion/24geese.html>) gave readers a completely incorrect impression about a long-standing goal to reduce the number of local nesting or “resident” Canada geese in New York State with a more recent and specific plan to capture and remove geese residing near JFK and LaGuardia airports.

First, let me make it very clear: contrary to the impression that some New York Times readers have come away with, **there are absolutely no plans by DEC or others to capture, euthanize and bury 170,000 resident geese to achieve the statewide population goal of 85,000 birds.** Here are the facts:

In 1999, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) helped develop a management plan for resident Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway (basically the East Coast of the U.S. and Canada). At that time, DEC estimated the number of resident geese in New York to be approximately 137,000 birds. Based on the growing frequency and severity of complaints about geese, DEC biologists concluded that a more acceptable number of resident geese in New York was at or below 85,000 birds. Our management efforts since 1999 have largely been to encourage or implement programs or policies to help achieve that population level.

In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Resident Canada Goose Management. Population objectives, as identified by flyway management plans, were incorporated into the Final EIS to help define its objectives for acceptable population reduction and management. The population estimate and objective for New York in that document were 161,000 and 85,000 geese, respectively.

In spring 2009, following the US Airways Flight 1549 incident, DEC cooperated with federal and local officials to develop an action plan to reduce the number of resident Canada geese that posed a hazard to aviation safety in the New York metropolitan area. U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Wildlife Services program accepted lead responsibility for developing and implementing a specific work plan to reduce the number of geese around JFK and LaGuardia airports. That work plan was designed to be more aggressive, and more effective, than the variety of non-lethal measures that had been used at both airports for many years.

It is the USDA work plan, not the flyway management plan, which describes the goose removal program that occurred in New York City in 2009 and 2010. The USDA work plan cited the Atlantic Flyway plan, and the population goal for New York, as part of their determination that the actions called for were consistent with current management goals and policies of DEC and other wildlife agencies. To reiterate, there **are absolutely no plans by DEC or others to capture, euthanize and bury 170,000 resident geese to achieve the statewide population goal of 85,000 birds.**

DEC continues to advocate for a reduction in the number of Canada geese in New York State to 85,000 birds (from what has since grown to 257,000 birds in spring 2010) because we believe that a much smaller resident goose population would best serve the diverse public interests.

Unfortunately, we are farther from the goal now than we were in 1999, so we continue to seek practical and effective ways to reduce the population. Foremost among these is goose hunting, which results in estimated harvests of some 50,000-100,000 resident geese annually across New York State. DEC will continue to expand goose hunting opportunities wherever possible to help control or reduce resident goose populations. However, this is not an option in many urban and suburban areas, so capture and removal programs have become necessary. We also provide information on a wide variety of goose management techniques to help alleviate problems at airports, beaches, drinking water supplies, farms, and countless other situations across the state; for details, go to: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7003.html>.

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