Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Robert Streeter
Date of Interview: January 16, 2007
Location of Interview: NCTC
Interviewer: David Smith

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 30+
Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Co-Op Units Program, Colorado and Washington, D.C.; Western Energy and Land Use Team, Research, FWS; Deputy Executive Director, NAWMP, Minneapolis Office; Coordinator NAWMP / NAWCA, Washington, D.C.; Executive Director NAWMP; Assistant Director FWS Resources.
Most Important Projects: NAWMP, NAWCA
Colleagues and Mentors: Harvey Nelson, Frank Dunkle, Graciela Delagarza
Most Important Issues:

Brief Summary of Interview: Career in FWS; involvement in implementation of NAWMP; relationship / eventual merging of NAWMP and NAWCA; NAWMP and differences from other plans / programs; partnerships and common goals; Joint Ventures – first encounter, creation / implementation / evolutionary processes; forces / situations that facilitated creation, passage, implementation of NAWMP and NAWCA; significant contributions made, engagement of others in goals of NAWMP; lack of patience with bureaucracy; 'memoranda of agreement' w/other federal agencies – Forest Service, BLM, Bureau of Reclamation; contributions of Canada and Mexico to conservation and NAWMP; First Step Projects – Quill Lakes; Flagship Projects – Chase Lake, Lake Thompson, ACE Basin; funding in early years; up-dates and their importance / impact; accomplishment of Plan goals vs continued habitat losses; NAWMP Committee – accomplishments, recommendations, impact, importance; NAWMP and relationship to harvest regulatory processes; general accomplishments of NAWMP in last 20 years.

NAWMP January 16, 2007 Tape #2

Tape 2 Side A – 1st Interview

David Smith – I'm David Smith, and I'm here today to interview Dr. Robert Streeter, who came to the North American Office when it was in Minneapolis in 1988. And started the North American Waterfowl and Wetlands Office in Arlington, sometime in 1990 -- we'll get into that -- and was the Executive Director for a period of years in the early / mid '90s. And, was my boss -- actually hired me into this job. Not sure why he did, but he did. Bob, I'd like to ask you a series of questions, if I could, about your role in the North American Plan, and how it got where it is. First of all, tell us a little bit about your background, and how you came to end up in Minneapolis with this North American Plan project.

Bob Streeter – My career in the Fish & Wildlife Service started in about 1972, with the Co-Op Units Program in Colorado, and then moved to Washington, D.C., again with the Co-Op Units Program. Then I went to a program called the Western Energy and Land Use Team. It dealt with mining, and how to get mining implemented, but still have some fish and wildlife habitat left over. And all of that was in Research in the US Fish and Wildlife Service. So from '72 'till 1988 I was with Research in the Fish & Wildlife Service. And, during that time, I helped establish two new Offices within the Research Program. And I'd also helped Harvey Nelson with a … initiate a program, just on a detail to him, when he was Regional Director of Upper Mississippi River Conservation Program. And so, when the North American Office got started, and Harvey convinced the powers-that-be that he needed somebody to help him with it, why, he asked me to join them. And so I did join them in Minneapolis, at least on a temporary basis in 1988; and took the job full time in the summer of '88. So that's how I came to be with the program -- I guess because of my abilities to kind of organize and implement -- get programs started.

David Smith – Well, let me ask you, what's your first recollection of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, whether it was in that job, or before that job?

Bob Streeter – I had heard references to the North American Plan, but the first real recollection of it was when, at the Western Energy and Land Use Team, and then a subsidiary to that, something called the Office of Information Transfer where we were charged with getting research information out into use in the Regions, in the field, and a box of Plans came through, just off the press. And you open the box, 'ah, here's that North American Plan we've been hearing about.' So that was my first recollection. And that was sometime probably in … late in '76, when they came off the press.

David Smith – Okay. Well, could you …

Bob Streeter – I'm sorry, 1986.

David Smith – Okay. So the Plan had been written and it was printed and ready to go.

Bob Streeter – I had nothing to do with the development of the North American Plan. And, in fact, one of the first things I had to do was quickly, on the plane to Minneapolis, is start reading it and trying to learn what was in there.

David Smith –Tell me about your involvement since 1986, or actually since 1988, when you went to Minneapolis, and your role in the Plan -- actually from then on, what was the various positions you had with the Waterfowl Plan Implementation Office?

Bob Streeter – Just bureaucratically, the titles I had?

David Smith – Just kind of short history of …

Bob Streeter – So, '88 I was the Deputy Executive Director of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and managed that Office. In 1990, the Wetlands

Conservation Act was to be implemented, and the Director basically told Harvey and me 'okay, Harvey, you continue with the North American Plan, and Bob, you come into Washington and start the … become the Coordinator for the North American Wetlands Conservation Council.' The two Offices were linked at the hip, but still separate. We basically established a new, small, Office in Washington to implement the Act. We had partners from several of the conservation organizations that joined us, that helped put together the criteria and the process, etcetera. The next step then, or the next position, was when Harvey retired, then I was, in addition to being the … continue being the Coordinator for the Wetlands Council … the Wetlands Act, I was named then the Executive Director of the North American Plan. And that was until 1995, when I became Assistant Director for Fish & Wildlife Resources. And, you then, followed in my footsteps about a year later.

David Smith –Well, as Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife, you continued to have oversight over the North American Office?

Bob Streeter – Yeah. Bureaucratically - oversight, but the North American program was running by itself. I mean, the staff that was there, and all the partners, and … you don't mess with the Plan. It's the partners [that] make it work … at the Joint Ventures. And so, it did not take much time. You were there to be the … title, you know. The title … in the bureaucracy you were in charge of that program, but the North American Plan kept running by itself. And it was great, because I had other problems to deal with. I knew it was in good hands.

David Smith – Well, let me ask you, for a lot of people might not realize that, in the beginning then, there was a North American Plan Implementation Office and a start up Office for the Wetlands Act. And only later did they merge into what people see -- almost one and the same now. Is that …

Bob Streeter – Yeah, that's correct. They never were totally divorced. Harvey was still my supervisor on paper when I was developing the Wetlands Conservation Act

implementation. But we set up a new Office, in terms of a site, and offices, and secretaries, and administrative people, and new people to do the actual work of the Act. But then when -- and we knew this was going to happen -- that the Plan Office would be moved eventually to Washington and the two would be one. So it was never completely separated. But yet, it was separate to get it started, and then we merged the two back together, fairly painlessly, when the folks from Minneapolis came in.

David Smith – Thank you. You've been around a while and seen in your various positions a lot of plans, initiatives. What was it about the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, in your mind, that set it apart from any other number of 'Plans' that had come along?

Bob Streeter – Well, my background was as a scientist. And so, I think the first thing that set it aside, in my mind, was that it had specific goals and objectives. True, the population goals and the habitat goals were not linked. But, they at least were the best that could be done when the Plan was written. So that was the first thing. And then the second thing was: its implementation was not the responsibility of any one organization, or any one group, or any one budget. It was a partnership that the sum was stronger than the pieces. And the more I was involved with the North American Plan, and then later the Act, and then continuing with the two, the more convinced I was that it was the type of thing that is going to continue, because the strength of those partnerships had developed out in the ground, and at every level -- bureaucratic level, political level, implementation level. The word partnership was defined by how the North American Plan operated. Let me use one example: I remember going to, I think it was a Gulf Coast Joint Venture tour, and we started out of New Orleans. And we got on a boat outside of New Orleans, and it was a Fish & Wildlife Service boat. But the boat driver was a state guy. And the people that were the deck hands were from TNC. And it all worked okay. And I think the boat was a Fish & Wildlife Service boat, but they couldn't find the right trailer to move it, so they had a state trailer that was out there that they put it on. And, you know, people just came together and said 'I've go this, I can make … I can contribute this.' And somebody else said 'I've got some money.' And, you know, it just

worked because they all were moving towards the same end point -- a particular habitat goal or particular population goal, that had been translated down to a major project to help get that done.

David Smith – It works, sometimes it works. Just one of those things that seems to have worked. Speaking of partnerships, do you remember your first meeting, or field visit, to a Joint Venture, assuming it was a forming Joint Venture. We know the original six were there and went to seven, and they've grown. But do you remember your very first encounter, in the field, with a Joint Venture partnership?

Bob Streeter – Yeah. It's kind of blurry, but it was a … I believe it was in Louisiana. And it seems like it was both a Lower Mississippi and a Gulf Coast Joint Venture, because I think I met Charlie and Jerry there at that session. And a lot of other partners. But, you know, I can't be specific exactly which one it was, but it was down in the south or southeast. And folks talked funny, and they cooked a lot of good food, and I was just blown away with how much enthusiasm was around that table, even though everybody didn't know exactly what was going on yet. And this was early in '88 just, probably within a month after I, or less, after I started the Office.

David Smith – So, what was it like in those days, working with partners, people like Charlie and others, who … none of you all knew what a Joint Venture was, yet you all were out there to create this 'thing.' Now, how did you go about that? How did you build this beast that hadn't existed before?

Bob Streeter – It would really be nice to say that you had a cookbook and … or had done exactly something like this before, and so here's how you do it. But it was an evolutionary process, I think both at the Joint Ventures and with our North American Office. Not always … always collegial but not always completely friendly. The Joint Venture Coordinators wanted more, sometimes, than we were able to give them. Or sometimes, less than we were trying to give them, in terms of direction. I think I felt often inadequate, to go back and do the things that they wanted, like, they needed more

money, or they needed something from their Regional Director. But it seemed to unfold as the months went by. And the things that were right, you knew were right. The things that weren't, you didn't pursue. And you kept talking, and kept working back and forth. And, I think, the one thing I noticed that the Joint Venture Coordinators, although they worked for a bureaucracy line in the Fish & Wildlife Service, usually through Refuges to the Regional Director -- in some cases maybe they skipped that and went directly to the Regional Director at the time -- they still wanted this connection to the North American Office, because we represented the North American Plan. And there was always conflict, even between Regional Directors and the North American Plan Office, probably from some of the other Assistant Regional Directors in the Regions and the Joint Venture Coordinators, because they … the Joint Venture Coordinators really had to dance to the tune of the partners. Although they were paid by the Fish & Wildlife Service, and there was some money coming through the Service, they had to negotiate the difficult steps of getting all those partners to the table, and getting something out of each one, and making sure they all got something back. And the organization just evolved. It was through hard work and desire, rather than just simple logic and 'this is the way it has to be.'

David Smith – Well, it seems to be a model that worked. A whole lot of people, at least a whole lot of people think it worked real well. And have tried to copy it. Speaking of the organizational structure within the Fish & Wildlife Service, can you point to one or two things, elements, characteristics, at the time, in the late '80s, that helped that to work? I might also ask you one of two that didn't, but I'm more interested in anything -- from the Director on down to the Regional Directors on down to field people in the Refuge System -- was there something that about that period that enabled that to work -- facilitated it?

Bob Streeter – Yeah, you know, talking - maybe more as a biologist, the first thing that comes to mind is that one thing that helped make it work is that there was clearly a crisis in waterfowl numbers, relative to historic numbers. And whatever we had been doing wasn't enough. And whether it was a Refuge Manager, or even some ES field office people, they would like … they wanted to see something better. They wanted to see it improved. Another thing, we had a Director at the time that may not have been the most

popular in many ways. His name was Frank Dunkle. But he did believe in the North American Plan. He knew that it was important to do something. He was convinced that the North American Plan was a way that might get it done. and he basically gave directives to the Regional Directors to get behind this and make it happen. When Frank left, there were some Regional Directors that continued that, without direction, and there were others that didn't give it quite the support that they were previously. But I would say those are the two things that come to mind, in the late '80s. There was the issue - the problem - that everyone recognized and wanted to find solutions to; and there was, from the Fish & Wildlife Service, there was a person that wanted to make it happen. There were pressures on him, and pressures on many others, from other non-government organizations, and from states, to have it happen too. So, it wasn't just, unilaterally, this man said it has to happen. there were others pushing him.

David Smith – Bob, when you think back, okay that was the '80s into the '90s, when you were … became the Executive Director and ran the Implementation Office and Coordinator. Can you name two or three significant contributions that *you* made to this whole enterprise? I'm sure there are more than that, I'm being very, very serious.

Bob Streeter – Yeah, there are hundreds that I personally made. No. [Laughter] David, I think probably, the best one, the first one, the one that's most important, is the people that were with me. And that's a trite type of comment. And early in my career, I didn't really pay much attention to people. You got to get the job done and, you know, either be there or get out of the way. But, we really had a great team that came together for the North American Act, and re-staffing the Plan. Enthusiastic. Bright. Talented.

David Smith – Even you?

Bob Streeter – I'm really honest. It was the people within our office, and then it was the other people around. I mean, people out of Refuges, people out of Acquisition, people in Ecological Services, that wanted … you might be going to … I remember going to the bathroom - men's room - and standing next to me is a guy from Federal Aid. And he was

so enthusiastic that, this was a Plan that was working, and what he saw from the outside, and the people he's working with, the states …. So, it really was a partnership within the Fish & Wildlife Service that evolved also. And so, that would be the first thing -- is the people that we had to be partners with me, within the Fish & Wildlife Service, and in our office. And another key thing … I can't take credit for it, it's the … there was a Wetlands Council that was named; we provided a lot of suggestions to the Secretary as to who might be on … the first members of the Council. But the Secretary did all the politically correct things, and picked some of the ones we suggested, picked some others that we didn't suggest. But they and their key staff people that they said we want these people to work for us … bringing those people together, and bringing them in as part of the process, I think was a key … a good stroke that maybe I had something to do with. I didn't just … it wasn't just a Fish & Wildlife Service grant program. It became, the state representatives and the NGO representatives that run the Wetlands Council, they felt a part of this whole process. And although it wasn't biased toward anybody, any one group getting money, they all felt like they had a role in making it be a fairly objective process that picked the best project. So, I think that's something else I maybe can take a little credit for, but not too much.

David Smith – Let me ask you a question. You had a reputation for not being very patient with the bureaucracy. I know a story where the Wetlands Council members … you tried to get them identification badges so they could get in the Department of Interior building. And, as the story goes, you were told 'nope, they're not Departmental employees, they're not retired people, they're not contractors, we're not going to get them IDs.' And, as the story goes, you said 'fine.' And a few days later, there were some IDs that said Secretary of the Interior Appointed: so and so,' and those IDs have been floating around to this day, getting people in and out of doors. Is that true?

Bob Streeter – I had kind of forgotten about that, but, yeah, it's true. I mean, they needed an ID to get into the Department, and the Department wouldn't issue it. We issued it. And there was nothing that I knew that was against any regulations for us to say they

were a member of the North American Wetlands Council, appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. It just so happened that the format kind of looked like an official badge.

David Smith – It seemed that, at the time, getting things done was a high priority.

Bob Streeter – Yeah.

David Smith – So that's a good thing.

Bob Streeter – Yeah. I'll maybe pass on another story. I was told … we had the first, the very first Wetlands Council meeting at … I believe it was at the … in May of 1990. And I was told by the Council at that time that there's no way we're going to get any money out in fiscal year … within the next year. I knew that we had a chance of getting money in the 1991 budget cycle. And, make a long story short, we did put together, with help of a lot of people, we put together a process, solicited projects, reviewed them, selected the best ones, and we had those projects ready to go when the money came through. and it was done by September of that year. That's … there was no reason why it couldn't be done, technically, so … a lot of people said it couldn't, but not the people that believed it could get done.

David Smith – And to this day NAWCA gets money out the door quicker than any other grant program.

Bob Streeter – And accountable.

David Smith – The way you all set it up.

Bob Streeter – And accountable.

David Smith – And accountable. Moving to the other parts of the federal government, you did a lot of work in those years in other agencies. Lots of federal agencies, many

wanted to step up to the plate. Others should have. And you went out and twisted arms. I remember … on numerous 'memoranda of agreement and understanding.' Can you tell us a little bit about what was going on with your interaction with other federal agencies in those years?

Bob Streeter – As I recollect, it was as much for the North American Plan as the Wetlands Act. But there were other agencies that wanted to help with the North American Plan. And they saw it as, I think probably, as a way of getting new budget money within their own appropriations process, for things that they wanted to do, or people within their organization wanted to do. And so, there was a … we did develop 'memoranda of agreement' with various groups. And David. I frankly can't remember all of them right now. But, we and our staff, simply worked that through. Whoever had an interest, if it would help them out in their budget process, or their bureaucracy, we'd work with developing a 'memorandum of agreement' with them that helped facilitate that. I don't think it benefited … it didn't benefit us bureaucratically. But it certainly benefited the resource, if they could get more money to do work on Forest Service lands, or BLM lands, Bureau of Reclamation I think was another one.

David Smith – Okay, so we went from Fish & Wildlife Service to federal government. And now to talk about Canada and Mexico a little bit. And they came in at different times. Can you point to one or two key factors, from Canada and Mexico, they would be different I expect, as far as their contributions to the partnership, and to the conservation that's gone on under the Plan.

Bob Streeter – Canada was a partner right from the beginning. The International Association the Fish & Wildlife Agencies was actively involved in the development of the Plan, and also lobbied for the, and helped … I wouldn't say lobby … helped educate for the Wetlands Act, and its implementation. And the provinces in Canada, particularly Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick -- those provinces were very active in the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. And so, they were key in developing … helping to develop the Plan, and helping with the … supporting the Act,

and then in implementing it. There … David, there's so many parts to it that it would take a long time to go into it. But, it … you know, there were federal activities that were done at the federal level to bring in new money to go out to the Joint Ventures in Canada. there were … Canadian provinces worked their legislators, and provided either money, or cash, or some kind of "in kind" contributions. And sometime they provided most of the cash upfront, because they felt once they get the project going, then the money would flow from the Wetlands Council. So they were willing to gamble a little bit. So, they were very actively involved in … as much a promoter of the North American Plan as people in the United States. Mexico was another story. Early on … well, first of all, every time … there's a federal election in Mexico every six years. And every time there's a new President, the entire … what's … would be comparable to the Department of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service -- complete turnover in the agency, right on down to the secretaries. Now, maybe some of those might get hired back in. But, when it happened there'd be a hiatus when there was no one you could even contact in Mexico government for fish and wildlife type of issues. For whatever reason, they did not choose to sign onto the North American Plan, although there was some discussions, I know, prior to that time. But they chose not to sign on. There was a new Director that came on-board, her name was Graciela Delagarza, a person known to be very difficult to deal with. We were putting money … sending money to Canada … or to Mexico with the North American Act, and we had a Council meeting, I think the North American Council met in … down in Charleston … or down in ACE Basin actually, in South Carolina, maybe 1992 or so - approximately, just prior to the '93 update, but we wanted to start working on that update. And I will take some credit. We were at the airport the same time, and we met in a lounge, and she did not have any alcoholic drink, but we had coffee or something, and waiting for the planes. And on the back of an envelop, we talked about the North American Plan and what [were] the conditions that she would be willing to sign into it. Now that she saw the Wetlands Council, how it was operating, some of the work on the ground, in the ACE Basin … there was a nice tour, and she was pretty impressed with the collegiality and the partnerships that were working there. And she was willing to make a commitment that, yes, she would sign on to the North American Plan, if we met certain conditions. And I think you were involved in the writing of the update. She

assigned people in Mexico that would work with it. We provided resources for them to travel, and maybe you traveled down there to help write that update. And those things that we agreed to on the napkin were incorporated into the update. And that led them to be willing to … for her to then go up the system and convince their - comparable to the Secretary of Interior - to sign on when the time came for the signing ceremony -- in Mexico, by the way, for the '93 update. So those were … they're completely different. Mexico does not have a lot of resources to put towards wildlife types of things. They had very little interest in waterfowl, but they had a lot of interest in wetland and wetland critters. And so it was under those conditions that they were willing to become a partner in the North American Plan, knowing that it does … all the benefit … all the projects benefit a wide array of species. And that's a long answer to your question.

David Smith – No, no, that's … it's a long process. Going back to Canada, what were these 'First Step Projects'? What how did they come to be? What did they represent? Were they prototypes? Were they demonstration projects?

Bob Streeter – 'First Step Projects' were, basically, the first step of putting money across the border from US to Canada. And as the Act was being written and implemented, the … I think the lead of it was the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, they came up with a big chunk of money. The states … International went to each of the states and said' we need money to go to Canada to partner in these Projects, how much can you give?' State of Texas promised a hundred thousand, and somebody else a million dollars, etcetera. And, all total, they came up with -- I'm sorry, I can't remember the number now, maybe … a couple million dollars. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation got some appropriations to match that, and send it across the border. And they handled the money.

[indecipherable – both speaking?]

Bob Streeter – The 'First Step Projects' were the projects that received the money for the first step – Quill Lakes in Manitoba for example was a 'First Step Project'. So that was

the whole idea. We should designate specific projects. And this was a Canadian idea, with the International and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation -- 'First Step Projects'. We had something else called 'Flagship Projects' in the US.

David Smith – What were 'Flagship Projects'?

Bob Streeter – I don't recall exactly how we came up with that, but we needed, from the national office, we needed some example projects that we could go to Congress … this was before the Act, this was working on the fiscal year '91 budget, which was done in fiscal year '88. And we needed projects to show Congress … different Congressmen … that, here's where the money would go, and here's the kind of things that would happen. These Projects are developed and the Joint Venture Coordinators, you know, were … had these …put these projects together. some of which were already being done by … prior to the North American Plan. Okay? So, the Plan can't … folks take total credit for it. But, they morphed into our 'Flagship Projects'. What's the best project in the Prairie Potholes? I think we came up [with] Chase Lake and Lake Thompson. What's the very best project in the Atlantic Coast? That was the ACE Basin. Etcetera. And we tried to have each Joint Venture put in one or two projects, then go to Congress and say 'this is a specific project, specific location, here's how much money would be needed to do the whole project, here's how much other people are putting into it, other partners are already coming to the table on this - the states, the NGOs'. And the NGOs would be different ones, you know, Ducks Unlimited … Isaac Walton League came to the table on some …. It is a wide array of money sources.

David Smith – So, when you were starting these projects, with Joint Ventures that were brand new, how did you, and others, cobble together funding for the implementation office? For Joint Ventures? I mean, you mentioned before that some Regional Directors made it happen, but really, where did that start up money come from?

Bob Streeter – The start up money for the North American Office … see Harvey … that would have been a … probably '87 budget year, and then '88 budget year … fiscal years,

came from the Directors account. I don't think there was any money in the first year for Joint Venture Coordinators. I think that was reprogrammed within the Service, at least within the Regional Office, if not nationally. I think the very first money appropriated came with the … it's either the '88 or '89 fiscal year budget. Probably was the '89 fiscal budget, that actually put money out to the Joint Ventures for Joint Venture Coordinator work. And then we tried to get that increased each year. And sometimes we were successful to a little degree or substantial degree. But, then money initially was reprogrammed within the Service, or out of the Director's special account.

David Smith – Okay.

Bob Streeter – And then we eventually got some money that was line appropriated.

David Smith – Let me go back, Bob, you mentioned earlier, at least one of the updates, what are your views of all these updates … that some people think its just a lot of trouble every five years, to go back and revisit something that seems like it's working.

Bob Streeter – Well, first of all, the Plan was a 15 year timeframe. And there was no call for updates, or even a revision, I don't think anyone really thought what happens after that 15 year timeframe on the North American Plan. But the Wetlands Conservation Act had a statement in there that this money was to support the … money for the wetlands conservation program was to support the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and other plans. But it specified that the North American Act be updated starting in a certain time and then every five years thereafter. So it's basically a Congressional Directive to make sure this Plan is keeping up with what's going on and that it's not something that gets out of date.

David Smith – Let me ask your view on the longevity of this Plan. It's been around a while. In 1986 with a 15 year horizon, did you think the work would be done in 15 years - or not? Did you ever … did you think it would go on forever, or be renewed, or should have been finished, or …?

Bob Streeter – Yes and no. Yes and no. For example, if you look at the Central Valley of California Joint Venture Plan, sometime prior to '95 they'd basically accomplished their habitat goals. Of the original Plan. And it was small enough, and specific enough, that, you know, it could be accomplished -- at least those habitat goals. Now, was that enough? Probably not. 'Cause we're loosing habitat at the same time as were trying to create, and save, and protect it. Others … Prairie Pothole … as much habitat had been lost there to agricultural operations, it probably would never be accomplished. But, we'd go a long way towards doing that -- particularly with the Ag bill, working the private lands. If you could keep those programs going, and then the North American goals might be reached. But, I personally felt like we'll probably never get to the point that were trying to get, simply because there's so many other changes, so many other pressures, on wetland habitats. And we gain a little bit. We loose a little bit. But it's going to be a need for this type of program, maybe … forever, you know -- certainly beyond my lifetime.

David Smith – Yup. Thank you. A little bit about some of the structures that you supervised and helped put together and served on. First, the North American Plan Committee - between the two countries, and then the three countries. Any observations on the work of that Committee, some of the key things it did accomplish?

Bob Streeter – Yeah. When I came in, in '88, supporting Harvey, I basically acted as a kind of a scribe -- not an official secretary, but as a scribe; and also helped Harvey develop the agenda for the Plan Committee meetings; and worked together with my Canadian counter … my Canadian counterparts to develop that agenda. I became -- and this is a personal observation -- I became increasingly frustrated at this Plan Committee, as nice as the people were and as much as I like these people, they just didn't make anything happen. You know, that was … we were … just continue to make things happen. I also knew, from the Joint Venture Coordinators, that they, you know, 'what's this Plan committee doing? They don't really help us any. And we know they go to these meetings, and they come to our sessions, and talk about these wonderful things, but

not really making anything happen.' So that was my first feeling -- as I would write … help write the agendas, and then afterwards, try to see what we accomplished and report that back, in a positive sense of what the Plan Committee had accomplished. As I matured, a little bit, and I became a … then when Harvey retired, I became, then, one of the Services two representatives on the Plan, I think I began to realize that it served … at least the purpose of the grandfathers -- they were all men at the time -- grandfathers of the North American Plan. They did represent the states interest; they represented the Fish & Wildlife Service; it was a means of communicating openly with people who'd become friends in Canada; it was not an adversarial type of organization. But it … but they were all trying to figure out what needs to be done. And a lot of the good work was done by the Canadian staff and the US staff, in terms of presenting things to the Committee; 'here's what we think, you debate it, discuss it, and then tell us if we should continue on this route, or should do something different.' They had … they did make some specific recommendations in sequencing of Joint Ventures. They didn't just accept every one as proposed. There was a little sequencing done early on. But I do believe in the … in hindsight, and in taking the broadest perspective, it's an important body that serves a function -- and continues to serve that function. I might mention, and this is kind of for the record, and it can be cut at times, but the Wetlands Council, in its second or third year, felt very strongly that there was no need for the Plan Committee. 'They don't do anything it's a no … do nothing thing. We're the ones that get the money. We're the ones that allocate. And we're kind of setting the direction by what … the projects that we're supporting.' And by that time I was disagreeing with them. I thought it served a useful role -- that the Plan Committee didn't do. [Possibly he means to say 'that the Wetlands Council didn't do'?] It was the kind of the balancing and the … providing a communications method.

David Smith – Well, that's a curious situation. Do you ever recall a joint meeting of the Wetlands Council and the Plan Committee in the same place at the same time?

Bob Streeter – I think there was one in California, wasn't there?

David Smith – I don't know but there was one in Mérida I believe.

Bob Streeter – Mérida, that's yeah, that's what it was sometime …

David Smith – Yeah. Sometime back

Bob Streeter – Yeah, you're right in the Yucatan.

Bob Streeter – Yeah, some warm place I remember that. Yeah, there was a joint meeting, and I think it was very collegial, and I think the plan committee learned a little bit about how the Wetlands Council worked, but …. And I think it was a Council meeting. I don't think there was a joint agenda that was … that went on …. But my memory doesn't serve me well on that one. Have to go back to the minutes.

David Smith – Okay, we'll do that another time. What about coordination with the whole Flyway system, the whole harvest management system, and the tension going on in the early day between harvest and habitat. Was the Plan and the Plan Committee going to infringe on the territory of the states and the regulatory agencies? How did that play out?

Bob Streeter – The real tensions I think occurred during the development of the North American Plan, prior to my being involved with it. where the … both provincially and the states, did not want to … they were very concerned that the North American Plan might get involved with regulation setting. And that was a no starter, on both sides of the border. There was not a … it was not always a friendly relationship between the Fish & Wildlife Service and the states when it came to regulations. I'm not sure of the regulatory process in Canada; that may have been a little different. But in the US it was not always a friendly situation. It's always 'we want more ducks to shoot, and feds your keeping the control on.' As the … so they didn't want anything to do with … having the Plan have anything to do with population management. And as the Plan was implemented, we always made sure that that was clear, that there was no connection to the harvest cycle, or the harvest regulations process. What it did do though, was bring

people together working on habitat projects, some of the same people that were involved in the regulatory process were doing work out in the Joint Ventures. And I think it … the North American served as a way to … if people are going to work together, they got to become friends, and you know, Mexico has a good idea. You become friends first -- before you work together. and you don't work with anybody that not your friend. Well, we have to work with everybody in the US. But the friendships developed, the trust developed between and among people, first of all. And that helps then develop trust in and among organizations. There were some other changes in the regulatory process also. The adaptive management process became part of the Fish & Wildlife Service regulation setting. And eventually the Services' Right Committee did bring in consultants that were always there, but they weren't always allowed to come to the actual decision meeting. And we eventually brought them in, and so, they could sit in the decision meetings and see what was going on. And that built further trust too. And I think that has continued. That the whole tension between Fish & Wildlife Service and the states, in the regulatory process, has decreased. And some those same people there, are the biggest supporters of the North American Plan, out in the states.

David Smith – Thank you. I only have about 30 or 40 more questions here, in the next few minutes, but …

Bob Streeter – Can you ask them all at once?

David Smith – I'll ask them … I'll spit them up into a couple. One is, in trying to report on the accomplishments of the Plan, I mean, we … and maybe the same thing for the Wetlands Act, we track acres and dollars fairly well -- given there is some double counting, and partnerships, and all of that; you mentioned before changes in landscapes, you know, from the … trying to emulate populations of the mid 70s, when we know our habitats aren't like the mid 70s, human populations aren't the mid 70s, and probably never will be. What are your thoughts on looking back at 20 years of the Waterfowl Plan, in terms of tracking and reporting accomplishments, and the framework for that -- from a population side, a habitat side; how we relate to people -- to Congress, to

supporters, to critics -- looking back at this whole two decade history, on how we're doing?

Bob Streeter – I think for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act it's a lot easier than for the Plan. Because the Wetlands Conservation Act does not have habitat goals except as it accepts the North American Plan -- and other plans. I think that with the Act we can account for the dollars spent. There was so many dollars that came in. They went to these places. Those people were supposed to do these things. They did them. And here's … and actually, it's … for every dollar that has gone in, whether there's been one to two other dollars - sometimes three other dollars - come into the project. So, you're getting a lot bigger bang for your federal buck in Canada, the US … I don't know about Mexico for sure, but for Canada and the US anyway.

David Smith – How about with the Plan?

Bob Streeter – With the Plan it's a … you know, one of the things that we pushed from our north American Office, from the start, was you got to set specific objectives out on the Joint Ventures. And some of the Joint Ventures embraced that, and others took a long time to agree to do that. But, it's so … the biology is so tricky of … if your going to have waterfowl, and habitat, because the vagaries of weather. Particularly in the breeding areas. I mean, you can have really a succession of wet years, and it probably doesn't matter what you've done on the ground, you've got so many potholes, and habitat that was developed the last year, because it was wet, it's wet again, and nobody can plow it out. that can mask a lot of things you're doing. I don't think we've done a good job … we or however is responsible for, keeping track of all the *losses* of habitat -- wetland, and associated uplands in the prairies; bottomland hardwoods, perhaps in the lower Mississippi, etcetera; subsidence in coastal … acres loss in the Gulf Coast. how many acres of critical habitat have been lost, while were trying to protect and gain others. And then, what does that really mean for ducks? What does it mean for geese? What does that mean for shore birds? And, I think that's a continued challenge that has certainly improved since the Plan was first implemented in 1988. But we're 20 years down the

road, and I might ask you that question, 'cause you've been dealing with it. From an outsider, you know, we're still wrestling with trying to tell you how many acres of habitat is enough. We just know it isn't – yet.

David Smith – Right. Good question. Well, Bob you've spent … you were personally involved in 10 years -- at least 10 years out of the 20 years the Plan's been around. Is there anything else you would like to add or volunteer? We're getting near the end of our time allocation. Anything else you want to put out on the table?

Bob Streeter – I guess, yes.

David Smith – Have at it.

Bob Streeter – The North American Plan … no one could have predicted how successful it has become, when it was signed in '86. I don't think anyone thought that it was going to be as broad, and have as many partnerships, and have as many dollars come in, as has occurred. I think there probably [are] people that were involved with it at that time, that are surprised that it's still going, after this time. They wouldn't have thought it would last. 'Cause, you know, government programs -- a flash in the pan. You get a new one -- five years later there's a change in administration, change in Congress, etcetera, and we're off in another direction. This is one that has kept going because of the strength of the partnerships. And the each of the partners feel their getting enough out of it to continue with it. And, I think the only thing that I would cap that with is, in my professional career, there's never been a program more fun, or more satisfying, to be associated with. not to necessarily … that you had a lot to do with it, but to be associated with, and been a part of making little bits of things happen, than this North American Plan. And, it does so much all around the country. I'm on a … at a very local level, in my retirement I'm on a Governors Task Force for the South Platte River – it's called a 'Roundtable.' And one of the best projects that's come in for [a] ten million dollars pot of funding that the Governor set aside for the South Platte, is a waterfowl habitat plan. The concern is [that there will be] enough water in the South Platte River, to go in to

Nebraska, to meet the interstate compact requirements for endangered species in the Platte River in Nebraska. The plan, the project that Ducks Unlimited was using, actually uses some NAWCA money, as a match. It takes water out of the River at certain times of the year, pumps it up to some ponds that create habitat for a shore birds and migratory … other migratory birds and ducks. It then filters back to the River at a different time of the year, when that water's needed in that River, and the compact calls for it to go to Nebraska. There's nothing lost -- no water is lost. But additional habitat is created. And it meets the compact needs for the endangered species. It's those kinds of partnerships - that benefit so many different species - that are going to keep this North American Plan at the forefront for some time to come. It'll evolve. It'll change, as the different people are involved, as technology changes, as mindsets change. But it's certainly still going in the right direction. Amen.

David Smith – Amen. Well, thank you very much. Congratulations.

Bob Streeter – Appreciate your part in it. Thank you, David.

David Smith – Thanks, Bob.

A Word From Your Transcriptionist: If a word appears [indecipherable] or with a "?" – I could not hear or I'm not sure I heard it right. Words or partial words appearing in [ ] are ones that ***I*** put in to clarify the thought. Proper names that I could not verify the spelling of show up in red text.