

**1st MEETING OF THE AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT
INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP**
14 – 16 December 2016, Kristianstad, Sweden

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AEWA INTERNATIONAL SINGLE SPECIES ACTION
PLAN FOR THE TAIGA BEAN GOOSE (*Anser f. fabalis*)**

**1. Implementing the Action Framework of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan
for the Taiga Bean Goose**

The AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Taiga Bean Goose (TBG ISSAP) was developed through an inclusive and consultative process in the course of 2013-2015 and was adopted by the 6th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA in November 2015.

The ISSAP sets an ambitious long-term goal for the recovery of this huntable sub-species and the two-tier purpose of the plan for the initial 10 years aims first at stabilizing the population size as a whole and in all sub-populations (management units) and subsequently at enabling them to start recovery and increase. In order to achieve the goal and the purpose, the ISSAP defines an action framework containing three objectives, 12 anticipated results and 17 broad actions (document AEWA/EGM IWG Inf. 1.6, pages 36-40). To each action Priority ranking and a timescale for implementation has been assigned to each action. In addition, it has been identified to which sub-populations (management units) and individual range states each action relates as well as the stakeholders responsible for its implementation.

Many of the actions in the framework are specifically relevant only to one or a few countries, where the detailed planning and decision-making occurs at the national level. In those cases, the role of the AEWA European Goose Management International Working Group (EGM IWG) is to encourage the implementation of the actions at national level and to monitor their progress as part of the overall ISSAP implementation process. These conservation and management actions will also be regularly reviewed and discussed at EGM IWG meetings.

Several key actions, however, will clearly require and benefit from a coordinated decision-making process at the international level. These actions, in the order of assigned priority, are the following:

1. 1.1.1. Development and implementation of the international Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) framework;
2. 1.2.2. Raising of the level of necessary identification skills and awareness of the status of different goose species and sub-species amongst hunters;
3. 1.1.3. Raising awareness amongst hunters on the need and ways to reduce crippling;

4. 1.1.2. Developing and implementing an international framework for resolving agricultural conflict which includes the Taiga Bean Goose, including the use of non-lethal methods.

The credibility and impact of these actions relies upon the involvement of all relevant stakeholders from the outset and buy-in ranging from administration at various levels within the range states, hunting and farming communities and their organisations, and international/national conservation NGOs. In this context, it is important that all range states within a TBG management unit are involved in the process and respect the underlying principles, such as those of the Adaptive Harvest Management approach, as well as the agreements reached and decisions taken. Without commitment and a constructive approach, no progress will be made in terms of achieving needed results, such as sustainability of harvest when open seasons are agreed, and actual recovery of the population to a favourable conservation status. Thus the *status quo* will remain contributing to yet another ‘tragedy of the commons’. An internationally coordinated approach is essential in ensuring that these actions are indeed undertaken in the required manner.

Action 1.1.1. ‘Develop and implement international adaptive harvest management framework (AHM)’, being the single action of the ISSAP qualified as “essential”, highlights the importance of flyway level sustainable use of this quarry population. A science-based, transparent and inclusive process will follow the existing best practice example of the AEWA Svalbard Pink-footed Goose Single Species Management Plan. However, in contrast, the starting point for the TBG ISSAP process lacks sufficient (quality) data and confirmation of the key drivers behind the decline. Under the many prevailing uncertainties, Adaptive Harvest Management is the key tool for recovering the population while ensuring that harvest, if any, is at sustainable levels. The AHM contains an important learning element based on the experience and new knowledge gained throughout the implementation process, which leads to gradual improvement of the decision-making.

The AHM process needs to take account of existing differences in practices and circumstances along the flyway and ensure they are addressed, where and as necessary. One such issue is the difficulty associated with sub-species/species identification amongst hunters (and bird observers). The reduction of crippling of grey geese among hunters also remains a point of concern, which needs attention and can be tackled through awareness raising and hunter education.

Thus, actions 1.2.2 and 1.1.3 complement and support the implementation of the AHM. Necessary guidelines, supporting and other related materials for awareness raising and education can be developed at international level and provided for further translation into national languages and adjustment, where necessary, to respond to specific hunting traditions and context of each country. Such a coordinated approach will simplify and ease the process as well as provide for cost-efficiency. To assess the current TBG crippling rate and to monitor its change, including in response to awareness and education work, the successful working model of the Pink-footed Goose can be followed and if practical, could be integrated into a common programme:

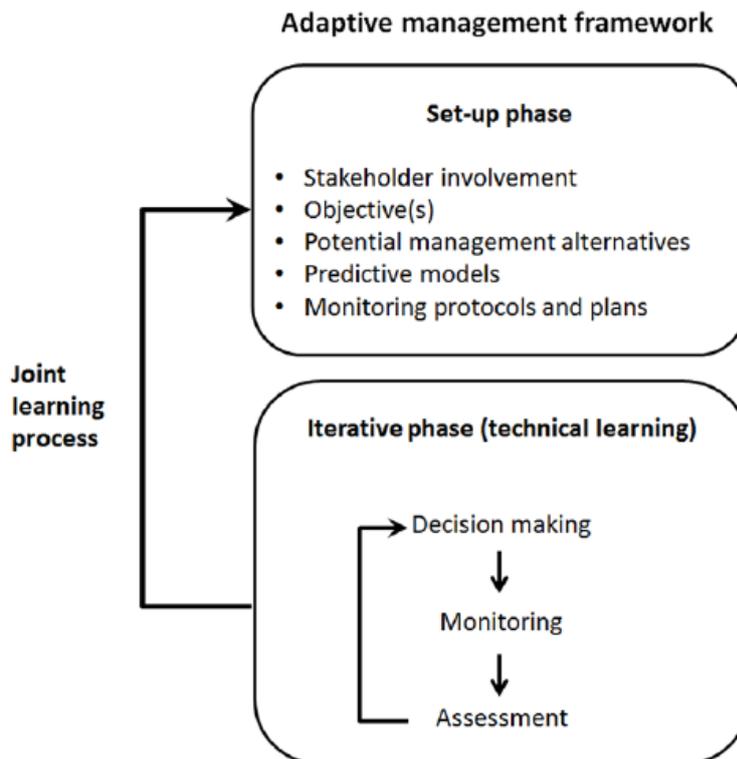
<http://pinkfootedgoose.aewa.info/node/194>

Developing and rolling out an international framework for addressing conflicts between TBG, and geese in general, and the agricultural sector, will require a coordinated and participatory approach. Each country is addressing this issue in various ways and with differing levels of success and acceptance. The feasibility of a broader multinational framework shall be evaluated and if deemed possible, it shall build on the body of existing knowledge and experience.

2. Adaptive Harvest Management Programme for the Taiga Bean Goose

An Adaptive Harvest Management programme (or framework) is a two-phase system allowing double-loop learning (see Figure 1) which enables development of knowledge and improved decision-making as the process advances.

Figure 1. Structure of an Adaptive (Harvest) Management programme/framework



At the beginning of the process, during the set-up phase, stakeholders determine the population objectives. Then potential management alternatives and predictive models are established. Last, but not least, monitoring protocols and plans need to be developed, to be able to follow the population response to management actions and to be able to learn from the differences from predictions and the observed changes.

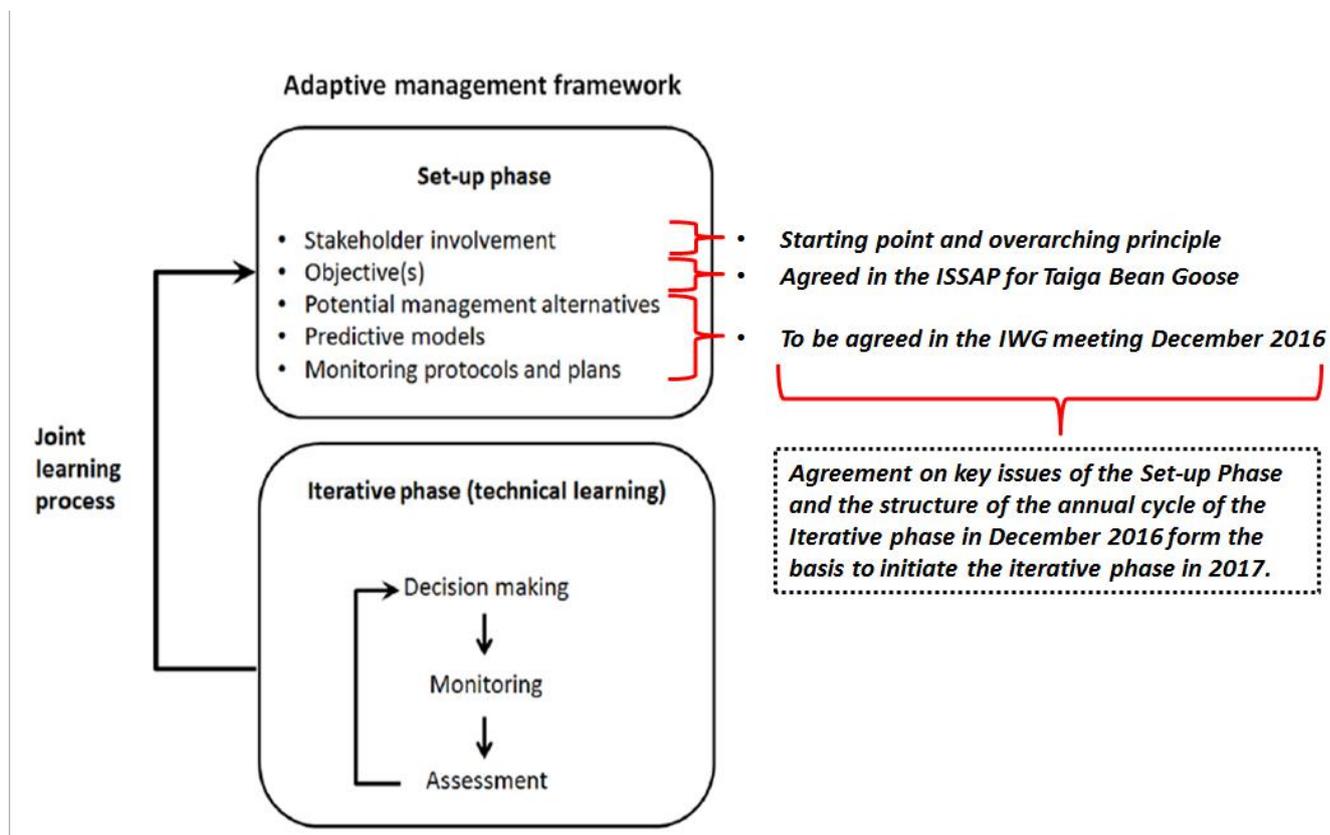
Based on agreed objectives and working models, the process moves to the iterative phase. At this stage, decisions on population management are made, the impact of actions monitored and results assessed, to increase understanding of the system, in order to inform decision-making in the next year, thus contributing to attaining population objectives.

Set-up phase of the Taiga Bean Goose AHM programme

The set-up phase of the TBG AHM process has, in practice, started with the preparation of the ISSAP. In the course of the action planning process, population objectives and key tools to achieve them were identified and agreed with close involvement of all relevant stakeholders. Following the adoption of the TBG ISSAP, predictive population models and management alternatives were developed.

The set-up phase of the AHM can be concluded at the first meeting of the AEWG EGM IWG, which is the decision-making body in the framework of the AEWG European Goose Management Platform (see Figure 2). Once the set-up phase has been concluded and the range states have agreed on management alternatives for AHM and predictive models, monitoring programme and other issues relevant for the process, the iterative phase can be initiated.

Figure 2. Timing of events of the set-up phase of the TBG Adaptive Harvest Management programme



The AHM process is foreseen to be launched for all TBG Management Units (MUs). The possible management options range from closed hunting season(s) to different allowable international harvest quota calculated on the basis of the population status, set objectives and predictive models. In the absence of credible population data and under the many existing uncertainties, the precautionary principle and risk-averse attitude shall be prevailing in the consideration of management alternatives and time horizons of population recovery. The EGM IWG is expected to discuss and decide which management alternative / time horizon is the most appropriate to launch the AHM process with at each MU.

In addition to the management alternatives, the first meeting of the EGM IWG will be also invited to discuss and agree on the predictive models, the outline of the monitoring programme as well as the structure of the annual iterative phase and harvest quota division between range states to be applied if and when open hunting season is decided. All of these are described and presented in document AEWG/EGM IWG 1.9.