

Mission Statement

“Work cooperatively to develop and implement management strategies acceptable on public and private lands on the spring staging area so that the Aleutian Goose is an asset to the community.”

Accomplishments

- Organized a diverse group to cooperatively identify solutions to address all interests, including the well-being of the recovered goose population and the local economy.
- Documented goose numbers and habitat use in Humboldt, Del Norte, Curry and Coos counties.
- Estimated crop losses due to goose grazing.
- Promoted a permitted, coordinated hazing program to shift geese to goose-safe areas.
- Provided goose hunting opportunities.
- Provided input to Pacific Flyway Management Plan.
- Distributed information on Aleutian Goose Working Group.
- Drafted letter supporting delisting of the Aleutian Goose in Oregon.
- Contacted our legislative representatives to inform them about the Aleutian Goose issue on the North Coast.
- Encouraged and supported an agreement between the Department of Fish and Game and the Resource Conservation district to collaborate on Goose management via grazing on some Fish and Game lands.

Acknowledgements/Partners:

PRIVATE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

Blake Alexandre, Peter Bussman, Dean Hunt, Rich Hunt, Jay Russ, Hugo Klopper

AGENCIES & INSTITUTIONS

California Coastal Conservancy
California Department of Fish and Game
California State Parks
California Waterfowl Association
Department of Wildlife, Humboldt State University
Humboldt Cattlemen’s Association.
Humboldt County Farm Bureau
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Pacific Coast Fish, Wildlife and Wetlands Restoration Association
Pacific Coast Joint Venture
UC Davis Agricultural Extension
US Fish and Wildlife Service
USDA—Natural Resources Conservation Services

ORGANIZATION

Chair: Blake Alexandre
8371 Lower Lake Road
Crescent City, CA 95531

Phone: (707) 487-1000 • **Fax:** (707) 487-1001

Email: blake@ecodairyfarms.com

COMMITTEES

Mapping and Habitat
Education and Hope
Hunting and Hazing

Photos courtesy of Ron LeValley

Living with Aleutian Geese on the Pacific North Coast



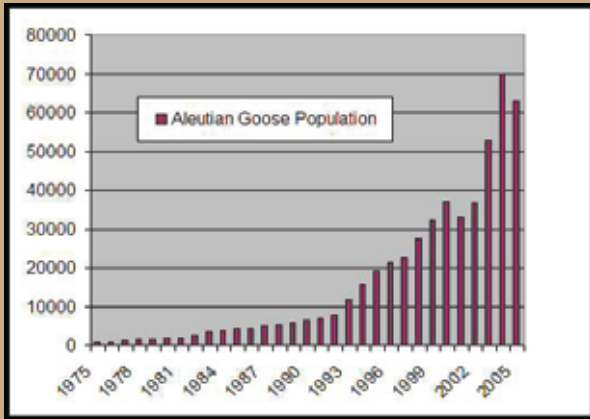
**An Introduction to the
Aleutian Goose Working Group**

Recovery

After 30 years of successful remedial actions by Federal and State wildlife agencies, the once endangered Aleutian Goose population is thriving on the Pacific North Coast.

From a low of approximately 800 geese in 1975, some 60,000 of the geese stop in Humboldt, Del Norte, Curry and Coos counties between late January and mid-April to prepare for their incredible transoceanic migration to nesting grounds in the Aleutian Islands, Alaska.

In late winter and early spring North Coast bird watchers and waterfowl hunters alike now regularly enjoy the birds' daily flights between roosts and feeding areas.



Challenges

However, since these vegetarian geese are incredible grazers that seek out the greenest of pastures, a major conflict has emerged on the North Coast.

During their northward migration, the geese pause between February and April and eat tender spring plant growth that the region's dairy, beef cattle, and sheep producers rely on to feed their stock. Some landowners have lost up to fifty percent of their annual grass production to Aleutian geese during this period.

As a result, ranches and farms that accommodate the geese are having to reduce herd or flock size, or provide supplemental feed. Families who operate one of our region's prized economic industries are losing substantial income.

Cooperation

The Aleutian Goose Working Group is comprised of concerned citizens from Northern California and Southern Oregon, including local farmers, State and Federal agency personnel, and non-governmental organizations.

The group is working toward a suite of solutions that will recognize the needs of farmers as well as the once endangered goose population.

The aim of the group is to find a way of coexisting with the geese – where the geese can be seen throughout the community as an asset rather than a burden.

Goals

Immediate goals of the group include:

- Identify prime grazing areas lands where the geese can be supported.
- Encourage the enhancement of Aleutian Goose habitat on public lands.
- Secure public and private support to enhance grazing opportunities (e.g. agricultural incentives, preserves, etc.).
- Implement well-placed hazing and hunting programs that will shift geese into goose-safe areas.
- Continue outreach to inform community about scope of goose-agricultural issues and initiatives to find solutions.
- Assist the Pacific Flyway Council in its objective to maintain the population of Aleutian Geese at 60,000 birds measured by a 3-year average of indirect estimates obtained in the spring.
- Determine the extent of crop losses to geese.
- Establish goose management areas.



Solutions

The group believes that a long-term solution includes the creation of goose management zones consisting of strategic parcels purposely managed to attract and hold the majority of the geese throughout the spring season. These parcels would serve as goose-safe areas and should provide the majority of the bird's habitat needs, thus lessening the burden on those lands designated for livestock production.

Effective goose-safe areas must offer among the most nutritious pasture grass in the area and minimal disturbances.

These areas will include both public lands designated for this purpose and portions of private holdings that willing landowners choose to contribute. The group is seeking incentives that can be offered to private landowners for providing goose-safe areas.

Private land trusts or government entities could oversee agreements servicing goose-safe parcels.

Once established, landowners can effectively encourage geese to use these goose-safe areas.

The group is hopeful that a grassland enhancement program can be created to service this unique North Coast situation.