



Late Fall Habitat Conditions in Canada

November 20, 2006

Habitat conditions have generally improved or remained constant over the past month. Waterfowl have left the Prairie provinces and Western Boreal Forest while staging and wintering waterfowl are plentiful in coastal British Columbia and in eastern Canada, where the weather has been mild and wet.

Recent storms have delivered a large amount of precipitation to coastal **British Columbia** resolving the previous low flow issues in the Lower Fraser River system. The storms have pushed waterfowl into the Fraser River delta including large numbers of mallards, American wigeon and northern pintails, resulting in increased rates of crop depredation. Snow geese from Wrangel Island, Russia are expected to number 100,000 in the delta this year, up from last year's total of 80,000. The large numbers of snow geese are believed to be partially attributed to the favourable weather experienced on the breeding grounds in the last few years.

Temperatures have been mild in the central Interior and recent precipitation has resulted in a slight upgrading of habitat conditions in the area. The Middle and Upper Fraser River systems are now rebounding from previous low levels. Precipitation has been above average in the southern Interior but the area is still recovering from the drought experienced in previous years. Precipitation has also been above average in the southeast Interior and habitat conditions there are good.

The Peace region has already received a good amount of much-needed snow and temperatures in the area have been well below normal. There is currently no frost in the ground, but the Chinook winds should lead to freezing/thawing of the snow cover and improved soil moisture conditions. Some ducks remain in the region.

Fall precipitation has been average to above average throughout **Alberta**. Temperatures have been slightly below average in most areas with temperatures well below average in the Peace region. Soil moisture is near normal in the aspen parkland, boreal transition zone and prairies and variable in the Peace region. The prospects for a frost seal are fairly good in most areas with the exception of the northeast parkland and northern Peace region. There is no snow cover in the prairie region and 8 to 20 cm in the Peace region.

Habitat conditions in **Saskatchewan** are generally good to excellent in the parklands and poor to fair in the prairies. In the northwest, central and northeast parts of the province the frost seal should be excellent as there were a number of rainfall events in late fall followed by early winter snow. Throughout the fall many of the seasonal wetlands had water in them and some roads were not passable due to the moisture. In the past week

the central area of the province has had up to 10 inches of snow with an additional 3-4 inches received on November 14th. A number of producers in the northeast have been out this fall ditching in preparation for a big spring run-off. If there is normal snowfall over the winter there should be good to excellent conditions for run-off next spring. In the prairies, conditions are drier with the southwest and southeast parts of the province being snow free as of November 16th. In the Missouri Coteau, there may not be enough moisture in the soil for a good frost seal. There are still a few large Canada geese and mallards in the province, but most have migrated south.

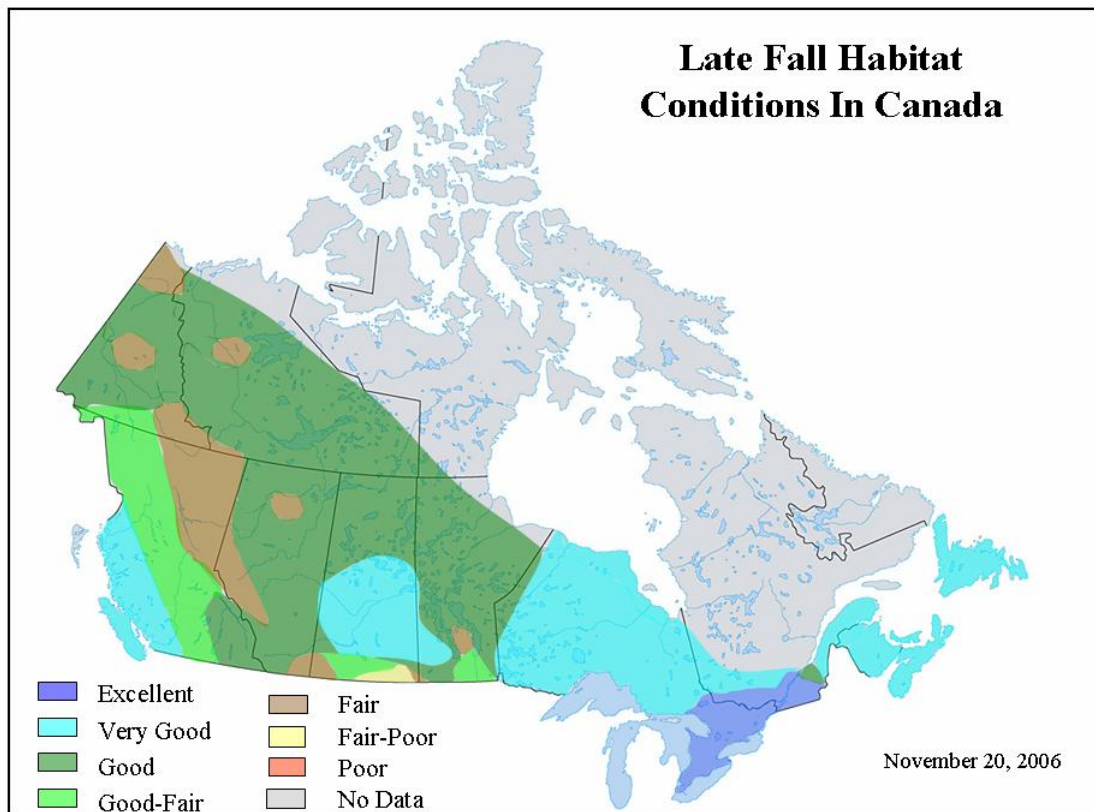
Southwestern **Manitoba** received a large uniform snowfall on October 30th with some areas receiving up to 20 cm of snow. This snow has since melted and has combined with recent rains to improve soil moisture conditions. This precipitation has improved prospects for a frost seal although additional precipitation will be needed to ensure good wetland conditions in the spring. Temperatures have been unseasonably cold since the end of October and waterfowl were largely gone from the region by the beginning of November.

Many parts of the **Western Boreal Forest** are experiencing below average temperatures and have received a large amount of snow. Some of the more northern areas also received rain before the freeze-up, which helped to improve soil moisture conditions. Central and northern Saskatchewan are shaping up to have ample runoff next spring. The long range forecast for the Western Boreal Forest calls for below average temperatures in most areas with the exception of the southern Yukon. Precipitation is forecast to be above average in northeast British Columbia; below average in the northern parts of the Yukon and Northwest Territories; and average elsewhere. Waterfowl left the Western Boreal Forest early this year and no large peak in migration was observed.

As freeze-up approaches, wetlands throughout **Ontario** remain in very good to excellent condition. An extremely wet fall with near record rainfall totals has resulted in very high soil moisture levels across the southern, central and eastern regions of the province and has set the stage for an excellent frost seal. Much of the corn and soybean crops are still standing, as fields are too sodden for harvesting equipment. Snow has started accumulating throughout much of northern Ontario and wetlands are now generally ice covered. Hunting continues to be good along the lower Great Lakes coastal marshes where good numbers of diving and dabbling ducks remain.

Temperatures continue to be above the seasonal average in **Quebec** except in southern regions where they have been close to average. October and early November have been exceptionally wet throughout the province with precipitation ranging from 60 to 130 per cent above average. The first snowfall was recorded on October 28th in northern regions and the snow stayed on the ground until the first week of November. Water levels are high throughout the province and habitat conditions are generally very good or better. The current level of the St. Lawrence River is comparable to levels experienced during the spring thaw. Wetlands are now fully recharged and soil moisture levels are high, which should ensure a good frost seal in all regions. The abundant precipitation did not affect the success of the hunting season, which was very good this year. Large numbers of American black ducks and mallard were observed in southern regions.

Habitat conditions are very good in **Atlantic Canada**. Temperatures have been in the high teens in much of the region over the last few weeks, which is well above the seasonal average of 0 to 2°C. Large amounts of rain have accompanied the warm weather and total precipitation is double that of last year in some areas. Winter weather predictions call for a warm winter much like last year throughout the region with little snow accumulation and most precipitation in the form of rain. Weather predictions for the next few weeks are favourable for waterfowl with warm conditions and some small amounts of precipitation. Waterfowl numbers over the entire region are currently high due to the mild weather and the amount of food available.



Prepared by Stacey Hay

Field Contacts:

British Columbia – Bruce Harrison
Alberta – Ian McFarlane
Saskatchewan – Michael Hill
Manitoba – Mark Francis
Western Boreal Forest – Darcy Falk
Ontario – Scott Muir
Quebec – Patrick Harbour
Atlantic Canada – Wade Lewis