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For Immediate Release - September 5, 2007

Parks Canada Kills Cormorants With Media in Tow

Toronto, September 5, 2007: Parks Canada has just announced their intention to kill double-crested cormorants at Middle Island, Point Pelee National Park. Middle Island is part of a cluster of Islands known as the Lake Erie Archipelago Islands, and shared by Ontario and Ohio. Parks Canada is hosting a media tour of Middle Island today to garner public and media support for the mass killing of cormorants. The press will be shown dead trees, and told cormorants are damaging 'habitat', and "something must be done".

The media tour will help publicize upcoming public meetings hosted by Parks Canada in Windsor and Leamington and finalize a cormorant 'strategy'.

We anticipate Ontario Parks will announce a similar plan to kill cormorants on East Sister Island soon after the provincial election. East Sister Island is a provincially designated nature reserve and also part of the archipelago islands. Together with Parks Canada and Ohio state, which has already begun killing hundreds of cormorants, Ontario will effectively impact all cormorant nesting sites on Lake Erie leaving no place safe for the birds.

While Parks Canada insist their desire for public consultations are sincere, documents released through the Freedom of Information Act suggest Parks Canada, Ontario Parks and Ohio intend to kill cormorants cooperatively to ensure a rapid population decline.

Parks Canada already has a brutal reputation for killing unwanted wildlife, such as their resident deer population, and stumbles when asked for the 'scientific research' that justifies their wildlife management decisions.

"The best Parks Canada can do, is kill animals," says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. "Their approach remains simplistic because the same people behind the massive deer cull in southern Ontario's national and provincial parks are the same people behind the killing of cormorants. It's the same gang of wildlife managers on contract with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Parks Canada. They just oscillate between the two agencies"

On the contrary, independent scientific analysis of current cormorant management strategies reject the rationale for control measures.

The American Ornithologists Union (AOU) has recently published their report on U.S. Federal Legislation on the management of double-crested cormorants. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services along with the US Department of Agriculture's "Wildlife Services" division (until recently called "Animal Damage Control") have approved regional depredation orders for cormorants.

This report is significant because it is written by an independent panel of avian scientists, as opposed to government wildlife "managers".

The AOU's report on cormorants can be found here:
<http://www.aou.org:80/committees/conservation.php3>

press release

PO Box 326, Station B,
Toronto, Ontario
Canada, M5T 2W2

T: 877 785 8636

W: www.peacefulparks.org

E: ppc@peacefulparks.org



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A summary of its findings are as follows:

- the scientific evidence supporting the proposed action is weak;
- the analysis of the data is simplistic;
- the management plan proposed by USFWS is inadequate and has a poorly evaluated potential to be effective;
- the consequences of the proposed action on the cormorants are unknown, and appear to be punitive instead of mitigatory;
- the assessment of success is unclear; in the DEIS (draft environmental impact study) success is based on public perception and not on scientific results. The FEIS (final environmental impact study) is not clear on how success will be assessed; and,
- there is no adequate mechanism for monitoring the population effects of the plan, nor for deciding when to terminate management actions." (pp. 9-10).

For more Information, please call AnnaMaria Valastro at 416 785 8636

Note to the Editor:

The report further concludes:

"...we find that (a) there is no good evidence presented in the FEIS that cormorants cause significant fisheries problems except at aquaculture and hatchery sites; (b) the solutions proposed, primarily increased take, would likely be ineffective at aquaculture and hatchery sites yet potentially destructive to continental cormorant populations; (c) how "success" of a control program would be defined is unclear; and (d) there is no monitoring program in place or proposed that could evaluate success, or detect effects on continental cormorant populations,. Consequently, it appears that what the USFWS plans to do constitutes persecution of a bird species rather than a solution to the real problems of declining fisheries and depredation at aquaculture and hatchery sites." (p. 21).

Ohio's lethal controls are claimed not to be motivated by any effect on the local fishery (although support from fishers has been eagerly accepted), but only by the need to protect colonies of other nesting birds and the associated vegetation. The AOU report overall gives short shrift to this justification, but does say: "Other concerns associated with Double-crested Cormorants addressed by the FEIS were not supported by scientific evidence, or at most showed that the impact would be localized to the immediate sites of colonies or roosts . This included impacts to other birds, vegetation, water quality, and federally listed species." (pp. 15-16).

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