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Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

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Resolution 1997-07-08

SHOREBIRDS AND HORSESHOE CRAB MANAGEMENT

WHEREAS, the Delaware Bay in New Jersey and Delaware is recognized as one of the top three migratory bird staging areas in the world and has been designated by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network as a Site of International Significance; and

WHEREAS, each year approximately 500,000 to 1.5 million shorebirds of at least six different species concentrate on Delaware Bay on their northbound migration to arctic breeding grounds; and

WHEREAS, these birds concentrate on the bay shore in order to replenish energy reserves expended during direct flight, from as far as Brazil, and to prepare for non-stop flights to the Canadian arctic; and

WHEREAS, these birds replenish their weight through the rapid ingestion of horseshoe crab eggs deposited on the shores of Delaware Bay; and

WHEREAS, data indicate a dramatic decline in the number of horseshoe crab eggs deposited on these shores; and

WHEREAS, this decline has had a consequent negative impact on migratory shorebirds; and

WHEREAS, horseshoe crabs are an important commercial species; and

WHEREAS, this issue must be addressed at a multi-state level in conjunction with the involved Federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for more information and analysis to assist in the management of both shorebirds and horseshoe crabs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies encourages all appropriate state, federal and non-governmental organizations to work jointly to identify research needs for horseshoe crabs along the Atlantic Coast and provide a mechanism to gather this information quickly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies supports the effort of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to bring together these entities and ultimately establish a management plan for the sustainable harvest of horseshoe crabs consistent with management needs for migratory shorebirds of Delaware Bay.