

16/36. SLAVE RIVER, THE SLAVE RIVER DELTA AND THE PEACE ATHABASCA DELTA OF CANADA

AWARE of the importance of wetlands and free flowing rivers as natural environments which contribute greatly to the character, heritage and biological diversity of the earth;

OBSERVING that the Peace Athabasca Delta is the largest freshwater boreal delta in the world and that it is the single focal point of all four North American waterfowl flyways;

FURTHER OBSERVING that the Peace Athabasca Delta and the Slave River Delta are critical breeding areas for North American waterfowl, especially during years of drought on the Canadian prairies when a large portion of the continental duck population is forced to spend the summer in northern habitats, and that suitable southern prairie breeding habitat continues to decrease in quantity and quality;

NOTING that the Peace Athabasca Delta and the Slave River Delta produce from one hundred thousand to over six hundred thousand ducks per year, and are critical staging and stopover points for up to one million migrating swans, geese and ducks each autumn;

FURTHER NOTING that the Peace Athabasca Delta and Slave River Delta are at the northern breeding limits of a number of bird species;

RECALLING that the Canadian Delegation supported the Resolutions of the 15th Session of the IUCN General Assembly, New Zealand 1981, including Resolution 15/13 concerning the protection of free flowing rivers, and that the Slave River is such a river;

RECOGNIZING that 80 per cent of the Peace Athabasca Delta and part of the Slave River are protected as a national park in accordance with the National Parks Act of Canada and Parks Canada Policy;

CONCERNED that the natural hydrologic regime of the area has been affected negatively since 1967 by the operation of a hydroelectric power dam upstream on the Peace River in the province of British Columbia;

FURTHER CONCERNED that a proposal to construct a dam and associated works on the Slave River near 60N latitude to produce hydroelectric energy threatens habitats critical to the survival of the endangered whooping crane (*Grus americana*) the world's largest free-roaming herd of bison (*Bison bison*) the northern-most breeding colony of white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) established on the Slave River rapids for at least 200 years, nesting areas of the endangered peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and hundreds of thousands of geese, swans, ducks and other water birds which nest, stage or moult there;

The General Assembly of IUCN, at its 16th Session in Madrid, Spain, 5-14 November 1984:

1. CONGRATULATES the Government of Canada for having designated the Peace Athabasca Delta in 1982 under the Convention on the Conservation of Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention);
2. FURTHER CONGRATULATES Canada for having nominated Wood Buffalo National Park in 1983 as a World Heritage Site under the Unesco Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and notes that the nomination was accepted;
3. REQUESTS the Governments of Canada, Alberta, and the Northwest Territories to take all necessary measures to ensure the long-term preservation of the Slave River, the Slave River Delta and the Peace Athabasca Delta in a natural state free of man-made encumbrances, allowing them to maintain their dynamic nature in a manner compatible with IUCN criteria for national parks.

