

Highlights and Action Items

NABCI Federal Subcommittee meeting

November 6, 2000

The working group for the Federal Subcommittee met November 6, 2000 at the U.S. Forest Service Franklin Court Building in Washington, DC. The single topic of discussion was the extent to which we can coordinate bird conservation and management budgets among federal agencies and encourage federal agencies to incorporate shared or similar bird conservation language into their 2002 and 2003 budgets. This was in response to a letter requesting such actions, signed by Federal Subcommittee co-chairs Jamie Clark and Val Mezainis. The meeting was attended by budget experts from a variety of federal agencies.

Meeting attendees (* indicates individuals with direct budget responsibilities):

Jack Capp (FS), Bob Ford (FWS), Jon Andrew (FWS), *Lynn Delaughter (FWS), *Kim McClurg (FWS), John Meagher (EPA), Lynne Trulio (EPA), Eric Lawton (BLM), Chris Jauhola (BLM), Roberta Chew (State Dept.), Mike Anderson (NRCS), *Brenda Thomas (NRCS), Gary Rankel (BIA), *Steve Guertin (FWS), David A Smith (FWS), *Paula Frechen (FWS), Ellie Brown (USGS), Ken Williams (USGS), *Corbin Newman (FS), *Hank Kashdan (FS)

Background

Jack Capp and Bob Ford provided a brief overview of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), noting in particular that NABCI is an initiative to promote and coordinate integrated bird conservation and management across North America among a variety of partners. NABCI can best be viewed as a table, where partners can come to discuss shared opportunities for conservation and explore new partnerships, opportunities, and collaboration. Attached is the text from a NABCI outreach document, soon to be published, that may provide further background.

In regard specifically to budgets, NABCI is best not considered a “fundable program” or responsible for specific line items in any budget, rather NABCI can provide the language link that can better coordinate research, monitoring, and on-the-ground needs related to bird conservation and management.

A coordinated budget process among federal agencies is a long term process and can

1. Strengthen support for existing bird conservation and management dollars
2. Increase coordination and communication among agencies for more efficient government, less duplication of effort in bird conservation.
3. Discover, clarify, and strategize about funding gaps: not only can we identify more clearly the role of federal agencies, but the process will help identify more clearly the roles of state and non-government organizations (NGOs).
4. Clarify total federal government bird conservation efforts, make opportunities and accomplishments.

Items to consider and pursue:

Discussion among the group members revolved around possible actions and next steps. Ken Williams noted that USGS will specifically reference portions of their budget as conducted “in consultation” with US Fish and Wildlife Service, and noted that such a reference to other agencies would be well received. The US Fish and Wildlife Service plans to have similar text in their budget language that includes specific references to other agencies, such as USGS. In discussions, other agencies such as the USFS and BLM, may have an opportunity to provide similar language. It is important that the accurate level of partnership and bird conservation intent be conveyed in budget language.

Several points came out of a lengthy discussion, as follows.

1. Show bird conservation in budget - make it more visible and coordinated with others. Federal agencies, where applicable and not confusing to the overall budget, could potentially make bird conservation dollars more visible and reference NABCI in introductory language.
2. Concentrate, where appropriate, on geographic areas - initiatives focus areas/Bird Conservation Regions/ecosystems-habitats. Opportunities may exist to concentrate budget linkages on specific geographic areas, which may include focus areas (such as waterfowl focus areas from the waterfowl management plan), Bird Conservation Region priorities, or, more broadly, ecosystems and habitats, such as sagebrush.
3. Share budget specific language. Within guidelines, we can recognize that sharing budget language, to the detail possible, is advantageous to bird conservation and will better facilitate getting more resources to the ground.
4. National program priorities (e.g. USGS research and monitoring). While recognizing the advantages of geographically specific references, we must also recognize that the need and place of national/international programs, such as winter habitat or research and monitoring over a species’ entire range.
5. Work with partners. Better definition of the federal agency role will provide a better definition of local, state, and NGO roles in bird conservation. To the extent possible, partners in bird conservation and management should understand clearly what federal government agencies will and will not accomplish.
6. Agency budget table - 2001 in conference language. Jack Capp distributed two proposed tables that could facilitate specific numerical budget coordination among federal agencies. After some discussion, it was decided that these tables should be modified extensively or could reflect existing budgets of the current fiscal year, or other options, that could in turn be provided to non-federal partners. This idea will be tabled for an undetermined amount of time.
7. Five year “opportunity”. In reference to the above budget tables, any reference specifically to a future fiscal year will not be possible for some agencies. Therefore, a suggestion was to generalize as “five year opportunities” or “outyear opportunities”. The federal subcommittee will discuss this later, with agency budget personnel.

Current status and coordination notes (subject to change):

The following is a brief summary of current status of budget text and coordination efforts among federal agencies.

USGS - Ken Williams discussed USGS efforts, budget text will include specific language that references partnerships, other agencies' specific program areas, and work that is in consultation with other agencies (currently just USFWS, USGS to discuss in more detail with BLM, USFS).

BLM - coordination opportunity with USGS, especially in regard to GIS work. Opportunities with other agencies include work in sagebrush habitats.

Forest Service - opportunities throughout, especially with land management and monitoring activities. Directors Discretionary funding is helping to fund BCR staff in selected areas. The International Program funding emphasizes migratory bird conservation.

US Fish and Wildlife Service - Is in the process of coordinating budget text with USGS and others in appropriate program areas and as introductory text. USFWS to experiment with methods to coordinate opportunities in select Bird Conservation Regions or habitats (e.g. sagebrush).

NRCS - possibly WRP, WHIP; probably need to select most appropriate portions of programs, or decide arbitrarily about some percentage and justify.

EPA - Very difficult, not able to specifically line item.

State Department - very difficult, mostly through an international approach, more thought to be given to this.

BIA - only opportunity would be through a reference to the Circle of Wings program, although it will necessarily be vague. However, BIA has opportunities to include language at appropriate places.

DoD - introductory budget text being written that references NABCI as a coordinating effort, but not specifically a reference as consultation to other agencies.

Next steps:

Further consultation should take place among individuals in federal agencies to explore possibilities of coordinating language and, eventually, budgets for bird conservation. Upcoming fiscal years offer opportunities to at least coordinate language and common programs. Language of course should reflect reality without providing speculation or possible opportunities in outyears.

Each agency, if interested, could pursue the best course of action within the agency for reference to NACBI, and at a minimum, use the attachment to the budget letter from Clark and Mezainis as a guide. This subcommittee will continue to pursue more agency coordination regarding shared bird conservation messages and programs plus budget information synthesis.

Other forums or chances to discuss this as a group include the next meeting of senior representatives on December 13.

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