

Highlights and Action Items

NABCI Federal Subcommittee meeting

January 25, 2001

The NABCI Federal Subcommittee's Working Group met January 25, 2001 in the U.S. Forest Service Building at Franklin Court, Washington, D.C. Meeting topics included 1) an update on the January 30 U.S. NABCI Committee meeting (including a discussion of G-9 roles), 2) Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) Executive Order update, 3) coordination of federal budgets for bird conservation, 4) NABCI communications strategy and 5) an update on the recent court order impacting EPA's ability to regulate isolated wetlands. Those attending the meeting were:

Paul Schmidt (FWS), Jack Capp (USFS), David Smith (FWS), Kim McClurg (FWS), John Meagher (EPA), Kathleen Kutschenreuter (EPA), Eric Lawton (BLM), Ellie Brown (USGS), Ken Williams (USGS), Chris Eberly (DoD), Ellen Murphy (USFWS), Debbie Pressman (USFS), Ron Archuleta (USFS), Herb Raffaele (USFWS), David Pashley (American Bird Conservancy), Bob Ford (FWS).

Update regarding the January 30 U.S. NABCI Committee meeting

Marshall Jones (Acting Director, USFWS) and Bob McDowell (President, IAFWA) will co-chair the meeting on January 30; David Pashley reviewed the agenda for that meeting. Ken Williams proposed several topic reordering changes in the January 30 meeting agenda which were intended to make the meeting flow more smoothly and to provide the Committee with critical decision points at appropriate times. After much discussion, most of the changes were incorporated into the final U.S. NABCI Committee agenda (see U.S. NABCI Committee minutes).

Paul Schmidt had previously requested input from the Federal Sub-committee regarding the role of the NABCI G-9, so he could perhaps make suggestions to the U.S. NABCI Committee. Only a few comments were received via e-mail or phone conversation, so the Federal Sub-committee discussed the issue at length. Schmidt started this discussion with a review of the Canada/Mexico/United States Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Trilateral Committee), which is a body of federal representation of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The Trilateral has been meeting for 5 years, Herb Raffaele serves as U.S. staff to the Committee. The Trilateral works with all types of resource and conservation issues, these issues are fleshed out by working "tables" (such as the migratory bird table, on which any state or NGO can be represented).

The NABCI G-9 is a body of 9 individuals, 3 designated from each country who can represent federal/state/NGO interests. Previous work of the G-9 has been to develop the international, organizational framework for NABCI and to facilitate the two international meetings held to date. Future roles are less well defined. For the United States, Paul Schmidt (federal), Gary Myers (state), and George Fenwick (NGO) are G-9 representatives.

A discussion ensued about whether the NABCI G-9 should fold into the Trilateral Committee. While there is a possibility to coordinate better between the two for continental objectives, Herb Raffaele expressed caution in several areas. For example, 1) there is potential to risk CEC funding for the G-9 to continue, 2) it remains unclear of the advantage of a G-9 over simply the G-3 (what can the first do that the second cannot?), and 3) an association with the Trilateral may limit the potential to for NABCI to eventually work across the breadth of a birds range (such as the Caribbean, or Central or South America). Raffaele also mentioned that the G-3 should review the “Monarch Butterfly” model that started as a CEC project and is now a working table for the Trilateral meetings.

Several potential specific G-9 roles were discussed, ranging from the idea that the G-9 can orchestrate the “next generation of continental conservation agreements” to facilitating a Partners in Flight analogue to the Waterfowl Plan Committee. **Ellie Brown proposed a specific short term role of the G-3 (i.e., the U.S. contingent to the G-9) may be to improve relations with existing international aid programs, and tie bird conservation priorities to those funding efforts. The Federal Sub-committee working group agreed to move this idea forward to the U.S. NABCI Committee and request that Ellie led a small ad hoc group (including Roberta Chew of State, Kim McClurg of FWS and others) to pursue this idea. Furthermore, this group may evolve into a U.S. NABCI international working group or subcommittee. These recommendations will be moved to the U.S. NABCI Committee. Bob Ford is to further solicit and distribute G-9 ideas from Federal Agency Sub-committee members.**

MBTA Executive Order

Paul Schmidt provided an update on the recently signed Executive Order. The USFWS is developing a briefing statement, which may be available for review among other agencies. **Within the next few months, Schmidt expects an interagency meeting to lay out ideas and to develop a Federal interagency team to work on the implementation of the Executive Order.**

Coordination of Federal Bird Conservation Budgets

Several agencies present expect no opportunity for budget increases, and may even experience budget decreases, in the next fiscal year. However, all agreed to continue to strengthen budget language ties across agencies and continue to move forward to improve coordination and cooperation. Everyone also agreed that budget work will develop quickly this year because of delays in transition to a new administration so constant communication will be important. **Ford agreed to continue to work with Debbie Pressman (USFS), Kim McClurg (FWS), Ken Williams (USGS), Ellie Brown(USGS), and others to achieve the best possible results during this rapidly changing process.**

The Bird Funding Group, which is not a subcommittee of NABCI, has not yet approached OMB regarding federal bird conservation funding efforts, they have a conference call next week to further develop strategies. At the U.S. NABCI Steering Committee meeting next week, there should be a strong federal message to continue this coordination.

NABCI Communications Strategy

Ken Williams provided an overview of current progress; he will present the current prospectus and the financial commitments of the Federal and NGO Sub-committees to the U.S. NABCI Committee on January 30. Ford discussed the first phase consultation work of Jennifer Wheeler in the USFWS. She conducted about 15 interviews regarding the prospectus and the needs for a NABCI communications effort; she received many constructive comments. The results are provided in a 2 page report (handout at meeting) and it is available upon request from Bob Ford (FWS).

Debbie Pressman reminded the group that several bird conservation initiatives are discussing communications needs, including the Partners in Flight Management Steering Committee. Communications seems to be an area that NABCI could potentially increase efficiency and effectiveness for bird conservation.

Supreme Court decision regarding isolated wetlands

John Meagher, EPA, provided a brief update on the Supreme Court decision that ruled in an area in Illinois that isolated wetlands there can no longer be regulated by dredge and fill permits. The implications to bird conservation may be tremendous and, as a federal subcommittee, we may want to consider other for wetlands conservation in critical areas.

Next meeting date:

The next meeting date is proposed for March 7, 10:00 to 12:00 noon. The location is to be announced later.

Notes submitted by:

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