

**SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS
NABCI FEDERAL AGENCY SUBCOMMITTEE
APRIL 15, 2003**

**US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ARLINGTON VA**

The Federal Agency Subcommittee for NABCI met April 15, 2003 at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Building in Arlington, Virginia. Ten people, representing 6 agencies, were in attendance, as follows: Jack Capp, Jennifer Peterson, Debbie Pressman (Forest Service); Antionette Condo (State Dept); John Meagher, Pat Cotter (EPA); Gary Johnston (National Park Service); Eric Lawton (BLM); Raye Nilius, Bob Ford (US Fish and Wildlife Service).

In the text below, agenda items are bold, specific action items are in bold and italics.

Recent structural changes to US NABCI Committee staff and US Committee chair

The US NABCI Committee made two noteworthy changes at its last meeting January 28-29, 2003. First, the Committee changed its leadership from three co-chairs to one chair that rotates among Federal, State, and NGO interests. The Committee nominated and approved Steve Williams, Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, as the chair of the US NABCI Committee for the next year. Director Williams, a state representative, and an NGO representative will comprise an Executive Committee to help with necessary decisions between meetings. Second, David Pashley is moving on from his coordinator role, after serving in that capacity since 1999. David will replace George Fenwick on the US NABCI Committee. Bob Ford has assumed the role as US NABCI Coordinator. Next meeting dates are for a NABCI staff retreat on May 21 - 23, a full US NABCI Committee meeting around August 11.

Updates: WMI workshop, US NABCI Committee meeting, North American conference

The Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) hosted a bird conservation funding needs work shop in late January 2003. Over 100 federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, and others attended. The priority, short term (2 - 3 years) needs identified were increased funding to 1) North American Wetlands Conservation Act, 2) Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, 3) Joint Ventures, 4) State Wildlife Grants, and 5) science support to federal agencies. *These 5 needs will become the primary agenda for the Bird Funding Group and the NABCI NGO Subcommittee, and representatives of those groups will be working closely with the Federal Agency Subcommittee to request information about outyear needs. Bob Ford and Jack Capp will write a briefing paper on the workshop and present it at the NABCI staff*

meeting May 21-23, 2003.

The US NABCI Committee met immediately following the WMI workshop, on January 28-29, 2003. Primary discussion items included the WMI workshop results, the development of trilateral partnerships and projects, and bird conservation initiative reports. The draft minutes are on the US NABCI web page.

At the North American Natural Resources Conference in North Carolina in late March, a bird conservation session was held. At the session, WMI Executive Director Rollie Sparrowe and FWS Director Steve Williams announced the development of a CARE group for migratory birds, modeled after the successful refuge partnership. Williams also announced the start of a FWS Strategic Planning process for bird conservation, that will compliment the discussions of the US NABCI Committee and the work of the Federal Agency Subcommittee.

Status report - trilateral projects and partnerships

Mexico has identified six initial areas for trilateral cooperation, built around priority AICAs (IBAs). The six areas for initial attention for bird conservation in Mexico are:

1. Northeastern Yucatán peninsula (Ria Lagartos in Yucatán, Cozumel, and Sian Ka'an in Quintana Roo);
2. El Triunfo (Chiapas);
3. Chihuahuan Desert grasslands (including Janos-Nuevo Casas Grandes in Chihuahua);
4. Marismas Nacionales (Nayarit-Sinaloa);
5. Chamela - Cuixmala (Jalisco); and
6. El Cielo (Tamaulipas).

A series of regional workshops in Mexico this fall and winter have focused on these priority areas. These workshops are designed to help build regional alliances in Mexico and to promote the development of Trilateral Projects. In late September 2002, CEC funds were available to support some 'pilot' Trilateral Projects, but those proposals needed to be developed and approved within the next 4-6 weeks. The three National NABCI Coordinators worked quickly with NABCI partners in all three countries to meet the deadline.

Three 'pilot' Trilateral Projects have now been approved by the CEC for funding. The projects have received ~\$150,000 with about 50% of the funds going to Mexico and 25% each to Canada and the United States. All of the projects focus on a shared continental conservation concern and shared species but have the component in each country led by a local group. All projects are well linked to ongoing conservation work, including to projects funded by the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, so that there will be maximum leverage of the CEC funds. A final report on all three projects will be available by June 2003.

Hemispheric conference on Migratory species

The Federal Agency Subcommittee briefly discussed the Migratory Species workshop in Chile (led by Antionette Condo). This is a workshop, previously announced at this subcommittee, to be held in conjunction with the Neotropical Ornithological Congress, to begin discussions about developing a strategy to improve conservation of migratory species in the

Western Hemisphere. The desire is to have a Senior representative from each country's government at the meeting. A draft agenda should be available soon from Antionette.

The US NABCI Committee has approved language for this workshop that identifies themselves as a potential point of contact for hemispheric migratory bird conservation. Discussions about how NABCI should represent itself, especially through Federal Agencies, will remain on the Federal Agency Subcommittee agenda. ***An update should be provided at the next meeting.***

The Trade Representatives Office has recently contacted Bob Ford about information regarding NAFTA and input into the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFA). Trade staff is interested in using the NAFTA to CEC to NABCI model as they develop the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). CAFTA discussions, at least to this level of detail for migratory birds, are very early in the process. ***As discussions continue, Ford will update this group and the US NABCI Committee.***

The Ministers of the Americas will have a meeting in Washington, DC late in June, 2003. One target is for the NABCI International MOU to be signed at that meeting.

Federal agency response to NGO request for outyear needs and items for May staff meeting

The Federal Agency Subcommittee discussed the role of this subcommittee, especially in regard to the ongoing request for information from the NGO Subcommittee regarding outyear needs, and action items for the NABCI staff meeting May 21 - 23, 2003.

Four items were agreed upon, as follows:

**** regarding coordinated Federal budgets - redistribute and receive update comments on Federal Agency document previously drafted (not reviewed since about Sept 2001). Use as vehicle to determine coordination points as well as points unique to each agency. EPA and others have kept green book language that references coordinated bird conservation dollars among fed agencies. Ford/Bogart/Pressman in lead***

**** small team to work on a coordinated "Fed private lands document", that provides a summary of private lands opportunities that can be beneficial to bird conservation. Jack Capp in lead.***

**** BLM proposed a similar "public lands opportunities" - and agencies began a discussion about cooperating on Federal lands habitat priorities through Challenge grants programs - this will continue through a small team. Eric Lawton in lead.***

**** Federal Agencies requested that unfunded domestic Neotrop Act proposals be shared with them for potential funding. We need to keep on the table an idea of sharing a "pot of federal money" to go to some Neotrop proposals, as well as the use of NFWF for coordinated Fed budget ideas. Ford in lead.***

Agency updates

U.S. Forest Service - US Forest Service appropriations for bird conservation has increased some

for 2004. National forests and grasslands funding increased slightly. International programs increased about 15% emphasizing migratory species. State and private forestry received large increases and these programs can be used to advance bird conservation, such as in the Forest Legacy program.

Bureau of Land Management - Budget projections indicate that migratory bird funding is likely to remain flat, although there is a renewed interest in sage ecosystems which will relate to sage grouse and other priority bird habitat management. The best opportunities for BLM are in Challenge Cost Share, and partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Environmental Protection Agency - As a result of recent court actions regarding the Clean Water Act (previously reported to the Subcommittee), EPA has been exploring opportunities to accomplish objectives through proactive programs. EPA is currently in meetings with states to determine the best course of action.

EPA has included language in budget justifications about NABCI and the need/desire for coordinated bird conservation.

EPA also mentioned the desire to fund marketing studies for the Duck Stamp, and that the study may need to be funded through federal agencies. The issue will be tabled until a future meeting.

US Fish and Wildlife Service - The US Fish and Wildlife Service has recently announced that Migratory Birds will be separated from the States (Federal Aid) Program and the program area focus solely on Migratory Bird issues. Paul Schmidt has been promoted to Assistant Director of that program area.

Paul will oversee a Migratory Bird Strategic Planning process and hopes to rely heavily on the US NABCI Committee, as well as this subcommittee, and other partners for consultation. In the short term, budget priorities are sustaining and increasing the basic science support for migratory birds, as is consistent with the messages from the WMI workshop.

Raye Nilius reported for the refuge system - This is the 100 year anniversary of the refuge system and refuge budget has been increased somewhat. She mentioned that new field positions will be developed in partnership between migratory birds and the refuge system, and that field biologist positions will soon be located in Joint Venture offices.

National Park Service - Natural Resource Challenges have another increase. Many of the 33 ecosystem based network identify migratory birds as a high priority. Additional increases are expected to fund these networks. The Secretary's Conservation Challenge Initiative (CCI) is an opportunity to continue this work and for DOI agencies to work more closely together.

Council for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) - Pat Cotter provided an update for Biodiversity Program funding and the progress of the CEC Biodiversity Conservation Working Group. Marshall Jones (USFWS) chairs this working group. There is general agreement with that primary NABCI funding through CEC should focus on Mexico, and help to develop capacity

around Important Bird Areas (see Trinational report above). If needed, CEC should continue support for the NABCI Mexico coordinator position.

Cotter also mentioned that a connection to the Cartahena Convention may be useful inn regard to Special Protected Areas (SPA). The web page access is www.cep.uunet.org

State Department - Computers and other office equipment become surplus at many overseas offices of the U.S. federal government. Through a request of the American Birding Association (ABA) and others, the State Department found that donation of those computers to bird conservation needs can sometimes be made locally. Embassies can, for example, donate to local uses that include universities.

Next meeting date

The next meeting date for the Federal Agency Subcommittee of NABCI will be scheduled as needed, after the May 21 NABCI staff meeting, but before the August US NABCI Committee meeting.

Summary and Highlights submitted by Jack Capp (USFS) and Bob Ford (USFWS)