

## **Highlights and Action Items**

### **NABCI Federal Subcommittee meeting**

### **September 6, 2001**

The NABCI Federal Subcommittee met September 6, 2001 at the U.S. Forest Service Building, Franklin Court Building, Washington, D.C. Jack Capp and Bob Ford chaired the meeting. Agenda items included both information topics and action items. The agenda included 1) bird conservation and budget updates from each Federal agency represented, 2) Federal coordination for budgets and program priorities, and 3) a review of the NABCI Communications Strategy. Action items are provided in bold type below.

Those attending the meeting were: Mike Anderson (USDA-NRCS), John Meagher (EPA), Kathleen Kutschenreuter (EPA), Paula Frechen (USFWS), Heather Johnson (USFWS), Ken Williams (USGS), Paul Schmidt (USFWS), Mila Plavsic (USFWS), Gary Johnston (NPS), Ron Archuleta (USFS), Chris Eberly (DoD), Antoinette Condo (State Dept), Roxanne Bogart (USFWS), Jack Capp (USFS), Bob Ford (USFWS). Jim Woehr (WMI) was asked to attend part of the meeting to update the Subcommittee on NGO issues. Dave Case (D.J. Case and Associates) was asked to attend part of the meeting to provide an update on NABCI Communications.

#### Bird Conservation and Budget Updates - Federal Agencies:

Jack Capp led a discussion among Federal Agencies regarding current bird conservation programs and FY 2002 budget updates. Eight federal agencies were represented at the meeting, each provided a brief update as follows below.

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.* The USFWS budget is likely to be more constrained in the next several years, and we don't see significant increases in the Migratory Bird Program, however Congress has been very supportive of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and Joint Ventures and has added appropriations. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act funding remains unclear. The House provided \$5 million, while the Senate provided \$0. Final allocations will be determined soon. Steve Williams of Kansas has been nominated as Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, he has expressed support of migratory bird conservation and management as a priority for the USFWS.

*U.S. Geological Survey.* The USGS is rapidly developing an electronic communications, information sharing program called National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII). The bird conservation node, one of 10 focus areas, is growing the fastest among communication points. At least 2 agencies and OMB have expressed significant interest in this through the DOI Science

Advisor (Jim Tate). **Paul Schmidt proposed widespread support of this through federal agencies and requested a briefing for this Subcommittee and the US NABCI Committee at their next meetings.** A NABCI web page is rapidly developing as well with USGS (Elizabeth Martin), USFWS (Roxanne Bogart), and DoD (Chris Eberly) support staff.

*Environmental Protection Agency.* A January 2001 Supreme Court decision (the “SWANCC” Decision) limited the use of wetlands and other waters that are subject to protection under the Clean Water Act. EPA is working with other agencies to clarify the application of that decision, and will be looking to work with partners on cooperative, non-regulatory approaches to protect wetlands no longer covered by federal regulations. Governor Whitman has hired an Agriculture Advisor to strengthen communication with farm interests, coordinate across EPA on agricultural issues, and to increase EPA participation in interagency activities such as the Farm Bill.

*State Department.* John Turner has been nominated as Assistant Secretary in the State Department, he has expressed support of bird conservation and management.

*Natural Resource Conservation Service, DOA.* DOA has generally lean budgets. The Farm Bill discussions continue, although WHIP and WRP are fairly lean. Acreage objectives have increased in these programs, but appropriations may not meet the request for implementation. The House is considering withholding subsidies only for wetlands tracts drained, not the entire farm, which could substantially change the swampbuster provision.

*National Park Service.* The National Park Service has in place a “Park Flight” program, through which the NPS is increasing efforts for international and domestic bird conservation work. Carol Biedleman is the contact, based at the University of Arizona and currently working under a coop agreement. NPS hopes to increase participation on this subcommittee over time.

*U.S. Forest Service.* Most budgets, including bird conservation, are generally a flat line for FY02, although the Forest Service has submitted to the USDA budget increases for FY03 that substantially increase International Programs budget for Migratory Birds, Invasive Species, and Forest Policy Work. The USFS support for staff in Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) is finalized, that money is provided as a challenge cost share coordinated by the American Bird Conservancy or directly to Joint Ventures.

#### Federal Coordination of Budgets and Program Priorities:

Jim Woehr (Wildlife Management Institute) updated the Federal Subcommittee regarding actions by the NGO NABCI Subcommittee and the Bird Funding Group. He and others have met with DOI Science Advisor (Jim Tate) and have planned future meetings to discuss federal program priorities for bird

conservation and management. **The Bird Funding Group, in response to requests by Congressional staff to get a clearer picture of Federal Government bird conservation spending and activities, requested that the subcommittee (via Jack Capp and Bob Ford) revisit the coordinated federal budget tables already developed by the Federal Subcommittee, and provide a more concise view of program opportunities and needs (including FTEs) for outyear opportunities by October 15, 2001.** The Bird Funding Group has requested this information in order to build support at OMB, upper reaches of DOI, and across Departments to gain both recognition and momentum for increased appropriations.

NABCI Communications Strategy:

Dave Case, of DJ Case and Associates, presented the current thoughts regarding a NABCI Communications strategy (funded by the CEC, NGOs and several federal agencies). Such a strategy was requested by the U.S. NABCI Committee. The strategy as Dave is developing it is based on more than 100 in-depth interviews or group meetings and is fairly well developed. **Generally, the Federal Agency Subcommittee recognized the need for greatly improved bird conservation communications and expressed support of the strategy as presented today. The subcommittee may consider a more formal endorsement at the next meeting.** Dave requested comments and questions regarding the strategy from the Federal Agency Subcommittee directly to him (dave@djcase.com).

Next Meeting Date:

The next meeting of the NABCI Federal Agency Subcommittee will be October 18, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Primary agenda items will be the NBII bird conservation node progress and federal support, a follow up for the Bird Funding Group requests, further development of a NABCI action plan, and preparation for the US NABCI Committee retreat. The location is to be announced at a later date.

Highlights submitted by:

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Bob Ford/Roxanne Bogart, USFWS