

**Minutes from the First Meeting
of the
North American Bird Conservation Initiative's
U.S. Federal Agency Subcommittee**

Time and Location: Wednesday, December 15, 1999, 1:30-3:30pm, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240, Room 8068

Attendees: Jamie Rappaport Clark (DOI/FWS, Co-chair), Pete Poulos (USDA/APHIS), Roberta Chew (DOS/OES/ETC), Ken Williams (DOI/USGS/CRU), Chip Groat (DOI/USGS), Jack Capp (USDA/FS), Debbie Pressman (USDA/FS), David Davis (EPA), Paul Brouha (USDA/FS), Danny Sells (USDA, NRCS), Gary Kania (NFWF), Brooks Yeager (DOS/DAS-E), Paul Schmidt (DOI/FWS), Chris Tollefson (DOI/FWS), Seth Mott (DOI/FWS), Michael Soukup (DOI/NPS), Darrel Lewis (ACOE), Chris Jauhola (DOI/BLM), Roxanne Bogart (DOI/FWS), Jon Andrew (DOI/FWS), David Smith, (DOI/FWS), David Pashley (ABC), Gary Johnston (DOI/NPS), Alison Dalsimer (DOD), Stan Senner (NAS)

Welcome, Purpose, and Introductions

Jamie Clark welcomed participants to the first meeting of the NABCI-US Federal subcommittee. Following introductions, Jamie reviewed the five main purposes of meeting: (1) to engage other Federal agencies in the NABCI partnership effort to coordinate bird and landscape conservation in the United States, (2) to identify an agreed upon role for the Committee relative to achieving the goals of NABCI, (3) to determine the level of involvement and degree of participation by member agencies, (4) to identify points of contact, and to select a Co-chair for the Committee to work with the Service as liaison to the US Committee, and (5) to outline next steps for the Committee that constitute a workplan for the year 2000.

Jon Andrew provided a brief review of the status of birds in the United States, pointing out the many species that are declining and the few overabundant species that are causing ecological damage. He reviewed the major causes for declines and the primary motivations for conserving birds.

David Pashley discussed the history of NABCI, providing handouts on the chronology of events, guiding principles developed by representatives from Mexico, Canada, and the US, and minutes from the US National Committee and US NGO Subcommittee meetings (available by e-mail, dpashley@abcbirds.org). He referred to the approved map of Bird Conservation Regions and encouraged review of the draft US NABCI Vision document (comments due by Jan. 18, 2000).

Discussion

Attendees opened discussion with comments on the current status and role of NABCI in the United States. The roles of the US Committee include representing the US internationally in NABCI, providing a forum for interactions among the US bird conservation initiatives and their member organizations, and increasing resources for bird conservation in the US. The next draft

of the NABCI-US Vision document will be prepared for the NABCI-US Committee meeting on February 1, 2000; additional comments will be solicited at the March North American Conference.

Questions then surrounded the proposed Bird Conservation Regions and how far implementation within these regions has progressed. David Pashley mentioned that money is available and coordinators have been hired for the Sonoran Desert, Northern Rockies, and Central Shortgrass, Joint Ventures and that other joint ventures in earlier stages of development include Atlantic Northern Forests and Badlands and Prairies BCRs. Joint Ventures under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan have begun to evolve towards all bird-all habitat joint ventures, including several that have made substantial progress in this direction, such as Prairie Pothole and Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Ventures. A commonly expressed vision for NABCI is complete coverage of the continent, in every BCR, by functioning Joint Venture-like partnerships.

Several attendees expressed a strong interest in contributing to NABCI. For example, Darrell Lewis indicated that the Army Corps of Engineers' land base is small but extremely important for many bird species and that they are interested in engaging in NABCI. Brooks Yeager said that there were opportunities for the Department of State to contribute, including opportunities to coordinate interactions with international embassies on policy issues. Danny Sells of NRCS said that there should be a way to coordinate public information and education for private landowners to help generate increased public awareness and expanded opportunities for joint management of habitat on private lands. Jack Capp indicated that a half a million acres of private forest is influenced by Forest Service activities, and thus agreed with the importance of coordinating private land outreach and management efforts.

One of the main roles of NABCI is to influence regional coordination by setting guiding principles and a biological framework and encouraging participation by member organizations in joint ventures. It was proposed that there should be a unified Federal bird conservation message to all constituencies of the Federal government. One of the first ways the Federal Committee can begin this process is to share information and coordinate planning and outreach. It was proposed that an interagency communications group with representation from each agency be formed.

Based on the breadth of the discussion, Jamie Clark observed that the role of the Federal subcommittee seemed to be falling into two realms: to accomplish specific NABCI-related activities and to provide a broad forum for interagency coordination of bird conservation. She asked which agencies are missing from the meeting. Mentioned were Bureau of Reclamation, National Marine Fisheries Service, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Emergency Management Administration, FCC, Department of Transportation, Tennessee Valley Association, FAA, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. She recommended that each agency identify two points of contact, including a single agency "day-to-day" contact and a senior leadership representative who will sit on the Subcommittee. Each agency will identify these two individuals. She also said that in the future, the meetings would need to be more strategic, "surgical," and focused, and that each agency needed to make sure that it was represented in the NABCI Vision document.

It was acknowledged that the role of the Subcommittee meetings would need to be clarified. Purposes mentioned included interactions with the NABCI-US Committee including accomplishing work objectives and providing a reporting mechanism following Committee meetings as well as fueling the agenda of those meetings. Others mentioned included gaining a better understanding of the commonalities and conflicts relative to bird conservation and federal agency activities, and providing a forum to address specific policy issues of concern to a subset of Federal Subcommittee members through the establishment of multi-agency task forces.

The level of participation and frequency of meetings were then discussed. Jamie recommended that the members caucus shortly after February 1st, the next meeting date for the US Committee. Subsequent meetings of the Federal Subcommittee would precede NABCI-US meetings. In the meantime, she recommended that meeting coordinators get missing agencies into the fold and that each agency should come to the next meeting with the top three bird conservation issues of their agency that can be used to help frame focus areas for the subcommittee. Frequent meetings would be necessary until members identified how the subcommittee can effectively feed into NABCI. The next meeting of the NGO subcommittee is January 11, 2000.

Selection of a Co-chair

Two agencies, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service volunteered to occupy the Co-chair seat for the first 2-year rotation. BLM deferred to the Forest Service as the Forest Service can represent the interests of a separate department. It was acknowledged that Department of Interior bureaus represent vastly different interests, and, therefore, the possibility of having two bureaus from such a department occupy both co-chair seats should not be ruled out. Chris Jahoula suggested revisiting the idea of having the co-chair seat occupied by the FWS as a rotating rather than a permanent position. The name of the committee is the Federal Subcommittee of NABCI-US.

Action Items

The following action items came out of the meeting:

- ◆ Each member agency will send names of two points of contact, a “day-to-day” contact and a senior leadership representative, to Roxanne Bogart who is providing NABCI staff functions in the FWS. She can be reached at 703-358-2153, Roxanne_Bogart@fws.gov
- ◆ The Forest Service will send the name of its Co-chair representative to David Pashely and Roxanne Bogart.
- ◆ The FWS will edit the document that lists the roles of the Federal Subcommittee based on comments raised at this meeting.
- ◆ The FWS will prepare and distribute meeting minutes.
- ◆ The FWS and FS representatives along with David Pashley, NABCI-US Coordinator, will begin the coordination necessary to schedule the next meeting of the Federal Subcommittee for early February following the next NABCI-US meeting on February 1, 2000. Subsequent meetings of the Federal Subcommittee would precede NABCI-US meetings.
- ◆ Member agencies work on preparing a list of the top three bird conservation issues for their agencies to bring to the next meeting.