



## Tri-National Committee Meeting Tasks and Summary May 12, 2008 Veracruz, Mexico

### Participants

Basile VanHavre, Canadian Wildlife Service; Martin Vargas, SEMARNAT; David Mehlman, The Nature Conservancy; Eduardo Inigo, Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Deb Hahn, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; Humberto Berlanga, CONABIO; Bob Ford, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Martin, Canadian Wildlife Service; Richard Charette, Canadian Wildlife Service; Antoinette Condo, US State Department; Monica, SEMARNAT; CONANP?

The Committee agreed the purpose of meeting was to:

- to provide background information so that all Committee members have the same level of understanding of the history and goals of the Tri-national Committee
- to update the Tri-national Committee members on tri-national progress
- to develop action items for the Tri-national Committee for the coming year

### Next U.S. Tri-National NABCI Discussion

Fall 2008 Conference call

### Key Tasks from the meeting

- Coordinators – The Coordinators will set up a conference call in the fall 2008 to discuss advancement of tri-national issues.
- Committee – Advance a broader discussion on migratory birds at the WHMSI meeting in July 2008 or if that is not possible encourage this discussion in the near future.
- Committee – The Committee should give each national committee the message that we need to clarify the most up to date Bird Conservation Region (BCR) map, what entity will house the map, and how updates to the map will be implemented in the future.
- Humberto – Work with individuals at each NABCI project site in Mexico to pull together a list of the projects, money, and time that has been spent at the sites in the last 4 or 5 years.
- Humberto – Work with individuals in each regional alliance to get an update on progress and advancements. This information will be used to develop a 2 page regional alliance document that complements the current proposal documents.
- Deb – Work with Roxanne to put the regional alliance information into a format similar to the proposal documents.
- Committee – Present a proposal to the Migratory Bird Table for support of work in the grasslands of Mexico in the context of the Continentally Important Proposals.

### Summary of Discussions

## Country Updates

### 1. United States

Currently there are 22 members of the US Committee. The National Park Service is the newest member of the Committee. The Committee has signed an MOU between its members and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies approved a Resolution supporting the goals and objectives of the 2007 NABCI bird monitoring report. The Monitoring Subcommittee continues to promote the goals and objectives of the 2007 report through conducting workshops and developing tools for managers. The Committee is supporting the conservation of birds on private lands through work with NRCS and FSA. They are poised to develop a Farm Bill users guide once the Farm Bill is reauthorized and have been meeting with NRCS to discuss strategic habitat initiatives for birds. The Committee is also developing key bird conservation messages for the new administrations transitions teams. For more information, please see the U.S. NABCI Committee website ([www.us-nabci.org](http://www.us-nabci.org)).

### 2. Canadian update

Basile VanHavre, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), gave a presentation on key activities for migratory birds in Canada. Topics included regulations governing the incidental take of migratory birds and improving the Canadian bird monitoring capacity. Incidental take regulations apply to nearly 400 species of migratory birds and all lands and waters in Canada and are applicable to multiple industrial sectors. They provide a permit option for incidental take in addition to compliance through avoidance (existing prohibition). In order to allow for “fair and equitable” application of the regulations, Bird Conservation Region Plans are being standardized across Canada. This will be brought to Canada’s NABCI Committee for discussion in October 2008. The CWS has initiated an effort to review current monitoring capacity, identify gaps and recommend approaches for improved capability. They distributed a questionnaire to gather information about current monitoring programs in Canada. Currently, they expend approximately 17 Million year on monitoring. An external review panel will be reviewing the results of the survey. They would like to improve efficiency and effectiveness and provide better access to data.

### 3. Mexican update

The development of Regional Alliances is progressing in Marismas Nacionales, the Yucatán, the Rio Bravo in coordination with the Rio Grande Joint Venture, and at El Triunfo. Projects that relate to and complement NABCI work include expanding the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), and using North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) and Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (Neotrop Act) funds to advance specific projects. They are focused on monitoring in particular the expansion of Ebird, BBS, and the development of a Mexico Node for the Avian Knowledge Network. Wind power has become a key issue. They are in the process of developing specific guidance for wind power development in Mexico.

## History and Background

The original NABCI Strategic Plan states the following objective for the Tri-National NABCI Committee. “Through the Tri-National Committee, NABCI will achieve its objectives as well as

maximize communication, logistic and operational efficiency between all three North American countries. Furthermore, taking national priorities into account, NABCI, through the Tri-National Committee, will promote an integrated approach to bird conservation by strengthening cooperation mechanisms and links of existing and new international agreements and instruments of both global and regional nature." The Tri-National Committee (Committee) consists of three members from each country. The Committee meets once a year, typically during the Tri-lateral meeting.

A major achievement of the Committee was the development and signing of the Declaration of Intent (DOI) signed by all three countries in the summer of 2005. The DOI is a non-binding agreement that describes a cooperative continental approach to bird conservation but offers the potential for a hemispheric approach. The agreement is between the governments of Canada, United States and Mexico but references the importance of collaboration with additional partners. With the signing of the DOI, the Committee initiated the development of a Tri-National Action Plan that contains 6 goals. The development and implementation of the action has been led by the Committee with input and ultimate approval from the National NABCI Councils in the three countries. The development of the action plan was guided by both the objectives outlined in the DOI and the priorities identified in early meetings on NABCI.

The following six goals were identified:

1. Building and sustaining regional alliances in Mexico
2. Securing sustainable and significant new funding in the three countries for projects of continental importance
3. Ensuring the development of needed decision-support tools – which could include Coordinated Bird Monitoring, Species Assessments, planning within Bird Conservation Regions
4. Development of a strategy or policy for engaging countries outside of North America
5. Ensure commitment and support from non-signatory partners for the Declaration of Intent
6. In recognition of priority on terrestrial ecosystems within NABCI to date, NABCI Tri-national intends to promote action to address marine ecosystems and birds

Successfully achieving all six goal statements relied heavily on the ability of NABCI partners to secure stable, long-term funding for its implementation. In order to demonstrate the need for funding and to better articulate the nature and scope of priority activities under NABCI, Committee members requested that the three countries develop a joint proposal for the implementation of priority activities under NABCI. Given the focus within NABCI of tri-partite collaboration, Committee members chose to focus on projects involving the three countries that would protect shared species. By demonstrating the need for enhanced capacity and demonstrating the successes that can be achieved through tri-national collaboration it is hoped that the three countries will garner more support in their efforts to secure long-term, stable funding for the implementation of NABCI.

### **Action Plan Discussion**

**Goal 6 – In recognition of priority on terrestrial ecosystems within NABCI to date, NABCI Tri-national intends to promote action to address marine ecosystems and birds** - Goal 6 will be retained in the action plan. The Tri-National Committee will consider what issues and actions they

might engage in on marine issues based on what other partners are doing. There will be discussions at the Tri-lateral on work being done for marine ecosystems and their birds. The Waterbird Council is advancing a number of marine issues in particular on seabirds. The Committee is supporting maintaining marine issues on the agenda of the Migratory Bird Table of the Tri-lateral. There are potential options for action by the Committee such as advancement of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) or the Pink-footed shearwater project. However, the Committee wants to be strategic as opposed to reactive. There is also the possibility to develop a marine continentally important proposal. There are no short term action items for Goal 6.

**Goal 5 – Ensure commitment and support from non-signatory partners for the Declaration of Intent** - The Goal was developed with the idea that having non-signatory partners to the DOI would be beneficial for its implementation. To date we have not advanced this item. However, there is still interest in considering which particular NGOs and other partners we would want to have become non-signatory partners. We should weigh the benefits versus the time it would take in order to get other partners on board. The statement in the DOI is as follows.

g) The Participants recognize that it is far beyond their capacities alone to achieve effective bird conservation. The Participants, therefore, encourage other entities - national, international, regional, local, governmental, non-governmental, academic, business, among others - to collaborate in the implementation of this DOI and to confirm that collaboration through a letter of cooperation, or other appropriate mechanism.

**Goal 4 - Development of a strategy for engaging countries outside of North America** - Before WHMSI was developed there were discussions about what the strategy should be to discuss and address migratory bird issues throughout the hemisphere. WHMSI is one possible avenue but we have not had the necessary discussions and WHMSI is relatively young. Canada has also suggested the idea of the Americas Bird Conservation Initiative (ABCI) at a meeting in Panama 2 years ago. There is a workshop at the upcoming WHMSI conference on migratory birds but it is focused on the Neotrop Act. We would like to send the message to WHMSI that we want to discuss whether its structure might be an avenue for the coordination of migratory bird conservation across the hemisphere. Another idea was having an individual at the WHMSI to represent NABCI in particular.

**Goal 3 – Ensuring the development of needed decision-support tools which could include Coordinated Bird Monitoring, Species Assessments, planning within Bird Conservation Regions**

a. Monitoring - There was an interest in sharing the monitoring needs each of our countries have or are identifying in order to determine if there are any recommendations or comments on the needs from the tri-national perspective.

b. Currently, we have a BCR map, species assessments in each country, and the BBS and eBird are being expanded into Mexico. These outcomes came from a call for a common language. The Committee would like to consider whether there are new tools that need to be developed or expanded in the future.

c. State of the birds – Currently the State of the Birds report is being developed for the U.S. but there may be opportunities to expand this discussion to Mexico and Canada. The U.S. has a steering committee and some members are working on parts of the document. It will probably be similar to the UK state of the birds report and will be updated every 5 years to coincide with the USFWS's Birds of Conservation Concern updates. One option is to have Mexico and Canada develop their own reports

and then role them out strategically to get the most media exposure. We could also write an overarching executive summary that ties the reports together. In the future, we could consider a tri-national report.

d. BCR map – The BCR has not been officially reviewed or updated since it was first developed. However, it has been tweaked and changed by various partners. It is believed that the most current map is held by Bird Studies Canada. That map includes changes to boundaries between Canada and the U.S. and along the coastlines. The Committee would like to identify the most up to date and accurate version of the map and a person or organization that will take responsibility to house it. They also would like to see a process by which it can be updated. We need to ensure that any changes made are reviewed and are made with consistent criteria. There was some discussion on completely reviewing and updating the map. Time and money should be taken into consideration before we decide to do a complete review and update.

**Goal 2 - Securing sustainable and significant new funding in the three countries for projects of continental importance** – Goals 1 and 2 continue to be the Committee’s top priorities. The proposals and the funding documents have been developed. We need to send the message that people should not be intimidated by the price tags because if we want to make big things happen we need to think big.

Additionally, the money is for actions over 5-10 years. The Committee agrees with the U.S. Committee who felt that we needed to show success and progress by identifying what has been done at the sites in the past 4 or 5 years as a result of proposal development and partnership building in the areas. Humberto is going to work with individuals at in the sites in Mexico to gather that information. Deb will have the information added to the funding documents developed for each proposal. The Committee would also like to get some traction on the message that President Bush sent in regards to committing 4 Million to the project areas in Mexico. Although the money was not new money, Committee members could potentially use the announcement in Canada and Mexico to push folks in their governments on funding the proposals. The Mexican delegation will speak with Ernesto about his commitment to help secure funding. The key is for each Committee member to advance the proposals in the ways that they can. There was also a discussion about the missing connection with Canada at a few of the sites. There has been progress made with Marismas Nacionales lately on connecting to Canada. We need to continue working on the Yucatan connection and might need to stretch the connection to something such as the boreal forest.

**Goal 1 - Building and sustaining regional alliances in Mexico** - The Committee would like a status report and information on how the regional alliances have been successful and have supported conservation to date. We need more details on exactly what they are and why they should continue to be supported. The details could be used to develop a 2 pager on the regional alliances that integrates with the Continentally Important Proposal documents. The Committee asked about the possibility of supporting regional alliances in other areas. Mexico would consider this in the future but sees the current sites as the priority. They want to be strategic about their support.

**Grasslands Proposal to the Tri-lateral** – The proposal was submitted to and supported by the Co-Chairs of the Migratory Bird Table. The Co-Chairs will advance the proposal to the Executive Committee for consideration.

**NABCI III meeting** – There needs to be more discussion on whether a NABCI III is necessary. Funding and personnel will be the major limitations to having such a meeting. However, with the many advancements and achievements since the last meetings (1998 and 2001) and the upcoming threats and issues (E.g., climate change, renewable energy, etc.), there may be a need for a meeting.



(make sure 4 million doesn't come out of NAWCA or Neotrop.- letter to Fitzpatrick - informal letter, May 29,30) –