



## US NABCI Committee Meeting Tasks and Summary August 11-12, 2008 Arlington, Virginia

Committee members in attendance: Dale Hall (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), David Pashley (American Bird Conservancy), David Goad (North American Waterfowl Management Plan), Catherine Hickey (U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan), Gary Myers (Partners in Flight), Geoffrey Walsh (for Dwight Fielder Bureau of Land Management), Greg Butcher (National Audubon Society), Terrell Erickson (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Jim Kushlan (Waterbird Conservation for the Americas), John Hoskins (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), Carol Lively (U.S. Forest Service), Chris Eberly (for Peter Boice Department of Defense), Dave Mehlman (The Nature Conservancy), Sue Haseltine (U.S. Geological Survey), Matt Ponish (Farm Service Agency), Bert Frost (National Park Service)

Others: Deb Hahn (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), Elena Babij (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Marie Straussburger (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Guy Foulks (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Brad Andres (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Seth Mott (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Charlie Rewa (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Carol Beidleman (National Park Service), Jennifer Wheeler (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Steve Hilburger (U.S. Geological Survey), Melanie Steinkamp (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Skip Hyberg (Farm Service Agency), Ken Williams (U.S. Geological Survey), Bob Blohm (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Jen Mock (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), Antoinette Condo (U.S. State Department), Herb Raffaele (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

The Committee agreed the purpose of meeting was to:

- **assess the current NABCI priorities and discuss future direction,**
- **discuss progress on 2008 objectives,**
- **determine resources needed to complete 2008 objectives, and**
- **plan dates and agenda for Winter 2009 meeting.**

### Next U.S. NABCI Committee Meeting

TBD

### Tasks from the meeting


- Committee members - Send Deb your availability for a 1.5 day winter meeting in Arlington, Virginia on the following dates – January 12, 13, 14, 2009; February 9, 10, 11, 2009
- Committee members - Send Deb comments on the Accomplishments document by COB August 22, 2008.
- Committee members - Send Deb comments on the transition team packages by COB September 15, 2008.

- Deb - Collect information on committee member work on climate change and distribute to the Committee.
- Matt Ponish - Lead a strategic planning discussion with David Pashley, Catherine Hickey, Ken Williams and Carol Lively. The recommendations and plan will be discussed at the winter meeting.
- Private Lands Subcommittee - Complete the Farm Bill Users Guide for the Wildlife Conservationist.
- Private Lands Subcommittee - Continue advancing the implementation of Strategic Habitat Initiatives.
- Private Lands Subcommittee - Keep Committee members informed about proposed and interim rules
- Monitoring Subcommittee - Participate in the Heinz Center project if it is funded
- Monitoring Subcommittee - Work with KY Department of Fish and Game to finalize the monitoring report card and assess how it might be used nationally by other states and federal agencies.
- Monitoring Subcommittee - Develop a set of case studies that demonstrate how to do management-oriented monitoring.
- Monitoring Subcommittee - Take action on the recommendations for advancing data management
- Tri-national Committee - Continue to promote and look for funding for the Continentally Important Proposals
- Deb - Work with Humberto Berlanga to compile a list of the 3-4 top priority actions at each site and information on the regional alliances to develop a second set of documents with that information.
- Chair and Coordinator - Fill the vacant seat on the Tri-national Committee.
- Deb - Communicate to NABCI Mexico and Canada about the BCR map discussion and work with them to address the issues.
- Deb - Discuss NABCI/WHMSI collaboration opportunities with Herb Raffaele.
- Resources Subcommittee- Keep tabs on the climate change legislation language to ensure that the bird conservation programs that we all support are maintained in the funding language.
- Communications Subcommittee - Publish an All Bird Bulletin on Communications.
- Communications Subcommittee – Finalize transition team briefing packets by October 1.
- Federal agency Committee members – Ensure that the messages from the transition team packets get into their agencies briefing packets.
- Deb - Attend the JV Coordinators meeting in December.
- Deb - Finalize a draft JV presentation that Committee members could use at JV Management Board meetings.

## **Membership Updates**

Matt Ponish, Farm Service Agency and Bert Frost, National Park Service attended their first U.S. NABCI Committee (Committee) meeting.

## **Next Chair**



Dale Hall, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will retire in January 2009. Dale Hall has provided strong leadership and has been an active Committee chair. The Committee would like to thank Dale for his leadership and willingness to take the time to be an engaged Chair. As Dale leaves the NABCI Committee, we welcome our new Chair, John Hoskins. The Committee appreciates his willingness to Chair and provide leadership in the future.

### **Summary of Discussions**


There are a number of new Committee members since the current priorities were developed, the current priorities were developed 3.5 years ago, and 2009 marks the 10 year anniversary of the Committee. The Committee feels that NABCI accomplished what it originally intended to accomplish—laid out a framework for integrated bird conservation, developed a common planning unit called Bird Conservation Regions, helped influence wall to wall Joint Ventures (JVs), provided a forum for cross initiative and cross partner discussions, etc. However, there are plenty of challenges and issues left to address including assessing populations level, increasing our knowledge of limiting factors, increasing the fiscal and human resources dedicated to bird conservation, promoting cross border conservation, and many others. With that said, it is important to reevaluate where the Committee should focus their leadership in the next 3 to 5 years and keep the Committee energized and engaged. The first half of the meeting was aimed at starting the discussion on future priorities and key challenges. A presentation on Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) and a discussion of climate change started the priorities discussion.

### **Strategic Habitat Conservation**

Dan Ashe, USFWS, gave a presentation about SHC. SHC is a science-based approach to conservation focused on providing landscapes capable of sustaining trust species populations at objective levels. This approach is founded on an adaptive, iterative process of biological planning, conservation design, conservation delivery, monitoring, and research. SHC is an application of the scientific method and adaptive management to conservation at multiple spatial scales. This strategic conservation approach will include all USFWS programs and address both habitat and non-habitat factors limiting fish and wildlife populations. SHC is a reflection of increased expectations about transparency and accountability. It includes the following.

- ✓ Model-based, predictive assessments of landscape sustainability, measurable as explicit population objectives.
- ✓ Project-scale decisions informed with landscape-scale decision support tools.
- ✓ Monitoring focused on biological outcomes, and linked explicitly to decision-making.
- ✓ Research targeted to key uncertainties.

### **Climate Change**



The entities that Committee members represent are all looking at the issue of climate change in one way or another. In order to begin considering how climate change will impact the Committee's future priorities a few Committee members described what their agency or organization is currently doing.

In 2007, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) developed a science strategy outlining the major natural resource issues facing the Nation in the next decade. The strategy consists of six issues of critical importance. One issue is ecosystems and predicting ecosystem change. They want to advance our understanding of terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems so that we can predict ecosystem change. This includes research, mapping, and monitoring. The information collected will create a sound science foundation and be used to help managers make informed and strategic decisions. Another issue is adaptation of water and biological resources to climate change in order to development management strategies to deal with change. This includes the development of predictive models. The USGS also created a National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center (Center). Research will be the main objective of the Center. Research being conducted in 2008 includes projects such as—*Examining climate change as a challenge to bird conservation in the arid and semi-arid regions of North America*. The USGS is conducting a workshop in December 2008 to identify information gaps, research need and priorities, collaboration strategies, and an organizational structure for the Center.

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) is evaluating the vulnerabilities from climate change of WHSRN sites in the Americas and identifying potential mitigation options that can be used to safeguard vulnerable populations and habitats. Shorebird populations, that have demanding migration schedules, that rely on wind patterns for migration, that breed and winter at high latitudes (where the greatest climate change impacts are expected) that depend on fragile ecological synchronicities, and that are already suffering major population declines, may be especially vulnerable to a changing climate.

Most shorebird conservation strategies were developed in an era when major climatic changes were not anticipated. Now that the relevance of climate change to conservation goals is widely recognized, there is an urgent need to re-evaluate our approaches to the conservation of natural resources. Specifically, we need to:

- Develop methods and tools for evaluating the current and future vulnerabilities of important shorebird sites in the Americas to climate change.
- Assess the effectiveness of existing conservation approaches against a backdrop of a changing climate.
- Identify ways in which existing conservation approaches and instruments could be modified to better conserve shorebirds and their habitats under future climates.

The National Audubon Society has been closely following the climate change legislation on the Hill. They anticipate legislation passing next year and want to see strong wildlife adaptation language included in the legislation. They support assessing threats for species and sites to determine how

climate change interacts with other traditional threats. They do not want to see conservationists stopping what they are doing now but instead take into consideration climate change and its impacts in what they are currently doing. They are focused on the more vulnerable habitats such as mountain tops, coastal zones, alpine and arctic tundra. Audubon is also documenting changes that are already happening so that they can show that changes resulting from climate change are happening now. They are not a thing of the future.

Deb Hahn passed out two climate change presentations created by Ellie Cohen, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO). The presentations discuss a few key ideas. First being, the need to develop an ecosystem services act. There is a need for legislation that is broader and focused on maintaining ecosystem health and services. Second, the presentation identified development of regional climate change models so that we can adapt our management at the regional level as a key step. Lastly, there is a need to look at the future stressors or issues so that wildlife is positioned as a component in any discussions on these issues. For example, water scarcity and quality are going to be future challenges. We, as conservationists, need to make sure that we are positioned to have riparian habitat and wetlands included in the discussions.

The following are points related to climate change that the Committee discussed.

1. We need to help equip the science community to evaluate the response of bird populations. A piece of this is monitoring. The monitoring subcommittee made some great recommendations last year and we need to follow through and implement those recommendations. We need money and resources to provide tools.
2. We need to make sure monitoring helps us answer larger questions as opposed to just doing monitoring that answers questions at a local scale. For example, what about disease organisms? How will they react to climate change? Can we use birds can be indicators of change?
3. If a core need is to monitor (including data management) then we need to get long term funding for monitoring and data management.
4. We can dramatically improve our capacity relatively inexpensively but we need a commitment from the community.
5. Monitoring is still not popular with managers and we still have a nongame and game division within many fish and wildlife agencies. What we need in each state is a commitment by the decision maker to improve the monitoring and bridge the divides.
6. What about climate change and the bird plans? – Do we need to update those to include impacts from climate change? What about making one plan for all the initiatives as opposed to many different plans? Some felt that initiatives didn't have the capacity to do this in a reasonable time frame.

7. Part of the difficulty with climate change is the scale and complexity. It has such broad impact that we have a hard time in framing the questions. How do we get our hands around it and move forward as a bird conservation community? We lack capacity to actually do this within our community. Regional climate affects, possible responses of habitats and populations, recognizing uncertainty, and monitoring (how do we focus it? how do we manage data? how do we evaluate the data? how do we implement actions based on the data? and how do we do it without breaking the bank?). How do we put the capacity in place and how do we take action to sustain the resources we need? There is a lot of data and a lot to build on. We are not starting from scratch.
8. The Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act and other similar legislation will not fit the bill in the future. We need some more similar to an ecosystem services act.
9. We should consider what adaptation really means. If we get a significant amount of new funding, are we going to be able to direct it to the right places?

### **NABCI Committee Priorities Discussion**

The following points are the initial discussions of a larger strategic planning discussion that will be take place over the next 4-8 months. (What is the vision for the next 10 years? What are the priorities for the next 3 to 5 years?)

1. The NABCI Committee needs to consider current and future stressors and how those will affect bird conservation. We need to come together as a community and convince the appropriators and funders that we need a billion dollars or more for conservation. In this country we spent billions on hunting, fishing and wildlife watching much of which is bird watching. How do we harness that constituency?
2. We need to look at habitat and landscapes. - The only caution for focusing on landscapes is that people do not always relate to habitat but to species.
3. Habitat management is critical. Land is being developed and divided up rapidly.
4. The public hunts and watches birds. We should help make them understand that birds are indicators of a healthy environment. By safeguarding habitats we safe guard human healthy and quality of life. We sold wetlands based on water quality and ground water recharge. We can use this message to get increase funding for conservation.
5. The State of the Birds report is a venue to articulate the ideas and link to the public.
6. What about a universal voice for bird conservation? For example, FSA and NRCS would like to see one set of comments on the Farm Bill conservation program rules. At the very least the Committee could recommend a focus of the program and not compromise our individual objectives. All the agencies and organizations at the table have multiple objectives but we also have common bird conservation goals.

7. The public needs to see a clear message and not complexity or confusion. We cannot be seen arguing amongst ourselves and expect public support for conservation. We should remove our silos and send common messages.
8. Over the last 3 years, the Committee has focused on communications to federal and state agencies. Should we now focus on the public? – We should develop the messages but use those entities that are better equipped to communicate with the public to send the messages. All of our agencies and organizations should use the same messages.
9. We need a strategic process and to be able to assess whether our actions bring us closer to achieving our objectives.
10. The Lower Mississippi JV has a good vision of what is needed for bird conservation. Can we develop a larger and broader vision such as an environmental health vision within the BCRs and JVs? The bird conservation community has been carved out and now the fish community is carving out their way instead of uniting through the JVs. Could we try to unite the two communities in a small area to show success?
  - a. Unless there is a pot of money to support this, it is not a good idea. This could potentially happen if a pot of money comes along with climate change funding, but it would be more difficult in the west because the fish community drives the issues.
  - b. What is the right thing to do for the bird community? This could be possible over the next 10 years. We really need to focus on healthy populations and habitats. Maybe we shouldn't focus on fish and birds together but on what we want our landscapes to look like.
  - c. We are still in the process organizing the bird conservation community and we need to continue focusing on birds for the next 10 years. However, we should make sure we are being compatible with the overall landscape and the visions of other groups.
11. There are things that we can do that relate strictly to birds but we have discussed climate change, urban sprawl, and other topics that are not just bird issues they are conservation issues that affect the fabric of our lives. Most of the organizations around the table deal with more than birds. We can deal with more than just birds for the next 10 years.
  - a. NAWMP was focused on waterfowl and their habitat at the outset. In the 1998 update, the issue on the table was whether it was useful to reframe the Plan in a broader context. There were people on each side of the table on this. They decided to recognize a broader context but keep the focus on waterfowl. The Committee is looking at itself after 10 years and the conservation landscape is different. The initiatives are more mature and the challenges are different. Maybe we should reframe our discussion based on the new landscape but we are still in the bird business. The question might be how can we work together amongst ourselves while

linking out to the broader conservation community? We should not lose track of the fact that we are in the bird business.

- b. Reframing the issues means focusing on the core issue of bird habitats and bird conservation but reframing it in a more strategic context and linking out to other communities (E.g., fish).
12. New requirements in the Department of Defense (DoD) have focused on more coordinated monitoring on DoD lands. The NABCI monitoring report has been very helpful and has guided the DoD monitoring plan. However, monitoring does not get enough funding and we all depend on each other to show what we accomplished.
  13. What about interagency discussions and metrics that cross agencies?
  14. The Northeast coordinated monitoring partnership is finishing up the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a 3 year grant. The funding will be used up at the end of this year. Coordinated monitoring still has enormous obstacles to overcome even though they have made much progress. They were not successful in getting money to develop partnerships in the rest of the country but we need to keep trying.
  15. 10 years is a good time to take a step back and do a review. There were some excellent documents prepared for this meeting to begin the discussion of future priorities. We are all about communications – between initiatives, government agencies, etc. Maybe we need to have a message to the general public but also do specific tasks (E.g., monitoring or strategic habitat conservation). A working group should develop a draft plan for the next 5 years and bring it to the next meeting and by summer meeting in 2009 we should have a plan forward. We should also have subcommittees or working groups that have specific tasks and a finite time period to get them done.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Develop a Strategic Assessment Subcommittee that will provide a draft strategic plan for the winter 2009 meeting – Matt Ponish will lead the Subcommittee. It will look at what has worked in the past and what hasn't and where we should go from here. David Pashley, Catherine Hickey, Ken Williams and Carol Lively will be members.
2. Deb will collect information from each Committee member on what they are doing for climate change within their organization or agency. It will be distributed to the Committee members for information and also will be used in the strategic planning discussions.

#### **Communications**

All-Bird Bulletin – Three All-Bird Bulletins (ABB) have gone out since the last Committee meeting addressing monitoring, conservation design, and the continentally important proposals. One ABB will be published before the next Committee meeting addressing communications. Roxanne Bogart who coordinates and develops the ABB will be out on maternity leave starting in September.

New Federal Administration - The Committee acknowledged the need to develop messages and briefing packets for the transition teams that will visit with the federal agencies starting in November. A draft document was provided for review and comment by Committee members. The Committee felt that the draft was generally on track. They liked the idea of sending the same messages to each agency. They recommended trying to reduce the length to one page front and back. The Federal Agency Committee members will each develop a half page explanation about how the messages and NABCI relate specifically to their agency. Each federal agency Committee member will be responsible for getting the information into their briefing packets. Related to the transition teams the 2009 North American will be held in Crystal City, VA and is an opportunity to advance some of these messages. Comments will be sent to Deb Hahn by close of business September 15.

NABCI Accomplishments Document – Since the Committee is built of partners it is sometimes difficult to identify NABCI accomplishments. The Committee, however, wanted to see a document that captures what NABCI partners have done over the past 10 years. A draft was provided for review and comment. The Committee felt that the draft was generally on track. The Committee would like have a final draft for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (Association) annual meeting in September. The Communications Subcommittee will attempt to finalize the draft by the Association's annual meeting. Some members felt that this document should go to Congress others did not agree with this. The main idea was to let all the NABCI partners know what great work they have done over the past decade. Committee members will send Deb Hahn comments by COB August 22, 2008.

Climate change legislation Update – There are two bills in the House—one introduced by Rep. Markey and one introduced by Rep. Doggett. Both have provisions very similar to those in the Lieberman-Warner Bill. The exact dollar figures going to wildlife adaptation are difficult to define but the amounts are substantial. The Ways and Means Committee may be holding a hearing on climate change, including the Doggett bill, in September and Rep. Dingell may introduce a bill in September. It has long been accepted that a comprehensive climate bill will not pass this Congress. However the support we have engendered for this title is a good foundation for when a subsequent Congress ultimately enacts a bill.

### **Action Items**

1. Send comments to Deb on the NABCI Accomplishments document by **COB August 22, 2008**. We will attempt to have a final document for the Association's meeting in early September.
2. Send comments to Deb on the NABCI transition team messages by **COB September 15, 2008**.
3. Keep tabs on the climate change legislation language to ensure that the bird conservation programs that we all support are maintained in the funding language.
4. Collect and disseminate information on committee member work on climate change and distribute to the Committee.
5. Publish one more All Bird Bulletin on Communications in 2008.

## Private Lands

### Farm Bill Updates

(<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=landing>) – A document that identified changes in the 2008 Farm Bill was developed by Dave Walker, USFWS, and was distributed. Some aspects of the 2008 Farm Bill were highlighted and discussed. They include the following.

1. There is more opportunity under the forestry titles. The State forestry agencies will be working with NRCS to develop a statewide assessment and strategy for forest resources. The state fish and wildlife agencies are encouraged to participate in this process.
2. The best time to provide comments, suggestions and guidance about conservation program implementation is through NEPA. NEPA is being used more and more to inform the community about what is going on with rules and programs (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=cep-su>).
3. NRCS's technical capacity on the ground continues to be one of the limiting factors to implementing programs. They are looking to partner with state fish and wildlife agencies and NGOs to implement programs.
4. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) program has additional restrictions on who is eligible for the program.
5. The regulations surrounding data use and dissemination have changed. This may affect NRCS and FSAs ability to share information on easements, CRP lands, etc. This is not final yet.
6. Involvement in the state technical committees is critical to impact conservation program implementation.
7. Overall, it was felt that there are opportunities in the 2008 Farm Bill but that it is a mixed bag for wildlife with losses in some programs and gains in others.

Farm Bill Users Guide - A Guide to the Farm Bill was developed by Don McKenzie of WMI in the late 90s. The Subcommittee felt that an updated guide for the 2008 Farm Bill will be critical. The guide would be placed on the NABCI website. The focus would be on how the wildlife conservationist can get involved in the Farm Bill. Randy Gray is being hired to write the Guide and the Subcommittee developed a draft Table of Contents (TOC). With a delay in the reauthorization of the Farm Bill and 90 days for NRCS and FSA to develop rules for the programs, Randy is going to begin development of the Guide in December 2008. The Committee had some minor comments on the TOC but is still supportive of developing the guide.

Strategic Habitat Initiatives – The intent of this task is to collaboratively devise strategic bird conservation habitat initiatives with NRCS and FSA staff. The idea is to choose an area where we have good capacity in the bird community, where private lands are critical to the conservation of

birds, and where we have good information and objectives developed for birds. Dave Smith, Terrell Erickson, Charlie Rewa and Deb Hahn met with the Regional Assistant Chiefs. Dale Hall, Seth Mott, Paul Schmidt, and Deb Hahn met with Arlen Lancaster, Chief NRCS and Teresa Lasseter, Chief FSA to talk about NABCI and engaging them in strategic habitat initiatives and the JVs. The webcast for NRCS biologists conducted in August also focused on this topic. There is good opportunity to advance this concept with the 2008 Farm Bill. It contains language regarding cooperative partnerships and focused initiatives. It would also be good to get NRCS and FSA involved with the JV where they are not already.

Conservation Effects Assessment Program (CEAP) – Charlie Rewa presented an update on CEAP. He provided a number of examples of the type of assessment they are trying to do with respect to birds. They are estimating the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) benefits to mixed-grass prairie birds in conjunction with the Playa Lakes JV. CRP is benefiting some birds (e.g., dickcissel, eastern meadowlark, and grasshopper sparrow) and providing little benefit to other species such as Swainson’s hawk. CRP enrollment that is in the vicinity of grasslands has been beneficial because it increased the size of the grassland blocks. They recommended strategically planning CRP enrollment to provide more benefits. Numerous other projects related to other aspects of CRP, the Wetland Reserve Program, and practices under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program are being worked on throughout the country.

Biofuels – In the current Farm Bill, the wildlife community had wanted some side boards on how biofuels were being planted but they did not get this. There is some language addressing invasive species, which is important. NRCS has an invasive species coordinator who is looking at invasives and biofuels.

There is an effort underway to genetically modify some of the plants to get more growth. This means shorter, denser plants that may not be as good for wildlife. The wildlife community needs to work with USDA and farmers/ranchers when they are getting involved in the biofuels program. There will be some negative affects to wildlife that we can try to mitigate.

Some people have said that replacing corn with switchgrass is better for birds. However, grass is not the same throughout the country. The Association’s Biofuels Working Group is looking at site appropriate biofuels plantings. You need to consider winter cover and height for nesting the following spring and to avoid impacting the nesting season.

We have some time to work together on the biofuels issue because the development of facilities to produce biofuel is probably 24 months out. Biofuels is not an issue for the Private Lands Subcommittee at this moment because others are engaged at the moment.

### **Action Items**

1. Complete the Farm Bill Users Guide for the Wildlife Conservationist.
2. Continue advancing the implementation of Strategic Habitat Initiatives.
3. Keep Committee members informed about proposed and interim rules

## **International**

NABCI Tri-national Committee - The NABCI Tri-national Committee met in May in conjunction with the Tri-Lateral. They reaffirmed the importance of the continentally important proposals and regional alliance development. They asked for a discussion with Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI) about how NABCI and WHMSI will coordinate the hemispheric level. They also discussed the need to come to consensus on the Bird Conservation Region (BCR) map. Gary Myers, the U.S. State Fish and Wildlife Agency representative on the Tri-national Committee, is stepping down after serving for 9 years. Gary Myers was thanked for his contributions and excellent work. The Chair and Coordinator will look to fill that seat in the near future.

Regional Alliances – Regional Alliances, similar to JVs, are being developed in Mexico. Discussions were held with the Wetlands Council in December 2007 regarding supporting the development of additional regional alliances as they did with Marismas Nacionales. Currently, they are not interested in supporting the development of more regional alliances but would consider it again in the future. The Committee noted that there is infrastructure in Mexico that can and is supporting the regional alliances but that a little infusion of money can help advance the process more quickly. Deb has not heard from the Mexico NABCI Committee about the status of their action items in regards to developing a document explaining what regional alliances are and their status. The NABCI Tri-national Committee put a proposal into the Tri-Lateral Committee in May to provide seed funding for a regional alliance in the Chihuahuan Desert. The Tri-national Committee has not heard whether this was approved for funding or not.

Continentally Important Proposals - The Continentally Important Proposals have been pulled together into a succinct package in order to promote the proposals. The documents include an Introduction/Overview and a two-page document for each of the five proposals. There are expectations of NABCI (all three countries) and we will need to continue to deliver on and address those expectations. Both the Mexican and Canadian NABCI representatives of the Tri-national Committee agreed to look for funding within their countries for the proposals.

There was a Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative meeting in Hohhot China on June 28-29, 2008. The discussion was lead by NGO and academics in Mexico and focused on the North American grasslands. This could potentially help implement the grasslands continentally important proposal and help develop the regional alliance and bi-national Joint Venture in this area. See the Resources Subcommittee discussions below for more on continentally important proposal funding.

At the last meeting the Committee recommended development of a second set of documents that highlight the top 3 or 4 priorities at each site. The 3 national Coordinators are still gathering this information in addition to information on the status of the regional alliances.

Bird Conservation Region Map – A mapping team comprised of members from the United States, Mexico, and Canada assembled at an international workshop held in Puebla, Mexico, in November 1998, to develop a consistent spatial framework for bird conservation for North America. After agreeing on general principles, they adopted a hierarchical framework of nested ecological units delineated by the Environmental Protection Agency. The map was presented to and approved by the Committee during its November 1, 1999, meeting. The intent was for the map to be a dynamic

tool. They anticipated that BCR boundaries would change over time as new scientific information becomes available. It was expected that the map would be updated every three years, with the first update occurring in November 2002.

The BCR map 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 Tri-national Committee would like to identify the most up to date and accurate version of the map and an entity that will take responsibility to house it. They also would like to see a process by which it can be updated. They want to ensure that any changes made are reviewed and approved with consistent criteria. They discussed completely reviewing and updating the map also but felt that time and money should be taken into consideration before deciding to do a complete review and update.

The Committee recommends that the most accurate map be identified and agreed upon by the three countries, that an entity to house the map be identified, and that all the changes and tweaks that have been made or recommended be compiled. The information about the changes will allow the Tri-national Committee to look at the costs and benefits to updating the map and make a recommendation. Currently, the Committee did not find consensus on whether they would recommend updating the map or not.

International Subcommittee – Herb Raffaele, USFWS, chairs the International Subcommittee and discussed the status of the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee was responsible for facilitating the development and signing of the Declaration of Intent and developing the joint US/Mexico NABCI meeting in August 2007. Currently, there are no tasks for this Subcommittee. With that in mind, Herb Raffaele recommended that the Subcommittee be disbanded until it is needed in the future. The Tri-national Committee will continue to operate. It was noted that we may need to update the Committee Charter to reflect this change.

Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI) – Herb Raffaele, Chair of the WHMSI interim steering committee gave a brief update on the WHMSI meeting held in July 2008 in Paraguay. A session was held on the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The intent was to receive input from Latin American partners on specific aspects of the program. The information will be used to help guide implementation of the program. The Organization of American States presented information on their grant for capacity building in Latin America. The grant is for \$500,000 over the next 3 years. One part of the grant will support workshops on bird monitoring in the Caribbean. They also spend time discussing governance and how WHMSI can provide an equal platform for NGOs and governments in the Western Hemisphere.

Based on the recommendation of the Tri-national Committee and the MOU signed between WHMSI and the US NABCI Committee, Herb Raffaele and Deb Hahn will discuss future collaboration between NABCI and WHMSI.

## **Action Items**

1. Continue to promote and look for funding for the Continentally Important Proposals
2. Work with Humberto Berlanga to compile a list of the 3-4 top priority actions at each site and information on the regional alliances to develop a second set of documents with that information.
3. Communicate to NABCI Mexico and Canada about the BCR map discussion and work with them to address the issues.
4. Discuss NABCI/WHMSI collaboration opportunities.
5. Recruit a third member of the US representatives to the Tri-national Committee.

## **Monitoring**

Monitoring Report - The Subcommittee feels that this report needs continued promotion by the Committee. This is needed to continue the advancement of monitoring. The Monitoring MOU has been finalized and signed by 18 Committee members.

Assessment of Monitoring Programs – This effort has stalled due to a lack of funding and interest from key agencies. However, the Heinz Center is applying for a grant through the Mutli-State Grant Program to review monitoring programs in order to recommend program changes to collect information on climate change. Through meetings with the Heinz Center they were informed about the Monitoring Report and we have asked that members of the Monitoring Subcommittee be involved in the project if it is funded. There may be aspects of this project that we can use to begin looking at monitoring programs.

The Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership decided not to assess monitoring programs. Instead, they are informing people about the report. They are using it to show that monitoring programs can be more effective when they are developed and implemented based on the goals and objectives laid out in the report. This has received a positive response.

Environment Canada continues to advance their review of monitoring programs for Canada. Currently, they expend approximately \$17 Million per year on monitoring. They would like to improve efficiency and effectiveness and provide better access to data through the review. Brad Andres, as a member of the Monitoring Subcommittee, is participating in the assessment.

Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership (Partnership) Update – The Partnership piloted five multi-state monitoring initiatives during the 2008 breeding season, bringing design and protocol improvements to efforts focused on grassland birds (NY, NJ, CT), mountain birds (NY, VT, NH, ME, QC, NS, NB), tidal marsh birds (DE, MD, NJ), Chimney Swifts (CT, DC, and NC), and nightjars (10 northeastern states, plus many more in concert with U.S. Nightjar Survey Network). Grassland bird data, for example, will allow state agencies and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to evaluate effectiveness of Landowner and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Programs. The 2008 Northeast Bird Monitoring and Conservation Workshop will be held from

September 23-25 in Cape May, NJ. American Bird Conservancy is seeking funds to continue implementing the Northeast bird monitoring framework and extend the model to the Midwest and Southeast regions. This is an important need for monitoring.

Monitoring Workshops – In 2008, the Subcommittee wants to develop a series of workshops that advance the goals and the objectives of the report. One key workshop was held on January 28 – February 1, 2008 at NCTC in Shepherdstown. It was titled *Application of Structured Decision Making to Assess Multiple Scale Monitoring Needs for Waterbird Management*. Structured Decision Making workshops have also addressed range-wide conservation of Mountain Plovers and the red knot - horseshoe crab interaction in Delaware Bay. Monitoring is a key component of this process. The Subcommittee will continue this work.

Natural Resources Monitoring Partnership (NRMP) and the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) - The Subcommittee supports advancement of these databases and participation in these efforts by NABCI members. The NRMP and AKN are only as good as the information they house. The Committee reiterated the need to get programs into these databases. The State of Arkansas for example, requires anyone receiving State Wildlife Grant money to input their monitoring programs into NRMP.

Making the Monitoring Report more useful to managers – The Subcommittee is waiting to receive a draft monitoring report card from the Central Hardwoods JV and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Game. The Subcommittee will review and comment on the report card and hopes to use it as a basis to develop something that can be used by other States and federal agencies.

Securing Key Databases – At the last Committee meeting, a request was made to the Subcommittee to assess what critical initiative databases need to have long term viability. The Subcommittee looked at the *Opportunities for Improving Avian Monitoring* (2007) goal 4 that states the need to maintain bird population monitoring data in modern management systems and provide greater access to avian monitoring information. Data collected on bird numbers, reproduction, and survival are only useful if effectively applied to answer bird conservation and management questions. The Subcommittee members developed 3 recommendations. They plan to develop specific priorities with monetary figures for the next NABCI meeting. The 3 recommendations were as follows.

1. Organizations should commit to long-term, base support for existing data management systems that provide critical information for bird conservation and management decisions and currently have support (i.e. data are maintained in modern management systems and have good accessibility). Support will need to keep pace with increasing operating costs and should include costs for periodic improvements. They recommend that organizations responsible for large-scale data management systems assess current funding effectiveness and outline funding strategies to ensure long-term support. Communication between data managers and administrators who formulate budgets is essential to develop realistic expectations for data management capability. (U.S. Geological Survey, Avian Knowledge Alliance, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other data management partners; December 2008).

2. Equally important as maintaining existing data management capability is the need to enhance data management systems that are currently under-funded or those that need to be created. Bird monitoring information continues to accumulate at a rapid rate, yet development of effective data management systems that are widely accessible remains rudimentary. With each passing year, the risk of data loss increases. The initiatives have developed a preliminary list of data management systems that need to be enhanced or developed. After further review, the bird conservation initiatives should work with those organizations that would likely be responsible for data management system development to establish realistic enhancement costs and implementation priorities. Priority costs should be transmitted to those administrators responsible for developing organizations' budgets. The strategy produced below should guide development of and improvements to data management systems (Bird Conservation Initiatives, US-NABCI Monitoring Subcommittee, Avian Knowledge Alliance, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; December 2008).
  
3. The US-NABCI Monitoring Subcommittee should develop a comprehensive data management strategy to guide the bird conservation initiatives and achieve economies of scale. The comprehensive data management strategy should define the roles, relationships and responsibilities of individuals/organizations involved in data management; suggest standards for data management processes to improve coordination across programs; and recommend standards for metadata development, database documentation, and archiving of data sets. We recommend that a small group associated with the US-NABCI Monitoring Subcommittee draft an initial outline that can be reviewed by the larger data management community. Communication to the larger group of data managers could be accomplished through a two- or three-day workshop. The workshop results would serve as "best data management practices" and would be linked to broader efforts to evaluate avian monitoring effectiveness. The strategy would be distributed to all US-NABCI Committee organizations and could be applied to development of all data management systems (\$25,000 needed for travel and logistics; Avian Knowledge Alliance, U.S. Geological Survey, US-NABCI Monitoring Subcommittee; January 2009).

The first recommendation is aimed at the organizations/agencies that currently house the databases. The organization or agency is being asked to report back to the Committee at their next meeting on how secure their databases are. This includes USFWS, US Geological Survey (USGS), and the Avian Knowledge Alliance (AKA). The AKA is a data capture organization. The second recommendation would require an initiative representative to work to enhance data systems that are currently under-funded or need to be created. The last recommendation is directed at the Subcommittee to develop a comprehensive data management strategy.

The Committee agreed these are important but did not identify the specific person to work with USFWS, USGS, or AKA. They also recommended considering the costs of securing the databases versus the benefits.

#### New Subcommittee Leadership

Paul Schmidt will be stepping down as Chair of the Subcommittee after 3 years of leadership. Paul Schmidt will continue to play a key role and participate on the Subcommittee. Brad Andres will be the new Chair.

### **Action Items**

1. Participate in the Heinz Center project if it is funded
2. Work with KY Department of Fish and Game to finalize the monitoring report card and assess how it might be used nationally by other states and federal agencies.
3. Develop a set of case studies that demonstrate how to do management-oriented monitoring.
4. Take action on the recommendations for advancing data management

### **Conservation Design**

The Conservation Design Subcommittee feels that the JVs have embraced the design message and leadership in this arena and that the subcommittee has succeeded in accomplishing its objectives. Rather than disbanding now, however, the Subcommittee feels that it should remain in place, at least until discussions in 2009 to ascertain whether or not additional roles will be appropriate. They would also like to consider what role they might play in the larger discussion of strategic habitat conservation.

### **The North American Monarch Conservation Plan**

Carol Lively gave a brief update on the North American Monarch Conservation Plan (Plan). Participants from Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. completed the Plan. It has been printed in Spanish, English, and French. The Plan is available on the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) website. Carol will send a copy to each NABCI Committee member. They are considering forming a monarch partnership/joint venture. The US Forest Service held a workshop looking at monarch and pollinator conservation on private lands. The workshop was a success and CEC will be funding more workshops—one in Mexico and one in Texas. Monarch Live has been developed for children in grades 3 through 8. The program will be web-based and start in Washington DC in December. It will then travel to Mexico and follow the migration north through the U.S. You can register on-line to participate.

### **Communicating with Joint Ventures**

The Committee built upon the discussion they had about Joint Venture (JV) communications from their last meeting. One of the key items that was identified was having Committee members who are also JV Management Board members present a NABCI update once year if the JV is interesting. Catherine Hickey recently did this with the San Francisco Bay JV. Melanie Steincamp, Atlantic Coast JV Mid-Atlantic Coordinator agreed that this was the best approach. She acknowledged that connections between NABCI and the JVs have decreased. Deb Hahn will use the JV calendar on the USFWS website (<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/JointVentures/files/JointVentureCalendar.pdf>)

to help Committee members plan these presentations. Deb Hahn will also increase her communication with Guy Foulks and Seth Mott and attend the Coordinators meeting to discuss JV priorities and needs with the Coordinators. Guy Foulks, USFWS, noted that the Appalachian Mountain JV, the East Gulf Coastal Plain JV and the Rio Grande JV have implementation plans out for review. The Committee has asked the initiatives to review JV implementation plans as they are released.

#### **Action Items:**

1. The Initiatives will review and comment on the JV implementation plans
2. Deb will attend the JV Coordinators meeting in December.
3. Deb will finalize a draft JV presentation that Committee members could use at JV Management Board meetings.

#### **State of the Birds Report**

Bob Ford, USFWS, provided an update on the State of the Birds report (Report). The Committee received information on the Report at their last meeting. The Committee expressed its support for the Report and interest to be involved in development of the Report. David Pashley, Greg Butcher, Dave Mehlman, and Deb Hahn are on the Working Group. One of the major comments from the Committee was a desire to see such a report be tri-national in the future. To this end, they have engaged Canada and Mexico. Canada is currently an active participant on the Working Group. A meeting will be held August 13-14 to make major advancements in development of the Report. The intent is to roll out the Report in March and make a major media impact. The Committee will see a draft of the Report at their winter 2009 meeting.

Richard Gregory from the United Kingdom gave a presentation on the development and impact of their state of the birds report. They have produced such a report for about 10 years now. The report and its impact on the conservation policies of the UK government have been significant. The UK State of the Birds Report publishes a wild bird indicator that the UK government uses as an indicator of biodiversity health along with a few other indicators. They also have a number of indicators based on habitat type. The farmland bird indicator, for example, is driving farmland management and conservation. The State of the Birds Report is published every year and is a partnership between NGOs and Government. The statistics in the State of the Birds Report are used by all partners.

#### **Resources Subcommittee**

Gary Myers reported on the Resources Subcommittee. They began by focusing on the climate change legislation in Congress. They met with key NGOs in Washington DC to discuss the language and programs included in the wildlife adaptation component of the Lieberman-Warner Bill. It will be important to make sure our programs are retained in the bill. There are a number of our partners working on this so the Subcommittee will simply keep an eye on progress. The Subcommittee also considered using the debt for nature concept in Mexico to fund the Continentally Important

Proposals. However, Mexico is not eligible for debt forgiveness. They also have the funding documents on the proposals that can be used to get funding. There is a meeting after the Committee meeting to consider how to approach funding sources such as the World Bank, Global Environment Fund, and Interagency Development Bank. Gary Myers is willing to promote the proposals and bird conservation funding in DC but the State of Tennessee is cutting back on travel funds. The Committee acknowledged the need to make sure that Gary can travel.


### **Bird Conservation Funding Coalition (BCFC)**

Background – An NGO Subcommittee was formed by the NABCI Committee in 1999. They met on a regular basis for a number of years. They only discussed funding issues. Because the NABCI Committee has federal members, they were nervous about an NGO Subcommittee lobbying and looking at budgets. In 2003, The Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) held a conference to develop bird funding priorities. The outcome was a consensus on 4 programs that needed more funding— State Wildlife Grants, Joint Ventures, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act and the North American Wetland Conservation Act. At this time, the NGO Subcommittee became the Bird Conservation Funding Coalition (BCFC). It is not directly affiliated with NABCI but they are closely connected. The BCFC took on the priorities developed in 2003. After some time, the membership of BCFC drifted from the NGO membership of the Committee and began to lose contact with the Committee. Darin Schroeder, ABC, with the help of Brian Moore, National Audubon Society are leading BCFC. For the past few years, they have met with OMB and Congressmen and their staff to talk about the programs. The list of programs has increased based on the changing landscape of the bird conservation community. They have had good success galvanizing the NGO community around one set of budget recommendations. The Green Group looks to the BCFC for their bird program recommendations and uses those numbers. We do not want to lose that influence.

In order to ensure the survival of the BCFC, ABC is hiring someone to lead it full time and they would like the Committees support to help bring the BCFC back to full strength. They would like to put a package together for each Presidential candidate and talk about the programs they support. The Committee recommended that a BCFC member go to other coalitions such as climate change and energy development. They also asked for more communication to the Committee on what the budgets look like. The National Park Service asked how they chose their programs. The BCFC requires consensus on what programs they supported. Darin Schroeder cautioned developing a long list of programs to support in fear they lose their impact.

### **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (Neotrop Act) Reauthorization**

ABC is leading an effort to reauthorize the Neotrop Act. The reauthorization would ramp up the authorization to 20 Million by 2015. They have 16 cosponsors of House bill and have indications of support for sponsoring the Senate bill. They are calling it the Act for Songbirds and have legislative tools on ABC's website. The legislative tools are available to the Bird Conservation Alliance members (200 plus) for use own their own websites. Over 30,000 citizens have taken action to contact their members in support of the Neotrop Act. There is a small possibility to have the Neotrop Act folded into an omnibus bill at the end of the year. It is more likely it will be



reintroduced next year and build on the momentum it got this year. The House Natural Resources Subcommittee had a hearing on the decline of migratory birds. This and other efforts will help us get the bill considered in the future.