

**MEETING SUMMARY
UNITED STATES COMMITTEE OF THE
NORTH AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVATION INITIATIVE
5-6 AUGUST 2002
NATIONAL CONSERVATION TRAINING CENTER
SHEPARDSTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA**

Committee members in attendance – Richard Bishop, George Fenwick (co-chair), John Frampton, Rebecca Frank, Jim Kushlan, Bob McDowell (co-chair), Gary Myers, Josh Sandt, Rollie Sparrowe, Scott Yaich

Alternate Committee members in attendance – Brad Andres (for Steve Miller), Jack Capp (for Val Mezainis), Tom Melius (co-chair, for Steve Williams)
National Coordinator – David Pashley

Staff and others in attendance – Roxanne Bogart, Dave Case, Jim Cole, Billy Dukes, Bob Ford, Rick Kearney, Terry Little, Sean McMahan, Seth Mott, Pat Patterson, Herb Raffaele, Terry Rich, Paul Schmidt, David Smith, Melanie Steinkamp, Ken Williams, Jim Woehr

INTRODUCTION

This is a summary of the August, 2002, meeting of the US NABCI Committee. Support materials provided prior to or during the meeting are not included. Once again, the meeting served the purpose of NABCI as a forum for discussion and an opportunity to advance the concepts and applications of coordinated bird conservation.

**JOINT VENTURES – I. ASSOCIATION OF JV MANAGEMENT BOARDS –
Rebecca Frank**

The Association has met twice, most recently in Dallas in April. It continues to evolve, but the group decided that it was not prepared as an organization to respond to the queries posed by the NABCI Committee regarding development of partnerships where none now exist, authorities to review Implementation Plans and other documents, etc. Each JV is unique, independent, and self-directed; there is no such thing as a “Model Joint Venture.” The general sense among JVs is that most of these types of issues should be resolved locally rather than by any national body. The exception is that most or all JVs continue to favor organized lobbying for increased funding from Congress. The Association will work more closely with the Funding Group in the future to assure consistency of messages.

**JOINT VENTURES – II. □WHITE SPACE□ ANALYSIS AND USFWS DIRECTOR□S
ORDER - Seth Mott**

An objective set by the US NABCI Committee is establishment of “wall to wall” Joint Ventures across the United States. Staff members feel that we are close to achieving this objective due to expansion of existing JVs or creation of new ones, and that serious discussions are currently underway to fill in any spaces that remain (save for the bulk of Alaska). Staff also outlined some

“conditions” of fully functional Joint Ventures, not as suggestions, but rather as an assessment of existing conditions across a cross-section of Joint Ventures. The Committee recommends that the paper describing these conditions be rewritten to appear less directive. Also, the success in filling “white space” needs to be communicated to potential supporters.

The new draft of the USFWS Director’s Order regarding recognition of Joint Ventures reflects comments received from US NABCI Committee members and others since the January meeting. FWS is prepared to confirm this as finalized, and the Committee voiced support with very minor modifications.

The IAFWA Bird Conservation Committee charged Ken Babcock with the task of developing a recommended process whereby the nation could be systematically covered by effective Joint Ventures. Staff have been in contact with Ken as he has been working on this, and the Committee looks forward to seeing these recommendations in September at the IAFWA meetings. Some clarity as to potentially useful actions that the US NABCI Committee can take may emerge thereafter.

WILDLIFE HABITAT COUNCIL - Bill Howard

WHC is a non-profit organization founded in 1988 primarily by industry that tries to assist companies in doing conservation-related projects on their properties. The Council now includes approximately 120 corporations as well as numerous conservation organizations. Tuss Erickson with Phillips Petroleum encouraged WHC to get more involved with Joint Ventures, and, more recently, USFWS staff suggested that this involvement be tied to NABCI.

With preliminary funding, WHC contracted David Wesley (formerly of Ducks Unlimited) to work on this concept. A technical committee (including many NABCI partners) was formed and met recently, as did a Steering Committee with corporate, agency, and NGO representation. Current strategy is to develop a message to be marketed to the partner companies. This is anticipated as at least a 3-year project.

There are several steps involved in this process. First is developing projects of benefit to birds on corporate lands, but a longer term goal is to increase corporate involvement in Joint Ventures and ultimately to increase their support for bird conservation. The role of the WHC in this is to act as a facilitator.

Biological expertise for this comes partially from WHC staff, but user friendly materials need to be developed from existing bird conservation plans. This exists or is under development for a few habitat types and NRCS is considering funding such work for the Great Basin. This is an important niche for NABCI to fill.

The WHC web site gets about 40,000 hits/month from all over the world and should be considered as a resource by the NABCI Communications WG.

PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAMS – Jack Capp, representing the Federal Agency Subcommittee

The NABCI Committee has adopted "bird friendly agricultural policy, including Farm Bill issues" as one of its nine Action Items. The Federal Agency Subcommittee suggested broadening this to encompass the entire area of private lands programs in existence at federal and state levels. The US NABCI Committee agreed to make this change.

The amount of information regarding these programs is significant and very confusing. The confusion felt among those in the professional conservation community must be compounded among landowners who are the potential end users of the programs. The Fed. Subcommittee proposed that it work on ways to make these programs easier to understand, to have central sources of information that are geographically specific, easily accessible, and landowner friendly. As a first step, the Subcommittee is summarizing those federal programs in existence with the potential to benefit birds on private lands.

Although funding for these programs is considerable (indeed much greater than all of the other funding issues we discuss), agencies often do not have the staff or expertise necessary to effectively deliver these programs in a manner designed to benefit bird populations. The Fed. Subcommittee proposed to investigate staffing levels and, most importantly, training needs for these various programs.

Although a great deal of good is done for birds through these programs, there is no systematic connection, in most places at least, between private land program delivery and bird conservation plans. The Fed. Subcommittee proposed to investigate ways in which these connections can be made.

The US NABCI Committee agreed that all of the above is an appropriate course of action for the Federal Agency Subcommittee.

MEMBERSHIP PROPOSAL - Jim Woehr

Jim Woehr recommended that the IAFWA Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group be granted a seat on the NABCI US Committee. The Committee agreed unanimously to accept this recommendation.

NABCI STAFF COMPOSITION – Jim Woehr

The Staff requested advice from the Committee regarding Staff membership, as the methodology for such decisions is ambiguous in earlier meeting summaries. Although the Committee feels that process should be minimized and Staff trusted to make its own decisions, it was resolved that all Staff recommendations for membership changes would go through the National Coordinator to the three co-chairs for final decision.

COMMUNICATIONS - Roxanne Bogart

Roxanne Bogart has taken over as chair of the Communications Working Group as Ken Williams' time is shifting to other responsibilities. Ken will continue to stay actively involved, and all are appreciative of his contributions since becoming initial chair of this WG.

The communications climate has improved considerably over the past year, with focus shifting from concern over the direction of NABCI to a generally positive perspective regarding integrated bird conservation. This reflects, at least in part, successful implementation of the Communications Strategy developed by D.J. Case & Associates. This excellent work continues, and is at or under budget. The Committee endorsed the proposed DJCA work plan.

An International Communications Strategy was presented to the Trinational NABCI Committee in February and then circulated for review. Several substantive comments have been received from Canada, and the International Communications WG will work to incorporate them in upcoming months and will circulate the draft strategy thereafter.

The Committee received a presentation of the web site (www.nabci-us.org) very favorably, suggesting various additions and linkages to increase its effectiveness.

The Committee reviewed the Questions and Answers document, and will send comments to David Pashley and Roxanne Bogart by August 15. The document will be finalized thereafter, but the general concepts were positively received and the Communications WG can proceed to develop a power point demonstration based largely on the Q&As. That demonstration will be presented at the IAFWA Business Session (Rick Kearney will assure time on that schedule). The presentation can be used or modified by any NABCI partner. The Communications WG is asked to consider how best to use a substantial period of time during the next IAFWA meeting in September, 2003, in Wisconsin.

Roxanne will be spending time now on NABCI case studies, and already has some commitments of assistance. These will be put on the web site and also, over time, incorporated into various presentations.

The short-term strategy for the Communications WG remains building a foundation of trust and enthusiasm for NABCI. There is still work to be done assuring a positive attitude in the core of potential partners, the first target audience for communications. Targets will be expanded, however, and more effort will be put into working with the Funding Group on communications tools and seeking efficiencies in communication with the bird initiatives and Joint Ventures. Other groups, such as the Wildlife Habitat Council, will be sought out as well.

The longer-term strategy for reaching the NABCI vision is less well-defined, and has only been the subject of brief investigation by the WG. All feel, however, that such a long-term strategy is needed in order to put shorter term efforts into a broad context. The WG should seriously consider where it wants to be in 5 or 6 years. This entails consideration of how broad a target

audience we endeavor to reach. Specifically, members felt that future Communications WG initiatives should: 1) portray the scale of unmet bird conservation needs, and 2) show how bird conservation dollars can be leveraged through cooperative programs. There were words of caution that experience with the NAWMP taught partners that reaching a broad, general public would not only be difficult and expensive, but also not particularly necessary to reach Plan objectives. The climate has changed since then, however, and the NABCI partnership is considerably broader, so this too should be within the realm of consideration by the Communications WG. The Committee anticipates a full report on these issues of long term planning and context at its next meeting.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES – I. TRINATIONAL MOU - Herb Raffaele

Relatively minor alterations are being suggested by the State Department to the current draft of the MOU, and if those recommendations are accepted by Mexico and Canada, a final draft is possible by the middle of September. One change will probably be to drop the title “MOU” and replace it with either “Framework” or “Charter.” The Committee was assured that additions of other countries to the MOU is possible. The document specifies establishment of a body to enact its recommendations. This may be the Trinational NABCI Committee, although the document could not be specific. Once the document is signed, it may be necessary to alter the Trinational terms of reference and basis for establishment in order for it to meet the strictures envisioned for such a support body.

It will be difficult to get the three ministers together for a signing, so having separate signings in the three countries is probably necessary, possibly with video linkages. The Committee agreed that Herb should work with Drafting Team and both the US and International Communications Working Groups to determine how to proceed. This includes both the issue of acquiring signatures and publicity. Most members preferred a White House signing ceremony if it could be arranged in a timely manner. A final version of the text will be sent to the Committee when it is available. The Drafting Team will dissolve when the document is signed.

It was agreed that a demonstration of support for the agreement from the NGO community and states would be beneficial. The NGO Subcommittee will take a lead in generating letters of support (from NGOs, IAFWA, and perhaps the Wildlife Habitat Council on behalf of corporate community) and will consider the advantages of having a companion document as well that could be signed by multiple partners. The companion document could serve the purpose of summarizing the content of the agreement in a manner designed to generate interest and support.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES – II. CEC UPDATE – Herb Raffaele

A Biodiversity Working Group has been created to provide guidance to the CEC’s Biodiversity Program. This group met recently for first time. It is made up of four representatives from each country, with the US represented by the USFWS Director, Doug Wheeler (NGO), Duane Shroufe (IAFWA), and an individual from NOAA. One early decision was to form a drafting team to develop a CEC Biodiversity Plan.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES – III. TRINATIONAL NABCI PROJECTS - David Pashley

The Mexico NABCI Committee has identified six sites to serve as focus points for Trinational NABCI Projects (Marismas Nacionales, El Triunfo, El Cielo, northeast Yucatan peninsula, Chamela-Cuixmala, and the Janos area). Linkages to various BCRs in the US are suggested based on shared birds ranked as reasonably high priorities by one or another of the initiatives (more input from the waterbird and shorebird groups is needed). We await more information from Mexico, notably regarding contacts and conservation needs at each of the six sites. David will add a column to the linkage table indicating Joint Ventures involved and will distribute that as well as the list of 10 other sites identified in Mexico to the Committee and Staff. It was noted that having projects in place by the time of the MOU signing would be a good public relations asset. Herb Raffaele announced that the Demonstration Project Working Group established by the Committee a year ago has disbanded with its responsibilities transferred to the Trinational NABCI Committee.

BIRD CONSERVATION REGION BOUNDARY REVISION - Paul Schmidt

The three national NABCI Committees agreed to BCR boundaries late in 1999 with the caveat that they would be reviewed in 3 years. The Trinational NABCI Committee has taken a lead in beginning that process. The Committee agreed that David Pashley and Rex Johnson serve with their counterparts in Canada and Mexico to oversee this process and review those boundaries. The review may be more extensive in Mexico, with only minor changes suggested for the US and Canada. The exception is that this revision will include decisions regarding pelagic BCRs. The Waterbird group suggests that the boundaries they have established be seriously considered in this process.

PARTNERS IN FLIGHT INTERNATIONAL PLAN - Terry Rich

A new PIF plan is being developed for the U.S. and Canada, with an emphasis on explicit population objectives for high priority landbirds and habitat suites. The Species Assessment database is undergoing a thorough review and update to generate these priority species. Included will be estimates of the population sizes of North American species, a tool not previously available. A status report will be presented at the IAFWA meeting in September.

COLONIAL WATERBIRD PLAN - Jim Kushlan

The North American Water Bird Conservation Plan will be released at the IAFWA meeting in September. American Bird Conservancy is helping with production while USFWS is helping with distribution. There will be a name change thereafter from “North American Waterbird Conservation Plan” to “Waterbird Conservation for the Americas.” Meanwhile, Jennifer Wheeler is working on a new marsh bird component. Also, a Caribbean plan for all aquatic birds is under development by partners there. A workshop on the Caribbean plan will take place during the September meeting of the American Ornithologists’ Union in New Orleans.

FUNDING – I. FUNDING FOR KEY POSITIONS - Pat Patterson

An option for funding PIF Coordinators and the NABCI National Coordinator (plus three other positions) for two years is for multiple NGOs to band together to present a proposal to one or more major private foundations. This is envisioned as a potential bridge to a time, perhaps FY 2005, when some or all of these positions become institutionalized in the USFWS.

FUNDING – II. FEDERAL FUNDING WORKSHOP - Rollie Sparrowe and Jim Woehr

The Wildlife Management Institute is hosting a workshop on January 19-20, 2003 in Washington, DC, during which attendees will attempt to come to agreement as to federal appropriations and legislation needs for bird conservation for the next several years. One product they hope to create is a set of common objectives that all bird initiatives can support. WMI emphasizes that this is not a NABCI event. More information is available from Jim Woehr.

FUNDING – III. STATE BIRD CONSERVATION PROJECTS – Rick Kearney

A wide variety of funding sources are used by state for bird conservation projects. Two recent sources are of particular interest. A total of \$50 million became available through the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program in FY 2001 to “fulfill unmet needs of wildlife within the States,” including wildlife-related education and recreation. As of July 2002, 46 states had received 208 WCRP grants, dozens of which provided direct benefits to birds. Once all of the money is distributed, this program terminates. Also beginning in FY 2001, the State Wildlife Grants Program is targeted at “species with the greatest conservation need.” This, then, is more narrowly focused than was WCRP. This is an ongoing program, with \$25 million awarded from FY 2001 funds and \$80 million available for 2002, with hopes for continued increases into the future (for 2003, the House voted to increase funding to \$100 million with the Senate proposing funding at the \$60 million level; this difference must be resolved in conference). Twenty-nine projects were funded with 2001 money, virtually all with significant bird conservation benefits. SWG requires that states develop Comprehensive Wildlife Plans by 2005 in order to continue to receive funding.

The State “all bird” workshops are helping to focus on the most important bird projects for use of SWG and other funds. Seven have been held thus far, with three more scheduled prior to the end of 2002, and many more anticipated in the future.

FUNDING – IV. FUNDING FOR UPLAND PROJECTS, NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION ACT REPORT – Tom Melius & David Smith

Of 286 proposals received (200 from Latin America/Caribbean, 65 from the US, and 21 US-Latin American partners), 270 met minimum eligibility standards and were reviewed. The available \$3 million was used to fund 32 of these, 18 in Latin America, 5 in the US, and 9 cross-border. The match to grant ratio was 4.7 to 1, meaning that about \$13.7 million in match has

been committed. A full list of funded projects is available from the USFWS Division of Bird Habitat Conservation. (<http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NMBCA/projects.htm>)

One observation is that completion of such a challenging review process by DBHC is an outstanding achievement, and the Committee expressed extreme gratitude for a job well done. Another is that a great many of the projects that were not funded were of very high quality, and that an enormous unmet need exists for both upland projects in the US and bird conservation projects in general in Latin America and the Caribbean. It was noted that all of these excellent projects were submitted against a short deadline with significant match requirements, all after the Service was hindered in its capacity to initially circulate information due to a lack of Internet connection. The quality of what was funded, the match leveraged, and the magnitude of the demand are all compelling arguments that the program should be continued and expanded.

The Service will prepare a report evaluating the program by October that will be of value to the Committee. This will include commentary on match ratio and percentages devoted to the US versus Latin America and the Caribbean as well as background information on the proposals. It is suspected that reauthorization of this bill will be considered beginning in summer of 2003. The Committee or Funding Group will consider at that time recommending changes, including an increase in the authorization from the current \$5 million.

A general comment regarding funding is that, even though times would appear to be difficult due to Administration priorities and the condition of the economy, the trend in funding for bird conservation has been extraordinarily positive. Increases for NAWCA, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Joint Ventures, as well as State Wildlife Grants mean that more money than ever is being put on the ground for bird conservation.

MONITORING WORKING GROUP UPDATE - Melanie Steinkamp

The Monitoring WG was requested by the US NABCI Committee to develop a Monitoring Vision Statement. Review of a draft of that statement elicited numerous constructive suggestions, including some about core assumptions and intentions. As a result, the document is not yet complete. The US NABCI Committee reiterated its commitment to Monitoring and requested that this document be completed during September of this year.

RESEARCH AND THE US NABCI COMMITTEE - Jim Kushlan

It was proposed that NABCI could establish better connections with the ornithological community by requesting that the American Ornithologists' Union constitute a group to help define NABCI research needs. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to research and science as basic to bird conservation, but noted that there is a rather lengthy history of research needs definition that has already taken place. Staff will consider next steps, but a direct request of the AOU will not be made at this time.

SPECIES ASSESSMENT WORKING GROUP - Paul Schmidt

The Trinational NABCI Committee received a request from the SAWG to be considered as a Working Group of that Committee; the Trinational asked in return for draft Terms of Reference.

Those Terms were presented to the three National Committees for consideration, with a recommendation from the Trinational that this request be granted. The US NABCI Committee decided to not approve this request for the time being, and asked for a new draft of the Terms of Reference with clearer explanations of such issues as how members get appointed, nature of responsibilities, and lines of authority.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the US NABCI Committee will be in January, 2003, in Arlington, Virginia. Firm dates and more details will follow.