



The North American Bird Conservation Initiative

US NABCI Committee Meeting Tasks and Summary August 21, 2007 Mexico City, Mexico

Committee members in attendance: Dale Hall (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), David Pashley (American Bird Conservancy), Richard Bishop (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), Sally Benjamin (Farm Service Agency)

Others: Deb Hahn (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), Paul Schmidt (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Herb Raffaele (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Doug Bliss (Canadian Wildlife Service), Garry Donaldson (Canadian Wildlife Service), Gonzalo Merediz Alonso (Amigos de Sian Ka'an)

The Committee agreed the purpose of meeting was to:

- **discuss progress on 2007 objectives,**
- **review products of the Subcommittees,**
- **determine 2007 objectives/tasks,**
- **determine resources needed to complete 2007 objectives, and**
- **prepare for the joint US Mexico NABCI meeting.**

Next U.S. NABCI Committee Meeting

Date To Be Determined – Since a number of Committee members were not in attendance the Committee will determine the most appropriate date in January or February 2008 via email.

Key Tasks from the meeting (Please see the 2007 Work Plan for a complete 2007 task list)

- **Deb/Paul** - Send thanks to the Monitoring Subcommittee from the US NABCI Committee for their hard work
- **Monitoring/Communications Subcommittee** – Determine what to present and ask for from the Bird Conservation Committee on monitoring including getting endorsement of the Association at its Business Meeting.
- **Deb** – Develop a meeting summary and task list.
- **G. Myers, P. Schmidt, D. Pashley, G. Walsh, G. Butcher, and H. Raffaele** – Develop a draft strategy to increase support for bird conservation through legislation, foundations, etc. before the next NABCI Meeting. Bring other members on to the group.
- **Monitoring Subcommittee** - Have a meeting between the USFS, USFWS, and the USGS at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting to discuss funding a full-time person to do an assessment of monitoring.
- **Herb Raffaele** - send the U.S. Caribbean monitoring publication to Deb for distribution to the Subcommittee.

- **Monitoring Subcommittee** - Develop a session on monitoring at the PIF Conference
- **Monitoring Subcommittee** - Conduct 3 conference calls and potentially one face-to-face Subcommittee meeting within the next 4 months.
- **Committee members** - take steps to advance the goals and objectives of the monitoring report through their organizations and agencies.
- **Private Lands Subcommittee** - Conduct a meeting at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conference on September 18, 2007 from 5-6pm. Participants should meeting the main hotel lobby.
- **Communications Subcommittee** - Expand the State Communication Action Plan to include Wildlife Diversity Program Managers and biologists.
- **Communications Subcommittee** - Develop presentations for other federal agency partners including BLM, USGS, NPS.
- **Geoffrey Walsh** – get Deb information on the BLM meetings that are most appropriate for a presentation and get NABCI on the agenda when applicable.
- **Deb Hahn** - Update the award criteria and get JV comment on the recommended 4 awards.
- **Deb Hahn/Communications Subcommittee** - Implement the award process starting in October 2007.
- **Conservation Design Subcommittee** - The Subcommittee will help develop the PIF sessions and use the outcome of the sessions to recommend next steps and potential workshop topics.


Overview

At the August 2006 Committee meeting, it was decided to pursue a summer 2007 meeting in conjunction with the Mexico NABCI Committee. The Committee asked that the International Subcommittee take the lead on moving this forward. The International Subcommittee met on January 9 to discuss objectives, timing, location, etc. Herb Raffaele, Chair of the International Subcommittee spoke to officials in SEMARNAT, the Mexico NABCI Coordinator and others during a January 2007 visit to Mexico. The Mexico NABCI Committee responded positively and a meeting date was set. Although the meeting was focused on Mexico and U.S. discussions, it was important to have Canadian representation since NABCI is a tri-national initiative. The objectives of the joint meeting were to learn more about bird conservation in the countries; share ideas; develop relationships; and to identify a few priorities for future collaboration.

Summary of Discussions

International

The day began with a short discussion of how working in Mexico is different from working in the U.S. The Committee then received a presentation from Gonzalo Merediz Alonso, the Director of Amigos de Sian Ka'an in the Yucatan. The purpose of the presentation was to inform the U.S. Committee about the tri-national proposal developed for the Yucatan. The presentation provided detailed information on the history of the area, the threats to conservation, and the five goals of the proposal which included acquisition of land, monitoring, and environmental education. The



proposal is a 10 year \$54 Million dollar proposal. Much of the cost is for land acquisition. For more details or a copy of the presentation please contact Deb.

Currently, we have 5 strong proposals from Mexico and most of them have good connections to the U.S. The U.S. members of the Tri-national Committee were critical in pulling together overview documents of the 5 proposals in order to advance the tri-national projects at this meeting. Deb provided a brief overview of all the proposals. The information below is a summary of the information in the proposals from the 4 other Mexican sites beyond the Yucatan.

Chihuahuan Desert Grasslands – Janos and Saltillo

The project has developed tri-national linkages with partners in the grasslands in the U.S. and Canada. Longstanding partnerships have been developed in these areas with the help of TNC and the USFS International Programs.

- 3-year \$7,650,000
- Support for a Regional Alliance Coordinator
- Maintain and operate Rancho El Uno
- Develop a monitoring and inventory program
- Implement conservation actions (acquisition, easements, habitat restoration, etc.)
- Explore water rights ownership
- Establish an endowment for Rancho El Uno


Marismas Nacionales

Currently, the proposal has strong linkages to the U.S. (Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) and the Linking Communities, Wetlands, and Migratory Birds Program, Utah Committee) and is developing stronger linkages with partners in Saskatchewan in order to complete the tri-national proposal. The partners are also discussing the addition of a habitat component.

- 5-year \$1,385,000
- Develop monitoring and data base management programs
- Provide education for local communities
- Enhance eco-tourism opportunities such as the birding festivals

Chiapas-El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve

The Pacific Coast JV (U.S. and Canada) submitted a proposal that links birds and oak habitat to the birds of Chiapas. Chiapas partners are also exploring linkages to Joint Ventures in eastern U.S.

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- 5-year \$3,771,000
 - Establish and manage a network of sites
 - Develop and implement best management practices
 - Engage in local policy development
 - Engage the local community in conservation
 - Define population goals
 - Consolidate the Regional Alliance
 - Develop a sustainable, long-term financing mechanism

Laguna Madre

Although partners in Laguna Madre have worked with partners in the U.S. and Canada the current proposal is only for Mexico.

- 10-year \$24,950,000
- Conservation of waterfowl feeding and resting areas
- Protection of shorebird habitat
- Protection of migratory bird stopover habitat
- Restoration of biological corridors
- Development of a long-term monitoring program
- Development of best management practices
- Support for the Regional Alliance

It was agreed that since these are tri-national proposals the Mexico and Canadian NABCI Committees also need to show support and commitment to advancing them via assisting with funding, in-kind support to projects, travel support to complete development of projects, etc..

Committee members discussed the limitations on spending federal dollars in Mexico for land acquisition unless purchases are supported by the Federal Government of Mexico. For example, NAWCA projects that provide money for land acquisition receive support from the government in advance. The Committee discussed the need to engage industry in conservation actions at the tri-national proposal locations and beyond. For example, in the Yucatan the hotel companies have made huge investments that they want to protect. The Committee felt that the potential for wildlife funding through new carbon sequestration legislation in the U.S. should be considered as a potential funding source. The members decided that new money was needed whether it was a new source or money added to existing legislation such as the Neotrop Act and USFS International Programs.

Another concept that was discussed was to get a smaller pot of money (~1 Million) to support the development and implementation of regional alliances in Mexico.

The Committee agreed that they needed a well laid out plan for getting more money for bird conservation. A working group was developed to look at possible funding sources including the carbon sequestration legislation (David Pashley, Gary Myers, Greg Butcher, Geoffrey Walsh, Paul Schmidt, and Herb Raffaele). John Hoskins was also recommended to participate on the working group. Any other Committee members or people outside of the Committee that have expertise are welcome to join the working group by contacting Deb. They are going to work with the Bird Conservation Funding Coalition on getting more money in existing legislation, find out what the status of the carbon sequestration funding bills are (work with Gary Taylor, AFWA), and remain cognizant of other initiatives such as WHMSI.

The Committee discussed potential priorities for the joint discussions on August 22. Currently the priorities are pretty broad brush and the Committee would like to see more refined priorities out of the joint discussions. They want to make sure that the Objectives of the DOI are what they priorities are based on so that we don't end up with disparate short-term priorities. They agreed that we cannot have a full discussion on the tri-national projects till we hear support from Mexico. The Committee wants to look at priorities for the next 1-5 years. They want to also consider a NABCI III meeting between the three countries. However in 2008 the PIF conference is being held and in 2009 the next WHMSI conference will be held.


Action Items

1. The Resources Subcommittee will prepare a strategy to increase support for bird conservation before the next NABCI meeting (January-February 2008).
2. Other action on tri-national issues will be determined at the joint committee meeting.

Monitoring

A final draft of the *Opportunities for Improving Avian Monitoring* report was submitted to the Committee on February 16, 2007. The report was distributed and announced at the North American Conference in March. The Committee reiterated it's thanks to the members of the Subcommittee for their hard work and for producing an excellent report. The report is being strategically distributed throughout agencies and organizations. However, there is a need for Committee members to take a strong role in pushing implementation of the goals of the report through their agencies and organizations. Canada also added its support for the report.

Although not as much progress has been made since the distribution of the report as the Subcommittee would have liked, they are still moving forward. The MOU developed for the report has been signed by 11 Committee members. Most of the other signatures should be acquired in the next few months. To date the only member that is certain they will not be able to sign is the Association of Joint Venture Management Boards. Although they support the goals of the report, they felt that one signature could not represent the all of the Joint Ventures. However, they are sending a letter in support of the report that can be added as an addendum to the report. The



USGS, USFS, and USFWS are discussing hiring a full-time person to do an assessment of monitoring programs in the U.S. Although this is a daunting task the Subcommittee feels it is one of the most important next steps. It will most likely be completed in late 2008. The Committee continues to support this concept. Canada has developed a working group to do the same thing for Canada. It will be important for both efforts to communicate with one another although Canada's timeframe for completion is 5-6 months. Key support tools to completing this task are the Natural Resources Monitoring Partnership and the Avian Knowledge Network. The Subcommittee needs to continue to support advancement of these databases and participation by NABCI members.

Currently, the Subcommittee has a few working groups that are looking at technical aspects of data store and statistical design, communications, and the development of a monitoring session at the Partners in Flight conference in February 2008. A monitoring session is also in development for the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in December 2007.

A resolution was developed and submitted to the Bird Conservation Committee of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The Bird Conservation Committee approved the resolution and will be submitting it to the Resolutions Committee for consideration at the September 2007 meeting. Based on this resolution, the Subcommittee will be asking for help from the Bird Conservation Committee in advancing the report.

The Subcommittee will have three conference calls and hopefully one meeting over the next four months to further advance its 2007 tasks. It was acknowledged that having a full-time coordinator in the NE has been very important to advancing the goals of the report at a regional level. The Committee is hopeful that the monitoring proposal submitted to the multi-state grant process will be accepted so the concept can be expanded throughout the U.S.

Monitoring is going to be a key component of Conservation Design or Strategic Habitat Conservation and in determining the effects of climate change. A monitoring document was developed between the U.S. and the Caribbean that could be helpful to the Subcommittee.

Action Items

1. Develop a presentation to give to the Bird Conservation Committee asking for support in moving forward implementation of the goals of the report within the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies.
2. Have a meeting between the USFS, USFWS, and the USGS at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting to discuss funding a full-time person to do an assessment of monitoring.
3. Herb Raffaele will send the U.S. Caribbean monitoring publication to Deb for distribution to the Subcommittee.
4. Develop a session on monitoring at the PIF Conference
5. Conduct 3 conference calls and potentially one face-to-face Subcommittee meeting within the next 4 months.
6. Committee members should take steps to advance the goals and objectives of the report through their organizations and agencies.

Private Lands

The Subcommittee was formed in the middle of 2006. The Subcommittee is co-chaired by NRCS and FSA. NRCS recently hired a new national biologist, Terrell Erickson. She has agreed to replace Charlie Rewa as the co-chair of the Subcommittee for NRCS. She will also confirm that she will be sitting on the NABCI Committee for NRCS.

In May 2007, the Subcommittee wrote a letter to NRCS signed by Dale Hall and Bruce McCloskey to get time on the State Conservationists agenda in July. We received an invitation to speak to the Chief and his leadership team in July. The Subcommittee with the help of the Communications Subcommittee developed a presentation. Paul Schmidt presented and Greg Butcher attended as a Committee member. The presentation was successful and the Chief was engaged. Specific NRCS staff have been requested to address some of the items NABCI promoted in the presentation.

The Subcommittee helped develop the June issue of the All-Bird Bulletin on private lands conservation.

The Subcommittee will also develop presentations on bird conservation for the regional NRCS state conservationists meetings and a web-based conference call on technical issues for NRCS biologists. Terrell Erickson is going to get information on how to get on the agendas.

With the reauthorization of the Farm Bill in high gear, the Subcommittee is going to start discussing updating the Farm Bill user's 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 2007 Farm Bill will be critical and does not want to wait till the last minute so that the updated guide can be completed as soon as possible after reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Dave Walker, USFWS, is going to develop a draft outline/table of contents to get started.

Strategic habitat initiative – 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. We would help translate the regional bird initiative into a format that would allow NRCS staff to develop strategic habitat initiatives similar to the Montana EQUIP example. A meeting will be held at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting to flesh out this task. Dave Smith, Breck Carmichael, Larry Kruckenberg, Deb Hahn, Sally Benjamin, and Charlie Rewa will be at the meeting. Others are welcome to attend. The Committee was supportive of adding this task.

The Committee discussed the effectiveness of hiring biologists to work in NRCS offices from the States or the USFWS. They also discussed the need to broaden the focus of the Subcommittee to consider how to affect FSA since it is different than NRCS.

Action Items:

1. The Committee supported the updated tasks for 2007-2008.

2. Conduct a meeting at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conference on September 18, 2007 from 5-6pm. Participants should meeting the main hotel lobby.
3. Get on the agendas of the regional NRCS State Conservationists meetings and NRCS state biologist's conference calls.
4. Begin updating the Farm Bill user's guide.

Conservation Design

The Conservation Design Subcommittee is assisting with the development of three technical sessions at the PIF International Conference in February 2008. One session is being led by Bob Altman and Tom Will and deals with population objectives. This may be a precursor to a larger stand alone workshop later next year. A second is a full day session is being led by Jane Fitzgerald, Wayne Thogmartin, and Tim Jones on the current status of evaluation of bird-habitat relationships. The third session is led by David Pashley, Ed Laurent, and Brian Smith and is titled "Blue Sky: opportunities for advancing bird conservation over the next ten years". The session will deal with the greatest existing challenges in the science of bird conservation including issues of detectability, vital rates, continental connectivity, measuring environmental variables, determining population limiting factors, data management, and applications. Following these sessions one or more workshops will be developed.

Action Items

1. The Subcommittee will help develop the PIF sessions and use the outcome of the sessions to recommend next steps and potential workshop topics.

Communications

The Committee agreed that the Subcommittee has been effective in implementing the Communications Action Plan for State Directors and that the action plan should be expanded to include Wildlife Diversity Program Managers and biologists. There is continued interest in presenting the concept of integrated bird conservation and what NABCI can do for you to the Federal Agencies. The NRCS was the first presentation. There have been requests for a similar presentation to be given to the National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the Bureau of Land Management. Geoffrey Walsh is going to get information on the BLM Deputy State Director meetings to Deb and then work to get us on the agendas.

The U.S. NABCI Committee website continues to be updated and has a wealth of good information. Canada recently updated the tri-national website (http://www.nabci.net/International/English/about_nabci.html#)

It was noted that the when the Committee is discussing funding and carbon sequestration issues it needs to consider communications. In addition, in 2008 the Communications Subcommittee should also start considering the change of administration. We need to have a clear message at the North

American meeting in 2009. The Committee also agreed that they should get time with the transition teams of the federal agencies to inform them about bird conservation and NABCI.

The Committee agreed that the NABCI/AJVMB Bird Conservation awards were a success and should be continued. They supported the criteria and the award process outlined by the Subcommittee with one change. They want to add another criterion that explicitly includes outreach, education and communication.

In order to address the concern about which scale of nominee the awards were for (i.e., national/international or local/regional) the Committee had a lengthy discussion. Some members felt the awards should be national/international in scope and other felt that by omitting the local/regional scale we were not fulfilling the vision of NABCI. The compromise was to develop 4 awards (1 national/international group award, 1 national/international individual award, 1 regional/local group award and 1 regional/local individual award). The 2 national/international awards would be presented at the USFWS Director's Reception at the North American and the 2 local/regional awards would be presented at the most applicable local venue. The Committee felt that they did not have to give out four awards each year if they did not receive the appropriate nominees. It was reiterated that the awards were not for NABCI Committee members.

Action Items

1. Expand the State Communication Action Plan to include Wildlife Diversity Program Managers and biologists.
2. Develop presentations for other federal agency partners.
3. Update the award criteria and get JV comment on the recommended 4 awards.
4. Implement the award process starting in October 2007.

Other Topics

In January 2007, the Committee acknowledged that climate change was a critical issue that they wanted to begin discussing. Sue Haseltine brought together a small group to discuss next steps. The group is developing a session at the 2008 PIF Conference on climate change. The session will look at how climate change is affecting birds throughout the U.S., Canada, and Mexico and will have a discussion on the next steps. This is in addition to discussing the potential funding sources for climate change work related to wildlife.

There is a clarification to the January meeting minutes. The U.S. NABCI Committee asked for a recommendation from the Federal Agency Subcommittee as to the future of that Subcommittee. The Subcommittee recommended that it be dissolved. Through discussions at the US Committee meeting in January a decision was mistakenly made to put the Subcommittee on hold as opposed to dissolving it. To correct that error, the US NABCI Committee is accepting the Subcommittee's recommendation to dissolve the Federal Agency Subcommittee of NABCI. The Subcommittee is officially dissolved.