

U.S. NABCI COMMITTEE MEETING SEPTEMBER 15, 2000 - INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

Committee members present: David Waller, co-chair; George Fenwick, Jim Kushlan, Val Mezainis, Gary Myers, Rollie Sparrowe, George Vandell, Alan Wentz, Scott Yaich.
Substitutes: Tom Melius for Jamie Clark; Stephen Brown for Stan Senner

Publication Update - Paul Schmidt

At the request of the US NABCI Committee, the USFWS has printed the NABCI-US Foundation Document (available now) originally written by the Interim US NABCI Committee and approved by the permanent Committee at the March 2000 meeting. In addition, a color outreach document including a map of North America's Bird Conservation Regions with a narrative description of each, is in preparation and will be available by the end of October. The USFWS has contributed staff time and fronted printing costs for these publications. Although the final printing invoices are not yet in, the cost is expected to run a little over \$50,000. WMI has volunteered to act as a banker and will invoice Committee and Subcommittee member agencies and organizations who can contribute to defray these printing costs.

NABCI contacts -

Paul Schmidt is the official NABCI liaison for USFWS, and Bob Ford will serve as chief staff person for the Service. Len Ugarenko will serve as chief staff person for the co-chair from the IAFWA and the official NABCI liaison for IAFWA. All will work closely with David Pashley to staff NABCI. The next co-chair representing IAFWA will be Pat Graham of Montana.

REPORTS FROM THE NABCI WORKSHOP

The next segment of the meeting concentrated on the results of the NABCI Workshop held the previous day. This was the first workshop of its type, and was attended by over 100 people. Those attendees participated in a series of breakouts involving four topics. A spokesperson for each of the four breakout topics from the Workshop addressed the Committee.

Geography - Report by Scott Yaich

In consideration of the relative geography of Bird Conservation Regions and Joint Ventures, participants in the geography breakouts developed the following comments and recommendations:

* There are distinct functions that can operate on the basis of semi-permanent geographic structures:

1. Technical work and the biological foundation should be developed at the BCR level.
2. Implementation occurs at the state level.
3. Facilitation and support of bird conservation takes place at the Joint Venture level.

* Bird Conservation Region and Joint Venture boundaries will change over time.

Movement toward convergence is desirable but may not be rapid. Because of pelagic birds, current Bird Conservation Region coverage may not be sufficient.

* Comprehensive coverage by Bird Conservation Regions and Joint Venture Management Board functions is a medium term goal. Expansion of existing Joint Ventures may be more efficient than creation of new ones.

* Strengthening administrative support for bird conservation can be achieved through those developments.

* The primary decision-making unit is the local partnership. Appropriate national assistance should take the form of encouragement.

Scott Yaich proposed the following resolution - **The US NABCI Committee invites Joint Venture Management Boards and other partners to become involved in a formal consultation process regarding the best means to achieve comprehensive partnership coverage.**

Seconded by George Vandel. Passed unanimously.

Joint Venture and Bird Conservation Region Relationships - Report by Paul Schmidt

Participants in the breakout session reviewed the draft paper entitled "Bird Conservation Regions and Joint Ventures: evolving roles for bird conservation delivery". The relationships described in that paper were generally accepted, although many concepts were further developed and improved. Generally, workshop participants agreed that Bird Conservation Regions may relate to Joint Ventures in any number of ways; however, technical work and the development of a solid biological foundation are the most important. A new, possibly final, draft of the "evolving roles" paper will be distributed by mid-October 2000.

Session participants agreed to the following general concepts:

* Joint Ventures are a successful model and that, within Joint Ventures, habitat is the common currency to deliver bird conservation.

* NABCI is best considered a table, not an umbrella.

* Bird Conservation Regions and Joint Ventures must be cautious of bureaucracy and duplication of effort.

* Bird Conservation Region and Joint Venture success stories should be shared and built upon through better communication and education.

* U.S. NABCI Committee roles are to provide increased leadership through coordination and facilitation and to provide support and funding.

Session participants had two unresolved issues:

* many participants thought that Bird Conservation Region and Joint Venture boundary lines should converge, while others thought convergence was not necessary for effective implementation.

* many participants thought that each Bird Conservation Region required at least one dedicated staff person.

Workshop participants make the following recommendations:

* Joint Ventures, or Joint Venture-like partnerships, are the primary structure through which to staff Bird Conservation Regions.

* An ad hoc committee, or "confederation", of Joint Venture Management Board members may be developed to address issues of Joint Venture boundaries as well as new Joint Venture development and roles.

* Partners in Flight and other bird initiatives may best be served by a counterpart to the North American Waterfowl Plan Committee. While that is not necessarily a role of the U.S. NABCI Committee, this committee can help facilitate those actions.

* Work of IAFWA committees and communications to states on behalf of NABCI is supported, as well as the NABCI communications proposal submitted by the federal subcommittee.

Tom Melius moved to accept this report and its recommendations.

Seconded by Gary Myers. Passed unanimously.

Integrating Plans - Report by Seth Mott

Fulfillment of the NABCI Vision of biologically-based landscape-oriented bird conservation will require the integration of the priorities and objectives of the full spectrum of bird conservation needs. It is assessment of the bird conservation community that this integration is best initiated and conducted at the scale of the bio-geographic Bird Conservation Regions. The population and habitat objectives of various bird conservation plans, such as PIF physiographic plans, NAWMP Joint Venture implementation plans, regional components of the US Shorebird Conservation Plan, and others, should be integrated through a biological planning process to develop a spatially explicit landscape design for each BCR. This landscape design should describe the desired future conditions and actions necessary for the perpetuation of bird populations at desired levels. The landscape design and actions necessary to achieve it should be developed in consultation with the agencies, organizations, and other interests that will be involved with its implementation. Products of this process should include discrete habitat objectives stepped down through multiple scales to include recommendations appropriate for individual management areas, refuges, forest units, private lands programs, etc. The lead responsibility for conducting and coordinating this planning process will usually require a full-time position. Decisions on assigning this responsibility to new or existing staff should be made in consultation with appropriate technical committees and implementation partners. Specific findings from Thursday's workshop:

* Joint Venture technical committees should expand to include expertise for "all-birds".

* International Councils analogous to the NAWMP Committee should be formed for landbird, shorebird, and colonial waterbird groups.

* Decisions on BCR level staffing should occur with participation of all potential regional partners.

* Additional funding is needed to improve biological foundation information for all birds.

* A consensus on appropriate approaches to species prioritization across all bird groups is lacking and this issue is of concern to some partners.

Acceptance of this report was proposed by Gary Myers.

Seconded by George Fenwick. Passed unanimously.

Funding - Report by Jim Woehr

The funding breakout session considered a full range of NABCI funding needs and opportunities and statements of general principles. Full minutes of the meeting will be distributed in the near future. The breakout groups found two points were of most significance, and should be considered by the US NABCI Committee:

Budget Cooperation -

Tom Melius proposed the following resolution - **The US NABCI Committee endorses the growing cooperation among members of the NABCI Federal Agency and NGO Subcommittees regarding integration of federal budgetary processes as they affect bird conservation.**

Seconded by Gary Myers.

Discussion - Bob Ford referred to a draft letter to be sent to federal partners and signed by Jamie Clark and Val Mezainis, the Federal Agency Subcommittee co-chairs, requesting cooperation in this endeavor. Passed unanimously.

Communications Working Group -

Gary Myers proposed the following resolution - **The US NABCI Committee requests formation of a Communications Working Group and development of a communications strategy targeted at key audiences.**

Seconded by Val Mezainis.

Discussion - Bob Ford referred to a letter to the US NABCI Committee from himself and Jack Capp as lead staff for the Federal Agency Subcommittee requesting formation of such a Communications Working Group. A communications team is being assembled to assist with press relations and other outreach activities in relation to the tri-national NABCI meeting planned for next February in Queretaro, Mexico; this may evolve with the proposed Working Group. Committee members noted that a serious effort at a Communications Strategy requires professional involvement and dedication of resources, including assistance from outside the federal government. Such a strategy should be sensitive to the bird initiatives - we are not implementing NABCI, but rather the Vision as it emerges from the initiatives.

Passed unanimously.

NABCI Website -

Related to the Communications strategy is a proposal presented by David Pashley and Chris Eberly and formally proposed by George Fenwick - **The US NABCI Committee approves proceeding with development of a nabci.org web site in coordination with the Communications working group and strategy.**

Seconded by George Vandel.

Discussion - The Commission for Environmental Cooperation has purchased this domain name and endorsement is sought to begin populating the US portion of the site. The Committee sees this as a basic web page, on a parallel path with development of the Communications Strategy, that will begin with simple links to the existing initiatives.

Passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Business Plan -

Gary Myers proposed a resolution generated by the Partners in Flight Joint Committees - **The US NABCI Committee requests that the leadership of the bird initiatives outline infrastructural needs, including staffing, to be incorporated into a business and funding plan designed to support the bird initiatives.**

Seconded by George Fenwick.

Discussion - A major use of the proposed business plan is as a resource for the Funding

Group. It was confirmed that this proposal includes consideration of BCR staffing. David Pashley was asked to provide a written status report and time line on BCR positions and their funding.

Passed unanimously

Next meetings -

The tri-national NABCI meeting to be held in Queretaro, Mexico been re-scheduled for February 14-16, 2001. US NABCI members should get that on their calendars. Letters of invitation to the 40 US representatives will go out in the next couple of weeks. The US NABCI Committee should hold a half or full day meeting in anticipation of the Mexico meeting. David Pashley was asked to find a date for such a meeting in Washington, DC, sometime around February 1, 2001.

Closing comments -

David Waller closed the meeting with general comments regarding NABCI as a forum for communication and coordination among the bird initiatives, a table upon which this interaction occurs rather than an umbrella that overlies them. He noted that NABCI is not a new bureaucracy, nor a merger of existing initiatives, not a funding initiative or program unto itself, but rather a unifying theme for bird conservation. Acting co-chair Tom Melius agreed with these points and the meeting was adjourned.