

**The United States Committee of the
North American Bird Conservation Initiative
Meeting Summary
National Conservation Training Center**

January 14-15, 2002

Committee members present - Richard Bishop, George Fenwick (co-chair), John Frampton, Rebecca Frank, Marshall Jones (co-chair), Jim Kushlan, Bob McDowell (co-chair), Val Mezainis, Steve Miller, Gary Myers, Josh Sandt, Rollie Sparrowe, Alan Wentz

National Coordinator - David Pashley

Facilitator - Dave Case

Staff and other attendees - Brad Andres, Jon Andrew, Charles Baxter, Roxanne Bogart, Jim Cole, Naomi Edelson, Bob Ford, Ron George, John Herron, Heather Johnson, Tom Melius, Seth Mott, Pat Patterson, Herb Raffaele, Terry Rich, Paul Schmidt, David Smith, Ken Williams, Steve Williams, Jim Woehr, Scott Yaich

INTRODUCTION

This is a summary of the major activities and decision points (**in bold**) of the January, 2002, meeting of the US NABCI Committee. Support materials that were provided prior to and during the meeting are not included. This meeting served the NABCI Committee's critically important role as a forum for discussion and information sharing, although detailed minutes of those discussions have not been included in the summary.

MEETING SUMMARIES

Process for review of meeting summaries: the Coordinator will submit a draft meeting summary to all Committee members for review. Committee members will suggest changes to the Coordinator. Those changes will be made unless they are substantive, in which case the Coordinator will seek input from the co-chairs. A final draft of the meeting summary will include a summary of changes and who suggested them.

The meeting summary from the July meeting was approved.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Representation of the Joint Venture Management Board Association on the NABCI US Committee was approved.

A PROPOSED ACTION PLAN - David Pashley

At the request of the US NABCI Committee, a NABCI Staff has been assembled and has identified potential components of an Action Plan. The following nine topics, not in priority order, were identified by NABCI Staff as the most important issues for bird conservation at a national level. The first seven are on this agenda, with the final two proposed as topics for discussion at subsequent meetings.

1. Secure a source of funding for upland bird conservation projects.

2. Increase appropriations to federal agencies to allow them to achieve their bird conservation objectives.
3. Assure that state wildlife agencies have the capacity to appropriately contribute to achieving bird conservation objectives.
4. Achieve comprehensive national coverage by effective bird conservation partnerships such as Joint Ventures.
5. Maintain the health and vitality of the bird conservation initiatives.
6. Increase the capacity of US-based organizations to contribute to effective bird conservation internationally.
7. Develop and implement a communications strategy.
8. Nurture a system capable of adequately monitoring all of the birds of the country.
9. Work toward an agricultural policy that provides significant benefits to bird populations.

COMMUNICATIONS - introduction by Ken Williams, presentation by Dave Case

Because the Committee felt that NABCI was hampered by a lack of effective communication, a Communications Working Group was established that entered into a contract with D.J. Case & Associates to produce a NABCI Communications Strategy. This proposed strategy was presented to the Committee.

The strategy is built on the premise that NABCI is not a program, but rather is, at its heart, integrated bird conservation done by the partners who define NABCI. Communications must stress this rather than stressing the “brand” of NABCI. NABCI must be seen as adding value and as being fundamentally collaborative. The initial communications target audience consists of internal members of the bird conservation community.

The Committee approved the focus, direction, and design of the proposed communication strategy.

The Committee asked the communications working group to develop a work plan with deliverables and a budget for implementation of the communications strategy. This should be presented to the NABCI staff who will then present it to the US NABCI Committee for consideration.

The existing contract with D.J. Case & Associates can be extended through the 2002 implementation phase, and various partners have committed partial funding for this effort. Details of how this will proceed will emerge from review of the above Work Plan.

The International Communications Working Group is developing a Trinational Communications Strategy that is closely aligned with the US strategy. This will be presented to the Trinational Committee at its February meeting.

CURRENT CONCEPTS IN BIRD CONSERVATION - presentation by Charles Baxter

There are four critical concepts in the NABCI vision:

- 1) Birds should be managed on the basis of an ecological framework defined by a common spatial language. This means that the geography of Joint Ventures must accommodate management at the Bird Conservation Region scale.
- 2) Management is linked to population response at regional or continental scales. This means that Joint Ventures must have the capacity for biological planning.
- 3) Science and management are linked, meaning that a JV must have GIS and database management capacity and that research must be directed toward testing key assumptions in

biological plans. Creation of links between management and science can be done easily by managers simply stating the assumptions upon which they are basing their decisions.

- 4) Conservation must be delivered within a context of achieving landscape sustainability. This calls for a definition and periodic assessment of “sustainability” and production of a conservation blueprint or geospatial decision support model.

NABCI is a continent-wide experiment in the application of population ecology, landscape ecology, and adaptive management. It is a fundamentally new way of doing business. Its two greatest challenges are:

- 1) Achieving a recognition among partners that the NABCI vision presupposes these new ways of doing business.
- 2) Creating at the JV level a framework that allows partners to align and focus existing resources on the above needs.

A Joint Venture is what holds together the three spheres of biological foundation, conservation design, and conservation delivery. Recommended steps include:

- 1) Adopt a model that builds partnerships around and within the above three spheres of bird conservation.
- 2) Coalesce and increase partner capabilities in 3 areas: biological planning, monitoring, and evaluation; conservation planning and design; geospatial capacity and information management.
- 3) Communicate this changing business of bird conservation.

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS - background by Seth Mott and Steve Miller

The Action Plan and the NABCI Vision Document both refer to building bird conservation partnerships across the country. Some of the issues that we face in doing so are:

- 1) Boundaries (formation, delineation, and recognition of partnerships).
- 2) Capacity (staffing and infrastructure, including at the BCR level).
- 3) Sanctioning of plans (the “all bird” imprimatur)

None of these were issues in the pre-NABCI world, in that borders and sanctioning were the province of the NAWMP Plan Committee and capacity was a function of FWS and JV boards. Now, however, there is no consensus on resolution of these issues and no existing guidance or authority for how decisions are reached. Is there a role for the US NABCI Committee in any of this?

The recognition received through some sort of sanctioning can be important in that it implies quality control, builds credibility and partner support, and may make funding easier. There are two aspects of sanctioning: sanctioning of regional plans written by partnerships (like Joint Ventures) relative to objectives in bird plans (for example, does an Implementation Plan adequately address landbird needs?), and sanctioning of initiative plans by partners involved in delivery. The Committee dealt first with the second issue:

The US NABCI Committee encourages the IAFWA, through its committee structure and the NABCI state sub-committee, to set up a system for approval of national level bird conservation plans for the purpose of engaging states in plan implementation.

After further discussion, it was resolved that the US NABCI Committee needs input from the Joint Ventures as to their position on the outstanding difficult issues. Therefore:

The US NABCI Committee requests that the Association of JV Management Boards consider the following broad questions and provide comments to the NABCI Committee at

its July 2002 meeting:

How should questions regarding joint venture boundaries be resolved?

What is the relationship between joint ventures and bird conservation plans?

How many joint ventures should there be? (with the understanding that the US NABCI Committee's position is that the US should be covered with wall-to-wall joint ventures)

The Fish and Wildlife Service has a draft Director's Order designed to address these issues from a FWS perspective. This should be reviewed, particularly by the Association, with respect to these questions and responses submitted back to FWS.

Although there were comments that the US NABCI Committee may consider stepping beyond its terms of reference and become more proactive on some of these issues, on this particular issue, it was concluded that **the US NABCI Committee does not wish to consider sanctioning bird conservation plans, leaving that role to the Fish and Wildlife Service, states, and other partners.**

OPTIONS FOR FUNDING UPLAND NABCI PROJECTS - background by Naomi Edelson and Pat Patterson

Some general issues for consideration when attempting to secure additional funding are:

- Building a coalition and constituency is often as important as actually getting the money;
- A compelling case for the need for additional money must be made;
- Key lobbying partners must be identified and involved; conflicts with their other initiatives must be avoided;
- Decide whether to build a case through the Administration or through Congress;
- Decide whether to start small or to start big;
- Decide whether the focus should be strictly within the US or in the US and international;
- Create a context within which all of the funding needs (federal, state, JV, uplands, etc.) make sense as an integrated whole.

There are three broad options available, each with its pros and cons:

1. Secure full funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Act. Pros are that the Act is focused on birds of concern and funds are available for areas of greatest need. Cons are the \$5 million cap, the 3:1 match requirement, perhaps the high percentage that must be spent outside the US, and uncertainty as to decision-making authority.
2. Expand the scope and authority of NAWCA. Pros are its proven track record and efficiency of process. Cons include repercussions of perceptions regarding wetlands vs. uplands.
3. New legislation. The pro is that this would afford an opportunity to create a perfect program, and the main cons are difficulties resulting in part from the fact that this would not be positively received given the existence of useable tools.

During the subsequent discussion, modification and use of other existing tools such as the Farm Bill and AID was discussed. Regardless of the option or combination of options chosen, this component will be a part of the option, one that has more financial potential than any foreseeable new source of money.

A Guidebook as to use of existing programs was suggested, targeted at the "end user" of the programs (the landowner rather than the federal or state biologist). The Nature Conservancy may have a document that could be used as a starting point for such a product (Pat Patterson will investigate and report back).

See below under Funding Summary for final remarks and temporary resolution of this issue.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES – background by Herb Raffaele

Trinational Memorandum Of Understanding

Draft language for a Trinational MOU has been approved by the drafting teams of all three countries, and is ready for review within the US. The following decisions were made:

- * The Committee accepts the MOU as a working draft and agrees that each US NABCI Committee member will circulate the draft to their constituencies for information and comment.**
- * Committee members agree to submit personal comments by February 8, 2002 and to have completed the above review process by April 10, 2002. Herb Raffaele will draft a description of the context of the MOU and David Pashley will distribute that document and the MOU to all Committee members via e-mail.**
- * All comments should go to David Pashley who will forward them to Herb Raffaele and U.S. Representatives on the Trinational Committee.**

Trinational Committee Terms of Reference

One change in wording was recommended in the Roles and Responsibilities section, in the second sentence of the first bullet under the two main roles of the Committee. That sentence is suggested to read “Members are expected to work together for the collective vision and goals of NABCI by representing and communicating the issues and concerns of their National Committees/Council to the Trinational Committee”. The first sentence of the second bullet would be deleted, leaving the second sentence, beginning “They are also expected to relate...” as the full statement of that second bullet.

The Committee approved the amended language of the Terms of Reference and entrusts the U.S. representatives to the Trinational Committee to reach agreement with Mexico and Canada on final language.

The US representatives to the Trinational Committee are George Fenwick, Gary Myers, and Paul Schmidt.

Trinational NABCI Projects

Characteristics of Trinational NABCI Projects have been agreed upon, and the US Demonstration Working Group proposes development of a “Lessons Learned” web-based document detailing examples of projects exhibiting those characteristics. Mexico is planning to identify a set of sites proposed as portions of Trinational NABCI Projects, and the CEC has money in its budget earmarked for Demonstration Projects. The US NABCI Committee discussed a recommendation to the CEC regarding use of those funds, given the Committee’s stated interest in avoiding involvement in any sort of review and selection process.

The US NABCI Committee concurs that its designees (representatives to the Trinational Committee) should work with Mexico, Canada, the CEC, and EPA to influence the CEC to spend its Demonstration Project funds in a manner that reflects the discussion by the US NABCI Committee.

Relations with CEC

The US NABCI Committee co-chairs will appoint a representative to serve as a primary point of contact for EPA and CEC.

The US NABCI Committee agrees to communicate with the CEC Council at its June meeting regarding the importance of the CEC's continued financial support for NABCI. David Pashley is working with the other national coordinators to produce a report to that Council on NABCI progress, and will circulate that report to US NABCI Committee members upon its completion.

Other International Issues

NABCI Staff will develop a recommendation regarding a US NABCI Committee position for the World Summit on Sustainable Development; Herb Raffaele will describe pros and cons of various positions for the NABCI Staff.

DELIVERY OF BIRD CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES BY STATE WILDLIFE

AGENCIES - background by John Herron

State wildlife agencies are making significant contributions to bird conservation and have the potential to do considerably more, particularly if funding is increased. Current opportunities that may assist states in contributing to NABCI-related goals include:

- Creating a process in which state agencies formally adopt the various bird conservation plans;
- Fully assessing the capacity of state agencies to deliver bird conservation goals;
- Making better use of the Model Wildlife Diversity Program document developed by the IAFWA; this could include distribution to members of the US NABCI Committee;
- Developing the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plans that incorporate the goals of the various bird initiative plans. Each state is obligated to complete a comprehensive plan that addresses priority species by 2005 in order to qualify for future CARA-like funding.

OUTYEAR NEEDS FOR FEDERAL AGENCY BIRD CONSERVATION PROGRAMS -

background by Jim Woehr

The Committee agreed that the overall process being undertaken by the Funding Group with the assistance of the Federal Agency Subcommittee is on track.

INITIATIVE SUPPORT NEEDS - background by David Pashley

The most pressing situations among those positions that are filled but without secure funding are those of the PIF Regional Coordinators. Current funding for those positions expires in approximately April of 2003. **NABCI Staff is requested to produce a report on these positions, including a budget and strong suggestions as to where they may be housed; this report is due prior to the North American Conference in April.**

SUMMARY OF FUNDING ISSUES

The President's budget will be announced on February 4, with a briefing to the International on Feb. 13. **The US NABCI Committee should arrange a Conference Call shortly thereafter.**

The general sense of the Committee on funding issues is that we should strive for

incremental increases on all fronts, with an understanding that the current climate is not auspicious for major new programs. Indeed, staying in place in the short term is going to be a challenge. The first requirement for the Neotrop Act is to spend what money is available in an effective manner. The longer term is best served by beginning to mobilize complex constituencies within a clear context. Expectations for delivery of large programs by NABCI must be diminished and replaced with an understanding, based on experience, that broad involvement in the process from the bottom up is more likely to result in success than a sweeping national program.

The Committee would appreciate a more informed commentary on the array of funding issues, including federal appropriations and funding sources for upland projects, from some combination of NABCI Staff, the NGO Subcommittee, and the Funding Group. **Both the NGO Subcommittee and NABCI Staff will meet to discuss these and perhaps other issues in the very near future.**

NEXT MEETINGS

There will be a NABCI Informational Session at the North American Conference in Dallas in April. This should be a well-orchestrated representation of highlighted events, and not a Business Meeting. Portions of the Communications Strategy will be presented. **The NABCI Staff will propose an agenda for this session to be circulated to the full Committee for review.**

The next meeting of the US NABCI Committee will take place on August 5-6, 2002, again at the National Conservation Training Center, beginning at 1 PM on that Monday and concluding at 3 PM on the Tuesday. Monitoring will be one of the agenda items. More details will be forthcoming.