

Meeting Summary

United States Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative

**April 2, 2002
Dallas, TX**

The meeting began with a welcome from US NABCI Coordinator David Pashley. David emphasized that the meeting was an informational meeting rather than one in which decisions were to be made.

Introductions from the Co-chairs

Marshall Jones (representing Steve Williams), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Several new Committee members were welcomed: two are new positions, with Rebecca Frank representing the Association of Joint Venture Management Board Chairs and John Frampton representing the Resident Game Bird Working Group of the IAFWA. There are three replacements, with Josh Sandt replacing George Vandell for the National Flyway Council and Richard Bishop replacing Scott Yaich as representative of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee. Scott stays on the Committee, replacing Alan Wentz as representative of Ducks Unlimited.

The strengths of NABCI are not its organizational structure, but rather its service as a forum to find ways to cooperate in solving difficult conservation problems. This fits very well with Steve Williams' emphasis on the importance of partnerships. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes the importance of NABCI, and is weaving it into many of its existing functions, including Joint Ventures and the Trilateral Committee.

George Fenwick, American Bird Conservancy

Two recent Partners in Flight events pointed out the importance of NABCI. The Management Steering Committee meeting in Fort Hood, Texas, resulted in a recommitment to the principles of NABCI - initiatives working together to better achieve shared objectives. Last month, the Third International PIF Workshop at Asilomar, California, was attended by more than 620 people from all elements of the bird conservation community. This group displayed tremendous enthusiasm for the great surge of activity and advancement in bird conservation. NABCI represents conservation across borders - among initiatives, agendas, and national boundaries.

Bob McDowell, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies/New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife

The infection has taken hold, and change is happening faster than we can comprehend. Examples include the NABCI Action Plan (see below in presentation by Scott Yaich), the Trinational MOU that is pulling North America into a shared context, the increasing commitment of state agencies to coordinated bird conservation, the evolving role of Joint Ventures as a delivery mechanism for all birds, the new Communications Strategy (see below in presentation by Dave Case), and the success of the all-bird workshops being held around the country.

The NABCI Action Plan - Scott Yaich, Ducks Unlimited

An Action Plan has been created by the NABCI Committee and Staff in order to focus activities. It was derived in part from unfinalized text written in 2000 to accompany the NABCI Vision document. The intent of the Action Plan is to identify those issues of greatest importance for bird conservation at a national level. The purpose is to provide focus for the bird conservation community as a whole, with the NABCI Committee playing a facilitation role. Inclusion of an item on the list does not infer specific activity by that Committee. The Action Plan currently consists of nine issues, not listed in order of importance:

1. Securing a funding source for upland projects, comparable to the impact that NAWCA has on wetland projects.
2. Assuring the capacity of state agencies to meet their bird conservation objectives (including passage and implementation of CARA).
3. Building the capacity of U.S. organizations and agencies to work on international bird conservation issues; passage of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act and development of the NABCI Trinational MOU will assist in this issue, but significant capacity building is still needed.
4. Securing adequate funding for federal agency bird conservation efforts. We need a sustained, proactive strategy for maintaining and enhancing vital federal appropriations, rather than being largely reactive to budget issues.
5. Creating a monitoring system capable of tracking population status of all North American birds. This is a deficiency for all initiatives, even the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.
6. Influencing agricultural policy in ways beneficial to birds, recognizing the importance of the Farm Bill.
7. Creating and maintaining a nationwide coverage of effective bird conservation partnerships such as Joint Ventures. The addition of the Association of JV Management Board chairs to the US NABCI Committee is a step in the right direction.
8. Developing and implementing an effective communications strategy (see below in presentation by Dave Case).
9. Maintaining the health and vitality of bird conservation initiatives.

Bird Conservation as a Tool to Achieve Conservation Objectives at a Large Scale - Pat Patterson, The Nature Conservancy

There are several biological reasons why birds can be effective tools for achieving objectives at appropriate scales:

- Populations of many bird species are declining at a multi-regional scale;
- Threats to many birds are unique due to their migratory cycles;
- Bird conservation can have strong positive effects on many other wide-ranging organisms.

Partnership, policy, and resource decisions can benefit from consideration of bird conservation, as evidenced by the connectivity among partners in all of the countries involved in NABCI. Bird conservation progress can lead to improvement in a number of areas:

- Our capacity to measure conservation success at a multi-ecoregional scale;
- A wide-ranging bird monitoring program can turn out to be a surrogate for measuring ecosystem health;
- Bird conservation efforts can stimulate real-world adaptive resource management;
- The lessons we are learning in the US can be applied on a global scale.

In conclusion, we need a focused hemispheric bird conservation program to properly deal with all of the needs of migratory birds, and this translates into a hemispheric program for the conservation of all birds. As this international scale emerges, new and increased resources can become available for our use.

The Nature Conservancy's Prairie Wings program is but one example of how a shared international vision has started assisting partners in leveraging significant funding. The infrastructure that allows application of such programs consists of Joint Ventures and Bird Conservation Regions, both of which can drive resource and policy direction. All of this is built into the core principles of NABCI.

The Funding Situation - Rollie Sparrowe, Wildlife Management Institute

One of the major expectations of NABCI is that it will generate additional resources. In an effort to move toward that goal, the NABCI US NGO Subcommittee and Funding Group have been working toward a cohesive strategy for bird conservation funding priorities. This strategy does not involve getting funding for NABCI itself, but rather for the pieces that contribute to bird conservation. Discussions have included the bird conservation needs of federal agencies over extended periods of time. First, budget areas contributing to bird conservation are being identified, and second, opportunities are being sought for incremental improvements. The Funding Group is devising a strategy to advance all of these pieces, gradually and systematically.

High priority, short-term needs for bird conservation at this point total nearly \$22 million and include the following items related to federal budgets:

- No cuts in base bird conservation funding;
- Support for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, with an increase in authorization to \$10 million, along with moderate suggestions for changes in implementation;
- Replacement survey aircraft for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- An additional \$5 million for the Bureau of Land Management budget, mostly for riparian restoration;
- Increases of \$2 million each for the U.S. Forest Service International Programs and National Forest System;
- Increased Joint Venture funding;
- Support for key bird conservation staff positions (\$1.2 million).

Is this realistic in the current funding climate? We need to put together the power of our partnerships to test whether we can approach these desired increases.

US NABCI Communications Strategy - David Case, D.J. Case & Associates

Communications is a critically important function of the NABCI US Committee. At the March 2001 meeting, the Committee directed the Communication Working Group to develop a strategy to guide communications efforts. The Working Group, assisted by D.J. Case & Associates, developed and presented a communications strategy to the NABCI US Committee at their January 2002 meeting. The strategy was approved and implementation is now well underway. Key components of the communications strategy were reviewed.

The communications situation:

- NABCI *is* communications;
- The NABCI Vision is perceived to be right on track—the disagreement that exists is largely a function of lack of information and/or trust;
- The NABCI Vision means that new partners will start working together in new ways, presenting both opportunities and challenges;
- NABCI is a forum for the hard and difficult;
- There is a sense of urgency, but also recognition that great progress has been made.

Target audiences:

- First, our natural partners in the bird conservation community;
- Second, potential funding sources;
- Following, the broader professional community and citizen conservation community;
- And, as we progress, our international partners.

The strategic approach entails:

- Communications must be at the forefront of NABCI US activities;
- Communications should promote partners and the vision of integrated bird conservation, not NABCI as an entity;
- NABCI US communications should be strategic and “value-added”—not a clearing house for all things related to bird conservation; and
- Communicate the NABCI vision by showing it in action—emphasize “case studies.”

Objectives/Messages:

- Target audiences should know what NABCI is and what it isn't and what is going on with NABCI;
- Target audiences should feel confident that an integrated approach to bird conservation embodied by NABCI will really benefit their interests, and that people involved in the NABCI administration: are listening to their concerns; and
- Target audiences should engage in the sometimes difficult and challenging discussions on how to deliver bird conservation administratively and on the ground, and should speak out in support of integrated bird conservation and NABCI.

Current Actions:

- “Case studies” are being compiled and communicated;
- Support materials including Q&As, powerpoint presentations, and information updates are being developed and distributed;
- The US NABCI web site will be up and running in the very near future at www.nabci-us.org. The site has been developed by Roxanne Bogart, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chris Eberley, DoD Partners in Flight, and Elizabeth Marteen, U.S. Geological Survey; and
- NABCI champions are continuing to hit the road to communicate about NABCI—there is no substitute for personal contact.

Near Future Actions—The Communications Working Group will work with:

- The Funding Group on funding-related communications; and
- The bird initiatives and Joint Ventures to identify common needs with which NABCI can assist.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the US NABCI Committee is scheduled for August 5-6, 2002, at the National Conservation Training Center.

Note: PowerPoint files for the Scott Yaich, Pat Patterson, and Dave Case presentations are available from those individuals or at www.nabci-us.org.