

UNITED STATES NABCI STEERING COMMITTEE
First meeting, Shepardstown, WV
1 November 1999

Committee members present:

Jamie Clark, David Waller (co-chairs)

Jim Kushlan, Linda Leddy (alt., representing Stan Senner), Gary Myers, Rollie Sparrowe, George Vandel, Alan Wentz, Scott Yaich

Also in attendance:

Jon Andrew, Dan Ashe, Roxanne Bogart, Jack Capp, Hans Herrmann, Roger Holmes, David Pashley, David Smith, Jeff Wells, Jim Woehr

Welcome and Introductions

Jamie Clark called the meeting to order at 9 AM, welcoming attendees to NCTC and expressing excitement regarding the status of migratory bird conservation and the opportunities presented by NABCI. Migratory birds is a highlighted issue in her tenure, and an effort to pull all of this together is long overdue, raising bird conservation to a higher level. David Waller expressed his pleasure at having watched all of this evolve over the decade, noting in particular the Estes Park meeting.

David Smith reviewed the agenda, beginning with some expectations and objectives for today's meeting. People are looking to this committee to provide vision, cooperation, hope, and growth in integrated bird conservation. Specifically, today we should come to an understanding of the role of the Committee, deal with staffing and membership, come up with the beginnings of a work plan, and think about next steps.

Background

David Pashley and Scott Yaich recounted the background and history of NABCI. Pashley reviewed the initial CEC Council resolution to develop a strategy and action plan for the conservation of North American birds and the subsequent formation of the Group of 9. That group was initially skeptical regarding the value and possibility of this endeavor, but proceeded to capture those concepts regarding bird conservation shared among the three nations. This led to the Guidelines document and the perception that this vision must be expanded beyond the G-9. An international meeting in Puebla was the first major event in the history of NABCI, and momentum gained there has been maintained since. Yaich indicated that there was not a consensus as to the composition and function of the US Steering Committee at the North American meeting in March 1999 in Burlingame, CA. As a result, Roger Holmes called for creation of the Interim US Steering Committee during the Migratory Wildlife Committee meeting, with Scott Yaich as chairperson. This group had two charges, one to develop an "integrated plan" and the other to determine the composition of the permanent committee. The "plan" became more of a vision or blueprint, leading in the direction of a plan. In discussion, several cautioned that there is skepticism regarding NABCI, and a good deal of ignorance. All of us have an important job in communicating and educating our colleagues, and we must take care not to alarm others by moving too rapidly. Roger Holmes noted that this effort is destined to go beyond all birds toward a focus on landscapes and a much broader range of conservation issues, and that passage of CARA will fill a great void; a marriage between CARA and bird conservation objectives creates tremendous opportunities.

Roles and Responsibilities – David Smith noted that in the Interim Committee's NABCI document, there are three purposes of NABCI in US – broaden partnerships, increase resources, and enhance effectiveness (p. 5). The functions of the Steering Committee are to represent the US internationally, serve as a forum for interaction among bird initiatives, and increase resources for bird conservation (p. 23). The goal of NABCI is "to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally-based, biologically-driven, landscape-oriented partnerships" (p. 6). Some questions that have been asked about NABCI:

To whom does the Steering Committee report?

Who appoints members and what are the "rules" of membership?

How to balance autonomy of initiatives with the need for interdependence?

How to engage the diversity of stakeholders, making this inclusive?

How will the Committee interact with Joint Ventures?

What will be the strategy to increase funding?
Will there be expenses for NABCI? How will staff be supported?
How will Committee interact with Mexico & Canada? What is the role of CEC?

Scott Yaich noted that those members representing the various initiatives must keep in mind the need to identify issues that will be raised by participants in the initiatives, to anticipate questions that must be answered to generate buy-in. The initiatives essentially have veto power over the Committee. Jamie Clark noted that the Committee should deal with possible answers to the bigger philosophical issues, rather than making absolute decisions, recognizing that this buy-in must keep pace with decisions. Jim Kushlan reminded that review of the Vision document will not be finalized until after Jan. 18, so some absolute decisions must await that.

Who does the Steering Committee report to? Gary Myers stressed autonomy, lack of “possession” by the International or any others. The Committee answers to the bird initiatives, but nobody owns it. Jamie Clark and David Waller indicated that this is their view as well. Members of the Committee must be representatives, but must basically work for the betterment of bird conservation in general. Linda Leddy asked about CEC and was assured that CEC will perform strictly a facilitation role and does not want ownership of NABCI. Rollie Sparrowe noted that what we are doing goes well beyond the mandate of CEC, and that their assistance is welcome but their leadership is neither intended nor desirable. Jim Kushlan noted that the Committee is now independent, building upon CEC and G-9, but the situation is now turned around as the NABCI Committee takes control of the situation – CEC and the G-9 become important tools for the Committee to use. Alan Wentz confirmed that CEC is now one of our partners, similar to other partners, save that they will play a significant facilitation role. **Summary – this is fundamentally an autonomous effort with links to the bird initiatives and a link to CEC as a facilitator and the international components of NABCI.** George Vandel noted that as members, we are all accountable to the organizations or initiatives that they represent; Jim Kushlan, however, commented that committee members are accountable to everyone working in bird conservation.

How are members of Committee appointed? Original members were recommended by Interim Committee. Jim Kushlan said that it is necessary that Committee be allowed to evolve to respond to changes in the bird conservation community. Scott Yaich said that it is probably necessary to discuss roles and functions of the Committee before we can intelligently consider what the Committee ought ultimately to look like. Jamie Clark noted that we do need criteria to prevent undesirable expansion to the point that the Committee becomes unwieldy. The role is related to the “level” of representation from within organizations on the Committee; Gary Myers reminded the group of the need for “clout” in generating resources.

Rollie Sparrowe brought up the issue of the relationship between this committee and the federal government, particularly inasmuch as the Committee endeavors to increase resources for bird conservation, or to influence policy – Federal Administrative Procedures Act issues. We ultimately will deal with really difficult issues such as grazing and timber management on public lands. Dan Ashe asked how the Committee could presume to represent the US in international issues? Might not the State Department or EPA be concerned about this? Gary Myers reminded the group that the initiatives and organizations they represent have, in total, a very significant symbolic value, and that stimulus to do good things for birds from the co-chairs of this Committee could have tremendous importance.

George Vandel noted congressional frustration with fragmentation within the conservation community, and that this Committee could make a huge step forward in reducing that perception of disunity. Is policy within the purview of this Committee? Alan Wentz asked whether this should just be a neutral forum for discussion of issues that are actually acted upon by members or sub-groups. Rollie Sparrowe noted that the North American Plan Committee actually plays a similar neutral role. Gary Myers suggested that some issues cannot be dealt with by this Committee directly, and some decisions must be dealt with by members. Dan Ashe noted that the apparent failure of the Neotropical bird legislation in this Congress may actually create an opportunity to craft a broader template to provide a constitution for the objectives developing from this Committee to seek legislative authorization. Can Congress give this Committee a charter to deal with bird conservation policy and international issues? Jamie Clark noted that such an effort could avoid many of the roadblocks. Scott Yaich commented that we are attempting to provide context, just as

NAWMP or PIF have provided context for great advances in their particular areas of concern. NABCI can perform the same function on a bigger scale. Scott and Alan Wentz noted that the NAWMP is autonomous but NAWCA is authorized. Congress could restrict what the Committee could do to some extent, but if our autonomy is preserved, some legislative means of delivering resources could accompany and enhance the work of the Committee. Jim Woehr noted the difficulty that this Committee and the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service of influencing a coordinated budget agenda among federal agencies. “Birds” may be a vehicle just wide enough to accomplish that coordination, but this Committee must carefully and sensitively address the issue. David Smith noted that this was the intent behind development of the NABCI Vision document. **Again, can this Committee provide the context for all of this, and clarify that the pieces are not unrelated to one another. Developing coherent funding advocacy and strategies and policy direction is a role for the Committee, but how to sensitively (and legally) do this must be worked on.**

Roger Holmes questioned, given the legal issues, whether the USFWS should lead, or even be a member of, this Committee. Dan Ashe asked whether this group really has to deal with policy – even though policy issues are important for bird conservation. This group has the purpose of broadening involvement, and may not actually have to deal directly with divisive policy issues. The Committee should look for opportunities to grow and increase resources, and could avoid functions that could be questionable. Rollie Sparrowe noted that a separate, but related, funding subcommittee could evade much of this problem, operating simply with general objectives as set by the Committee. The ad hoc funding committee of the International was abolished by the Migratory Wildlife Committee in part due the potential for the NABCI Committee to take it over. The NABCI Committee and its co-chairs can serve a very powerful advocacy role, stating needs, separate from operational aspects that could be undertaken by appropriate aggregations from among us. George Vandel mentioned the importance of a leadership role. Linda Leddy stressed that in many ways this is a process – a forum for interchange to develop vision, not a policy-making group. Subgroups or independent groups can work to implement the vision. David Smith noted that the Committee builds the context and enables members to do what is needed; it provides for dialogue, interchange, subcommittees, workgroups, and parallel committees to perform specific functions.

Roger Holmes suggested that the word “Steering” in the title of this Committee may cause some problems. Simply removing that word would fix that problem, and it was decided that the name hereafter will be the **United States NABCI Committee.**

Jamie Clark commented that this discussion raises more questions than it answers relative to her role and relationship with the Committee. She sees a clear role for the Director of the FWS as a liaison to other federal agency heads. Jamie has a personal interest in bird conservation, but cannot speak for her successors in that position. She would like to get the role of this Committee reconciled today. David Waller plans to be actively and personally involved, and agrees that Jamie and the USFWS should be deeply involved, as long as these issues of policy do not present problems. There are key leadership roles to be assumed here.

Linda Leddy questioned the use of the word “endeavor” in relation to increasing resources. A more appropriate role is in identifying needed resources. George Vandel agreed that there is a line between identifying policy issues, from a long-term perspective, and being an active advocate of policy. Jim Kushlan suggested that we create a statement as to what this Committee is NOT. If this Committee states the case and validates the needs, something like the former ad hoc funding committee could work as a vehicle for implementation.

Summary of role discussion – The US NABCI Committee should take on a leadership role in development of concepts and identification of objectives. Such a shared vision can be very powerful, as it reduces the fragmentation that is currently notable in the conservation community. The Committee will not set policy, but will establish a context within which its constituents and other groups can operate.

David Smith & Jon Andrew suggest drafting a Charter or some such document to capture both the philosophy of the Committee and some details of membership, etc. David Pashley will write a first draft of a Charter within the next few weeks and will distribute it for review.

Dan Ashe – Agreeing on need is very important, and respective parties can advocate for that need in the best way they can. Developing consensus around need issues is one of the main functions of the Committee. The ad hoc funding committee should be resurrected, welcoming any participants that can work together on this, attempting to achieve the needs identified by the NABCI Committee. Rollie Sparrowe suggested that the Committee should work quickly in identification of the type of legislation that we need in the near future. The new committee can be as independent of US NABCI Committee as need be. We must maintain a firewall between the Committee and Support functions. Scott Yaich suggested that the NABCI Coordinator should staff the Support Committee as well as the larger Committee. Roger Holmes suggested that the Support Committee could function more clearly as part of the International Association, maintaining separation from the NABCI Committee. **Summary – This Committee recommends resurrection of the Funding Committee, essentially independent of the US NABCI Committee, appointed by the IAFWA, with Rollie Sparrowe as chair, as quickly as possible, with representation broadened from its former status. David Waller will appoint this committee. Roger Holmes suggested a name – Bird Conservation Funding Committee.**

Gary Myers suggested a second committee that is sort of a Project Committee that consists of agencies (federal) and organizations with the capacity to do things on the ground. Scott Yaich questioned whether the scale for this type of activity would be more appropriate at the Joint Venture or Bird Conservation Region level. **At a national level, Jamie Clark can be a liaison to other federal agencies and David Waller can be a liaison with states. Scott Yaich said that one of the most important functions of this Committee should be development of Joint Ventures in BCRs in which they do not currently exist.** Alan Wentz encouraged us to think about long-term considerations – a lot of the recommendations in the Vision document relate to infrastructure within agencies, things that will in the long run increase the capacity to deal with bird conservation issues. At some level, this Committee cannot worry about what is going to happen in the very near future. Jamie Clark disagreed, claiming that we do have an opportunity in the next year to imbed the bird initiative in agencies that are currently receptive to them. So, the Committee has to focus both on short-term and on long-term issues.

Rollie Sparrowe emphasized the need for the bird conservation community to focus very soon on the new Farm Bill. Linda Leddy noted that Stan Senner would particularly like to be involved in the policy end of things, and will work with Rollie on this. David Smith pointed out that the current NABCI Vision document has to be revised, as this is the tool needed by the Bird Conservation Funding Committee.

International perspective

Hans Herrmann presented an international and CEC perspective. NABCI's goal is to improve the conservation of birds and their habitats in North America. It is about partnership and capacity building. Some of the premises emphasize the international roles of National NABCI Committees, including issues of bird biology. We must recognize the social and political differences among the three nations. The international role of national committees includes full participation in the Trinational Steering Committee, which consists of three representatives from each country. The function of the Trinational Committee is guidance and leadership in advancing the vision of NABCI, to work on implementation of multi-national projects, to put birds in the picture of other conservation discussions, to facilitate transfer of information among nations, build capacity, to mobilize financial and human resources, to encourage improvement of political and financial support for bird conservation, and to build productive relationships. Hans stressed the differences among the nations of North America – we are different, and these differences create opportunities if we cooperate to take advantage of relative strengths.

CEC works with USFWS in the US regarding all biodiversity issues – this is based on a formal agreement among the EPA, USFWS, and the CEC. The CEC Council endorsed NABCI in its most recent meeting, and agrees to continue support of NABCI for the three years following that meeting in June of 1999. This means that CEC will devote some financial resources (mainly to support National Coordinators) as well as facilitation roles to NABCI for that amount of time. Canada & the US get about 30% each of the CEC money and Mexico gets 40% of what is available.

Committee Composition – The PIF Subcommittee recommended two additional Committee members: one additional federal agency and one non-game NGO. Linda Leddy indicated that a fairly similar

recommendation came out of the recent national shorebird meeting. Jamie Clark said there is a bewildering array of federal agencies. **Dan Ashe called for creation of a separate federal subcommittee**, with Jamie as federal liaison as representative to the US NABCI Committee. Chairmanship of this federal committee could rotate, and not necessarily be USFWS (although the Service could co-chair); the Forest Service could be first chair. **Gary Myers suggested that the subcommittee could choose a chair that would become a member of the US NABCI Committee (in addition to USFWS). This was agreed upon by the Committee.** George Vandel noted the importance of the Farm Bill and the need to include NRCS. Jamie Clark suggested that involving them in the subcommittee is a good way to get them into the fold. (all the US NABCI Committee meetings will be open, and subcommittee representatives welcomed.) A similar solution was suggested for the non-game community. **The current NGO members of the Committee (WMI, DU) will convene the first NGO subcommittee meeting, and the chair of that subcommittee (who would rotate) would serve on the US NABCI Committee (in addition to WMI and DU).**

Staffing – US NABCI Coordinator position – David Pashley through American Bird Conservancy will assume this position. Coordinator is accountable to the co-chairs. A Job Description, including a fundraising component, is requested from ABC as well as some sort of Contract between the Committee co-chairs and ABC.

Mapping – The Committee endorses the map of Bird Conservation Regions as presented by the Mapping Team. We must emphasize that this is not “final”, that we are inviting comments, but will not change the map for the next three years. Co-chairs should send a letter of thanks to the Mapping Team (D. Pashley will draft). **The Mapping Team will produce a final document**, with four parts: 1) an introduction reiterating basic principles in the Proposed Framework; 2) comments on results of the review process; 3) a new map, including BCRs in Canada and Mexico (assuming resolution by the Mexican mapping team); and 4) descriptions of each BCR. D. Pashley will lead production of this draft, with continued technical mapping assistance from Rex Johnson. This document is due for review by the US NABCI Committee at its February meeting.

The committee discussed the potential for new and existing Joint Ventures relative to the BCR geography. Jim Kushlan asked whether Joint Ventures need approval, and what the relationship is between existing, new JVs and the US NABCI Committee. The NAWMPlan Committee has to deal with this. Scott Yaich noted that a big issue is technical points for JVs within the NAWCA process. This is an issue that needs to be dealt with in the future.

Scott Yaich noted that **the Interim Committee should persist as a Drafting subcommittee (the Committee agreed to this).** Scott asked for input on the Vision document from the US NABCI Committee members. Alan Wentz suggested that the dollar figures might be lifted out and put in a separate document or appendix, realizing that numbers will change over time. Scott agreed that a pair of documents, one of which will change every year, provides some longevity to the part with the general issues described. Pull out the numbers that we have now, and all of us (including the Funding Committee) will consider them over time. The next draft, to be ready in late Jan. or early Feb., will include an Executive Summary, and Gary Myers distributed a draft summary prepared by TWRA.

Representation on the Tri-national Steering Committee – The Trinational Committee should meet in the first few months of next year. Jim Kushlan suggested maintaining the fed, state, and ngo balance on the US G-3. Jamie commented that with changes in jobs, she would suggest that Jon Andrew replace Paul Schmidt. Scott Yaich recommended that Gary Myers and David Pashley continue in their respective roles. However, the Coordinator will attend anyway, and it would be better to select another NGO rep to fully fill the US slate. **It was agreed that the chair of the new NGO subcommittee will be the third member of the US G-3 along with Jon Andrew and Gary Myers.**

Gary Myers volunteered staff help to work with David Pashley to answer many of the unanswered questions that were posed today. **Each Committee member will inform David as to who (themselves or staff) will work with him to answer those questions and advance other Committee issues.**

US National Meeting – suggested for early September, perhaps in Estes Park. The goal includes kicking off development of BCRs, to bring the initiatives together, to make NABCI a reality in the United States. We could leave the meeting with commitments to create wall-to-wall Joint Ventures in the US within a set period of time. There are many difficult and complex issues that need to be resolved within NABCI – lots of these are technical issues. In addition, Rollie Sparrowe suggested that the North American in March 2001 will be in Washington DC and that would be an appropriate time to hold a half day session on NABCI. The fall 2000 doesn't conflict with the vision for the NABCI meeting the following spring in DC – the latter would be more political in nature. Rollie does not see this as a conflict, as the big NABCI meeting pulls different people in. **David Pashley will look into the details for fall of 2000 and will confer with the co-chairs over the next two weeks, and the co-chairs will decide whether to do this or not.** An international Meeting is proposed thereafter for early November in Morelia, Mexico.

CEC needs instruction as to who should enter into a contract for the next year, to fulfill the role now occupied by WMI. **WMI and ABC will work on details of how to do this and recommend back to the Committee.**

The continued existence of the US Monitoring group (chaired by Marshall Howe) as a subcommittee of the US NABCI Committee was approved.

Note: <http://www.rfi.on.ca/cec/> is a web site maintained by CEC for our use and advancement of NABCI in general. There is a password-protected site not in existence explicitly for the US National Committee.

We need a **letterhead for NABCI**. Hans suggests tri-national stationery and a logo. David Pashley will work with Hans on this.

Next meeting of the US NABCI Committee? It should be prior to the North American to consider the next draft of the Vision document. This suggests the need for a meeting in February, in order to have a final draft of the document at the North American. Scott Yaich asked whether we want to lay out the product at the North American, or to use it as a last opportunity to gather comments before producing a final. George Vandel suggested that giving the Flyway Councils and others one last chance in March for input would be advantageous. Gary Myers reminded us that we need to give tools to the Bird Conservation Funding Committee for the upcoming budget cycle, which should happen by February. Funding Committee should get up and running, and then the full Committee should meet perhaps in early February to deal both with the document and the Funding Committee. We could adjust the budget numbers in the document at that time. George Vandel said we should have a Committee draft (incorporating comments), but not produce a final until after the North American. George will assure that Flyway Council chairs will have copies of the Vision document and be encouraged to review it at their February technical committee meetings. George will have this done by Dec. 1. If this goes well, the Flyway Council meetings at the North American can achieve buy-in, and a final draft produced very shortly thereafter. If, however, significant issues are raised, it may be necessary to take the document to the joint meeting of the four Flyway Councils to be held in Memphis in July of 2000 before it is finalized. **The next meeting of the US NABCI Committee will be held during the first week of February, to be specifically determined by the co-chairs and the Coordinator.** The federal and the NGO subcommittees should have met and appointed their respective chairs as new members of the NABCI Committee prior to that meeting in Jan.-Feb.

Communications strategy – Do we need one? How do we communicate in the short run regarding this meeting. Jim Woehr suggests putting the minutes on the web site, as one small step. Alan Wentz says we need a strategy to make NABCI known throughout the bird community. We should send out a synopsis of where we stand to send out to state agencies, federal agencies, etc. **D. Pashley will distribute this, posting the synopsis on the web site rather than the minutes.** Reiterate in synopsis where the Vision document can be located. Minutes – D. Pashley will send draft minutes out to all participants and give everyone a few days to make comments. Action Items will be emphasized in bold face and in the synopsis.

Closing comments – Scott Yaich appreciated the level of participation by 3 state directors, Jamie, Dan, and all others. Dan Ashe emphasized that we have some short-term needs, perhaps a three-month window in

which we can approach Congress about our emerging needs. David Waller noted that we got more accomplished in a one day introductory meeting than he had anticipated. Gary Myers commented that he only regrets that we don't have a group in place to more aggressively consider legislation (although Rollie noted that the Funding Committee will start considering this very rapidly); Linda Leddy commented that it was great to see such consensus being built (and suggested renaming that committee the Funding/Legislation Committee). Jon Andrew said that it bodes well for bird conservation to get this group here today and make the kind of progress we have made.

David Waller adjourned the meeting at 4:40 PM.