**Advancing Private and Working Lands Conservation for Birds**

**2017-2019**

**A work plan for the US NABCI Committee and its partners**

**Developed by the NABCI Private and Working Lands Subcommittee**

DRAFT v1. 12/5/16

DRAFT v2. 12/20/16

DRAFT v3. 1/5/17

FINAL v. 1/20/17

**Conservation Goal I: An authorized Farm Bill that establishes bird-friendly policies and programs that are funded annually at desired levels.**

**Strategy i:** Non-federal NABCI partners encourage Members of Congress to vote for passage of Farm Bill with strong conservation provisions in 2018, or as appropriate.

**Action a:** NABCI Coordinator in conjunction with AFWA Farm Bill Coordinator will provide advisories and available advocacy tools to NABCI partners at appropriate times when action is needed (ongoing effort).

**Strategy ii:** Non-federal NABCI partners will regularly engage and build relationships with Members of Congress who serve on the House and Senate Ag and Appropriations committees to advocate for annual funding of farm bill conservation programs. Conduct at least bi-annually with private lands sub-committee chairs, other team members, and other relevant organizations (e.g. AFWA, California Rangeland Conservation Coalition) in conjunction with NABCI meetings.

**Action a:** NABCI partners will coordinate with the Joint Ventures and Association of Joint Venture Management Boards on messaging in support of Farm Bill programs to be used during any Congressional meetings.

**Conservation Goal II: Implement the Farm Bill to maximize conservation outcomes for birds**

**Strategy i:** NABCI partners will encourage USDA and NRCS leadership to continue support for and funding of strategic, landscape-scale initiatives (e.g., Working Lands for Wildlife, Regional Conservation Partnership Program).

**Action a:** Highlight successes resulting from landscape conservation initiatives and partner biologists who assist in Farm Bill conservation delivery (e.g. SGI, GWWA WLFW). Use these successes as examples and emphasize their benefits to multiple species and improved ecosystem services.

**Action b:** Work with the Joint Ventures to arrange a series of regional workshops with Farm Service Agency staff to expand the JV/FSA partnership and explore new opportunities for conservation.

**Action c:** Continue to further partnerships between JVs and NRCS, building off the 2015 JV/NRCS workshop in Mississippi. Engage NRCS to seek ways for them to be better involved on JV management boards, etc.

**Strategy ii:** Assist NRCS in building and maintaining field delivery capacity by cost-sharing existing partner biologist positions and expanding the number of partner biologists in regions currently underrepresented and identified as high priority areas by Joint Ventures, LCCs, SWAPs, and bird initiatives.

**Action a:** NABCI partners will assess the delivery capacity of partner biologists (e.g., location, conservation focus, etc.) and share results with NRCS staff and leadership as well as partner organizations.

**Action b**: The Subcommittee will use this assessment to develop a sustainable database that quantifies the partner capacity across the country. This database will serve as both an informational resource (e.g., may include a map component that provides location/contact information for partner positions) as well as a tool for summarizing the effectiveness of partner positions.

The subcommittee will draft a workplan outlining the objectives and benchmarks for designing and completing the database. We anticipate it will be built in stages, likely by prioritizing regions and building out.

Given the potential scope and scale of this effort, we anticipate contracting the work and needing external funding for completion.

**Action c**: Using the assessment and database in Actions a and b, identify and/or encourage joint funding for increasing the delivery capacity (i.e. increasing staff on the ground) from NRCS as well as other sources (e.g. NFWF Conservation Partners Program, USDA Forest Service: State and Private Forestry, states and NGO’s).

**Strategy iii:** Work with NABCI partners to address science needs related to improving targeted conservation on private lands for the greatest benefit to birds and other wildlife.

**Action a:** Develop a webpage(s) on the NABCI website to serve as a clearinghouse that highlights decision tools developed by partners used in Farm Bill conservation program delivery.

**Action b:**  In collaboration with the NABCI Human Dimensions Subcommittee, work with NABCI partners to identify and address social science/human dimensions related questions that will improve the delivery of bird conservation practices in private lands.

**Strategy iv:** NABCI partners will pursue opportunities to invest in and develop outcome-based monitoring programs and evaluate population-level impacts on birds and other wildlife from NRCS conservation programs.

**Action a:** Provide successful examples of monitoring efforts that show value added benefits to multiple species from species specific programs (e.g., SGI, NBCI, WLFW) and/or evaluate the effectiveness of practices on the ground (benefits to both landowners and wildlife).

**Action b:** In collaboration with the NABCI Monitoring Subcommittee, work with NABCI partners to identify opportunities for collaboration to enhance monitoring on private lands, especially for citizen science opportunities.

**Strategy v:** Upon passage of next Farm Bill, NABCI partners will update the 2014 Farm Bill Field Guide to Fish and Wildlife Conservation document and distribute to partners.

**Conservation Goal III: Advance and support private lands conservation for birds outside of NRCS/FSA programs**

**Strategy i:** Engage land trusts in bird conservation (Land Trust Alliance as well as regional and national land trusts), educating them on what they can do for birds, resources for them. Use current examples from AMJV, IWJV, RMBO, others where land trusts are valuable partners.

**Action a:** Subcommittee members meet with Land Trust Alliance (LTA) to identify opportunities for collaboration and discuss the most efficient/effective methods of distributing bird conservation information to land trusts.

**Action b:** Assist with efforts to integrate bird conservation metrics into Land Trust conservation efforts, with birds serving as indicators to conservation objectives.

**Action c:** Assist Cornell Lab of Ornithology with their land trust engagement:

Help develop and review materials for bird conservation workshops for land trusts. These workshops will be presented at regional and national land trust meetings to provide technical information and get better engagement with the birdtrust.org website.

Facilitate development land trust bird conservation collaboratives, which are partnerships among clustered land trusts. Subcommittee will work with NABCI partners to identify and facilitate local partnerships.

**Strategy ii:** Engage USFS State and Private Forestry and State Forest Agencies.

**Action a:** NABCI reps meet with USFS Private, state and national/regional leadership to discuss program needs and opportunities to advance bird conservation

**Action b:** Develop and share tools similar to those described in Goal II, Strategy iii above (e.g., Vermont Audubon’s Foresters for the Birds Toolkit)

**Action c:** Identify existing collaborations NABCI partners have w/ State Forestry groups, especially when they are focused on bird conservation efforts, and provide these as examples for others, describing what has worked well

**Strategy iii:** Engage Partners for Conservation (national landowner group)

**Action a:** NABCI reps meet with Partners for Conservation leadership to discuss opportunities and strategies to advance bird conservation on private land.

**Action b:** Coordinate hill visits with Partners for Conservation, JV’s and NABCI. Develop shared messaging regarding the Farm Bill and other strategic needs for bird conservation.

**Strategy iv:** Engage game and conservation NGOs and initiatives with strong private lands programs and overlap. Focus on messaging, how their work benefits birds and why benefits to birds are important, and how they can plug into the work of our partners.

**Action a:** Develop messaging and outreach materials (and roll up existing messages) with Game Species NGOs that demonstrates multi-species benefits from habitat management. Coordinate this effort with AFWA’s Upland Game Bird and Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Groups so these messages also involve state agencies.

**Action b:** Develop and share tools similar to those described in Goal II, Strategy iii above.

**Action c:** Coordinate Hill visits with representatives from these organizations and JVs to demonstrate partnership successes and benefits to multiple species

**Strategy v**: Engage USFWS Partners Program

**Action a:** Meet with FWS Div. of Habitat Restoration personnel and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Review state level plans and highlight bird focal species identified in those plans.

Discuss opportunities for using birds as indicators of impacts from their projects (citizen science monitoring). Look at/synthesize existing work looking at engaging landowners in monitoring efforts.

**Action b:** Provide examples of successful targeted bird conservation projects where USFWS Partners Program was involved.