



North American Bird Conservation Initiative- US Committee

31 January-1 February 2018

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041



Still smiling after an all-day meeting! More than 45 individuals representing 28 organizations attended the Winter 2018 NABCI meeting.

NABCI Coordinator Overview- *Judith Scarl, NABCI Coordinator/AFWA Bird Conservation Program Manager*

Related Materials: [NABCI Work Plan Progress Report](#)

NABCI's capacity has grown tremendously over the past few years; more than 70 individuals participate on NABCI's Subcommittees, with 13 NABCI partners playing a leadership role in the Subcommittees. Four federal agencies, all of the states, and seven NGOs make direct annual financial contributions to NABCI; all of these annual NGO commitments are new in the last two years. The Coordinator distributes informal NABCI News emails to more than 275 people, and our All-Bird Bulletin Blog has a direct distribution of 900. This increased participation and interest reflects the increasing value partners see in the NABCI partnership and help NABCI to strengthen communication within the bird conservation community and maintain an effective NABCI Committee, two of our strategic plan subgoals. NABCI's Human Dimensions and Private and Working Lands Subcommittees have excelled at facilitating science-based conservation efforts that support healthy bird populations, largely due to engaged, visionary Chairs and Co-Chairs and active Subcommittee members. NABCI's progress towards informing and supporting effective policy to advance bird conservation was demonstrated through a 2017 State of the Birds Farm Bill special report, which enabled targeted, focused communication about a critical bird conservation program.

The Coordinator encourages NABCI partners to consider leading or co-leading a NABCI Subcommittee; we are currently looking for a Legislative and Policy Co-Chair and a Private and Working Lands Co-Chair. Partners are also encouraged to engage colleagues in NABCI Subcommittees and connect interested individuals with Subcommittee leadership or with Judith Scarl. Sharing NABCI communications within your network helps the bird community connect to and take ownership of NABCI.

Follow-Up: NABCI partners continue to encourage colleagues/staff to participate in or lead NABCI Subcommittees.

Private and Working Lands Subcommittee report and discussion – *Todd Fearer, Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture*

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1e: *Promote and advance bird conservation objectives on both private and public lands.*

The PWL Subcommittee has been seeking new connections that focus on State of the Birds 2017: Farm Bill report recommendations; new partners include the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and the American Forest Foundation. Subcommittee highlights include:

- 1) **State of the Birds 2017- Farm Bill Special Report, and related Congressional engagement:** October 2017 event on Capitol Hill, in partnership with American Forest Foundation and Forest Resources Association; JVs are engaging Congress through tours at their home offices, relating information back to SOTB report.
- 2) **Evaluating Collaborative Potential on Farm Bill Platforms:** Subcommittee is compiling Farm Bill platforms from different organizations, from traditional partners (Ducks Unlimited, Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Audubon, etc) as well as non-traditional organizations (NACD, commodity groups, Forestry and Farm Bill Coalition). Subcommittee will look at platform alignment to increase engagement between organizations.
- 3) **Human Dimensions of Private Lands conservation, and a forum for partner biologists:** NABCI's PWL and HD Subcommittees developed and presented two sessions at the September 2017 Pathways Human Dimensions conference: 1) State of the Science of Human Dimensions related to private lands conservation; 2) Realities of implementation- how well that science translates to on-the-ground implementation. Partner biologists, employed by NGOs but working with landowners to implement Farm Bill programs, plan a critical role in bird conservation, both regarding conservation capacity but also private landowners' perception of Farm Bill programs. PWL Subcommittee plans to set up a forum for these shared biologist positions, to come together and exchange ideas, develop a community.

Discussion:

-General interest in private lands biologist forum, and discussion on whether the forum would be national or regional; PWL Subcommittee will engage employers to get their input. State agencies may be interested in having state-level staff participation to help launch this initiative.

-Question on whether Subcommittee is looking at the breadth of private lands, including urban and suburban areas; although Subcommittee is looking at this, not a lot of progress yet. PWL Work Plan emphasizes reaching out to other organizations that aren't necessarily Farm Bill focused (land trusts, state forest employees, etc) to evaluate opportunities.

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 1a: *Work collaboratively across countries to support partnership development that will advance full annual cycle conservation of migratory birds and their habitats.*

International Subcommittee report and discussion - *Greg Butcher, US Forest Service/Deb Hahn, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*

The [International Ornithological Congress](#) will be held in Vancouver from August 19-26, 2018, in partnership with the Vancouver Bird Festival. Greg will provide information to NABCI on meeting attendees and events.

In 2016, as part of the Centennial Celebration of the Migratory Bird treaty, NABCI released a [State of North America's Birds report](#), and the three North American countries were tasked with developing a

[Hemispheric Vision for Bird Conservation](#). The Convention for Migratory Species has commissioned a similar initiative- the Americas Flyways Framework (AFF)- which will develop a hemispheric action plan for bird conservation. Our Subcommittee and the three North American NABCI Coordinators are looking into how to align North America's Vision with the AFF action plan.

Species Assessment in Central America is done, and group plans to develop State of the Birds report on lessons from this assessment. BirdsCaribbean wants to do Caribbean species assessments, after which all of North America, through Central America, will have completed bird assessments. Consider new State of North America's Birds report when these assessments are completed?

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 1a4 Work with Coordinators of NABCI Canada and Mexico to support redevelopment of NABCI Canada Committee and identify shared priorities for collaboration between countries

NABCI Canada Progress and Partnership- Marie-France Noel, NABCI Canada Coordinator, Canadian Wildlife Service: marie-france.noel@canada.ca

NABCI Canada hired a Coordinator 1.5 years ago, prior to which that Committee had been dormant. Over the last 1.5 years, NABCI Canada has stood up an Executive Council with representatives from Canadian Wildlife Service, Joint Ventures, the provinces, NGOs, and Industry; this reflects the composition of NABCI Canada, which currently includes 29 representatives. NABCI Canada's major products include a State of Canada's Birds report (2012), Bird Conservation Region Strategies (2014), and the State of North America's Birds report (2016), which will help guide NABCI Canada's priorities. NABCI Canada aims for a spring 2018 launch of a revitalized NABCI Canada website. [Contact Marie-France](#) to sign up for NABCI-Canada news bulletins.

As part of a re-evaluation of NABCI Canada's priorities, NABCI Canada has identified four major roles for their Committee, and within these roles, they have identified key strategies- their next step is to develop actions for these strategies.

Role 1: Coordinate

Priority Strategies: 1) Collaborate with habitat conservation partnerships (such as Joint Ventures) for effective all-bird conservation; 2) Ensure dynamic partnerships to actively implement bird conservation at multiple scales across Canada.

Role 2: Communicate

Priority Strategies: 1) Coordinate the periodic production of the State of the Birds reports (Canada and North America); 2) Using various communications platforms showcase success stories, best practices and interesting pilot projects that demonstrate progress especially for bird groups at high risk (grassland birds, shorebirds, seabirds and aerial insectivores).

Role 3: Track Bird Conservation

Priority Strategies: 1) Advocate for a national habitat monitoring system to support adaptive management of bird conservation; 2) Coordinate the development of a comprehensive tracking system of bird conservation action in Canada that supports progress reporting and adaptive management.

Role 4: Influence Policy

Priority Strategies: 1) Assist cooperation on migratory bird conservation across the Western Hemisphere through existing, or by creating new, international agreements; 2) Successfully influence invasive species policies and best practices for wetlands, grasslands and islands/seabirds.

Questions and Discussion:

-What is the relationship between NABCI Canada and NAWCC Canada? They are formalizing representation from the group. Marie-France has been attending NAWCC meetings.

NABCI Mexico Progress and Partnership- Humberto Berlanga, NABCI Mexico Coordinator, CONABIO

Because of differences in the structure, complexity, and infrastructure of the bird conservation communities in the US and Mexico, our two countries' Committees function differently. NABCI Mexico has 10 representatives that held in-person meetings for 4-5 years, but currently communicates only electronically and via Humberto's relationships with Committee members. NABCI is now institutionalized through CONABIO, a federal organization that provides information about biodiversity to 12 different Mexican ministries. NABCI Mexico used the leadership of CONABIO to create a bird conservation agenda within the country, which it lacked 15 years ago. Currently, NABCI Mexico has 5 staff members, and their Committee has the same composition as it did when NABCI started.

NABCI Mexico's Focus:

- 1) Promoting partnerships and forming constituencies- In Mexico, the bird community is not big and it is very siloed. Academics are focused on research, not conservation; NGOs focus on raising money and protecting/managing areas.
- 2) Organizing conservation efforts across the country- Mexico has ~200 major protected areas, and NABCI Mexico helps to promote sustainable use of wildlife resources.
- 3) Making bird conservation popular/engaging people in bird conservation: NABCI Mexico creates space for people to get involved.

NABCI Mexico Projects include:

- Workshops to encourage the use of birds as indicators of socioeconomic interventions
- eBird
- Working with Guatemala and other Central American countries to incorporate citizen science and monitoring before and after socioeconomic interventions.
- Urban Bird programs across 35 cities
- Working with Island Conservation on invasive species
- Developing new approach to reduce the gap between agriculture, tourism, and other conservation sectors- pilot project using grasslands.

Discussion:

- Some members of US NABCI are discussing how to build a bird conservation constituency; Mexico's Urban Bird program may be a model for that conversation
- Potential opportunity to executive America's Flyways Framework in context of the conservation business plans



From left to right, north to south: Canadian NABCI Coordinator Marie-France Noel, US NABCI Coordinator Judith Scarl, Mexican NABCI Coordinator Humberto Berlanga. Featured Center: Canadian Wildlife Service mascot, Kwimu the Loon. This meeting marked the first occasion in many years where all three North American NABCI Coordinators were together in one place!

Monitoring Subcommittee Brief Update- Judith Scarl, NABCI

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1a: *Promote and advance bird monitoring that is integrated into strategic habitat conservation*

This Subcommittee spent a few years working on a demographics monitoring document which now has a complete draft, but the document needs unification across chapters, which Gray Anderson (Subcommittee Chair) is working on. A skeleton work plan for the Subcommittee was approved a year ago, and now the Subcommittee needs to work to develop a broader perspective/vision, agree on the most critical national needs for monitoring, and set a clear direction.

Monitoring Subcommittee Affiliated Project 1: Unified Science Team (UST)'s Efforts to Identify National Needs for Measuring Net Landscape Change- *Jorge Coppen, USFWS*

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1c: *Support efforts to coordinate and unify science capacity among national bird conservation partnerships to more effectively address shared ecological science challenges and needs; Subgoal 1c1a:* *Monitor and support efforts to identify common needs to measure and evaluate net landscape change between the bird conservation and broader communities*

Related materials: White paper on Net Landscape Change Needs and Recommendations: [Full Recommendations](#) and [Executive Summary](#)

Understanding landscape composition change allows us to better plan habitat conservation delivery in a transparent, cost-effective, and efficient manner. As landscapes are altered by loss and degradation from urbanization, agricultural expansion, energy development, and climate change, it is increasingly important to incorporate an understanding of landscape change into conservation strategies. For example, Migratory Bird Joint Ventures (JVs) need to predict how landscapes, habitats, and populations will respond to future change to best allocate habitat to meet those future needs. The Unified Science Team (UST) conducted an assessment across JVs to evaluate each partnership's need for data to assess landscape composition in key habitats and to identify common needs across JVs.

Based on this assessment, the UST recommends focusing on three key needs: 1) improve classification and qualitative assessments of grassland and shrubland habitats; 2) increase communication with NRCS regarding National Resources Inventory (NRI) data needs and accessibility; 3) assess opportunities to update the National Land Cover Database (NLCD). In addition, UST also mentions the need to fulfil FWS mandates to update the National Wetlands Inventory as fully as practicable. For more information on these recommendations, see accompanying White Paper.

UST requests that NABCI serves as the mouthpiece for this request, acting as a conduit between the JV science community and those that hold the data.

Discussion

There is general agreement that this represents a very significant need, and that it would be helpful for NABCI to provide a voice in support of this need. Committee discusses whether needs are funding-related or primarily caused by an analysis bottleneck; for example, with the NLCD, part of the delay is image processing time. Individuals also mention that some monitoring is moving towards satellite imagery and away from national datasets. What can we get out of free, global remote sensing systems, given that it may not be feasible to have national datasets?

NABCI discusses the possibility of drafting a resolution calling on federal agencies to collect and disseminate appropriate data. Federal agencies can't sign on to anything that dictates how other agencies should act, but could support something that talks about the value of databases and improvements to these data sets. One suggestion is to convene a higher-level group that is in charge of these programs and get a recommendation from an inter-agency team on what is feasible. Since other partners use these products, this is a good opportunity to engage other partners as well.

Individual NABCI agencies provide information and offer to help:

USGS: In partnership with NASA, USGS is supporting LANDSAT 9, a global satellite mapping effort. The spatial resolution of LANDSAT9 images will be 15 m (49 ft) for the panchromatic band and 30 m (98 ft) for the multispectral bands. The image swath will be 185 km (115 mi) wide, covering wide areas of the Earth's landscape while providing sufficient resolution to distinguish land cover features like urban centers, farms, and forests. The launch date is 2020. The USGS Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS) Center is a remotely sensed data management, systems development, and research field center for the Land Resources Mission Area. Priorities for the EROS Center include (1) improving the understanding of the rates, causes and consequences of land-use and land-cover change by monitoring land change as it is occurring, (2) providing real-time and other assessments of those changes and (3) informing stakeholders on the potential threats and management options for changing conditions. Melanie Steinkamp from USGS offers to serve as a point person to connect with others in USGS who are experts land use/land cover change.

NRCS: The challenge with NRI data is that there is some personally identifying information (PII), so there are limitations on what can be shared. Having more specific detail on exactly what data, at what scale and for what purpose would help in navigating PII issues. Note that two people from the University of Montana are working on a project that utilizes NRI data and NRI-like information collected on BLM land to train and validate a number of models that will be used to generate land cover maps (percent cover of annual and perennial herbaceous vegetation, shrubs, bare ground and litter) into the future. Dr. Naugle and Dr. Allred have offered to provide a webinar explaining this work. Danielle Flynn would serve as NRCS liaison to connect to appropriate people within NRCS and wants to better understand the specific needs of the UST.

Several Committee members agree that NABCI's Monitoring Subcommittee is the appropriate liaison to better define NABCI's ask to agencies and whether this is a funding ask or a request to evaluate other pathways.

David Whitehurst makes a motion to ask the Monitoring Subcommittee and the Legislative and Policy Subcommittee to consider this discussion and bring back to NABCI a recommended way to communicate this need as soon as possible. David also recommends that the Executive Council should be granted the authority to act on behalf of the Committee between meetings on this issue. Todd Fearer seconds. The motion passes unanimously.

Follow Up: This discussion was continued on Thursday morning, when John Alexander presented draft language for a resolution on how to proceed. Discussion included:

-As stated, would be challenging for at least one of the relevant federal agencies to respond to the proposed resolution

-We got a commitment yesterday from federal partners to connect team to geospatial/data people.

-Important to ensure that we have an action, and that the Monitoring subcommittee takes this on as a charge

-Be careful with the language of any charge- this should be a directive to partners to work with federal agencies to address, rather than a charge to federal agencies

Follow-Up: As originally proposed, the Monitoring Subcommittee should further refine the language of the action and submit to the Executive Council for consideration. Ken Rosenberg and John Alexander to lead?

Additional Follow-Up Needed: Follow up with federal partners who have offered to connect with data experts and leaders within their agencies; develop strategy for communicating expressed needs to agencies.

Human Dimensions Subcommittee report and discussion- Ashley Gramza, Virginia Tech/Tammy VerCauteren, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1b: *Enable bird conservation partners to integrate human dimensions science and tools into bird conservation efforts.*

Related Materials: [Human Dimensions Subcommittee 2017 Accomplishments](#)

This Subcommittee's accomplishments include a [HD Fact Sheet](#) with broad distribution, organized symposia at the Pathways Human Dimensions conference in September 2017, and collaboration with NAWMP on the Viewer elements of their Hunter/Viewer survey. Ashley Gramza, the National Bird Conservation Social Science Coordinator, receives 4-6 requests per month from partners wishing to understand how to apply HD to projects or get feedback on projects/proposals.

Subcommittee's Current Projects

- 1) **CRP project within the Playa Lakes Joint Venture region:** Between 2020-2022, two thirds of CRP projects expire, which will affect a lot of intact grasslands. This project examines why people enroll in CRP and what they plan to do after contracts expire- how do we encourage them to keep their land as grass? Opportunity to match social and ecological aspects- how do producers' perceptions of the landscape compare to what is happening on the ground, and how does this factor back into their decisions?
- 2) **NAWMP Hunter/Viewer Survey:** Hunter and Viewer reports came out on January 26, 2018; Subcommittee will synthesize reports and evaluate how to use data to engage the public.
Committee member comment: It would be helpful to use these data to better understand the spectrum from birders to bird lovers.
One of the Subcommittee's 2018 priorities is to evaluate what additional information we can mine from these data.
- 3) **State and Joint Ventures Work:** Not all JVs, and not all states, have Human Dimensions capacity or expertise. Subcommittee is working with JVs on guidance document to help JVs integrate HD work into planning and implementation.
- 4) **HD Success Story Map:** Subcommittee shared a prototype story map, which will be released in March and highlight 11 successes. Successes involve case studies where social science is integrated to help bird conservation in some way.
- 5) **HD Webinar Series:** This Subcommittee will also start an HD webinar series in collaboration with the Unified Science Team, with webinars scheduled for 13 February, 20 March, and 17 April at 3pm Eastern time. The first webinar will be a broad overview of HD and how the community has been using HD. The second webinar will focus on how to integrate HD into planning.
- 6) **Building a Bird Conservation Constituency:** Led by Terry Rich, a group had an initial meeting on January 30 to discuss building a bird conservation constituency. Discussion centered around who to target- 45 million Americans who watch birds at their feeders, or the 300k serious birders? Group decided to focus on the core first and will consider a one-day workshop/meeting prior to the summer NABCI meeting.

Follow Up: [Contact Terry Rich](#) if you would like to get involved in the Building a Bird Conservation Constituency Work Group.

Communications Subcommittee report and discussion - EJ Williams, American Bird Conservancy
NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 2: *Strengthen communication within the bird conservation community.*

NABCI Template: EJ notes that several of the previous presentations have had a consistent look, which represents the NABCI Powerpoint template developed by the Communications Subcommittee. Rachel Levin is the new Co-Chair of this Subcommittee, replacing Matt Cimitile, who took a new job.

Blog: The [All-Bird Bulletin Blog](#) is distributed bi-monthly and aligns with six key themes: Monitoring, Human Dimensions, International, Private and Working Lands, Birds as Indicators, and Birds and Public Policy. EJ encourages NABCI partners to sign up for blogs.

NABCI Tagline: NABCI is looking to develop a tag line to be used on communications (such as our fact sheets) that is a quick phrase to tell people what NABCI is. The audience will be broad. The Communications Subcommittee distributed a survey to Committee members prior to the meeting asking them to rank potential tagline options. Options were developed based on feedback/suggestions from last NABCI meeting, word cloud from NABCI's work plan, and Communications Subcommittee suggestions. Top options were: "Partners in Bird Conservation" (50% liked/28% disliked) and "Partners in Birds, Habitats, and People" (45% liked/54% disliked). No options were overwhelmingly supported.

The Committee discussed NABCI's current and future audiences, which differ by product. NABCI currently has four audiences: bird conservation professionals are our primary audience, with non-traditional partners, leadership, and the public as audiences for some of NABCI's communications or initiatives. Several Committee members suggested that tag line must be broad to accommodate flexible audiences. One purpose of a tag line is to distinguish ourselves from others in bird conservation, attract people, catch their attention.

There was some enthusiasm about having a context for people to submit ideas that can be sent through informal tests to gauge response. EJ will solicit suggestions for either full-blown taglines, or words that might resonate.

Follow Up: EJ will solicit suggestions from NABCI for tag lines or words that might resonate in a tag line.

Follow Up: NABCI Committee members contact EJ to sign up for 2018 Blog. Each NABCI Committee member organization is expected to contribute one blog per year.

Follow Up: Other Subcommittees are asked to submit their communications needs to the Communications Subcommittee a few months in advance.

The Relevance of Bird Conservation: Initial Messaging for Partner Outreach- *Steve Albert, Institute for Bird Populations*

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 2b: *Demonstrate bird conservation's strong ties to healthy land, water, and people in order to communicate relevance beyond birds; Subgoal 2b2: Develop initial talking points supporting bird conservation relevancy for meetings with agency leadership, funding organizations, and non-traditional partners*

Related Materials: [DRAFT Document: Linking Bird Conservation to Human Benefits](#)

Background: NABCI's Executive Council is charged with reaching out to organizational leadership to demonstrate how and why bird conservation is relevant to them and their agencies. Ad hoc team was charged with developing some initial relevancy talking points- how is bird conservation linked to clean air, clean water, human health, and economics? Team is developing a broad document with several examples of bird conservation's links to these human priorities; ultimately NABCI will create a one-pager where examples can be switched in and out, depending on audience. This document will be designed to help bird conservation professionals reach NABCI's other three audiences (leadership, non-traditional partners, general public), and tries to summarize why birds are important and how they matter to what Americans value most.

Discussion: Committee members respond very positively to document and suggest additional ways to promote content, including: linking examples to NABCI news, use individual examples as Facebook post, building a webpage with the template for a one-pager that also includes many examples and pictures. NABCI can provide a few sample one-pagers but give partners the flexibility to create their own.

Follow Up: Relevance Team will move forward with developing sample one-pagers for partners and work with Communications Subcommittee to explore opportunities to promote content.

National Bird Conservation Priorities- *Judith Scarl, NABCI/Tammy Vercauteren, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies/Todd Fearer, Appalachian Mountain JV*

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 1: *Support, develop, integrate, and promote priorities of regional, national, and international bird conservation partnerships.*

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 1: *Facilitate coordinated communication with government leadership about highest priority programs, initiatives, and needs of bird conservation.*

Background: One of NABCI's roles is to help the bird community speak with a unified voice about common priorities. In our Strategic plan, NABCI agrees to support, develop, integrate, and promote priorities of regional, national, and international bird conservation partnerships, and to facilitate coordinated communication with government leadership about highest priority programs, initiatives, and needs of bird conservation. NABCI is developing a short list of top priorities that NABCI should support, promote, and communicate to leadership and potential partners over the next 3-5 years to advance NABCI's vision. Over the last six months, using feedback from the NABCI Committee, Bird Conservation Plan Partnership Coordinators, and the small Priorities team, we developed 5 broad conservation themes: Land and water conservation, Addressing Threats, Research and Evaluation, Engagement and Partnerships, and Funding and Policy. Each Theme has 3-6 strategies, which reflect the high-level, core needs for bird conservation. Within each Strategy, there are multiple actions. This results in a huge document that represents the breadth of conservation efforts. The next step is to create a second, shorter document, that focuses on specific actions that NABCI wishes to highlight over the next 3 years.

Survey: NABCI Committee members responded to a survey to identify which actions within each strategy we might want to elevate when we communicate with leadership or partners. Identified actions will not necessarily be limited to those that NABCI itself will lead; NABCI's primary role will be to highlight and promote these actions. Committee members were asked, "*Which TWO of the following actions within this strategy should NABCI elevate over the next 3 years, based on the [listed] criteria?*" Criteria were: 1) These actions *most urgently need to happen* in order for NABCI's vision to be achieved, and 2) *It will be possible to make progress* on this action over the next ~3 years. 20 out of 25 (80%) of active Committee members responded to the survey, and at least 50% of responding Committee members marked the same action as meeting the proposed criteria for 16 out of 19 questions, indicating some level of agreement.

Developing our Short List: Committee members were asked: "*If at least 50% of responding Committee members marked an action as meeting the proposed criteria, can we live with including this action on our final short list?*" Group agreed to proceed using these criteria, although there was some concern that 1) resulting list would still be too broad (i.e. highlight too many actions) OR 2) resulting list could have strategies without actions (i.e. highlight too few actions).

For strategies without 50+% of Committee members voting for the same action, group discussed how to proceed, and agreed to limit the number of actions for those strategies and take a straw poll to evaluate likelihood of consensus. Group discussed what we were trying to achieve, and comments included:
-Individual Committee members likely voted for particular birds of interest

-All listed actions are important, so we may be identifying issues that the largest proportion of the bird community agrees on; use caution when communicating about what our final list represents

-We are prioritizing our communication needs and available resources, not which actions are most important for conservation

-How will we measure success in communicating these priorities? Potential answer: We will go back to our intended audience. Are these partners using our list of priorities to guide decision-making? Are we successfully forming or facilitating partnerships with new groups that share these priorities? If yes, we are successful.

Committee moved forward with examining three strategies without clear consensus, as well as one additional strategy where votes were very close.

Actions selected for inclusion for these four strategies are as follows:

Strategy: Minimize direct anthropogenic threats to birds and their habitats.

Action: Minimize the threats from improper siting of energy development (11 out of 20 votes)

Strategy: Promote and support biological and social science research that can be used to inform strong conservation decisions and actions.

Action: Fill knowledge gaps about population status and limiting factors, including by using integrated population models to assess limiting factors and causes of species declines (10 out of 20 votes)

Strategy: Strengthen policy compliance and enforcement nationally and internationally.

Action: Creating an aware constituency that respects environmental and wildlife policies and laws and adherence to protected area management plans. (10 out of 20 votes)

Strategy: Restore functional natural processes and regimes, such as fire patterns, natural hydrology, and other management that mimics natural disturbance, and keep disturbance within normal limits.

Group indicated that of four possible choices, these could potentially be reduced to two. Judith Scarl will work with a few others (Greg Butcher and David Whitehurst?) to combine these actions.

Next Steps/Follow Up:

-Judith will work with a few others (Greg Butcher, David Whitehurst?) to combine actions as noted above.

-Judith will share document with themes, strategies, and actions that received 50% consensus with Priorities team. Since there is some debate about whether this will still be too broad, she will also share document with higher threshold for consensus.

-Engage self-identified audience for document to evaluate whether this meets their needs; modify as appropriate.

-Tweak language as necessary to ensure we are appropriately conveying our message.

-Develop communications strategy/begin sharing document.

The Status of Bird Conservation Policy, Regulations, and Budgets

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3: *Inform and support effective policy to advance bird conservation*

Migratory Bird Treaty Act: DOI Solicitor's Opinion on MBTA interpretation and how USFWS policy will change as a result of this interpretation (Information Only)- *Ken Richkus, US Fish and Wildlife Service*

On December 22, the Department of the Interior [released an opinion](#) stating that incidental take of migratory birds is no longer enforceable under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as long as the activity in question is legal, and the purpose of that activity is not to kill birds. USFS is trying to understand that opinion and how it affects policies and practices within the Service; many questions center around [Executive Order 13186](#) and MOUs through that Order, many of which mention incidental take. The Opinion also affects policies around permitting, especially regarding nest destruction, and USFWS is

trying to get further guidance about this. The Endangered Species Act, Bald and Golden Eagle protections are still in play, so incidental is still illegal for these species, as well as under some state laws.

Discussion:

Some MOUs between federal agencies have expired and stalled; what impact will this Solicitor's opinion have on this process? Since the MOUs were established under EO 13186, not the MBTA, they should still be valid, and the Solicitor's opinion should not affect the process of re-activating the MOUs. Note that the Department of Defense will distribute a memo with a similar message, noting that the EO has not changed, the Readiness Rule is still in play, and DoD will continue to do bird conservation.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Review Process- Proposed Changes- *Greg Butcher, US Forest Service*

US Forest service is revising NEPA procedures in order to streamline, with comments being accepted through Friday. NEPA was passed in the 1970s and applies to all federal agencies. NEPA is the law that establishes the rules for environmental impact statements and environmental assessments. Due to many different views about these processes, many comments are expected.

Discussion:

-How does MBTA and MOUs under EO13186 influence this? Answer: NEPA is more involved in habitat, with MBTA applying to mortality other than habitat. However, the change in MBTA interpretation could lessen the number of species that could be invoked under NEPA.

Current Status of Federal Budgets and Implications for Bird Conservation- *Round Robin, all Federal partners*

US Fish and Wildlife Service: Under a Continuing Resolution for FY18 until 8 February, and President's Budget for 2019 is due to be released on February 12. Likely to be looking at further reductions in budget. Note that North American Wetlands Conservation Act and Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grants can't be issued under a CR.

Note: The USFWS Director will host a moderated call for partners on February 13th regarding the President's Budget; contact Darin Schroeder (Darin_schroeder@fws.gov) if you'd like to be invited.

National Resource Conservation Service: NRCS has a unique situation in that their funding is authorized under the Farm Bill, so their program funding is not subject to annual appropriations. But funding for specific programs such as EQIP comes with rules and regulations regarding program priorities, so they don't have flexibility in how these funds are spent. NRCS also receives discretionary funding for technical assistance, which is how they pay their staff- TBD how much technical assistance funding they will receive.

US Forest Service: Similar to USFWS, under a CR, salaries get paid, but they can't issue grants. USFS tries to finish their grant season by June 30th, so this may lead to tight turnaround time for grant administration for FY18.

Bureau of Land Management: Similar to USFWS, but they don't have a grant-ending time like USFS. Instead, they go through a grant process on grants.gov and whenever they get money, will try to post grant opportunities and go through a 2-month review period as required. Note that the President's budget for FY18 proposed severe cuts to sage grouse funding, but Congress may restore most of that, which could provide opportunities for sage brush-focused projects.

Farm Service Agency: FSA is close to their cap for CRP, so even if they want to do projects under CREP or other programs they are prevented; there will be more competition for CRP acres moving forward unless the cap is raised in the next Farm Bill.

National Park Service: It is challenging to provide new funding (for example, for NABCI) when NPS is facing severe budget cuts and there is a strong emphasis to work in the field.

Department of Defense: Following several years of cuts, DoD is expecting a bump up in funding for natural resources work. These funds will go directly to the installations to implement compliance-driven priorities. DoD does not anticipate restoration of DoD Legacy Resource Management Program funding,

which provides competitive awards to high priority natural and cultural resource management projects that can't otherwise be funded by individual installations.

Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife (AAFW)- Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA)-
Sean Saville, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, ssaville@fishwildlife.org

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 1b2: Coordinate with Blue Ribbon Panel to secure viewer-based funding for bird conservation

The [Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife Act](#) is the expansion of the Blue Ribbon Panel- BRP was rebranded to be more representative of what group wants to accomplish. One of the BRP recommendations regarding funding was introduced as legislation in the House of Representatives- [Recovering America's Wildlife Act](#), introduced 12/14/2017 by representatives Fortenberry (R-NE) and Dingell (D-MI) as bill HR-4647 and has 7 co-sponsors as of 31 January 2018.

NABCI's State of North America's Birds report reinforces some of the messaging that AAFW is using in their campaign and pushes towards similar conservation action. With its proposal to dedicate \$1.3 billion annually towards wildlife conservation, RAWA could be one of the largest conservation windfalls in recent history, and many of the Species of Greatest Conservation Need that would benefit from this funding are birds. The need for increased funding is apparent- State and Tribal Wildlife Grants provide a small part of necessary funding, and RAWA proposed funding levels are derived from what it would cost to implement State Wildlife Action Plans at 75%.

AAFW has been conducting market tests and evaluating how to engage specific audiences. There is good economic data on outdoor recreation. Much of the leadership they are trying to engage is in the west, so a lot of AAFW's messaging focuses on western states. The campaign website is OurNatureUSA.com, and its main purpose is to capture comments for the public to send to their constituents. The AAFW also has social media channels (Facebook: Our Nature. Our Nation. Our Future. Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr: @OurNatureUSA. YouTube: Our Nature USA.) A [campaign video](#) drives traffic to the website.

Next Steps include:

- 1) Gather Co-Sponsors for RAWA in House of Representatives, and secure support for Senate introduction
- 2) Use Alliance partner networks and communication channels to amplify message and secure public support for bill- see Alliance sign-on letter on campaign website. Partner organizations can do grassroots advocacy.
- 3) Continue to drive traffic to www.OurNatureUSA.com website
- 4) Promote campaign video
- 5) Engage public in advocacy
- 6) Engage key stakeholders through conferences, conventions, public forums, trade shows, etc.

Discussion and Questions

- *How do you see NABCI or the broader bird community adding value to the Alliance?* NABCI itself may not do advocacy, but partners do. Communicate through our structure, help put efforts in context and highlight the importance of this funding for a larger bird conservation effort.
- *NABCI is considering a 2018 State of the Birds report focused on RAWA and the role state agencies play in bird conservation. If we produce the report over the next 6 months, are we already too late?* Response: Since this is a mid-term election year, the fall will be challenging for messaging. There is an initial 90-day push happening now, but after the mid-term elections there will be a continued campaign. Ideal time to release report would be just before or just after election cycle.

- *Who do we need to mobilize, what is the time scale, and what is the ask?* Sean will provide information after the meeting. Note that they are more focused on Republicans than Democrats because of fiscal concerns on the price tag.
- *One case to be made is long-term cost savings from precluding the need to list species. Do you have enough case examples to communicate this story?* Yes, and they are creating state by state fact sheets, focused especially on states where there are members of the House Natural Resources Committee.
- *RAWA comes with a 25% non-federal match requirement. What work is being done to identify sources of match?* Responses from Committee members: This creates an opportunity to expand partnerships at a state level and also gives states leverage to secure more funding stateside. This match requirement will push partners to be more flyway-oriented to secure match across a Flyway. Note the importance of coordinating to make sure federal programs are not double-matched.
- *How confident are you that this \$1.3 billion can be secured without taking funding from elsewhere?* This will require additional work and discussions with the Budget and Finance Committee. One potential vehicle is to put this into the infrastructure package.

NABCI Follow Up: Consider what role (if any) your organization can play in the Recovering America's Wildlife Act Campaign.

Exciting Special Surprise- *Todd Fearer, Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture*



Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture Coordinator Todd Fearer presents former AMJV Chair, David Whitehurst, with an award in recognition of his leadership within this JV.

Legislative and Policy Discussions, Continued

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3: Inform and support effective policy to advance bird conservation; Subgoal 1- Facilitate coordinated communication with government leadership about highest priority programs, initiatives, and needs of bird conservation.

Legislative and Policy Subcommittee report and discussion - Jennifer Cipolletti, American Bird Conservancy

Following up from the [State of the Birds 2017: Farm Bill Special Report](#), NABCI partners distributed the report to members of Congress and hosted a Farm Bill Hill event reception and briefing, sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, American Bird Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever. Congressional sponsors were Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and John Boozman (R-AR). NABCI combined our event with the American Forest Foundation and Forest Resources Association Farm Bill event, which led to a much larger audience and expanded our reach to more Congressional delegates and staffers, as well as different audience members, including bird conservation partners, farmers, ranchers, and forest owners. 50-75 people attended report briefing, and ~250 attended reception, at which a Tree Farmer of the Year award was presented. Next steps for Farm Bill report include 1) Highlight requests/positions that align with or benefit bird conservation priorities; 2) Inform partners and others about Farm Bill policy and recommendations for 2018 Farm Bill; 3) Joint Venture Fly-In week of 25 February 2018. American Bird Conservancy will also be doing advocacy that week.

Additional Subcommittee Projects

- Subcommittee drafted document listing major policy items relevant to NABCI that will be a legislative focus in the near future and will follow up to recommend specifics on timing for messaging about these items.
- Subcommittee reviewed and updated (as appropriate) fact sheets on key bird conservation policies; updated fact sheets will be available on NABCI's website.

Legislative and Policy State of the Birds Report Recommendations

As part of NABCI's initiative to more closely link State of the Birds messaging with specific policies or legislation, the Legislative and Policy Subcommittee presented ideas for future focus of SOTB reports. These include:

- Focus on Recovering America's Wildlife Act
- Focus on the role state and federal wildlife agencies play in bird conservation
- Highlighting the importance of science in bird conservation

Note: Legislative and Policy Subcommittee seeks a Co-Chair to ensure group has the capacity to meet NABCI's needs. Contact Judith Scarl and Jennifer Cipolletti if you are interested in being considered for this role or if you have suggestions for who might be a good fit.

Discussion

-Will the L&P Subcommittee discuss the changes to the interpretation of the MBTA? Response: Need to ensure Subcommittee is addressing issues that are appropriate to NABCI as a partnership; addressing MBTA changes through NABCI may put federal partners in untenable position. Discussion: NABCI can potentially play a role in telling good stories to promote good practices- many industry partners may still have social motivation to engage in best practices. We can highlight the positive work being done through MOUs and voluntary Best Management Practices.

Follow Up: Subcommittee to ensure most up to date messaging is on NABCI website.

Follow Up: Contact Judith Scarl and Jennifer Cipolletti if you are interested in being considered for Legislative and Policy Subcommittee Co-Chair or if you have suggestions for who might be a good fit.

State of the Birds Subcommittee discussion- Ken Rosenberg, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and American Bird Conservancy/Tom Moorman, Ducks Unlimited

NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1d1: Produce State of the Birds reports that synthesize science and align with key policy programs or initiatives to provide an effective communication tool to encourage science-based conservation policy

Background: State of the Birds reports were initiated by the Department of the Interior in 2009 under the Bush Administration. Paul Schmidt and a small group produced the first report, and State of the

Birds subsequently became subcommittee of NABCI. The original idea was to produce a report that showed the status of populations every ~5 years and promote birds as indicators of environmental health. Last year, NABCI decided that the SOTB report should focus more closely on specific policy issues and outcomes, so in 2017, we created a special report on the Farm Bill, using bird science to promote conservation aspects of this legislation.

2018 SOTB Report Ideas

- Critical Role of Federal and State Governments in Bird Conservation
- Recovering America's Wildlife Act (Blue Ribbon Panel): Increase capacity of state wildlife agencies
- Maintain "basic" MBTA Protections for Migratory Birds
- Focus on grasslands- converging grassland initiatives around a continental effort
- Incorporate more elements of relevancy messaging- "Why Birds Matter"

As always, report will have strong science backdrop. Analysis shows that there has been a net population loss of 2.3 billion native landbirds since 1970, with a net loss across all habitats- the largest have been in grasslands and boreal forests. This highlights that current efforts to reverse declines have been insufficient and provides an important backdrop for whatever policy issue we focus on. Note that this is especially relevant to the Blue Ribbon Panel conclusions- that we need more funding for Species of Greatest Conservation Need in order to meet our conservation goals. We also have many successful conservation stories to build on, to show that conservation investment works.

Discussion

Discussion focused on the legislative cycle and timing for a report focused on the role state agencies play in bird conservation/Recovering America's Wildlife Act. The immediate push is to get a hearing in the Natural Resources Committee, and the bill's sponsor has administered a challenge to the Alliance for America's Fish and to find 125 Congressional supporters of the bill. There was general consensus that our next State of the Birds report should focus on why the Recovering America's Wildlife Act is important and the value of state agencies to bird conservation. There was also general consensus that NABCI partners that wish to participate in an early legislative push should focus on helping the Alliance get co-sponsors for the bill and individuals to sign the letter, but for the State of the Birds report, we should evaluate what happens between now and May and tee up a report, as appropriate, to be released after mid-term elections, tailoring the report to the messaging needs at that stage.

Additional comments from NABCI partners during discussion:

-Consider a pull-out with a one-pager on grassland birds, one-pager on forest birds, etc- tailored messages to target audiences

-Need to think about what messaging will resonate with the current administration

-RAWA is about enabling fuller implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans, which should lead to seamless integration of these SWAPs. Report should focus on fuller implementation and integration of plans.

-Possibility to have state by state profiles- is this something states could help with? If we start early, we can do a lot with the SOTB website and set up templates for states. Note that states are already doing messaging, so there are opportunities to integrate with existing messages. States also bring case-specific examples to Fly-ins, but it could be helpful to have a template to provide greater consistency. Note, too, that last Congress, TWS interns produced ~20 state fact sheets that may be able to be adapted for this report. And finally, note that it is important to include territories as well as states.

-Opportunity to identify common themes across states and cross-walk priorities from groups of similar SWAPs

-Consider highlighting the unique situation in Hawaii,

Individuals that expressed interest in participating include: Ken Rosenberg, Gordon Myers, Jeff Gordon, David Whitehurst, John Alexander, Steve Albert, Todd Fearer, Caroline Murphy, Stephen Brown, Dave Trevino, Tammy VerCauteren, Terry Rich, Bob Ford, Rachel Levin, Ashley Gramza, Judith Scarl. Note that there may have been others, and it's not too late to sign up!

Follow Up:

- NABCI to produce State of the Birds report focused on importance of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act is important and the value of state agencies to bird conservation.
- NABCI partners that wishing to participate in an early legislative push for RAWA should focus on helping the Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife get co-sponsors for the bill and individuals to sign the letter over the next 90 days
- NABCI will evaluate what happens between now and May and tee up a report, as appropriate, to be released after mid-term elections, tailoring the report to the messaging needs at that stage.