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**9-10 February 2016 US NABCI Committee Meeting**

**USDA, Patriot Plaza III**

**355 E Street SW**

**Washington, DC 20024**

**9 February 2016**

**Host Welcome**, Matt Ponish, Director of Conservation and Environmental Protection Division and Brad Pfaff, Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, Farm Service Agency

**NABCI Coordinator Updates** (*Judith Scarl, US NABCI Coordinator, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies)*

This NABCI meeting has two themes: communications and partnerships. 2016 is a critical year for communications in the bird conservation community: the anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial, the May 2016 release of the first tri-national State of the Birds Report, and the upcoming release of NABCI’s new website are key communication opportunities to advance and promote bird conservation. NABCI’s two discussion sessions address both communications and partnerships: we will evaluate NABCI’s role in full annual cycle conservation and consider NABCI’s representation to evaluate what perspectives we are missing on the Committee and how we represent the voice of bird conservation.

***Implementing the NABCI Strategic Plan-Goal 1*: Support healthy bird populations through habitat conservation, management, education, monitoring and sound science.**

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

*Goal 1C: Advance benefits of bird conservation on private and working lands*

PWL subcommittee is performing an assessment of private lands partner biologist capacity and depicting this information in a series of maps. Can summarize capacity by state, by Joint Venture, by employer, by initiative focus, etc. Purpose of assessment and mapping tool is to communicate successes as well as identify gaps in biologist coverage. Next Steps: gather additional information from states and NGOs, create interactive map from a continually updated, interactive database. Action Item: Committee members and community to provide additional sources of information about private lands partner biologists to Todd Fearer.

**Human Dimensions Subcommittee report and discussion** (Tammy VerCauteren, BCR)

 *Goal 1D: Enable bird conservation partners to integrate human dimensions science and tools into bird conservation efforts.*

***Related Materials*:** 1-pager with updates

**Upcoming HD Trainings**: [Human Dimensions Foundations of Natural Resource Conservation](http://training.fws.gov/nctcweb/catalog/CourseDetail.aspx?CourseCodeLong=FWS-CLM8226) at NCTC this November (for USFWS employees and others). Full day symposium at North American Ornithological Conference this August in DC: “Understanding and Engaging American Birdwatchers.”

**National Social Science Coordinator Position**: Keeping position open and flexible, with focus both on urban footprint as well as barriers to engaging in conservation, especially with private lands. Position will help to identify gaps in research/coordination/collaboration and serve as a go-to resource for HD. $35k/year secured, need to fill $50-55k gap. Potential sources of additional funding: State and Private Forestry, and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission will contribute funds if another organization will match.

Two Committee members note that this subcommittee demonstrates integration of multiple bird initiatives moving towards a common goal; strong example of what NABCI can accomplish when we develop a common theme across bird initiatives.

**Monitoring Subcommittee report and discussion** (David Pashley, American Bird Conservancy; Viviana Ruiz-Gutiérrez, Cornell Lab of Ornithology)

*Goal 1A: Promote and advance outcome –based monitoring and database management*

**Viviana Ruiz-Gutiérrez is the new subcommittee co-chair (David Pashley remains Chair).**

**Demographic Monitoring Document**: Demographic monitoring looks at geographically and temporally specific issues like reproductive success and survivorship to understand when and where bird populations are limited; this type of monitoring deals with issues of causation when possible. Demographic Monitoring Document will have four parts: 1) Introduction that summarizes the importance of demographic monitoring; 2) Technical chapter that addresses what data we need to populate models of bird species characteristics to understand what is going on with populations; 3) Integration of this information into management; 4) Internationalization- especially for long-distance migrants, many species may be limited by issues on wintering grounds/migratory routes; how do we develop resources to expand demographic monitoring throughout the hemisphere? Draft expected by late March, NABCI Committee will have opportunity for feedback before summer meeting.

**Next Steps for Subcommittee**: 1) focus on count-based monitoring with increased structure and standardization; 2) Develop documents that highlight strengths/features of AKN and describes its utility; 3) Disseminate information to practitioners and stakeholders; 4) Convince community of importance of monitoring.

**Discussion**: Committee members inquired how the monitoring subcommittee was engaged with the new Unified Science Team. Emphasis that communication between subcommittees is key to identify potential areas of collaboration, support, focus that are bigger than a single subcommittee.

***Implementing the NABCI Strategic Plan- Goal 2*: Maintain a well-coordinated bird conservation community.**

**Communications Subcommittee Report** (Greg Butcher, USFS; Matt Cimitile, AMJV)

*Goal 2A: Make NABCI priorities, tools, and resources readily available to the bird conservation community guided by a strategic communications plan*

***Related Materials:*** Draft web layout

**Matt Cimitile is the new Communications subcommittee co-chair (Greg Butcher remains Chair).**

Purpose of redesigned NABCI website: 1) serve as one-stop shopping for bird conservation in US; 2) house major products/tools/resources of NABCI and its subcommittees; 3) Engaging, easy-to-navigate source of information to serve a variety of partners; 4) Ability to manage and update easily. A draft structure was presented to the Committee (see NABCI packet). Anticipated Release: late summer 2016. Committee members, subcommittee co-chairs, and broader community to provide feedback on what content they’d like to see on website (links to other sites/resources, specific documents, etc) as soon as possible.

Each Subcommittee should assess communication needs and ask Communications Subcommittee for support.

**State of North America’s Birds Update** (Ken Rosenberg, Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Judith Scarl, NABCI)

*Goal 2G: Create State of the Birds Reports and WatchList*

***Related Materials****:* Current Draft of tri-national NABCI message

This year’s State of North America’s Birds (SONAB) will be a pioneering collaboration between the NABCI Committees of the US, Mexico, and Canada and calls for a renewed commitment to conserve birds across political boundaries. Within the next 2 weeks, SONAB team will send text and layout to NABCI committee for review, comment, and approval. The report will be released on 18 May 2016 in conjunction with the Migratory Bird Plenary at the Trilateral meeting in Ottawa, Canada. We will hold a simultaneous release in Washington, DC, most likely at the Canadian Embassy in partnership with International Migratory Bird Day. Communications Team is developing joint Centennial/SONAB messaging for articles in state and NGO publications. We need Communications specialists to help with the US release event logistics. Report layout will include double-page spreads (newspaper-style) focused on ecosystems; each 2-page spread will stand alone.

***Implementing the NABCI Strategic Plan- Goal 3: Inform and support effective funding and policy to advance bird conservation***

**Blue Ribbon Panel Updates** (Glenn Olson, Audubon; Mark Humpert, AFWA)

The Blue Ribbon Panel (BRP), chaired by Dave Freudenthal (former governer of Wyoming) and Johnny Morris (founder of Bass Pro Shops), is a collaboration between the outdoor recreation retail and manufacturing sector, the energy industry, conservation organizations, and sportsmen’s groups that evaluated the future of conservation funding to address 12,000+ at-risk species, many of which are birds. The panel will release its key recommendations on March 2 at a press conference at the Press Club. BRP recommends that $1.3 billion annually be dedicated to conservation funding, not subject to annual Congressional appropriations. BRP used a two-pronged strategy: 1) initial sprint to get legislation attached to Republican efforts to repeal a ban on oil and gas exports, which passed. 2) Long-term strategy and campaign to secure the $1.3 billion.

**Bird Conservation National Messaging and Coordinated Advocacy** (Judith Scarl, NABCI/AFWA)

*Goal 3Aii: Disseminate (and develop as necessary) messaging that reflects importance of key bird conservation programs (NAWCA, NMBCA, JVs, Duck Stamp, etc.)*

At the August NABCI meeting, NABCI formed a partnership with AFWA and the Association of Joint Venture Management Boards to more closely align advocacy efforts and messaging, and ultimately develop coordinated messaging and a strategy that can be used by the broader bird community. Three step process: 1) identify short list of programs that had broad importance across the majority of the bird conservation community (NAWCA, NMBCA, SWG, Joint Ventures, and Farm Bill); 2) develop/compile national-level, up to date messaging for each of these programs; 3) develop a strategy to engage partners in coalition. **Goal**: broad base of partners will use coordinated, national-level messaging to supplement their own messaging, tying organizational asks and priorities to a broader message to demonstrate how five national priorities are broadly applicable across bird community.

Action: Draft one-pagers for each program, as well as a document tying these five programs together, will be available for use and feedback by ~mid-March.

Action: Committee will distribute messaging to partners.

Action: Coalition needs a few people familiar with advocacy/policy to assist with strategy development and outreach; NGO/partnership Committee members are asked to reach out to their legislative/policy staff to solicit help.

**Workshop Outcomes Oversight Team (WOOT) Report and Future Directions** (Todd Fearer, AMJV)

*Goal 2C: Articulate and clarify how NABCI supports and advances the priorities of the bird conservation plan partnerships and vice versa*

*Goal 2D: Support migratory bird joint ventures.*

WOOT is developing one year progress report examining outcomes/action items from workshop, identifying what is left to do and next steps. First steps taken on several initiatives, such as developing a unified science team and hiring a national social science coordinator, but still need further action. WOOT will identify the next major steps for the next 1-1.5 years and use actions to guide what form the WOOT will take. Todd will send the WOOT report to the NABCI Committee.

**Additional Comments on NABCI Accomplishments and Subcommittees**

Many of NABCI’s accomplishments between meetings are a result of subcommittee work. Subcommittee progress is based on how much time people invest in subcommittees and their projects. NABCI’s Charter indicates that each Committee member will “participate or direct staff from his/her organization to fully participate on NABCI subcommittees and contribute to the development, promotion and implementation of NABCI projects and products.” Judith Scarl will distribute a list of current subcommittees and their members, and Committee members will evaluate where their organization/partnership can help.

**NABCI’s Role in Full Life-Cycle Conservation**

*Goal 2B: Facilitate greater understanding and clarity around development and implementation of conservation business plans.*

*Goal 2Hiii: Coordinate with the NABCI Coordinators in Canada and Mexico to work cooperatively on tri-national issues, particularly grasslands.*

***Related Materials****:* Conservation Business Plan Updates

**Presentations: What opportunities exist for NABCI to engage in full annual cycle conservation?**

**1. Purpose of Discussion and Goals** (Judith Scarl, NABCI): Two of the primary functions identified by NABCI’s charter are related to full annual cycle or international collaboration; we represent the US internationally in NABCI, and we identify and facilitate the delivery of those resources need to achieve conservation objectives for birds of the US wherever they may occur over the course of their entire life cycles. 2016 offers several opportunities to strengthen our commitment to international conservation: our tri-national State of North America’s Birds report calls for a renewed commitment to work together to conserve migratory birds, the Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial messaging emphasizes a re-investment in international bird conservation, and the Monitoring Subcommittee’s Demographics Monitoring Document highlights the importance of an international understanding of bird populations and their limiting factors.

**2. Background: NABCI’s historical role in full annual cycle conservation and engagement with NABCI Mexico and Canada** (Deb Hahn, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies): NABCI was created as a North American initiative. In the mid-2000s, NABCI identified and developed a series of Continentally Important Projects and in 2005 signed a declaration of intent for close collaboration between 3 NABCI Committees. Each NABCI Committee identified 3 representatives to a tri-national committee that met to discuss North American issues and collaboration. In recent years, tri-national engagement has waned.

**3. NABCI Mexico and NABCI Canada: Current Status and Opportunities** (Judith Scarl, NABCI): NABCI Mexico has a coordinator (Humberto Berlanga) and ~13 member organizations, but the Committee acts more as individual advisors for Humberto’s work and does not meet. NABCI Canada does not have a coordinator but anticipates a hire this spring. NABCI Canada has representatives from each province, some NGOs, industry, and federal. No regular meetings, but met last fall to discuss Centennial/State of the Birds. **Opportunities for tri-national engagement include:** 1) reinstating Trinational representative system and appointing 3 representatives; 2) Trinational representatives meet, possibly at Trilateral meeting in May, to discuss collaboration; 3) 3 NABCI Coordinators meet to discuss strategies for integration.

**4. Conservation Business Plans: Successes, Current Status, and International Needs** (Rob Clay, Manomet): Important lesson learned from business planning- make sure to involve stakeholders (including international) in the development of the plan. Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Business Strategy has evolved from a strategy, to a business plan, to an initiative with the support of multiple partners. In total, there are 8 Business Plans in different stages of development. Pacific Flyway Plan has held a series of meetings over last 6 months and will meet in Panama mid-February; these accomplishments have been possible because of dedicated funding support**. Challenges in Plan Development**: All plans have struggled to move forward- dependent on volunteers. Need to clearly define plan audience, identify structure and level of detail to include. **Recommendations**: 1) re-institute NABCI International Committee; 2) promote/facilitate both national and international engagement in Business Plans; 3) help provide expertise (e.g. Open Standards, MIRADI, etc); 4) help define standard format/level of detail for plans; 5) raise funds to hire individuals to complete plans and/or for planning workshops.

**5. Building Partnerships in Latin America** (Viviana Ruiz-Gutiérrez, Cornell Lab of Ornithology): Two needs for full annual cycle conservation: information and partnerships. Monitoring Subcommittee can start to fill critical information gaps, coordinate to get information on population status/distributions on wintering grounds. Need to integrate information needs of business plans with monitoring programs and priorities of in-country partners. Central American Species Assessment is the main source for conservation planning in these countries and has served to build strong in-country partnerships; US NABCI can support Mexico NABCI’s efforts to strengthen partnerships in Latin America.

**Recommendations**: 1) Expand on tri-national State of the Birds Report to implement collaborative conservation; 2) Support NABCI Mexico in partnership-building; 3) Monitoring, State of the Birds, and International Committees should engage in international partnership building

**Facilitated Discussion and Short Report from Breakout Groups**

**Group 1 Recommendations**

While this group supported the idea that NABCI’s long-term goal should support hemispheric conservation, this group suggested initially focusing on tri-national efforts and strengthening North American partnerships before engaging hemispherically. Participants were enthusiastic about revitalizing trinational efforts and recommended reviving the tri-national NABCI representatives without duplicating existing efforts of the migratory bird panel at the Trilateral. Group felt that supporting Mexico as a leader in Latin America could support hemispheric efforts. Suggestion to write up NABCI and partners’ successes and failures in international partnerships.

**Group 2 Recommendations**

The second group also recommended re-invigorating NABCI’s tri-national charge and suggested using the Migratory Bird Table to discuss NABCI issues at the Trilateral. A recommended task is for the US NABCI to submit an agenda item to the Migratory Bird Table. Group also supported the idea that the three NABCI Coordinators meet to discuss strategies for integration and ways to align with the international committee/Migratory Bird table. This group also focused on a more hemispheric approach, recommending the formation of an International Subcommittee of the US NABCI to discuss how best to coordinate in North American and beyond. Specific tasks include: establishing an international NABCI subcommittee, work to influence USAID and other US Government funding in other countries. Include Canada and Mexico in the discussion/decision of how to approach other organizations and countries. This group also recommended that US NABCI provide oversight to the conservation business planning process to help define standard format and level of detail and that US NABCI develops a proposal to secure funding to hire individuals to complete Business Plans/support planning workshops with key international stakeholders.

**Actions and Next Steps**

- Nominate 3 representatives from US NABCI, develop agenda for discussion b/w US, Mexico, and Canada on how the three countries can work together AND how we can support hemispheric conservation initiatives. (Brad Bortner and Judith Scarl will submit agenda item to migratory bird panel at Trilateral.)

-Establish international subcommittee to coordinate with Canada, Mexico, and beyond. (Subcommittee may be tasked with summarizing successes/failures to use as a mechanism to start building what a hemispheric vision looks like).

A motion was passed to form an international subcommittee. Members include: Brad Bortner (interim chair), Viviana Ruiz-Guttierez, Rob Clay, a representative from Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (TBD), a representative from the Shorebird Partnership (TBD), a representative from the Joint Ventures (TBD), Glenn Olson, Guy Foulks, maybe Kristen Koyama (State Department), Greg Butcher, Scott Johnston. First task of Subcommittee should be to designate Chair (NABCI Committee member) and Co-Chair; second task will be to further refine short-term and long-term goals.

**Day 2: 10 February 2016**

**Public Lands/Executive Order Council Proposal** (Geoff Walsh, BLM)

***Goal 2F:*** *Support and inform bird conservation efforts stemming from* ***Executive Order 13186 Council*** *for Conservation of Migratory Birds.*

*i. Create ad hoc working group to develop plan for NABCI’s engagement in the executive order council and present to US NABCI Committee.*

***Goal 3B: Implement recommendations*** *included in* ***State of the Birds reports***

Geoff Walsh proposed the formation of a Public Lands Subcommittee to accomplish the following goals: 1) follow up on the recommendations from the 2011 State of the Birds report, which focused on Public Lands and Waters, and 2) engage agencies that manage land in bird conservation. Geoff will circulate a white paper that describes vision and purpose for this Subcommittee. Group indicated that several good opportunities exist for public lands subcommittee projects but expressed concern that Subcommittee proposal did not yet have clear vision. Concern that prior Federal Subcommittee failed due to lack of clear vision and overly broad focus. Geoff will distribute white paper to small group that will help to refine the proposal, and then submit proposal to full NABCI Committee. Small group includes: David Hoge, Geoff Walsh, Greg Butcher, Todd Fearer, Sara Schweitzer, Bob Ford, John Alexander.

**Evaluating NABCI Representation**

***Purpose of Discussion:*** In 2014, NABCI completed a strategic plan to define its mission and goals. The next step is to evaluate whether we have the right membership/perspectives to achieve those goals. In addition, the bird conservation community has diverse and sometimes conflicting expectations of how NABCI best represents the broader interests and voice of the community. NABCI’s charter indicates that the Committee will consider new membership at the winter meeting in even numbered years. This discussion will focus on four key questions, listed below with a summary from each breakout group’s discussion. The responses to these questions will guide NABCI’s evaluation of member applicants as well as current and future discussions and decisions about NABCI representation.

**Question 1: How can NABCI represent the bird conservation community without placing every bird conservation organization or partnership on NABCI?**

**Group 1:** 1)A focus on bird groups (and existing Bird Plans) allows participation without all jurisdictions formally sitting on the Committee. If this is the core participation structure, can ask how individual organizations represent or contribute to these larger bird groups or plans. 2) Representation can be through dedicated sub-group(s) (such as subcommittees) and/or identified roles for groups to reach out to others not participating directly. However, group expressed concern that if organizational staff represented on a subcommittee, that organization would still want a voice on the main committee.

**Group 2**: Stronger communication between Committee members and broader community will help community feel part of NABCI voice.

**Question 2: What perspectives are missing or underrepresented on the NABCI committee?**

**Group 1:** Tribal groups, State Department/Defense Department, land conservation community, industry/sector associations (possibly as an opportunity to attract money), marine resource groups, recreational community (bird watchers, etc), states may still be underrepresented, ecological economics/human health groups (e.g. water quality), legislative views. Group notes that some of these interests can be represented by partnerships (Land Trust Alliance, Wildlife Habitat Council) so that a single entity could represent a broader community.

**Group 2:** Need a better understanding of strategic plan by more diverse groups to answer this question.

**Question 3: What characteristics of an individual, representing an organization on the Committee, are most important?**

**Group 1:** Commitment to participation, vertical and horizontal communication within their home organization, high-level influence, demonstrated and active interest in bird conservation and process or willingness to assign staff to engage.

**Group 2:** Someone with the ear of the executives and the time to come to meetings. Communicates with people on the ground.

**What are the pros/cons of limiting NABCI’s size, versus being more inclusive?**

**Group 1**: Pros of limiting size: NABCI’s less formal structure (allowing non-members to speak) enhances work, coalitions can represent similar organizations, having the right people at the table leads to an effective committee, size matters (smaller group is often more effective). Cons of limiting size: Groups not represented within formal structure may feel ignored, trust and transparency issues may arise.

**Group 2**: Pros of limiting size: Smaller committee may help accomplish tasks. Cons of limiting size: exclusivity may lead to feel of insider-outsider. Suggestion: Greater subcommittee involvement may facilitate accomplishment of actions- need actions, not just ideas!

**NABCI Committee Closed Session** (NABCI Committee representatives only)

The Committee acknowledged concerns brought by the community about NABCI’s inclusiveness and the perception that NABCI is a closed group. Several members supported the idea of having a broader meeting every 3-5 years, including more members of the bird conservation community, to help with communications and networking. We stressed the importance of strong communication, supported by all NABCI members, to build a sense of community and ensure that NABCI does represent the voice of each of our member organizations as well as the broader bird conservation community. This communication and networking extends to reaching out to Committee organizations that have been less active recently. We discussed how to best recognize contributions of individuals/organizations that are active on subcommittees but not formally on Committee.

Considering NABCI membership more broadly, several Committee members supported the idea of a more thorough conversation about NABCI membership as we develop our 2016-2018 strategic plan. In development of this next Plan we can identify which (if any) underrepresented groups we want to reach out to and recruit. We might consider rotating membership, and future Committee enlargement should be based on our strategic goals.

We considered four criteria when evaluating current applicants: **geographic scale, taxonomic scope, impact/importance of the applicant, and the immediate benefit provided to getting NABCI’s work done**. The NABCI Committee voted to accept all five applicants:

**Institute for Bird Populations**, represented by Steve Albert, Assistant Director for Demographic Monitoring Programs

**American Birding Association**, represented by Jeff Gordon, ABA President

**The Wildlife Society**, represented by Keith Norris, Director of Government Affairs & Partnerships

**Biodiversity Research Institute**, represented by Iain Stenhouse, Senior Science Director

**Avian Knowledge Network**, represented by John Alexander, Executive Director of Klamath Bird Observatory

The NABCI Coordinator will call each organization, and our Committee Chair will send a formal letter welcoming each organization to the NABCI Committee.

**Executive Council**: Greg Butcher replaces Geoff Walsh as the Federal representative to the NABCI Executive Council, and Tammy VerCauteren will serve another term representing NGOs on the Executive Council.

**Gary T. Myers Award**: The NABCI Committee voted to accept the Awards Subcommittee nomination for the Gary T. Myers award, which will be presented at the North American meeting in March, if the awardee can attend.

**Thanks for a great meeting!**