**Outcomes and Next Steps**

**10-11 February 2015 US NABCI Committee Meeting**

**US Forest Service International Programs**

**1 Thomas Circle NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC**

*Hemisphere solidarity is new among statesman, but not among the feathered navies of the sky. – Aldo Leopold (A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There, 1949)*

***NABCI Committee Member Attendees****:* **Jerome Ford**, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), **David Pashley**, American Bird Conservancy (ABC); **Gordon Myers**, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA); **Geoff Walsh**, Bureau of Land Management (BLM); **Ken Rosenberg**, Cornell Lab of Ornithology (CLO); **David Hoge**, USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA); **Glenn Olson**, National Audubon Society (NAS); **Greg Butcher**, U.S. Forest Service (USFS); **Catherine Hickey**, US Shorebird Conservation Partnership (phone); **Todd Fearer**, Migratory Bird Joint Ventures; **Dave Mehlman**, The Nature Conservancy (TNC); **Danielle Flynn**, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); **Scott Yaich**, Ducks Unlimited; **Bob Ellis**, North American Waterfowl Management Plan; **Brad Bortner**, Waterbird Conservation for the Americas; **Tammy VerCauteren**, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

***Guest Attendees*:** **Dean Smith**, AFWA; **Guy Foulks**, USFWS; **Deb Hahn**, AFWA; **Alicia King**, USFWS; **David Younkman**, ABC; **Brad Andres**, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Partnership; **Anne Law**, ABC; **Charisa Morris**, USFWS; **Roxanne Bogart**, USFWS; **Ashley Dayer**, CLO (phone); **Scott Johnston**, USFWS; **Rob Clay**, Waterbird Council (phone); **Jim Douglas**, AFWA, Migratory Shorebird & Upland Gamebird Working Group (WG); **David Whitehurst**, Partners in Flight (PIF); **Matthew Steed**, U.S. Department of State; **Steve Hilburger**, USGS; **Bob Ford**, USFWS; **Victoria Arthur**, USFS; **Leakhena An**, USFWS; **Anya Rushing**, USFWS; **John Beavers**, NAS; **Connie Sanchez**, NAS; **Mark Humpert**, AFWA; **Bridgett Collins**, AFWA; **Allison Vogt**, TNC; **Ken Williams**, The Wildlife Society; **Christopher Deets**, USFWS; **John Myers**, NAS; **Andrea Grosse**, USFWS; **Jon Putman**, National Park Service; **Dean Smith**, AFWA; **Erin Cooper**, USFS; **Jeff Gordon**, American Birding Association; **Breck Carmichael**, AFWA, Resident Game Bird WG; **Sara Schweitzer**, AFWA, PIF/Shorebird/Waterbird WG; **Emily Jo Williams**, ABC; **Mike Burger**, NAS; **Wilhibmena Bratton**, USFS; **John Sauer**, USGS; **Michael Kreger**, USFWS; **Jim Shallow**, NAS; **Monica Tomosy**, USFS; **Amy Tegeler**, S.C. Department of Natural Resources (phone); **Pam Toschik**, USFWS (phone); **Wendy Easton**, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) (phone); **Charles Frances** (CWS) (phone); **Kevin Doherty**, USFWS (phone).

**Goal 1: Support healthy bird populations through habitat conservation, management, education, monitoring, and sound science.**

**1. Agenda Item: Monitoring Subcommittee Report and Discussion**

***NABCI Strategic Plan Action 1A: Promote and advance outcome-based monitoring and database management.***

***Purpose of Agenda Item:*** *David Pashley reported on outcomes and recommendations from Subcommittee’s Demographic Monitoring Workshop, November 2014. The subcommittee proposed the development of a framework and set of recommendations that guide the collective use of demographic data to inform full life cycle models and identify which limiting factors are most important as well as where and when they might most effectively be addressed.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:**

After a discussion of ***a draft outline for a proposed report*** focusing on the problem of having poor or incomplete demographic data on declining species, and how those demographic data identify causation of population declines, the proposed report’s chapter topics were explained. Proposed authors for chapters were identified from the workshop’s participants, and a deadline for completion of the report was given – end of 2015. It was estimated that completing the report would take about $10,000. The discussion on this topic included questions on selection of species and habitats to study, identification of the audience for the report, the utility of the report, and how to fully engage those in migratory birds’ migration and wintering areas. The Committee agreed with the need to examine full life cycle processes, and to pursue the proposed report. The Committee Chairman asked the Subcommittee to complete the outline for the report, including responses to comments received during discussion, and to bring the full draft to the Summer 2015 NABCI Meeting.

**2. Agenda Item: Private and Working Lands Subcommittee- Briefing on activities relevant to the Subcommittee’s work plan**

***Purpose of Agenda Item:****Update the Committee on (1) status of the 2014 Farm Bill Guide, its content, expected release date, and associated materials (webinars, fact sheets about the Farm Bill); (2) the national JV/NRCS meeting at the end of February, summarizing its purpose and attendees; (3) the awarded RCPP projects with a bird conservation focus; and (4) recently finalized rules for Farm Bill programs.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:**  (1) The 2014 Guide to the Farm Bill is nearly completed by the Subcommittee and the expected release date is late March 2015. In response to an Ask relative to number of hard copies of the Guide desired by NABCI’s organizations and partners, the Committee Chairman requested that representatives of organizations and partners contact Todd Fearer with an estimated number. The Subcommittee estimated about 5,000 copies would be needed, and that printing would cost $10,000. The Committee Chairman requested that organizations and partners requesting copies contribute funds for printing the Guide to the Subcommittee Chair, Todd Fearer. An electronic version of the Guide will be available in mid-March 2015. (2) The National JV/NRCS meeting will be on February 25th in Mississippi, followed by field trips. Case studies of successful coordination and monitoring will be discussed as well as improvements that should be made. A facilitator will keep participants on task in discussing specific topics and addressing concerns. All JVs will be represented and regional and headquarters NRCS staff will participate. Following this meeting, other localized meetings will be held. (3) Twenty-six of 115 awarded RCPP projects were centered on bird issues. The Subcommittee will track these projects to study their performance and success, and will provide guidance and assistance as needed. (4) Of recently finalized rules for Farm Bill Programs, the Conservation Stewardship program is closed for comment and the final rule will be released in Summer 2015; the comment period for the EQIP ended at midnight February 10th. The Agriculture Conservation Easement program rule will be out for review in March 2015. One hundred projects were selected for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program in December, and the next opportunity will be in Spring 2015. Conservation Innovation Grant Proposals are due February 24th.

**3. Agenda Item: Human Dimensions Subcommittee report and discussion**

***Purpose of Agenda Item:******Report*** *on draft task and membership for the Human Dimensions Subcommittee. The Subcommittee proposes to (1) contribute to the NAWMP Human Dimensions and Public Engagement efforts to encompass a broader wildlife enthusiast audience, (2) strengthen the social science capacity for bird organizations through sharing relevant research and offering trainings and/or workshops, and (3) understanding how to support birders interested in conservation.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** The three main tasks of the HD Subcommittee were presented by the Co-Chairs, Tammy VerCauteren and Ashley Dayer (on phone). Discussion followed during which tasks were supported and encouraged by the Committee, as well as further encouragement to get birders involved in conservation initiatives and funding opportunities. Others who would like to work on this Sub-committee should contact the Co-Chairs.

**4. Agenda Item: Update and discussion of desired characteristics and functions for the NABCI Coordinator position; Update on status of filling Partners in Flight and Waterbird Coordinator positions**

***Purpose of Agenda Item:****Update the Committee on the status of the hiring process for the NABCI (hired by AFWA), PIF, and Waterbird (hired by USFWS) Coordinators. There will be opportunity for Committee members to share their perspectives on the desired skills, knowledge, and abilities of the next NABCI Coordinator.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** Mark Humpert discussed the NABCI Coordinator position that he hopes to have filled by April 2015. The interview panel can include representatives from BCPPs, but members this panel must be determined by end of February.

The Coordinator will allocate most work time to NABCI, but also to AFWA’s Bird Conservation Committee, and this work should be seamless relative to all-bird initiatives. Discussion included questions about the position’s support in form of funding sources (USFWS, State Agencies through AFWA, and Flyway Council); the salary of the position being comparable to that of BCPP Coordinators’(currently not meeting same salary rate; however, if partners provide additional support, salary difference could be rectified; Gordon Myers will take lead on getting more secure partner support for NABCI Coordinator position); the location of the NABCI Coordinator (in D.C. offices of AFWA); and the NABCI Coordinator’s involvement with policy (must be a content expert).

NABCI Coordinator ***Position Announcement*** was released on February 13th, Friday.

Brad Bortner led the discussion of the PIF Coordinator and Waterbird Coordinator positions. Coordinators will be located in the Falls Church, Virginia offices of the USFWS. Position Descriptions are completed, but there was much discussion about desired integrated work by coordinators and additional skills the coordinators should have. Added skills include international coordination capabilities, implementation of domestic programs, and knowledge of human dimensions and social sciences. Many of these ideas were also discussed at the January 2015 meeting of representatives from JVs, BCPPs, and NABCI in Texas. Although there was a desire to add to or modify the Coordinator PDs, most of the Committee agreed that the Waterbird Coordinator position needed to be filled without further delay, and that the PIF Coordinator position was greatly needed also. Consensus seemed to be that there is a need for positions to be filled without further delay, that the Bird Conservation Plan Partnership initiatives must work efficiently as an integrated team, that additional skills associated with international coordination, domestic programs, and human dimensions/social sciences would be desired, and that the NABCI Coordinator should provide oversight to ensure bird initiatives are working toward all-bird conservation in the most efficient and effective manner.

**Goal 2: Maintain a well-coordinated bird conservation community**

**5. Agenda Item: NABCI’s Ad Hoc Conservation Business Planning Working Group - Proposed Standards for Bird Conservation Planning**

*NABCI Strategic Plan**Action 2B: Facilitate greater understanding and clarity around development and implementation of* conservation *business plans*

***Purpose of Agenda Item:****During the NABCI Committee discussion that followed the business planning panel in September 2014, the Committee agreed that (A) elements of conservation business planning provide a new and different way to approach our work; (B) there is a fair bit of confusion within the community on what adopting a conservation business planning approach should mean; and (C) a useful role for NABCI is to develop and endorse a guide or set of recommended standards intended to educate and influence bird conservation planners.” An ad hoc working group was tasked with developing a draft set of standards (see C) for the Committee’s review. Dave Younkman presented the group’s progress to date and sought guidance and input from the full Committee.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** The ad hoc working group produced documents on ***Conservation Planning Comparisons*** ***& Standards***; ***Conservation Business Plan Contents & Standards***; and ***Human Infrastructure***. Dave Younkman reviewed the documents and asked that the Committee provide feed-back on them by **March 4, 2015**. The ad hoc Working Group will use the Committee’s comments and suggestions to finalize the documents and present them at the NABCI Summer Meeting. Some comments received during discussion included the JVs’ uncertainty about the Business Plan approach to conservation planning; the different scales of plans; diverse terminology used, but goals are the same; and the benefits of having short-term goals within plans to demonstrate achievements toward the long-term goal.

**6. Agenda Item: Coordination of Bird Conservation Across the Western Hemisphere**

***Purpose of Agenda Item:****At the September NABCI meeting, Committee members noted that the current geographic scope of NABCI (i.e., North America) was perhaps too limited in light of a recognized need to promote full life cycle conservation across the wintering, breeding, and migratory ranges of U.S. birds. Initial ideas on possible structures or frameworks for orchestrating hemispheric collaboration have been developed and/or discussed in several international conservation forums such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI), and the Advisory Council to the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) grant program. Guy Foulks provided an overview presentation on these organizations and ideas generated to date. This information will provide the necessary background for a Committee discussion of “if and/or how” the US NABCI Committee might engage in these efforts.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** After Guy Foulks gave his ***presentation*** on Western Hemisphere bird conservation initiatives and needs, a discussion of using the business planning approach to conservation to engage partners in the process early, and NABCI’s involvement as a leader in this work commenced. There was agreement that fulfilling the full life cycle approach to conservation necessitated greater engagement with Western Hemisphere partners.

A **Motion** was made by David Whitehurst and was seconded: Evaluate NABCI’s role in full life cycle conservation and examine the Tri-National Sub-committee charge of NABCI that has been dormant for ~5 years. Results of this evaluation will be reported to the Committee at the Summer 2015 Meeting. This ad hoc sub-committee will include: David Whitehurst, Glenn Olson, Greg Butcher, Ken Rosenburg, Matt Steed, David Mehlman, David Younkman, Deb Hahn, and Ian Davidson. Leader will be Brad Bortner or his designee from USFWS, Migratory Birds Program.

**7. Agenda Item**: **Outcomes and recommendations from the January 2015 Joint Venture-Bird Conservation Partnership-NABCI Workshop**

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

*NABCI Strategic Plan**Action 2D:* *Support Joint Venture needs and priorities*

**Purpose of Agenda Item:** *A January 2015 workshop in Texas brought together key personnel from the bird conservation community to discuss needs for promoting more effective coordination, collaboration, and integration of priorities and activities among three networks—Joint Ventures, Bird Conservation Plan Partnerships (e.g., Partners in Flight, NAWMP, etc. ), and NABCI.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** Todd Fearer and Tammy VerCauteren provided ***information*** produced and discussed at the meeting. Before the meeting, each BCPP and JV completed a matrix and survey that summarized their work toward their conservation goals, and these summaries provided the baseline information that was discussed. All BCPPs and JVs were represented at the meeting except Waterbirds for the Americas and one of the Mississippi JVs. Participants formed groups to discuss topics under two major headings: science and communications. After these discussions, small-group discussions about each BCPP, and discussions about impediments identified and possible means of addressing these problems, the group produced Recommendations of the Workshop. The key idea that came from the workshop was enhanced integration of BCPPs and JVs. A report on the Next Steps to take will be completed in February 2015 by the Workshop Planning Team or Workshop Outcomes Oversight Team (WOOT). It was clear that Executive Leadership from NABCI is desired in the form of facilitation and oversight. The BCPPs and JVs want their work to be relevant, integrated, and to be communicated effectively. It was suggested that the Strategic Plan of NABCI be critiqued to ensure NABCI will serve as leader for initiatives and champion their work, including effective and influential communications. Workshop participants emphasized the need to get Coordinator positions filled soon.

Discussion of the materials presented by Todd and Tammy followed their presentation. Much of the discussion focused on the role of NABCI relative to the BCPPs and JVs, as well as integrating LCCs. Suggestions were to have the Executive Committee of NABCI take the lead in communicating key issues to policy- and decision-makers on behalf of the BCPPs and JVs. NABCI should be the unified voice for the integrated science and communications from the BCPPs and JVs, especially focusing on large-scale and high-level issues.

A Motion was presented: Todd Fearer and Tammy VerCauteren will assemble a small team to examine the recommendations and options from the BCPP-JV-NABCI Workshop held in Texas in January 2015, and provide the Next Steps report to the NABCI Committee. Motion was seconded by David Whitehurst.

**8. Agenda Item: Conserving the Network of Audubon's Important Bird Areas, featuring Strategies from the Audubon Atlantic Flyway Eastern Forest Project**

***Purpose of Agenda Item****. This session provided an overview of Audubon's Important Bird Areas Program, highlighting the identification process, stewardship of the Important Bird Areas network, and the strategies by which Audubon is working to conserve these and other priority sites, working in collaboration with communities and partners at various scales. Work of Audubon’s Atlantic Flyway Eastern Forest Project was featured, including their methods of identifying Important Bird Areas for forest breeding birds using Partners in Flight species rankings and Breeding Bird Survey data. The session also covered conservation strategies being used to improve forest breeding bird habitat, including working with private landowners, foresters, and public land managers.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** Connie Sanchez (Director, Important Bird Areas Program, National Audubon Society), Jim Shallow (Conservation and Policy Director, Audubon Vermont), and Mike Burger (Director of Conservation, Audubon New York)highlighted opportunities for partnerships and engagement with the ***IBA Program*** during their ***presentation***.

**9. Agenda Item:** **NABCI-AJVMB 2015 Gary T Myers Award**

***Purpose of Agenda Item:*** *Since 2007, the US NABCI Committee has co-sponsored the Gary T Myers Bird Conservation Award with the Association of Joint Venture Management Boards to recognize individuals and groups who have shown exceptional accomplishments and/or leadership in bird conservation in furtherance of the principles of NABCI and the national/international bird initiatives. The NABCI Awards Subcommittee reviewed nominations and have a recommendation to bring forward to the full Committee.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** On behalf of the Awards Sub-committee, Brad Bortner presented the recommendation for the 2015 Gary T Myers Award. There was a motion to accept this nomination, the motion was seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

**10. Agenda Item: Birds as Indicators in State of the Birds Reports**

*NABCI Strategic Plan**Action**2G. Create State of the Birds Reports and WatchList*

*NABCI Strategic Plan Action 3B. Implement recommendations included in State of the Birds reports*

***Purpose of Agenda Item:*** *In light of questions about how to interpret wetlands data in the 2014 State of the Birds report (i.e., bird trends going up, wetland habitats losing ground), a subset of the SotB Science Team has begun exploring how to quantitatively review the concept of birds as indicators.**This presentation will review the origins of the birds as indicators approach as used in the State of the Birds report, detail some of the questions and concerns that were raised in the preparation of the 2014 report, and tee up a discussion for the Committee about a preferred set of next steps.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** Scott Yaich, Ken Rosenburg, and Bob Ford led a discussion about messages and interpretation of ***data from the 2014 State of the Birds Report***, specifically information on wetlands. Concern was expressed that bird population changes were not an accurate reflection of wetland habitat changes. It was suggested that the messages were too general and broad, and did not reflect specific changes at a more local or habitat-specific scale (e.g., prairie potholes, coastal marsh, etc.).

Presenters asked that the NABCI Committee endorse a further examination of birds as indicators of habitat conditions, focusing first on wetlands and wetland-associated bird populations. This sub-committee would include Bob Ford, Scott Yaich, and John Sauer. This request was approved by the Chair. A deadline for completion would be established by the sub-committee.

Discussion of this topic ensued and included: requests for other habitat-types and bird populations to be examined; concern that SoTB was unduly landbird-focused; suggestion that nonmigratory birds may be better indicator of habitat conditions than migratory birds that only use habitats for specific seasons; support for science behind the SoTB, but messaging from it needs to be clear and accurate.

The next discussion focused on the 2016 State of the Birds Report. Work on this report is underway and Charles Frances will be the lead on it. It will be a tri-national report (MX, US, CA), in Spanish, English, and French. Overall themes will be migration, connectivity, and shared responsibilities for shared threats. This report will coincide with the 100-year anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (U.S. and Great Britain [Canada]), and 80-year anniversary of Mexico’s signing of the Treaty. A draft will be completed by December 2015 so there will be time for translation and review before the final release.

Issues for the U.S. NABI Committee to consider: (1) data disparities exist among countries and among species groups; thus, staff from USFWS are asked to provide work time to help rectify these data difficulties; (2) determination of lead authors from U.S. (e.g., USFWS, NABCI Coordinator, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, ABC); (3) having science and communications teams working together, using a hemispheric approach; (4) identification of organizations’ roles (e.g., design, editing, translations, printing [Cornell]) and budget lines; (5) the release of the report should coincide with 100-year Anniversary of the MBTA, and possibly the August 2016 American Ornithological Union Congress (host, Smithsonian and Pete Marra).This idea for the release is supported by Chairman Ford of the NABCI Committee, who also said the idea is supported by Director Ashe, but Mexico and Canada must be consulted before a final decision is made.

Deadlines:

* By February 13, 2015, Friday, Ken Rosenberg will send an email explaining needs for this work to the Committee.
* By February 25, 2015, Wednesday, the following assignments will be confirmed: Steering Committee (Jerome Ford, Bob Ford, Deb Hahn, Greg Butcher, Ken Rosenberg, David Whitehurst, John Sauer); Technical and Review Teams; Lead Contact Person (Ken Rosenberg); Communications Team; Science Team

**11. Agenda Item: Communications Subcommittee- Discussion of NABCI website proposal**

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

***Purpose of Agenda Item:*** *The Communications Subcommittee has been working to define and articulate how the functionality of the NABCI website might be improved. Greg Butcher and Roxanne Bogart will share the proposed purposes, audiences, and features for the website and seek input and ideas from the full Committee.*

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** The first focus of this sub-committee will be internal communications with the goal of integrating communication under NABCI. A Communications Team for the State of the Birds exists already. Others who have expressed interest in working on this sub-committee include Kacie Miller of RMBO and BEAC (Bird Education Alliance for Conservation) and Sue Bonfield of International Migratory Bird Day. This sub-committee will be a CEO Team (Communication, Education, and Outreach). This sub-committee will critique the communication plan for NABC I to ensure communications for all birds are voiced, and the new NABCI Coordinator will be asked to assist with this critique. The new NABCI Coordinator will also be asked to provide ideas for the NABCI web site, and an RFP for the web site enhancement.

**12. Agenda Item: Partner Highlight- American Birding Association**

***Purpose of Agenda Item:*** This is an opportunity for Committee members to learn more about the work of a NABCI partner organization. Jeffrey Gordon (President, ABA) will provide an overview of the ABA programs.

**Outcomes and Next Steps:** The Committee was given an ***overview*** of the work of the American Birding Association as well as its history. The ABA is involved in much outreach, communications, and policy work, including encouraging its members to purchase Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps (Duck Stamps) through a new campaign. The Committee asked Jeff Gordon to assist the NABCI Human Dimensions Sub-committee, assist with future Duck Stamp design ideas that include non-waterfowl species in the painting, and have the ABA participate in the First Day Sale Rally of the Duck Stamp.

**13. Agenda Item: Review Outcomes and Next Steps, Determine Next Steps for Parking Lot Items, and Set NABCI 2015 Summer Meeting Dates**

The following are actions taken relative to Parking Lot Items:

* NABCI and “policy/legislative” work. **New NABCI Coordinator should have this experience and work with Partners to do this work**
* NABCI and Public Lands. **Geoff Walsh will lead subcommittee on this issue**
* NABCI and LCCs. **Make this work more visible/transparent. Natural resource indicators LCCs established were mostly birds, so science coordinators of LCCs should be engaged. LCCs and JVs may work together on issues more often, including HD work. Invite LCC science coordinators to integrated science team discussed at TX meeting**
* North American versus hemispheric geographic focus for NABCI. **Discussed and agreed upon during several agenda items during these meeting days.**

*RE: Summer Meeting Dates – A Doodle Poll will be issued to Committee and Partners with final, approved notes.*