



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

BIRD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE PART II
Chair: Gordon Myers, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
Proxy Chair for Meeting: David Cobb, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

14 September 2016
8:00-10:00 am

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting
Marriott Philadelphia Downtown
Philadelphia, PA
Draft Notes

8:15 National Flyway Council Update

Dave Morrison, Texas Parks and Wildlife

The National Flyway Council last met in Pittsburgh in March at the North American. Focal areas:

- Eagle Rule revisions and Incidental Take
- Harvest Information Program improvements: HIP task group has had one conference call and will have first face-to-face meeting immediately following BCCII.
- Task Force on State Contributions to Canada- need to increase connections between non-waterfowl and non-game, connections with SWAP, etc.
- Focusing on R3

8:30 Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group (MSUGBWG) Report

Dave Morrison, Texas Parks and Wildlife

This group received an update on USFWS migratory bird budgets; funding for webless game birds was a key component of the discussion during this Working Group.

The Woodcock Task Force gave a status report on woodcock released in August; this group has a \$5.3 million RCPP grant for work in 7 Northeastern states.

Banding is a key component of how we manage migratory birds. Next year, 1-800 bands are starting to be phased out because of funding and will go to a web-based reporting band.

8:45 Resident Game Bird (RGB) Working Group Report

Breck Carmichael, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Tony Leif has stepped down from the Chair of this Working Group, and Breck is the new Chair.

Updates from NGOs and planning efforts:

National Wild Turkey Federation: “Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt” has impacted ~2 million of the 4 million acre goal. They have devoted an increased number of staff to work on an R3 initiative.

Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever- Historically, they have impacted almost 2 million acres of habitat, primarily through their partner biologist program which now has more than 150 biologists. Note- NABCI is working on shared partner biologist registry/map to identify where these biologists are and who pays them, so that we can find holes.

National Pheasant Plan- Scott Taylor is Coordinator and this group had its first meeting. First priority is looking at what is needed in 2018 Farm Bill to put more habitat for pheasants and other birds in that habitat suite on the ground.

National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative- Produced 2016 Bobwhite Almanac. Partnered with PBS to produce “[Bobwhites on the Brink](#)”, part of “This American Land” series. Several states are putting in for Working Lands for Wildlife for bobwhite under NRCS.

Sage Grouse Initiative has turned into Sage Brush Initiative to increase the number of species covered from 1 to over 300. A conservation plan is being initiated for Hungarian partridge and Chukar partridge.

North American Bird Conservation Initiative: Highlighted the [State of North America’s Birds](#) report, a series of coordinated messages in support of priority programs (Farm Bill, NAWCA, NMBCA, State Wildlife Grants, Joint Ventures) so that the bird community can send a unified message. NABCI is redeveloping its website and will have a Resident Game Bird page with links to Resident Game Bird plans and coordinators.

Work Plan- One goal revolved around consistent data collection for hunter numbers and harvest. This is a very difficult task, and a small subcommittee will evaluate whether that will remain in work plan.

9:00 Joint Meeting- MSUGBWG and RGB Report

Breck Carmichael, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

These two Work Groups will have a joint meeting when joint issues are on the table. Two topics discussed:

1. National Game Bird Summit- Idea emerging from a Quail Leadership Workshop to bring together the different game bird initiatives. During this discussion, this morphed into an idea for a summit on a habitat basis, rather than on a species basis, with grasslands potentially as a priority. More discussions needed moving forward.
2. Blue Ribbon Panel- opportunity to answer questions regarding whether states would have flexibility to expend these funds on game species that are listed in SWAP as SGCN (answer: under proposed legislation, states would have this flexibility).

9:10 Waterfowl Working Group Report

Diane Eggeman, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

[View the presentation online.](#)

NAWMP Implementation: Discussed progress towards implementing the 2012 revision and updating the plan by 2018.

Duck Stamp: Ed Penny is leading a group to analyze impacts from recent price increase.

State Contributions to Canada: Task force underway to revise action plan to increase contributions and hopefully reach \$10m goal AFWA endorsed.

Human Dimensions: Presentation on how USFWS is integrating Human Dimensions into work on National Wildlife Refuges; WWG is trying to weave this into 2012 revision.

See presentation (and presentation notes) for action items for this Working Group.

The Bird Conservation Committee talked about developing messages to USFWS regarding the importance of funding their migratory bird program. Waterfowl Working Group developed both general messages and also waterfowl-specific messaging (see slides).

9:25 State Contributions to Canada Report

Diane Eggeman, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

This past year, this initiative raised \$3.1 million. This year, states have increased their contribution by more than 10%. With matches from NAWCA, DU, etc, there is a 4:1 match for money invested by state agencies.

Discussion: What branding or promotion efforts have been done? Some concern (SC duck hunters) that money is being given away outside of the country.

-DU thinks that most of their constituents are aware of and support these efforts

-Suggestion that WWG could make a template article that can be customized for state wildlife magazines

-Action Plan has communication strategy as a focus

Discussion: Can PR funds be used for this program? This is a possibility, and DU Canada has activities in Canada that will be eligible as match.

9:35 PIF/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group Report

David Cobb, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Grassland Birds- There was significant discussion regarding grassland conservation and the need to address declines in associated bird species. Working Group recommends:

- a.) The WG, in concert with other appropriate working groups, develop and submit for consideration a resolution outlining the crisis and prioritizing grassland birds conservation by AFWA and participating states for consideration by the AFWA Resolutions Committee,
- b.) AFWA facilitate evaluation of tri-national grassland habitats and bird conservation efforts and develop a report with synopsis of current programs (goals, objectives, funding entities, etc.) and recommendations for collaboratively and collectively addressing declines in the broad suite of grassland birds,
- c.) The WG begin development, in concert with other appropriate working groups, of an NCN to address grassland bird conservation needs currently identified by conservation partners and to operationally address potential new recommendations from the above evaluation, and
- d.) AFWA avail itself of all possible avenues for encouraging prioritization of grassland birds conservation in budgeting of federal agencies.

State of the Birds Report- The WG recommends that the 2017 NABCI State of North America's Birds report focus on grassland habitats and associated bird species.

Feral and Free-ranging Cats- The WG recommends that the Bird Conservation Committee and Invasive Species Committee request that state directors designate staff that will serve on a Feral and Free-ranging Cats Working Group. These designations should be multi-disciplinary in scope, ranging from biological to legal to education staff.

FWS funding priorities- At the direction of the BCC, the WG will, in concert with other appropriate working groups, begin development of key messages for use in discussions regarding FWS funding priorities and the need to consistently optimize funding for grassland birds conservation.

Avian Knowledge Network- The WG discussed efforts to refine and expand the AKN. Members agreed that efforts should focus on providing webinars to introduce and discuss AKN standard sampling grids and to more completely explain structure, function, and utility of the AKN.

Grassland Bird Discussion: Follow Up

Support from other Working Groups

Resident Game Bird Working Group supports an AFWA grassland bird partnership and encourages us to define grasslands broadly, since in the East, grasslands and early successional habitat have similar bird species.

Grassland habitat is a priority for the Waterfowl Working Group, especially for upland nesting waterfowl, and this WG is supportive of an AFWA effort as well. AFWA is encouraged to start our effort with outreach to Joint Ventures.

Discussion

-Existing WAFWA group focused on Northern Great Plains grasslands with broad interests.

Advice to come together for a big picture goal and focus initial discussions on defining this goal.

-Next step may be to define grassland (how broad we want our effort to be)

-Discussed grasslands vs grassland birds. Talking about wilderness values and the biodiversity of grasslands is compelling and spans a broad spectrum of constituents. We can use birds as the hook, but ultimately it's the habitat we're working on.

-Suggestion to form a Grassland Task Force with a time-limited, specific charge. Group can provide the foundation for subsequent work.

Motion (Rick Jacobsen, CT): BCC establish a Work Group whose charge is to address 4 items presented by the PIF/SB/WB Working Group (see above) and complete its work within two years. Breck Carmichael (SC) seconds, motion carries.

Members of Group: Tammy VerCauteren, Brad Bortner or other designee from USFWS, possibly Jeff Nelson. Working Group chairs will find volunteers from within the WGs (some individuals already volunteered within the WG meetings).

Follow Up on USFWS Migratory Bird Funding

What do we do with the talking points, and how do we use these to influence funding?

One goal is to get them to AFWA's legislative and policy director.

Action: Talking points presented by WWG will be sent to each Working Group to edit/wordsmith.