



**Waterbird Conservation Council
Annual Meeting
January 10-12, 2005; Nassau, BAHAMAS**

Summary

ATTENDEES

Coordinators: Jennifer Wheeler, Bob Milko, John Cecil. *Council Members:* Ghisselle Alvarado, Paul Baicich, Stephen Brown, Jack Capp, Eric Carey, Francie Cuthbert, Ian Davidson, Paul Kluckner, Jim Kushlan, Eric Mellink, Rosabel Miro, Lourdes Mugica, Kathy Parsons, Don Paul, Paul Schmidt, Ann Sutton, Xico Vega, Gerald Winegrad, Kent Wohl. *Committee Members/Guests:* Daniel Blanco, Jim Chu, Cyndi Perry, Karl Kaufmann.

VENUE

The meeting was held at the Bahamas National Trust (BNT) headquarters, “The Retreat,” with BNT arranging for administrative support, equipment and refreshments.

A majority of the attendees arrived in Nassau early to attend a pre-meeting field trip to Andros Island on January 8 and 9. Paul Baicich and Eric Carey made arrangements with Tony White to lead the trip; Eric secured Carolyn Wardle and Mike Baltz as guides as well.

MEETING AGENDA AND NOTES

January 9

Executive Committee met in the evening for its bi-monthly discussion and to review the meeting agenda and objectives. Tasks for the Executive Committee are summarized at the end of notes for January 12.

January 10

Full Council Convenes.

Attendees were greeted by Council Chair (Kathy Parsons) and Local Host [Bahamas National Trust: Eric Carey & Chris Hamilton (Executive Director)], followed by introductions by all attendees.

Presentation of Strategic Issues for the Council

Council Chair and Committee leaders presented on the most important and urgent issues before the Council, and which were the focus of committee breakouts later in the day.

Recommendations by ad hoc committee on “Version 2”

The outstanding commitments from Version 1 of the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan were presented by Bob Milko. Discussion was continued on the following day.



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Committee Breakout Sessions

Standing and ad hoc committees met throughout the afternoon to complete committee reports and to deliberate on strategic issues. Recommendations from breakouts were reported to full Council meeting on subsequent days.

January 11

Continued discussion on Version 2

Council agreed that it is important for the initiative to follow through on commitments from Version 1 of the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan. These were: 1) Fuller treatment of marshbirds (status, threats, habitats); 2) Fuller treatment of Latin America and the Caribbean; 3) Revision of Version 1 status assessments; 4) Revision of other components (threats, monitoring, research, partnering, etc.); 5) Articulation of habitat and population goals; and 6) Increased conservation actions; all of which would be based on regional planning efforts. Fulfillment of these commitments would be led by various Council committees (as described below). Furthermore, rather than a single, printed Version 2 document, products fulfilling these commitments would be disseminated on-line as they become available. However, to communicate the progress and direction of the Waterbird Initiative to a general audience, a printed communications piece would be developed by mid-2005.

Committee Reports

Each of the Council committees presented on their purpose, progress, and upcoming plans, in order to seek input and approval by the full Council. The major points of discussion and any modifications or decisions are described below. *Vision and Workplan documents for each committee will be available from Chairs or from Jennifer Wheeler.*

Nominations Committee

A progress report, explanation of issues, and presentation of committee vision and 2005 tasks were given by the committee chair, Kathy Parsons.

Stephen Brown delivered a related presentation on lessons learned from creating an international council to guide the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHRSN).

Decisions and Tasks for 2005:

- The Nominations Committee will now be named the Membership Committee, to better reflect its activities.
- The policy that the Council Chair automatically chair the Membership Committee (the precedent set in 2003) will be re-visited by Council Chair and Chair-elect (Kathy Parsons and Eric Mellink).
- Issues of Mexican federal-agency representation on Council, as well as the Council's relationship to NABCI Mexico, need to be resolved. The representative from SEMARNAT brought onto the Council last year is no longer with the agency and it may be representation by a different federal agency is more appropriate. NABCI Mexico, formed to bring agencies and organizations together, does not have representation from the Council.



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- Priority Tasks for 2005 are:
 - Revise and release operating guidelines (primarily principles of membership document and Terms of Reference)
 - Develop and implement a strategy for populating council based on principles
 - Promote benefits of membership to existing and prospective members

Lunchtime Presentation: “Rice, Wetlands, and Birds in Cuba,” Lourdes Mugica

Resources Committee

A progress report, explanation of issues, and presentation of committee vision and 2005 tasks were given by Jim Kushlan, in the absence of Pat Patterson, no longer able to serve as Chair.

Related presentations on the state of bird conservation funding were given by Paul Baicich (for the U.S.) and Ian Davidson (for the Western Hemisphere).

Decisions and Tasks for 2005:

- A new chair or co-chairs for the committee need to be identified. Ideally, chairmanship would be by an individual with fundraising experience and affiliated with an organization that would strongly support this individual’s involvement in the Council.
- Priority Tasks for 2005 are:
 - Fund the operational budget of the Council for 2005
 - Analyze funding opportunities for the waterbird initiative (beginning with the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act)

The possibility of creating an NGO-type entity affiliated to the Waterbird initiative to act as a vehicle for channeling support to Latin American and Caribbean waterbird conservation was discussed. Many Council members raised concerns over the idea of a new administrative entity that might compete with existing partners for funding, and the pursuit of such an entity was not accepted as a task for the committee. It was suggested that the proponents (including Bob Milko, Jim Kushlan, Ian Davidson) form an ad hoc committee if interested in more fully detailing the idea for presentation to the Council.

Conservation Action Committee

A progress report, explanation of issues, and presentation of committee vision and 2005 tasks were given by the committee chair, Gerald Winegrad.

Francie Cuthbert presented on a “Student Analysis of the Status and Conservation Needs of the NAWCP’s 11 Highly Imperiled Waterbirds.”

Decisions and Tasks for 2005:

- Chairmanship for the committee needs to be resolved given that Gerald Winegrad is close to retirement and will be unable to continue as chair without organizational support.



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- Priority tasks for 2005:

Top Tier

- Continue to promote the importance of the waterbird conservation plan and its implementation and work to obtain increased funding to foster waterbird conservation as outlined in the NAWCP through such measures as Congressional appropriations through the NMBCA, NAWCA, and other sources and co-ordinate actions with the Resources Committee.
- Work with members of the International Committee and others to ensure that conservation strategies facilitate the involvement of international partners across the entire NAWCP area.
- Work to support efforts to prioritize islands in the Americas for eradication of introduced species causing problems for seabirds breeding on these islands.
- Identify significant threats to 11 imperiled seabird species within the NAWCP plan area, obtain professional peer review of these threats, and foster plans for solutions.

Next Tier

- Support efforts to eradicate introduced species on islands where these species are causing problems for seabirds breeding on these islands.
- Work to prevent albatross and other seabird mortality in longline fisheries and to address waterbird mortality in trawl and gill net fisheries.
- Continue to address the conflict between fish-eating birds and prey fish by encouraging the application of sound science, meaningful discourse between different factions on this issue, and the use of non-lethal controls where necessary.
- Evaluate/understand the impact of the harvest of seabird/waterbird forage fish on seabird populations in fresh and marine environments.

Evening Presentations and Dinner

Meeting attendees and local guests were treated to talk by Tony White on Birds of the Bahamas and Lynn Gape on conservation education activities of BNT.

January 12

U.S. Members Caucus on Representation to the Executive Committee

Jack Capp was selected as the new U.S. representative on the Executive Committee. Explanation: When the Council was formed in June 2003, it was decided that the Executive Committee would be formed of representatives from the five mega-regions of the plan area (Canada, U.S. Mexico, Caribbean, and Central America), the Council Past Chair, and three “at-large” members (in 2004, at-large members were replaced with committee chairs). The Council Chair and Chair-Elect would be selected from the five mega-region representatives for two year terms. Chair-Elect Eric Mellink (Mexico) will replace Chair Kathy Parsons (U.S.) by June 2005. Kathy will then retire as the U.S. representative, and replace Jim Kushlan as Past Chair. The U.S. members of the Council gathered to identify the new U.S. representative: Jack Capp offered and was accepted to fill this role.



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Committee Reports, cont.

Ad Hoc Committee on Setting Geographic Priorities

John Cecil presented on geographic tools currently or becoming available to the initiative and discussed the immediacy of needs for these tools at various scales (e.g. for grant programs).

Decision and Task for 2005:

- The Council agreed that the ad hoc committee should meet early in 2005 to outline a plan of action with regard to identifying geographic priorities at multiple scales.

Technical Services Committee

A progress report, explanation of issues, and presentation of committee vision and 2005 tasks were given by Kathy Parsons, in the absence of Melanie Steinkamp, unable to attend the meeting.

Decisions and Tasks for 2005:

- To facilitate progress on tasks, committee will seek to enhance increased participation from the ranks of scientists, for which technical questions are of professional interest.
- Priority tasks for 2005:
 - Form a task force and complete the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan relative to marshbirds. Version 1 included marshbirds, but was not a full treatment (i.e., status assessment not performed, and threats, needs, and partners only partially laid out.
 - Complete the monitoring needs framework underway by the committee.
 - Examine and update the method for status assessment reflecting the Council's decision to include the entire Western Hemisphere in its scope.
- The task of developing guidance for setting resource (population and habitat) objectives, which was identified in the committee's 2004 workplan, is not a priority task for 2005. Rather, this guidance is expected to arise from analyses and discussion among BCR and regional planners.

Communications Committee

A progress report, explanation of issues, and presentation of committee vision and 2005 tasks were given by the committee chair, Paul Baicich.

Jennifer Wheeler delivered a related presentation on the state of the Waterbird Initiative website, www.waterbirdconservation.org

Decisions and Tasks for 2005:

- To better address the broad and weighty communication needs of the Council and initiative, the committee will actively seek to expand its membership.
- Priority tasks for 2005:
 - Expand and improve communications within the committee, the Council, and immediate partners.



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- Take responsibility for a new “Executive Summary-like” communications piece on the work and progress of the initiative. This document is to be short, compelling, attractive, celebrate the plan's accomplishments, identify short-term objectives and even reach new audiences. The committee, working with the Executive Committee and ad hoc Version 2 Committee, will produce a draft by mid-2005.
- Assist and guide expansion, revision, and maintenance of the Initiative web site
- The Council approved the creation of an ad hoc committee on “Birds and Rice,” a concept that arose from the Communications Committee, with its stress on the communications/education aspects of “bird-compatible rice.” The ad hoc rice-and-birds committee will concentrate on A) research needs, B) best practices, C) promotion

Regional Planning and Implementation Committee

A progress report, explanation of issues, and presentation of committee vision and 2005 tasks were given by the committee chair, Paul Schmidt.

A related presentation was made remotely (by speaker-phone) on the Intermountain West Regional Plan, by regional planning lead Gary Ivey.

Decisions and Tasks for 2005:

- The committee will expand its membership and adjust operations to formally include representatives from each of the planning regions. This should allow the Council to better serve the regional-scale partners, and improve the flow of information and innovations across regions.
- In making adjustments to membership, the committee will expand its scope, previously focused on Canada and U.S., to all regions (Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean, as well as South America when appropriate), in order to assist regional-scale conservation throughout the Western Hemisphere.
- Priority tasks for 2005:
 - Facilitate completion and endorsement of at least five regional waterbird conservation plans (specifically Intermountain West, Mid-Atlantic/New England/Maritimes, Southeast U.S., Upper Mississippi Valley/Great Lakes, Caribbean and Alaska.).
 - Facilitate initiation of working group for Mexico to advance a technical assessment of waterbird needs in Mexico.
 - Assist Central American partners in creating a regional plan from the country reports generated under the Council’s project “Advancing Range-Wide Waterbird Conservation Throughout the Western Hemisphere.”

International Committee

A progress report, discussion of issues, and presentation of committee vision and 2005 tasks were given by the committee co-chair, Ian Davidson.

Ghisselle Alvarado, also co-chair, delivered a related presentation on “Waterbirds in Costa Rica,” essentially a country report that serves as a model for those to be produced by partners in Central America and South America under the Council’s project “Advancing Range-Wide Waterbird Conservation Throughout the Western Hemisphere.”



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Daniel Blanco presented on the Neotropical Waterbird Census, which he coordinates on behalf of Wetlands International. The NWC program was established to provide baseline information on the distribution and abundance of waterbirds and wetland habitats within the Neotropics. Currently, nine South American countries participate. This program is recognized as an important source of information and partner network for the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative.

Decisions and Tasks for 2005:

- The committee decided to shift its vision and objectives to address hemispheric and range-wide issues. Previously, the committee was focused on establishing a network of partners and a foundation of waterbird-related information in the planning regions of Mexico, Central America and South America, as well as facilitating waterbird conservation in these areas and the Caribbean. However, it was decided that the Regional Planning and Implementation Committee was the more appropriate forum to address the needs of regional-scale partner networks. Also, the Council decided to expand the scope of the initiative through South America. Thus, the International Committee is now positioned to concentrate on conservation questions and needs relevant to all partners connected by the ranges of waterbirds in the Western Hemisphere, and to seek the participation of these partners in collaborative efforts.
- The facilitation of partnerships based on the ranges of waterbirds is an international endeavor, whenever the ranges cross national boundaries. However the term “international” does not fully describe the vision and objectives of this committee. Thus the International Committee may seek a new name.
- Priority Tasks for 2005:
 - Put into writing the new vision for the committee as its focus shifts from Latin America/Caribbean areas of initiative exclusively to range-wide and cross-boundary issues and make appropriate membership changes.

Take the lead in approaching South American partners to make links between Council.

Continue to oversee the “Advancing Range-Wide Waterbird Conservation Throughout the Western Hemisphere,” which funds foundational work for areas south of Mexico, but transition the tasks of producing regional plans (regional=Mexico, Caribbean, Central American and South America) to the Regional Committee.

- Develop a strategy for effective outreach to South America partners to assist the Council in making the initiative hemispheric-wide.

Conclusion of discussion on “Version 2”

In summary, the commitments of Version 2 would be treated primarily as follows:

- Continental-scale treatment of marshbirds: 2005 task for Technical Services Committee.
- Fuller treatment of Latin America and the Caribbean: Underway under “Advancing Range-Wide Waterbird Conservation Throughout the Western Hemisphere;” Regional Committee to facilitate creation of relevant regional plans.
- Revision of status assessments: Technical Services to develop a strategy to account for hemispheric expansion
- Revision of other components (threats, monitoring, research, partnering, etc.): Not a discrete Council task for 2005; will be more feasible as more regional plans are completed.



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- Articulation of habitat and population goals – Not a discrete Council task for 2005; goals are being developed for the regional-scale in regional plans.
- Increased conservation actions – Regional Committee to facilitate regional-scale implementation of planned conservation activities; Resources Committee to assess funding opportunities; Conservation Action Committee to continue addressing urgent conservation issues.
- Printed Communications Piece: Development led by Communications Committee

Again, products addressing these commitments would be published on-line as they become available; a printed “Version 2” is not envisioned. The ad hoc committee agreed to persist long enough to launch the communications piece with the Executive Committee and Communications Committee.

Additional Actions for the Executive Committee

- Identify a new Chair Elect by June.
- Identify a South American representative to Executive Committee from the South American members to be brought onto the Council.
- Priority Tasks for 2005
 - Oversee and facilitate work of committees
 - Document procedures for Executive Committee membership
 - Document the organizational structure of the Council and develop a glossary to clarify vocabulary used in Council discussions
 - Work with other committees on the communications piece recommended by the ad hoc committee on Version 2.
- Within an ad hoc committee, develop for council consideration a strategy of “integration” - identifying opportunities and proposing actions for engaging with existing international organizations and programs to advance waterbird conservation; also promoting integration of waterbird conservation needs with other initiatives at regional scales.

Concluding Remarks by Chair, Chair Elect, and Coordinator

Gift to Local Host

A donation in the amount of \$350 was collected from meeting participants and presented to the Bahamas National Trust in recognition of their important and successful conservation work and as a thanks for their hospitality.

Arrangements for Annual Meeting 2006

The Council discussed options for the next full Council meeting, agreeing to continue to meet on an annual basis, independently from any conferences, in the first half of January. As in discussions for the 2005 meeting, it was agreed that the location should participation from partners south of the U.S. and provide benefits to the local host.



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The Council accepted the offer by Ghisselle Alvarado on behalf of the National Museum of Costa Rica to host the 2006 meeting in or near San Jose. Justification for this decision was that Ghisselle had researched accommodations and could show that costs would be reasonable; the meeting would lend support and visibility to the new Waterbird Program at the museum; and the meeting would coincide and lend support to the development of a regional plan for Central America.

Another offer, by Xico Vega, to meet in Sinaloa, Mexico will be re-visited when arrangements for the 2007 meeting are made.