



Waterbird Conservation for the Americas

Waterbird Conservation Council Executive Committee Conference Call Notes March 29, 2007

Participating : Paul Kluckner, Don Paul, Ian Davidson, Paul Baicich. Coordinators: Jennifer Wheeler, Garry Donaldson. Guest: Jennifer Arnold. Unable to Attend: Eric Mellink, Paul Schmidt, Lisa Sorenson, Ghisselle Alvarado, Kathy Parsons.

Because of low participation, final decisions were postponed until additional Executive Committee members could review information by email. These notes integrate the discussions on the call; decisions needed by Executive by followup email are italicized.

1. Policy and Critical Issues Involvement

Executive Committee, serving as the Policy and Critical issues venue, was presented with a proposed, refined approach to 2007 tasks by Jennifer Arnold. Some concerns about the approach were discussed on the call and were included in the description of the approach.

Action Needed: Approval and support from Executive Committee is sought on the Policy and Critical Issues Workplan for 2007. Please see the WATERBIRD CONSERVATION COUNCIL POLICY AND CRITICAL ISSUES WORKPLAN FOR 2007 below.

2. Membership Items – Jennifer Wheeler

Executive Committee was asked to decide or approve membership tasks, and provide input to Membership Committee as appropriate.

Participants on the call discussed:

- The process for updating the Council’s Terms of Reference (rules for operation). It was felt that the coordinator should be responsible for making updates as appropriate (e.g., annually, and to reflect current consensus) and circulating them to the Executive for review. *Action Needed: Approval by full Executive for this process.*
- Satisfaction with a 2007 Recruitment Timeline, as follows:
 - April 2007-re-circulate principles; review recruitment priorities (some suggestions – seabird, South America, “Range-wide” project recommendations...)
 - Mid April (16th)– circulate recruitment priorities and solicit candidates from council
 - April 30-develop slate; seek agreement from council
 - May 14-issue invitations; repeat for Oct recruitment
- The need to re-convene the Membership Committee for appropriate tasks. Specific tasks include:
 - Improving its own membership: The committee is lacking in Latin American members and suggestions are welcome.
 - Executive Terms – It is time to set a system in place and specific process rules need to be determined.



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- The Executive currently lacks a South American representative. Ian volunteered to organize a caucus of South American members to fill this vacancy; committee should provide support as needed.
- Class of 2007 Members – it is time to be reaching out and discussing with individuals their interest in continuing to serve as well as thinking ahead about the direction of the Council's membership. Class of 2007 includes Ghisselle, Stephen, Ian, Beth, Jim, Lourdes, Don, Melanie, Kent.

3. Progress Reports from Committees, Working Groups, Task Forces

Integration Task Force – Garry reported on the small group charged at the Quito meeting with developing a strategy document for collaborative efforts of the Council, WHSRN, and other initiatives for avian and habitat conservation in aquatic ecosystems throughout the Americas and associated oceans. Carol Lively is facilitating this group, which plans to meet at the very end of May in Panama. Jennifer was instructed to communicate to Carol our full support for her actions.

Regional Planning and Implementation Committee – Don Paul reported on the committee's 28 March phone call. Please see below.

Communications Committee – Paul B. reported on the committee's 21 March phone call. Please see below.

4. Other business

Via Jim Kushlan, our NABCI US representative, the Council has been requested to endorse the NABCI US Monitoring Report . Jennifer has requested the Technical Committee address this.

It was confirmed that the week of January 21, 2008 was the preferred date of the 2008 Annual Meeting in San Blas, Mexico -- from the perspective of timing related to holidays. However, it was also confirmed that there is interest in meeting jointly with WHSRN and WHMSI if these groups are interested --and-- it was subsequently determined that the Nayarit Bird Fest is taking place January 19-26, 2008. The question of date of the Annual Meeting should be revisited.

RSVP: Next Executive Committee Call – Thursday, May 24, 3 p.m. Eastern time.



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WATERBIRD CONSERVATION COUNCIL POLICY AND CRITICAL ISSUES WORKPLAN FOR 2007

Request for Executive Committee Approval and Support from Jennifer Arnold and Jennifer Wheeler

Background

On March 20th, Jennifer Arnold, acting as “Policy Advisor” for the Council, circulated a request for input to the whole Council: “...if someone has an issue that they think would benefit from Waterbird Council support, they [may] send me an email describing the issue and how the Council could help. We will then go through a process of vetting this, bringing it to the Executive Committee, then full Council and then, (if there is no opposition), ultimately developing a letter, making a phone call, or doing whatever is necessary to support the issue.” In one week, responses included such suggestions as an information letter about Midway, assistance with ACAP awareness in Panama, pursuing involvement in climate change policy, and helping Bermuda Audubon raise awareness about inappropriate development. These responses re-confirmed to us the breadth of policy issues that concern waterbirds, as well as the need for the Council to truly focus on a manageable number of tasks for a given year so not to overwhelm existing capacity or dilute effort.

Subsequently, we returned to the discussions held at Quito, the two reports we were charged to “mine” for guidance (the NMBCA “Range-wide” project synthesis and the “Strategic Engagement in Seabird Conservation”), and other Council documents, including “Involvement in Advocacy and Public Policy.” From these, we developed the following proposal.

Proposal

- Based on the evaluation of the Council’s strengths and weaknesses, principles set forth by the Council in terms of membership and policy involvement, and the clear message from the last meeting to emphasize seabirds, we suggest that the overarching goal of the Council in terms of policy involvement for 2007 should be to raise awareness of seabird and seabird issues within responsible government agencies with the nested goal of empowering individual Council members and affiliates to take action to promote seabird conservation in their own countries.
- To achieve this goal, we will focus on 2 to 5 countries for 2007 for which the Council will ultimately send a formal letter to an appropriate government official that outlines the threats to seabirds, the value of seabirds, and requests the government to seriously consider one or two specific ways to protect seabirds. Producing this letter will be the Council’s measurable action, but the letter will actually represent a milestone on an in-country individual’s or group’s path towards greater involvement in seabird conservation in their country.
- The Council’s policy engagement in a given country must be spearheaded by an in-country contact (individual or organization), preferably a current or potential Council affiliate. The “local” perspective and expertise is key to providing the influence of a local constituency, assessing and/or confirming what the critical seabird issues are in the country and what activities are already underway to address those issues, identifying the right person in the



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government to take the actions that will be requested, and reacting to whatever the government response is. This individual (or group) might overtly spearhead the development of the letter (e.g., a person involved in government outreach) or act as a more behind-the-scenes contact. Council affiliation (e.g., membership, or otherwise engaged in Council committees, tasks or projects) is also necessary if this approach is to increase Council influence and visibility.

- Efforts in each country will be built on ongoing policy efforts, so as to bolster, not replicate, those efforts. For example, if the ACAP Secretariat has already approached the country to request involvement, or Birdlife or ABC has been promoting other seabird policies or actions, the Council might request that a government give these requests serious consideration. This principle of engagement will increase the chances that the Council letter will have an impact; moreover, it ensures that the individual or group spearheading the Council action is tied into an existing network of support.

Feedback Needed from Executive

Does the Executive approve and support this approach?

a. Will it assist with identifying in-country contacts?

b. Does it agree that in order to be successful with limited capacity, a focused workplan is essential? We acknowledge that there are many policy issues of high importance to waterbirds, however we would have the above tasks take precedence over other policy actions by the Council in 2007.

Additional Considerations

If the above proposal is accepted, we would need to discuss what countries we should select for to pilot and test this approach. This would hinge on identifying in-country Council members or affiliates interested in advancing seabird conservation via policy engagement. The network of identified in-country activists, and the other Council members and affiliates who assist them, will in essence, be a Policy and Critical Issues 2007 Task Force.

We will tap into other committees for support as necessary (e.g., Communications Committee for any needed communications tools/support).

We should re-evaluate our success in 6 months or a year. We suggest that raising awareness of seabirds as a mechanism to empower Council members or affiliates within their own countries is a feasible, important task for 2007; however, this proposal does not imply that seabirds will always be the primary policy focus.

end



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Waterbird Council Regional Planning and Implementation Committee

Conference Call Notes

March 28, 2007

Call participants: Garry Donaldson, Lisa Sorensen, Jennifer Wheeler, Rob Clay and Don Paul

Agenda:

- Reports from regional liaisons (national and international liaisons)

We did not take the time to discuss specific reports from geographic regions during this conference call.

- Review and discussion of responsibilities
 - Discuss developing a network between your planners and plan implementers that works for your geographic area

Garry, Jennifer and Lisa took time to describe the networks within which they have to move Waterbird conservation forward within their specific geographic areas of Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean islands.

Garry described a network that is currently in place: The Canadian Wildlife Service/Environment Canada has Waterbird and Seabird committees that meet once a year and communicates via e-mail. These committees cover all Canadian Wildlife Service regions and are comprised of government biologists, although they have the capacity to involve other interested parties as needed. The committees are not involved directly with implementation of conservation actions but provide a biological foundation and recommendations to implementers (e.g., habitat Joint Ventures or senior management).

Lisa described the network within which she operates. The Society of the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) involves all or most of the Caribbean Islands and countries. The society has a waterbird working group which has a draft waterbird conservation plan partially completed. They also have a seabird working group that has backed the development of a new Caribbean seabird book and is preparing a seabird conservation workshop at an upcoming meeting. The weakest point in the network is the lack of capacity – people and budgets to carry out the needed work. The Society is made up of individuals, nonprofit organizations and government entities, and the representation from each island varies. The Society meets every other year and the next meeting is scheduled for July 2007, Puerto Rico. Lisa would like to work with Jennifer and others to get the waterbird plan completed by this meeting.

Jennifer described the network that exists for the United States. Currently there is not a formal network (e.g., a U.S. working group or a Society) but planners and implementers are linked by e-mail and listserv. There are also a number of venues to bring together planners and implementers (e.g., professional society meetings, regional working groups, and agency coordination meetings). There are regional waterbird conservation plans completed or near



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completion for most of the U.S., and these plans are in various stages of implementation. There is significant implementation at different levels and within different geographies but, an overall implementation strategy for the network is lacking.

- Discuss how to move communications and tasks forward from geographic networks to the Council through the Regional Planning and Implementation Committee
- What is the best design for a feedback loop?

We briefly discussed these two points dealing with communications and decided that we needed more time to thoughtfully decide which criteria should be used to determine what ideas, needs, and communications are most important to move forward to the Waterbird Conservation Council through the Regional Planning and Implementation Committee. We thought that these two discussion points fit in tandem one with another: deciding which communications to move forward and what a feed back loop would look like. We will include these discussion points on our next meeting agenda after the liaisons (you) have taken some time to think about what is most important to forward to the full Council.

- Website for use by the Regional Planning and Implementation Committee partners
 - Who do we want to reach through a website in addition to each other?
 - What should be provided for each region? e.g., liaison information, how to join the network, available waterbird plans or reports...

Jennifer led a discussion concerning the website and its usefulness for Regional Planning and Implementation Committee partners. In the discussion of who we would like to reach through the website, we essentially decided it would be appropriate to reach all of our partners that are important to planning and implementation. We also talked about several ways that the website would be of value to the general public and others interested in bird conservation. Garry indicated that this website is ideal for assisting with the delivery of water bird conservation in Canada, since his government's website process restrictions often hamper timely website information. Rob indicated that most-on-the-ground implementers of waterbird conservation in South America would need to have a website delivered in Spanish. He also mentioned the need to keep formatting simple and file sizes small because of slow Internet connections. Don suggested that the use of the website to facilitate discussion (e.g., chatting) and highlight successes would be desirable.

The conference call also helped facilitate some additional discussion important for and between Caribbean and Canada. We also discussed the newly established Association of Fish and Wildlife Association (AFWA) National Conservation Need (NCN) for bird conservation announced at the North American Wildlife Conference in Portland, Oregon this last week. NCN is a multiple-state grant opportunity. Don and Jennifer will investigate the potential value of NCN for moving regional waterbird conservation forward in the United States and potentially in Canada and those parts of the Caribbean that fall under US territorial oversight.

Our next scheduled regional planning and implementation committee conference call will occur on June 20, 2007 - 3 p.m. Eastern time.

end



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WATERBIRD COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE NOTES

Dear Waterbird communications colleagues (with a copy to Jennifer and Eric),

We had our most recent conference call on 21 March, a Wednesday. On the call were Megan, Mark, Lisa, Paul, and Jennifer.

We reviewed the following points:

- 1 The Quito Waterbird Conservation Council meeting report, covering, especially new seabird tasks.
 2. Lisa and Paul covered February's Austin, Texas, bird-education meeting and attempted to evaluate some of the communications and education opportunities. We will try to keep you informed of any developments.
 3. Our current committee's priority Tasks and Approaches
 - Continue to encourage regular and deeper communications within the Council and with immediate partners, through the listserv and other means. We need to post more regularly! (Mark has already posted a few times since the call. When I get back from Texas - where I am right now - I will also seek out items to post. Please do likewise.)
 - We still need to expand the current committee to include more members from south of the U.S., drawing on the finding of the "Range-wide" project as a guide to important tasks
 - Building the initiative's website, Jennifer presented the new look and organization of the draft website. Committee members on the call were highly supportive of that direction, yet needed more material on the model to currently available at:
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/fisheries/waterbirds/index.html>
- Discussion on developments will surely continue!
- Explore the possibilities to utilize the Shorebird Sister Schools program, especially south of the USA, to expand the work of the Initiative. This might mean either expanding the current uses of the program or broadening it to cover more species. This might be increasingly creative since we are having closer relations with the folks from WHSRN. Megan will pursue this.
 - We will be asked to help disseminate information concerning the status of seabirds, especially procellariids in the Americas, and their need for concerted attention. We stand ready to help.
5. Status of rice-water-birds dialogue. There is now a new listserv. (If you didn't get an invitation to join, contact Jennifer...)
 6. Our next conference call will take place on **13 June at 3pm Eastern time**. Please mark your calendar accordingly (and adjust the time to your zone!)

saludos,

Paul J. Baicich

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end