



Waterbird Conservation for the Americas

Executive Committee of the Waterbird Conservation Council Conference Call September 7, 2005

Participants

Executive Committee: Eric Mellink, Ghisselle Alvarado, Paul Schmidt, Kathy Parsons, Paul Baicich. Also Jennifer Wheeler, Garry Donaldson, coordinators.

Unable to participate: Ian Davidson, Paul Kluckner, Eric Carey, Melanie Steinkamp.

Next Call: **Tuesday, November 1, 2005, 8 a.m. Pacific/11 a.m. Eastern**

Discussion and Decisions

See attached Annotated Agenda below for background on discussion topics.

Committee Vacancies: Currently, the Executive Committee is without a U.S. representative and Chairs for the Resources and Conservation Action Committees. (Nor has a Chair Elect been identified from the Executive Committee – more on this below). The Committee recognizes that this is a problem and detrimental to the success of the Council and waterbird conservation. Kathy, as Membership Committee, reported on the products being developed to populate the Council, but suggested that replacing Chairs required leadership from within rather than seeking it outside the Council.

Action Item for EC: To identify a new U.S. representative, Jennifer will contact the U.S. members of the Council for their interest and opinions on serving on the Executive. For the two inactive committees, Jennifer will contact members previously associated with these committees for ideas on how to move forward. In the case of Resources Committee, Garry Donaldson suggested that a focus on a specific issue or activity now in progress – for example, development of a Global Environment Facility proposal associated with the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative – would provide an incentive for re-forming.

Chair Elect: The Committee felt strongly that Paul Kluckner, as a Canadian representative and as an experienced manager, would make an excellent Council Chair, and decided to continue to encourage him to serve, despite his reservations about capacity and experience with the Council. Garry Donaldson and Paul Schmidt described how Canadian Wildlife Service's Director General, Trevor Swerdfager, was very keen on supporting international conservation, and might be able to assist Paul Kluckner in adjusting responsibilities to fit in a Chairmanship.

Action Item for EC: Garry will contact Paul K. to discuss his interest in continuing to consider Chairmanship of the Council, in light of the Executive's preference for him, and clarifying the term (May 2007-2009). If Paul K. is amenable, then the possibility of approaching Trevor Swerdfager on the matter will be explored.

Mexican Representative: The Committee concurred with the decision to invite a representative of NABCI Mexico. Eric Mellink updated the Executive Committee on NABCI Mexico's all-bird species



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status assessment (now available in draft form if requested, due out in December, and hopefully acknowledging the uncertainties and the need for inventory and survey work).

Action Item for EC: Eric will contact the Executive Secretary of CONABIO (Fis. Ana Luisa Guzmás), inviting an institutional representative, and suggesting that Humberto Berlanga serve, given his participation in other related initiatives.

South America Representation: Ian Davidson was not available to elaborate on this subject. However, the Executive reiterated that it was in favor of his proposed approach to expanding to include South American interests, which includes making explicit connections to other initiatives. Garry Donaldson expressed enthusiasm about bringing waterbird and shorebird initiatives closer together in Canada.

Communications: Paul Baicich reported. The Committee encouraged forward motion on the Executive Summary-like Communications piece, even as key “Version 2” elements (marshbird assessment, regional planning, and Latin America and Caribbean efforts) are under development. It was felt that a compelling discussion of accomplishments and ongoing work tied to the “Talking Points” established by the Committee would increase enthusiasm and momentum.

Action Item for EC: Jennifer will re-circulate a revised draft of the Communications Piece to Committee Chairs.

Resources: In the absence of an active Resources Committee, the focus will be on funds necessary for the annual meeting. Council members with travel support will continue to be asked to seek support for one other member. Ghisselle reported that the National Museum of Costa Rica has made the generous offer to look into loaning the money for the deposit, if necessary.

Action Item for EC: Make reservations for the Annual meeting by November (information will be circulated soon). Jennifer will draft a request to Forest Service, including an invitation for International Programs to send a participant (e.g., Jim Chu or Dana Roth).

Technical Services: Kathy reported on the marshbird assessment process. The previous willingness of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Paul Schmidt) and Environment Canada (Paul Kluckner) to support travel to the Marshbird Assessment workshop was discussed; Kathy and Jennifer will know by mid-month if there is need for this support. The Committee concurred on the decision to send a note to PIF on our assessment process.

Regional: Paul Schmidt reported. Kathy thought that the Mid-Atlantic/New England/Maritimes plan would be in review draft form by the time of the annual meeting.

International: No discussion

Annual Meeting January 2006: Ghisselle described some of the fun details coming together for the meeting, including presentations on the National Museum’s work, such as an educational video created



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for a waterbird exhibition. Palo Verde is the proposed destination for the field trip: it will have nesting wading birds and we can learn about the recovery of the lake at this Ramsar site.

Action Item for EC: Get excited about the annual meeting! Ghisselle and Jennifer will prepare a specific “wish list” for the National Museum, so that Council members can consider donations in advance.

ANNOTATED AGENDA

Current Members of the Executive Committee:

Chair: Eric Mellink

Chair Elect: Vacant

Immediate Past Chair: Kathy Parsons

Canada Rep: Paul Kluckner

U.S. Rep: Vacant (*Vacated by Jack Capp upon retirement*)

Mexico Rep: Eric Mellink

Caribbean Rep: Eric Carey

Central America Rep: Ghisselle Alvarado

Communications Committee Chair: Paul Baicich

International Committee Chair: Ian Davidson/Ghisselle Alvarado

Regional Committee Chair: Paul Schmidt

Technical Services Chair: Melanie Steinkamp

Membership Chair: Kathy Parsons

Resources Chair: Vacant

Conservation Action Chair: Vacant

Initiative Coordinator: Jennifer Wheeler (it's now officially a position at USFWS)

Note also that Canada has a national coordinator, Garry Donaldson.

Chair Elect Vacancy:

As of our last conference call, Members were requested to continue to consider possibilities for a Chair Elect. Canadian representative, Paul Kluckner, was a popular nominee and was asked to consider serving. He asked that he be allowed to defer his decision until end of September, at which time Environment Canada would have completed a re-organization. It was also noted that by that time, there might be new Executive Committee members resulting from the addition of South America to the initiative and turnover in working committee chairs. In late July, Paul Kluckner communicated that he felt it would be best to decline the nomination given new duties and responsibilities in his job.

Discussion needed: How to continue the process for identifying and elevating an Executive Committee member to office of Chair-Elect.

Mexican Membership:

One of the tasks from the annual meeting in Nassau was to resolve issues of Mexican federal-agency representation on Council, as well as the Council's relationship to NABCI Mexico. Since that time, at



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the at the tri-national NABCI meeting, NABCI Mexico has formally requested US NABCI pass the word to the initiatives that requests related to bird planning be routed through Conabio (Humberto Berlanga) and/or the wildlife department (SEMARNAT). In order to work within the NABCI Mexico system, and secure the goodwill of associated organizations, it was felt to be in the best interests to approach NABCI Mexico for a representative to the Waterbird Conservation Council. The Council had previously invited a representative directly from the wildlife department; however, the appointee (Manuel Grosselet) did not have an opportunity to engage before the wildlife department underwent a reorganization and the appointee left the agency. Eric has broached the topic with Humberto Berlanga, NABCI Mexico's representative, who is receptive to the idea.

Discussion needed: Approve an invitation of membership being offered to a representative of NABCI Mexico.

South American Membership:

A task determined in Nassau was to develop operating guidelines and a strategy for populating the Council. These are still in development by the Membership Committee. However, the Council also resolved to expand into South America and tasked the International Committee with approaching key South American partners to make links to the Council. Ian's proposed approach to the International Committee is to expand slowly, adding members to the International Committee based on active engagement on issues. The January 2006 San Jose meeting would be the opportunity to engage these individuals.

Discussion needed: Feedback to Ian on proposed approach, in particular on the current issues which would drive the collaborations.

Communications:

Paul Baicich (chair) reports that: The committee (members: Alexandra Aparicio, Chris Elphick, Bill Howard, Megan Hill, Heidi Luquer, Mark Rauzon, Barbara Robinson, Xico Vega Picos) has a conference call about every other month. It is a fairly stable and functioning committee. The Committee has finished our "Talking Points" for waterbird conservation and stand ready to move them at the direction of the Executive Committee (e.g., in the Communications Piece). They have attempted to promote regular and deeper communications through our two waterbird listserves: <waterbirdcouncil@rana.er.usgs.gov> and waterbirdsnetwork@rana.er.usgs.gov. They are addressing the strengthening of the waterbird website, to make the site more useful. Issues discussed include management, links, multi-language content, funding, deadlines, and audiences. We have helped to launch (just starting!) a rice-and-birds committee, chaired by Chris Elphick.

Discussion Needed: Apprise Communications Committee of progress towards providing the content for the "Executive Summary-like" communications piece on the work and progress of the initiative.

Resources

Chair for this committee is vacant. The Executive Committee considered and accepted a proposal for approaching individual Council members to seek a pledge of support from their organizations to fund one other member's support for the annual meeting. Jennifer has drafted a request to the Forest Service International Program, which has funded participants at the last two annual meetings.

Discussion needed: Hotel for meeting requires 50% deposit by November 11; suggestions for "loan" to cover deposit?



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Technical Services

The continental-scale marshbird assessment is well underway thanks to the efforts of Kathy and Manomet. Profiles have been drafted for all 43 species, and dozens of specialists have been contacted to review the information and draft scores. Profiles will be revised for presentation and discussion at a workshop in conjunction with the Waterbird Society meeting in October. The workshop will 1) provide a second round of review of factor scores, 2) “calibrate” the individual responses from species experts across regional or taxon-based suites of species, 3) identify high conservation need species, and 4) conduct a threats analysis based on compiled information from experts, published sources etc. Some funds to assist participant travel to the workshop have been obtained; depending on need, more may be required.

Some members of the Council received a note from individuals associated with Partners in Flight expressing concerns about the process being used for marshbird status assessment. In response, Eric and Jennifer believe that the Waterbird Council should formally contact the PIF Science Committee and PIF Council to 1) explicitly state support for our marshbird assessment process and 2) re-iterate that our assessment process is adaptive and allows for input and iterative improvement. (In Nassau, the Technical Services committee was charged with examining and updating the method for status assessment reflecting the Council’s decision to include the entire Western Hemisphere in its scope.)

Discussion Needed: Additional support for the marshbird workshop. Okay the response to PIF.

Regional

Plans in various regions are coming together, albeit slowly. 2006 should see the completion of planning documents in the Southeast, Upper Mississippi Valley/Great Lakes, and the Caribbean. However, that is short of the goal of five regional plans completed. The Committee is exploring expanding its membership to include representatives from all regions. An informal poll by Jennifer shows that most regions are interested in cross-regional conversations/meetings to advance mutual goals and to “roll up” regional interests to the continental level of action. However, there was the feeling that meeting in locations outside the U.S. would be infeasible for most representatives (that were not also members of the Council). There is some movement on a Central America regional planning workshop in conjunction with the Neotrop project (see below).

Discussion Needed: ?

Conservation Action

Committee lacks a Chair. Some suggestions for chairs outside the Council have been proposed.

Discussion needed: Action to take on this committee.

International

The committee has reviewed and approved the new mandate of focusing on range-wide and cross-boundary issues. Under this mandate, the Committee will work on developing and strengthening strategic alliances with key stakeholders in the region such as the Ramsar Convention, Convention on Migratory Species, the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative, the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, Agreement on Albatross and Petrels, East Asian Australasian Waterbird Agreement and any other appropriate regional and or hemispheric initiatives. These alliances are to be built around issues of hemispheric scope that are paramount to the conservation of waterbirds (e.g., long-line fishing and impact on seabirds, species assessments, etc) and with a principle of uniting the shorebird, waterbird and waterfowl efforts under one umbrella to the extent possible. The Neotrop



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project continues: Of note, regional meetings to discuss the national reports and to advance towards the development of regional strategies – completed in July at the SCSCB meeting in Guadeloupe, and upcoming at the IX Congress of the MesoAmerican Society for Biology and Conservation, to be held in La Ceiba, Honduras during 21-25 November 2005.

Discussion Needed: Any questions about the Committee's approach or the Neotrop project.

Annual Meeting Preparation

Most important is the setting of specific goals and objectives for the meeting.

Logistical concerns will largely be handled by Ghisselle, Jennifer, and other interested Council members. However, we do need:

- Discussion of general agenda
- A good idea as to the number of people attending meetings and field trip
- Source of funds for deposits and “extra” costs
- Discussion on the gift/donation to the hosting organization

Thanks!