



**Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**  
**Partners in Flight/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group Report**  
Meeting of March 24, 2010

3:00pm – 5:00pm  
Kirk Nelson, Chair  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The meeting was convened during 3 -5 pm, chaired by Kirk Nelson. 15 participants were in attendance

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

**Wisconsin State Wildlife Action Plan and the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI) –**  
Andy Paulios, WI DNR/WBCI Coordinator, gave a presentation to the Working Group on State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) and WBCI. The purpose of the discussion was to inform the bird conservation initiatives about the bird conservation needs of one State and then have a broader discussion about what the States need from the initiatives and how the Working Group can facilitate that.

Wisconsin does not have population objectives so they are stepping them down from regional JVs to the state level. At the same time they are developing species population objectives, they are also looking at focal habitats. For example, WBCI is developing grasslands conservation areas. The presentation acknowledged that strategic conservation depends on good science, communication, and coordination. Both through WBCI and the SWAP they are addressing the full life cycle of species. Wisconsin is in the very early stages of updating their SWAP. The process will be driven by climate change, risk assessments for species and adaptation planning. Wisconsin would like to see increased coordination between PIF and the other bird initiatives and the JVs and States.

*Discussion:*

The discussion focused on how the Working Group can function more effectively to help the states address bird conservation needs and update their SWAPs during a time when state bird biologists are not able to attend the Working Group meetings in March and September of each year. In general, the question was- How can the bird initiatives assist at the national level to step down products such as the State of the Birds risk assessment to help States update their SWAPs and implement their bird conservation goals and objectives?

1. The States need help participating and engaging in regional partnerships and activities such as monitoring.

2. Joint Ventures are critical in this discussion but they do not necessarily have the capacity to coordinate information exchange with the states.
3. The Initiatives need to develop relationship with key state level actors that will ensure that the best available bird conservation information is included in the SWAPs
4. Bird Conservation Region (BCR) coordinators may be the most effective means to work with State agencies. However, there are not many BCR coordinators.
5. Although we are focused on birds we need to build on focal species efforts and connect the species to focal habitats or ecosystems.
6. PIFs Western Working Group and Southeast PIF can provide regional assistance but other regions are not as active.
7. The Working Group could focus in on the States that are currently updating their SWAPs.
8. The Working Group needs to use communication tools such as Webinars to communicate with the States about the available tools. At the twice annual Working Group meetings, we can bring national issues and cross pollinate at the national level. Joint Ventures should be part of this discussion.
9. A good example of the bird community assisting states was in Oregon. They developed a monitoring committee for their SWAP. They connected the bird focal species (birds as indicators) to the habitats and developed an adaptive management framework.
10. The Working Group will survey the states bird biologists to determine what tools and information would be useful to states (i.e., What do you need from the initiatives?). Tools the states might be able to use to implement their bird conservation objectives and update their SWAPs include the State of the Birds risk Assessment, information from the PIF Tri-national assessment, Southern Wings program information along with a generic section on international conservation for the SWAPs, monitoring tools (database information from NABCI, SE PIF monitoring evaluation tool, NE handbook, SE PIF technology document), and follow up information from the population objectives workshop in October 2009. The Working Group will also take advantage of other webinars such as the WBCI webinar on April 8 that will highlight the international conservation efforts of WI DNR. The Working Group will use Webinars and other communication tools to increase the communication between the wildlife agencies and the bird conservation initiatives and the JVs and increase the effectiveness of the Working Group.

**Partners in Flight Update** – Partner in Flight (PIF) is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. PIF sponsored a reception Tuesday night. It featured an amazing video highlighting partnerships and celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. PIF presented awards to 6 people that were integral in the development and success of PIF. They were Charles Baxter, Gary Myers, Peter Stangel, Naomi Edelson, Paul Schmidt, and George Fenwick. PIF will be releasing their Tri-National Vision on May 27 in Washington, DC in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day. A key message and part of the Tri-national Vision is the importance of a

continental perspective to management and implementation of bird conservation. Therefore, a key link to the states is the Southern Wings Program.

**Shorebird Conservation Plan Update** - The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP) Council completed its review of areas of national significance for shorebirds used to allocate points for Technical Question #3 of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Standard Grant proposals. The USSCP Council has long realized ambiguities in defining the boundary of coastal wetlands, and additional work is still needed. Aside from the coastal areas, the USSCP Council recommended: 1) adopting the areas suggested by the Intermountain West Joint Venture Shorebird Team, with the exception of the Yellowstone wetlands; 2) reducing the area in central Florida; 3) adding Horicon Marsh, WI, and Cabo Rojo Salt Flats, Puerto Rico; 4) expanding the area in northern Nebraska to cover all of the Sandhills; and 5) adding a swath of the Missouri River between the Kansas-Nebraska border and the edge of Bird Conservation Region 11. A peer review of the Arctic PRISM (Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring) program is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/shorebirdplan/downloads/ArcticPrismPeerReview.pdf>. The fourth meeting of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, during late April 2011.

**Waterbird Conservation for the Americas Update** - An Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force formed under the Obama Administration has released a draft Interim Report proposing a national ocean policy with an integrated governance structure, as well as a proposed framework for coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP). Specifically, the Task Force calls for Federal resource planning that is regionally based and developed cooperatively among Federal, State, tribal, and local authorities, and State-led regional governance structures, through the establishment of nine regional planning bodies. Though much of the U.S.'s marine waters are under federal jurisdiction, States own near-shore areas out to the Mean Lower Low Water mark or 3 nautical miles, depending on the State. Offshore coastal zones are often rich in marine wildlife, including seabirds, and are affected by human activities ranging from fishing, mineral extraction, and wind power development. Thus, States wildlife agencies have an important role to play in ocean policy and planning.

The development of necessary elements for a continental-scale secretive marshbird monitoring program is proceeding. Determination of status and trends for marsh birds will help inform harvest decisions for game species. Implementation of a national monitoring program is thus the highest priority in the draft "Priority Information Needs for Rails and Snipe, Funding Strategy" circulated to the Flyways. Priority information needs for coots, moorhens and gallinules are now being determined and it is likely a monitoring program will again be a high priority. Two major multi-state surveys are underway. The *Great Lakes Colonial Waterbird Census* – a four-year project to conduct the 4th decadal Great Lakes-wide survey that was initiated in the spring 2007 and the *Western Colonial Waterbird Survey* – a three-year project to perform the first comprehensive inventory of breeding waterbird populations and locations in the western United States. A website and WCWS listserve have been created. Visit [http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/western\\_colonial/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/western_colonial/index.html).

## **ACTIONS:**

The Working Group asked for the support of the Bird Conservation Committee to survey the state bird biologists to determine what they need from the PIF, shorebird and waterbird conservation initiatives. This will be followed up with a series of webinars and other forms of communication for state bird biologists and SWAP Coordinators to step down the products and tools available to help state agencies update their SWAPs. The products and tools could include the State of the Birds risk Assessment, information from the PIF Tri-national assessment, Southern Wings program information along with a generic section on international conservation for the SWAPs, monitoring tools (database information from NABCI, SE PIF monitoring evaluation tool, NE handbook, SE PIF technology document), and follow up information from the population objectives workshop in October 2009.

The Working Group will provide a case study of the State of the Birds risk assessment to Terra Rentz and Mark Humpert for their website.

The Working Group will develop a generic international section that includes discussion of the Southern Wings Program that states could use in their SWAPs.

Submitted by: Kirk Nelson