



**Waterfowl Working Group
March 25, 2010
North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

The meeting convened from 1:00pm – 5:00pm, chaired by Scott Yaich. Approximately 54 participants were in attendance.

Scheduled Discussion Items

NAWMP Coordinator and Wildlife Liaison

Dean Smith is filling the NAWMP Coordinator position at AFWA. He begins on April 1, 2010. His priority is enhancing and improving communications between Canadian and U.S. partners through the AFWA structure. Dean will be attending numerous meetings including AFWA meetings, regional associations and Joint Venture meetings. He would like to encourage more participation from Canada (federal, provincial, etc.) partners at U.S. meetings. He would also like to discuss how he can increase cross border JV discussions and LCC development. His work focused on NAWMP and NAWCA. However, he will also work on other wildlife policy issues on behalf of the Canadian Directors of Wildlife Committee.

Legislative and Policy Report

Caroline Garrett, Ducks Unlimited presented the report to the Working Group.

NAWCA Appropriations and NAWCA update– The President’s 2011 budget included a \$5M decrease for the NAWCA. The NAWCA update that just passed allows Canadian funds to be used as nonfederal match for projects in Canada.

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act: The President’s 2011 budget included a \$1M decrease. The bill for reauthorization has been introduced in both the House and Senate and has passed the House.

Climate Change: The Waxman/Markey bill passed the House last year. It currently contains funding for wildlife adaptation for states and federal agencies. The Kerry/Boxer bill in the Senate was marked up and passed out of Committee in fall 2009. There has been no additional movement in the Senate. Kerry, Graham, and Lieberman have a new bill that is anticipated to be on the table soon. It supposedly includes wildlife adaptation funding also.

Duck Stamp Legislation (H.R. 1916) was introduced into the House and the Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the legislation and passed it after amendment. However, some members of the Committee objected to the land acquisition component of the bill. As a result, the bill passed by the committee contains a number of amendments that make it unworkable. The

amendments included a number of exclusions from the price increase for youth under 18, the disabled, veterans, and unemployed. In addition, the approved bill does not include the second price increase to \$35. The desire now is to get a clean bill passed in the Senate, but that has not yet occurred.

Farm Bill – The Farm Bill is up for reauthorization in 2012, hearings will be starting soon, and the conservation community is beginning to prepare for the effort.

Joint Venture Authorization and funding – The legislation passed unanimously in the House. There is some indication that the Senate will move this bill; however, there are still individuals concerned about language. The President's 2011 budget recommends a \$1M decrease.

Clean Water Restoration Act – Scott Yaich reported that there have been no significant changes in the status of the bill since the last meeting when it was reported that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed an amendment that became a substitute for the bill. It reiterated the purpose of the bill to restore the level of Clean Water Act protections to that which existed before the SWANCC decision in 2001. The bill has not moved in the full Senate. The House has not introduced a bill yet. Many Joint Ventures are very interested in this. The Rainwater Basin JV is interested in engaging in this issue in some way if it is helpful to the community. One idea is to call a national workshop/seminar and invite groups from all sides to talk about this issue. In general, there is a need to continue to work on a strong communication effort to counter misinformation.

State Grants to NAWMP/NAWCA projects in Canada – Dave Kustersky (Ducks Unlimited Canada) provided the annual report for this program. The 2005 AFWA resolution maintained the program goal of \$10 million annual contributions to NAWCA/NAWMP projects in Canada. In FY 2009, 33 states contributed a little over \$2.8M. The current year will be economically more challenging for states. When matched with DU, NACWA and Canadian funds, the \$2.8M of state money resulted in \$14.99 million for habitat projects. The money is distributed throughout Canada; however, typically over 50% goes to Saskatchewan because that province is where a significant percentage of the ducks are produced. In the Prairie Habitat JV, the program partners secured or enhanced over 202,000 acres in 2009. The Eastern Habitat JV secured or enhanced over 23,000 acres.

NAWMP Committee and National Reports

U.S. Report: Mike Johnson, (USFWS), reported that the Plan Committee met in February in Arizona and talked about the NAWMP 2012 Revision, received reports from the Playa Lakes and Rainwater Basin JV, accepted a proposal for the Pacific Coast JV to include Alaska in their JV, and reviewed a marketing document for the NAWMP revision. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act received a \$5M increase in 2010 to \$47.6M. NAWCA also receives revenues from other funds such as interest on the P-R funds, migratory bird treaty fines, and EPA's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. With all those types of additions, NAWCA reached about \$89M in 2010. The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission met on March 10, 2010. Twenty proposals were selected in the U.S. and 11 in Mexico totaling \$22M. They included \$71M in partner funds. On March 17, 2010 the North American Wetlands Conservation Council met and selected 43 small grant proposals in 14 states totaling \$3.1 M. They will be matched by about \$7M. Five projects were also selected in Canada totaling \$25M and matched by \$48 M. These projects will be presented to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission at its June meeting. The current Duck Stamp showcases the American Wigeon by Robert Beal. It will be available starting June 25. The next Duck Stamp contest

will be in Berkeley, California on October 15-16, 2010. The Junior Duck Stamp Program received its first ever appropriation of \$250,000 in FY2010. The funding is being used to update the education program. The Junior Duck Stamp contest will be held on April 23, 2010 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The stamp selected at this contest will be turned into the \$5 stamp and the funds go back into the education program. The electronic duck stamp pilot program is beginning the third year in 2010-2011. It may need to be reauthorized in order for USFWS to continue the program while evaluate the first 3 years.

Canadian Update: Doug Bliss (Environment Canada) provided an update on activities of the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS). The CWS Regional Directors were put into place in early 2009 and middle manager positions were staffed in mid-2009. The CWS expects to be fully staffed in this calendar year. Unfortunately, CWS budgets will be frozen for the next 3 years with some potential reductions in coming years. Canada is redeveloping the Wetlands Information Portal (WetKit) and anticipates a 2011 launch. Ducks Unlimited Canada and Environment Canada will be major partners in the update. The North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Canada) (NAWCC) has not been as active in recent years. However, they are completing a strategic plan and reinvigorating the Council. Canada is excited about the updates to NAWCA legislation to contribute non-federal funds to NAWCA projects. CWS started an avian monitoring review in 2007. They are looking at monitoring programs to understand better their allocation of resources and whether the information they need to make conservation and management decisions. The review will most likely continue for 2 or 3 more years. The early results indicate that there is room for improvement in some surveys and there are a small number of surveys that should be discontinued. They are also looking for efficiencies to see if they can reduce the amount of effort without losing statistical rigor and whether they can move money around for species that are less well monitored. They have completed reviews for 190 surveys. Twenty-seven surveys were identified for more focused review. The review will be conducted by post-doctoral candidates who will review the data and survey design to give an unbiased assessment. They placed surveys into different categories—continue as is, continue pending further analysis, consider major revision, and potentially discontinue (about 14). An internal report will be provided to Environment Canada's (EC) senior management in the next couple of months. They are already starting to make changes to programs that are under the control of EC. Many of the waterfowl monitoring programs were well-designed and of high quality. They want to be sure that they have the appropriate level of monitoring for harvest management decisions. Many other taxa still need even basic monitoring information. Many programs are conducted in partnership with the U.S. so they will communicate with U.S. partners over the next couple of years to discuss any pertinent findings of programs. Doug Bliss and Richard Elliot are the contacts for this review.

2011-2012 NAWMP Revision – Seth Mott (USFWS) reported on the progress of the 2012 NAWMP Revision. He first provided some background regarding past NAWMP updates, and workshops and other meetings setting the stage for this major revision. Mott then described the two-step consultation process that the NAWMP Committee is using to take and incorporate input from the waterfowl management committee. The first round of input is being used to develop explicit Plan objectives. From 31 objectives used in the initial round of input, three emerged as fundamental objectives: (1) maintain healthy waterfowl populations as a part of North American fauna; (2) maintain landscapes capable of sustaining waterfowl populations in perpetuity; and, (3) perpetuate the tradition of waterfowling, in its broadest sense. Much work remains to be done to compile the results of the workshops held to date and before a 2nd round of consultation begins around September. The results of that will be used to inform the drafting of the document in early

2011, with the target of early 2012 to have a draft ready for approvals. Dr. Jim Ringelman has been contracted to coordinate the Plan revision effort. Overall, the Plan revision will seek to generate management coherence among the three primary elements of waterfowl conservation - population management, habitat conservation, and the human element that make those possible.

Division of Migratory Bird Management report – Bob Blohm (USFWS) provided a report that included the primary elements of the report to the Bird Conservation Committee. He focused some additional commentary on the SEIS on migratory bird hunting, replacement of the FWS' survey aircraft with the new Kodiaks, a periodic review of the primary waterfowl surveys, and the development of the banding needs document.

Joint Ventures and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives - Paul Schmidt (USFWS) presented on the LCCs and their relationship to the Joint Ventures (JVs). They have visited with JV representatives to discuss LCCs and the JVs' perspectives on LCCs, their function, and the potential relationships between the two types of partnerships. Many JVs have sent the USFWS letters expressing their desire to have a seat on an LCC (Intermountain West JV), work cooperatively with the LCCs (East Gulf Coast) or embrace LCC development (Appalachian JV). In addition, the Atlantic Coast JV will provide leadership but not establish an LCC. The Lower Mississippi Valley JV will assume the leadership of developing an LCC. The Playa Lakes JV decided to take the lead on becoming an LCC for a trial period of 12-18 months. The USFWS has met with the CWS to discuss LCCs but those conversations have just started. Although JVs want to participate, there are challenges that are in the process of being addressed. There will be an Executive Committee that will exert national oversight for LCCs.

Satellite Telemetry Study Update – Dale Humburg provided an update and reported that the researchers continue to test emerging technology and habitat conservation information needs by using mallards and advanced telemetry as a platform. They have had major issues with technological failure and will continue to work through the issues with controlled studies this year.

Submitted by: Scott Yaich