



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

BIRD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE PART II

Chair: Gordon Myers, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Vice-Chair: Tony Wilkinson, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation

8 March 2019

8:30-10:30 am

**North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference
Denver, CO**

National Flyway Council Updates

Kevin Blakely, Chair, National Flyway Council/Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Several coordination meetings involving federal agencies were postponed due to the federal shutdown, including the Harvest Management Working Group, so these groups did not report out to the NFC. Several Councils sent letters to federal agencies on topics including: concerns on clean water act changes, impacts of the Solicitor's opinion on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and proposed oil and gas leasing program in the Arctic Coastal Plain. The Councils completed actions to designate take levels of Peregrine Falcons in several states, and they allocated release of Trumpeter Swans to approved sites.

The NFC approved two actions:

- 1) In relationship to NAWMP, NFC approved to direct the balance of approx. \$17,000 in the HD surveys account being held by AFWA to be used in conjunction with the funding already provided by USGS and the USFWS for the Human Dimensions Work Group post-doc position. That position will be completing additional analyses and priorities from the Plan Committee.
- 2) Completed Golden Eagle Allocation Procedure for the placement of golden eagles with falconers: In February 2018, the Service asked each of the four Flyway Councils to develop and manage an allocation process for placing golden eagles with falconers. The federal Eagle Act allows the USFWS to authorize the taking, possession, and transportation of golden eagles for falconry. The Service has previously determined that removal of six golden eagles annually from the wild for falconry purposes is compatible with the preservation of the species. The USFWS is only allowing the placement of golden eagles with falconers when they become available by issuing the necessary depredation or rehabilitation permits. Each of the flyways discussed and approved the proposed Golden Eagle Allocation Process. The process includes Utah as the designated state wildlife agency for implementing the allocation process to the falconers through a random draw. The NFC completed a final letter to USFWS to provide notification of NFC's adoption of the process and designation of state wildlife agency for implementation.

Bird-Fish Related Conflicts Working Group Report

David Cobb, Wildlife Management Division Chief, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

The Working Group's Charge: *"Federal and State Agency members representing the bird and fisheries management disciplines will develop an adaptive approach to identify opportunities for most efficiently addressing the challenges of managing piscivorous birds and affected fishery resources and promote a common understanding of their interactions. The WG reports to the Fisheries and Water Resource Policy Committee and the Bird Conservation Committee. The WG may advance issues to the FWRPC and BCC from which information and requests can be developed and presented to state directors."*

Activities include:

- Finalizing a Workplan on November 19, 2018 with three categories of focus areas and goals: Communication, Science Assessments and Needs, and Recommendations.
- Members of the BFRSWG will attend a meeting with USFWS and other partners to review regional workshop summaries and discuss next steps in the species conflict framework process.
- Developing and distributing a survey to state fish chiefs, intending to better define the scope of bird- and fish-related conflicts among states, from a fisheries perspective, and gather feedback related to permitting issues for both aquaculture and free-swimming fish. Results will be presented at the Fisheries & Water Resources Policy Committee meeting at the NAWNRC on March 7.
- Submitting a symposium proposal for the AFS-TWS Joint Meeting in Reno, Sept 29 – Oct 3; the WG continues to develop a list of potential speakers and topics for the symposium.

The work group anticipates an in-person meeting this spring or summer in ID or WI to assign teams to address focal areas and goals.

PIF/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group Report

Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Initiative Updates

- Partners in Flight (PIF) accomplishments:
 - October 2018 meeting between the forestry sector and Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team
 - Engagement with industry and the Wildlife Habitat Council resulting in a PIF-hosted webinar on grasslands management for the WHC in early spring 2019
 - Formation of an Eastern PIF WG, and an initial meeting in April 2019
 - PIF will celebrate its 30-year anniversary in 2020 and is planning events to celebrate
- US Shorebird Conservation Plan Council:
 - release of the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture Shorebird Plan; available soon online;
 - 8th meeting of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group, from Oct. 24-28, 2019, in Panama City, Panama. Abstracts are due by May 01, 2019; details are on the WHSG web site.
- Waterbird Conservation Council: discussion on the need and initial work to re-activate the Council and find support for a Coordinator for the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas Initiative. There is initial support from NABCI Committee members to create a

term position on soft money for a Waterbird Coordinator. It would be optimum to engage a re-activated Waterbird Conservation Council in this effort.

Air-Space Habitat Threats

- A draft summary of existing BMPs was distributed and discussed;
- Focused on wind energy, powerlines, window strikes, communication and other towers;
- The summary will be finalized and distributed to appropriate state agency representatives for suggestions;
- Will coordinate with others in BCC working on incidental take threats and provide a report in September.

Avian Conservation Data Management Workshop, March 2018:

- Reactivated a colonial waterbird database initiated by former Waterbird Coordinator with data from several sources, primarily from the Atlantic Flyway, but focusing on 5 species of concern (Common Tern, Least Tern, Double-crested Cormorant, Laughing Gull, Black Skimmer);
- Data can be visualized in maps, figures, and tables; data can be sorted to assist evaluations and decision-making;
- Database will be housed in the AKN and may be part of a larger data hub project;
- A second workshop is planned for April 04, 2019, Raleigh, NC and via webex.

Policy/Legislation/Funding Discussion

- PIF has developed a strategy **for using land management- and policy-relevant science to improve ecosystem management**. This approach ensures accelerated forest restoration efforts are effective and they reduce risks of uncharacteristically severe fire, protect threatened and endangered species, manage for sustainable timber yields, maintain functioning ecological processes, and conserve at-risk migratory birds in western fire-adapted forests.
- HR 919 – **Bird-Safe Buildings Act of 2019 was introduced January 30, 2019:** incorporates bird-safe building materials and design features into public buildings, and for other purposes.
- HR 1305 – **Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act**, introduced February 15, 2019: to implement the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, and for other purposes.
- WG participants were encouraged to support these strategies and legislative efforts to the extent their affiliations could, and to acknowledge legislators who had been instrumental in getting the Farm Bill, Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Act, and other positive legislation passed recently.

Feral and Free-Ranging Cat Work Group Report

Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

- **State Wildlife Law Project** developing **library of statutes that will include the topic of feral and free-ranging cats**.
- Policies and Legal Actions related to cats:
 - 3 state bills (NJ, SC, VT) under consideration that would sanction and fund trap-neuter-release (TNR) as the approved method of managing feral and free-ranging cats.
 - The case, **Jones Beach State Park, New York vs. the American Bird Conservancy** was decided in December 2018 in ABC's favor. All cats in the colony at Jones Beach SP had to be removed to protect the federally-listed Piping Plover. This is the first case in

which the Endangered Species Act was used to protect a federally-listed species from free-ranging cats.

- On January 29, 2019, **Hawaii's Invasive Species Council passed Resolution 19-2**, supporting the keeping of pet cats indoors and the use of peer-reviewed science in pursuing humane mitigation of the impacts of feral cats on wildlife and people. The resolution was signed by representatives from the Department of Land and Natural Resources; Department of Agriculture; Department of Health; Department of Transportation; Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; and University of Hawaii.
- WG distributed a survey in 2018, and analysis of these data has begun. Highlights include state agency's interest in this AFWA WG providing BMPs for dealing with feral and free-ranging cats, and outreach materials.
- Working Group is developing a Best Management Practices document, and plans to have rough drafts of each chapter completed before July 01, 2019, with anticipated presentation to the Directors at the September 2019 AFWA business meeting.

Resident Game Bird (RGB) Working Group Report

Todd Bishop, Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Game Bird Plan Revisions: At least one of the resident game bird plans will initiate updates in 2019, and that Plan may come to the BCC for review in the future.

Translocation: The RGB WG is working on an effort to develop a national standard/template for translocation. Individual plans will still be developed for each translocated species, but a national template will suggest a consistent format and consistent elements for these plans. A draft template is anticipated this fall. Some translocation plans have already been completed by individual groups, and Todd asks whether the Bird Committee would like to endorse these individual plans and bring them to the Directors. BCC Chair Gordon Myers indicates that he sees value in moving these to the BCC for consideration, and reporting to the Directors to make them aware. The group generally agrees that this is a good pathway.

Small Game Hunter Participation: RGB WG is developing a resolution with the Hunting and Shooting Sports Participation Committee to address the decline in small game hunter participation and its impacts on conservation delivery. RGB WG aims to work cooperatively with this other Committee, to present joint resolution at fall meeting. Resolution will indicate that AFWA finds the decline in small game hunter participation to be a serious national conservation concern that will require a coordinated effort among states to understand and address; and that AFWA directs its Bird Conservation Committee and Hunting/Shooting Sports Participation Committee to cooperatively issue an assessment this challenge, including a list of key issues and recommended actions, and present it to this body in a timely manner. This action is encouraged by BCC Vice-Chair Tony Wilkinson and the BCC presents no objections.

Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group (MSUGBWG) Report

Alicia Hardin, Wildlife Division Administrator, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

This WG will take two actions: 1) Send a note asking flyways if they would prefer USFWS Webless research dollars at \$50,000 per year or every other year at \$100,000, and 2) Sign on to a resolution regarding the reauthorization of NAWCA, jointly with the Waterfowl WG.

Dove Task Force: Anticipate development of integrated population models by 2020. Initiating a 3 year Reward Banding study on July 1, 2019. Working with different management units on priority needs and developing a collective document. Priorities identified include: Harvest Information Program, Integrated Population Modeling, banding assessment, landscape-level

changes in dove species/populations, identifying barriers to hunting, and evaluating the economic impact of dove hunting.

Woodcock Task Force: The WTF is reconvening the Woodcock Harvest Management Team to examine thresholds that trigger liberal to moderate seasons. Information on a new study about eastern satellite telemetry migration project is available at woodcockmigration.org; this project seeks additional funding.

Waterfowl Working Group Report

Jeff Ver Steeg, Assistant Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

This Working Group heard a presentation from the Playa Lakes Joint Venture on the use of playas to assist communities with groundwater recharge, which represents a convergence of wildlife and community priorities. The group also heard/discussed the NAWMP Plan Committee Update, the Human Dimensions Working Group/Public Engagement Team R3 update, a Bird Committee Incidental Take Work Group update, a presentation on a NAWMP priority landscapes decision support tool, and updates on State Contributions to Canada.

2019 is the 30th anniversary of NAWCA, and the WWG will develop a resolution for the Bird Conservation Committee, in coordination with other Committees, to submit to AFWA.

Harvest Information Program Working Group Report

Ross Melinchuk, Vice President of Conservation, National Wild Turkey Federation

WMI will lead the implementation of a national pilot to test a new system; implementation will likely start in the 2020-2021 season. Group has a “critical mass” for state participation in the pilot, but can accommodate 1-2 states, ideally from Central/Pacific Flyways. Some states are already implementing the changes we are proposing through a pilot. One major source of error in the past has been data entry through a third party vendor; for many states, the majority of their licenses are sold at third-party vendors. Pilot will focus on eliminating these vendors from the data entry process.

Ross nominates Karen Waldrop (KY) and Josh Avey (AZ) to become Chair and Vice-Chair of this WG, respectively. Gordon Myers approves these nominations.

Closing Remarks

BCC Chair Gordon Myers thanks all of the Working Group Chairs and members and indicates that all the work through these groups is a tremendous accomplishment. Gordon thanks Judith Scarl for her work coordinating the meetings and the Working Groups.