

**Southeast Partners in Flight  
Steering Committee Meeting  
Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Meeting  
Hilton Head, South Carolina  
October 30, 2004**

**Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting began at 12:15 pm with 13 people in attendance. See attendance list here at the end.

**Financial Report, EJ Williams**

The current balance is somewhere between \$9,000 and \$10,000 of which approximately \$3,000 is earmarked for printing the Biloxi proceedings. The group discussed the merits of printing the poster in Spanish and agreed to use some of the existing funds to accomplish this task.

The group also discussed the need to form an audit committee to review the finances prior to the annual meeting and report to the steering committee at that time. We agreed that it will be best for EJ to continue to be the treasurer. Action Item: Form a small group to review the books and report to the steering committee at the spring meeting.

**Need For Chapter Bylaws, EJ**

A draft charter was developed but never approved by the entire steering committee. The group agreed that this document should serve as draft to be reviewed by a working group. Action Item: EJ to email the draft to the co-chairs for distribution, email work for a final to be brought to the annual meeting in McAllen for approval by the Steering Committee. If you are interested in being part of this working group email EJ, Catherine or Laurel.

**Report from Implementation Committee (IC), Laurel Moore Barnhill**

Implementation Committee met prior to the International in Cape May New Jersey, 29-27 September.

PIF Annual Support Needs: Terry Rich, National PIF Coordinator, submits a yearly PIF operational budget. Terry's salary is covered by USFWS while other annual expenses are covered completely or in part by one or more partners but some shortfalls exist. Annual expenses include, National Coordinator, Database, Science Committee, Mesoamerican Office, Awards, IMBD, Bird Conservation Magazine, and Web-site Maintenance.

The group discussed and agreed to contribute \$1,000 annually to Terry's travel. USFWS does not cover his travel budget only salary and benefits. The contribution from SEPIF would only be used for travel to SEPIF specific meetings (e.g., the annual meeting). This decision is a challenge to the other working groups to review the annual PIF expenses and if possible identify where they can best contribute.

Asilomar Proceedings: The proceedings are close to being finished and distributed to participants. If your address has changed since the meetings contact Linda Long ([llong@fs.fed.us](mailto:llong@fs.fed.us)) to make any necessary corrections.

PIF Conservation Directory: ABC has taken the lead in updating the directory. ABC has assembled lists by state that needs to be checked for accuracy as people have moved and to add new contacts. State coordinators have already received their state list. It is important that these lists reflect all PIF people in your state (e.g., USFWS, USFS, NRCS, TNC, Audubon, DU, ornithological societies, universities, industry and all others). The purpose is to include all individuals working actively in bird conservation in the America's at regional, national, and international levels. Action Item: review your state list and make corrections as required. <http://abcbirds.org/directory/directory.htm>

PIF Role in Advocacy Issues:

Background: California PIF has developed a decision making process to be used when handling advocacy issues and brought forward to the Implementation Committee for guidance. In general, the process addressed the following: providing scientific, technical, or other expert assistance; advocating for, supporting, opposing, or otherwise taking formal positions on legislation, program funding, etc.; and lobbying. Cal PIF is in the process of determining a final outcome and any documents will be used for internal purposes only.

The position of the Implementation Committee is that PIF is a partnership and its role is to provide sound scientific information. There is a point at which we (PIF) must step away from the decision making process. State and regional PIF groups need to keep in mind certain items (e.g., Hatch Act and PIF MOA with Federal Agencies) and the influence of their actions on federal partners. The IC is most concerned about the long-term welfare of the partnership, but national cannot dictate to a state or regional working group what they can or cannot do. Each group needs to keep in mind that they are part of a larger partnership.

There are a number of avenues for advocacy and one solution is for the Bird Conservation Alliance to advocate on behalf of PIF. The Alliance (<http://www.birdconservationalliance.org/>) serves as a forum for organizations to exchange information and ideas regarding current issues in bird conservation, assists its members in conducting collaborative advocacy, and provides resources to assist its members in their bird conservation work. The BCA will only be as successful on behalf of PIF as PIF makes it.

Discussion: This discussion came on the heels of the discussion about PIF and SEQSG advocating legislation to influence the Farm Bill, so there was a little confusion about where advocacy fits within the context of SEPIF. It's possible that PIF can provide information to partners such as Audubon or the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) who can then use the information for advocacy purposes. Because several people involved in PIF are state and federal personnel this issue has been difficult to deal with. State and Federal agency personnel might have more influence working directly with USFS on Forest Revision Plans. This is an opportunity for PIF to make sure PIF goals and objectives are considered in the context of USFS Forest Revision Plans.

Is an initiative between SEQSG and SEPIF advocacy? If suggestions are based on scientific information is this advocacy? Negative comments on an issue versus positive support of a Farm Bill practice might be taken differently. Comment that providing science doesn't always get the job done. Example of field borders for quail-numerous studies have shown that field borders are positive for quail. That didn't really help the movement much, there needed to be an advocacy movement when the group went to

Washington and started lobbying for the legislation to implement these practices. The joint initiative we have started on will eventually get to that point.

Can individuals represent themselves when advocating or whether they can represent PIF? Do we need guidelines that might be appropriate for PIF in terms of advocacy so that certain people can step back if they need to? Can individuals make recommendations that are not 'official'; for example, individuals becoming involved with USFS Forest Plan Revision are a type of advocacy, an opportunity to influence planning while using PIF goals. Some consider American Bird Conservancy as the advocacy group for PIF.

Action Item: This will be an agenda item for McAllen, TX Steering Committee. Discussion on PIF and its role as an advocate within the context of a larger discussion of the SEQSG and SEPIF initiative. Well thought out initiatives with good representation from SEPIF should not cause problems. Discussion at a broader level would be appropriate. Case by case basis analysis might be good for advocacy issues. Consensus is important.

State of the Birds, Audubon: During the IC, Greg Butcher distributed reprints of the insert included in the October 2004 edition of Audubon Magazine. The reprint and companion website (<http://www.audubon.org/bird/stateofthebirds/>) are intended to document key findings on a review of the status of 654 species and to identify policy implications. Copies are also available from Greg (<mailto:gbutcher@audubon.org>).

#### PIF Continental Plan

Nearly all of the 10,000 copies of the PIF Continental Plan have been distributed. But due to the continued demand, we have decided to reprint another 5,000 copies. As before, we will send 1-5 copies to any requester free of charge. But we are requesting donations of \$10 per plan for orders of more than 5 plans. Partial up-front support for the reprinting has been provided by Cornell, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. We continue to explore options for producing a pdf or other web version for downloading. Many of us believe that the plan should continue to be distributed as a whole, and not as stand-alone tables or other parts.—Terry Rich ([terry\\_rich@fws.gov](mailto:terry_rich@fws.gov))

The August 2004 issue of Bird Conservation magazine is almost completely devoted to the PIF Continental Plan, with articles on most of the major plan components. This issue is targeted at those who have some interest in the science of continental-level assessment but who are not interested in all the details. Terry has some additional copies available, first-come first-served, for distribution to appropriate audiences.

PIF Pins: Tri-national PIF pins will be available in the IMBD catalogue and samples were handed out to those present. A request from Sue Bonfield ([sbonfield@aol.com](mailto:sbonfield@aol.com)) was posted to the list serve in early November to determine interest. These are excellent items for International Migratory Bird Day events, meetings, etc. More IMBD items can be found on the website: <http://www.birdday.org> or linked from [Partners in Flight Home Page - U.S.](#)

#### Coordinated Bird Monitoring (CBM)

***Monitoring Avian Conservation: Rationale, Design, and Coordination*** (September 2004) was prepared by the Coordinated Bird Monitoring Working Group of the

International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA). This review and report was requested by the directors of the USFWS and USGS, in consultation with IAFWA, at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Spokane in March 2004.

The general objective was to assess opportunities and challenges in coordinated bird monitoring. Specific charges were to 1) identify key technical issues, approaches, and suggestions about the coordination of bird monitoring, 2) suggest a process for integrating and updating ideas from the avian conservation and research community; and 3) produce a report for the IAFWA Science and Research Committee with recommendations on technical aspects of coordinated bird monitoring.

The working group report consists of three sections – Rationale, Design, and Coordination – which emphasize the need to focus monitoring efforts on evaluation of avian responses to conservation actions. The report recommendations are intended to serve as a springboard for the bird conservation community to develop a shared technical and administrative framework for coordinating bird monitoring.

The US NABCI committee is requesting focused comments, will synthesize those comments, and take appropriate actions to advance priority bird monitoring needs through a reconstituted Monitoring Working Group. The comment period ends on December 1, 2004 and the report can be found at <http://www.iafwa.org>. They are requesting that comments be consolidated if possible. Each state director was sent a letter from Steve Williams requesting comments from agencies. If you have comments that represent your agency make sure that they are included in your agency's response. SEPIF comments will be sent to Terry for incorporation into a single PIF response.

Jon Bart's draft of CBM was reviewed by the Bird Committee at the IAFWA meeting and they have made recommendations based on this review. NABCI and Bird Committee are asking for comments on their recommendations; each state will get a letter for comments. State PIF coordinators need to make sure they are a part of this process. SEPIF should also draft comments

#### **Report from Science Committee, Chuck Hunter**

The Science Committee met two days before the IC with Chuck Hunter and Dean Demarest representing SEPIF.

#### PIF Species Assessment Database--Funding

In 1991, Partners In Flight (PIF) began developing a Species Assessment Process to objectively evaluate the conservation status of each bird species in North America, and to identify areas where conservation efforts for those species would be most effective. This process assigns scores to species in categories pertaining to their biology and conservation. The database is a widely used planning tool but it does not have an adequate nor stable funding base. The database is accessed via the web on average 2,000 times per week (<http://www.rmbo.org/pif/pif-db.html>). Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO), the creator and steward of the database, was recently awarded a \$30,000 grant from NFWF to maintain and update the database, on the condition that these funds be matched (1:1) by non-federal (U.S.) funds raised specifically for this project. Presently, \$10,000 in matching funds have been secured thanks to the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and an additional \$5000 from Canada, but RMBO still needs \$15,000 in order to take full advantage of the NFWF grant. A proposal

from RMBO outlining intentions and budget allocations was distributed. The database has been identified as a PIF national level priority.

Action Item: the group agreed that the Species Assessment Database is a worthwhile cause and supported the proposal. The group endorsed moving the proposal forward to the SE Director's Non-game Committee. The proposal was brought forward to the Directors and was tabled until the spring meeting due to their not having seen the material prior to the meeting.

#### PIF Species Assessment Database—Physio Scores

Although the database was originally intended to assist in regional conservation priority-setting among breeding birds, specifically in U.S. states and PIF Physiographic Areas, the PIF process can also be used simply as a means of assessing conservation status. More recently, the approach was applied at the continental scale to address species at the level of Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs). The Science Committee has agreed to pull physiographic region scores from the database despite certain BCRs having specific issues relevant to small areas (i.e., sub-BCRs). Also, some concern exists that some regional species will not be adequately assessed with a change towards a BCR assessment of priority birds. (e.g., Appalachian Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, BCR 28).

The question at hand then becomes, are physiographic scores still being used at the state and BCR level? Should we change our approach to regional assessments for priority birds?

Action Item: Send comments to Chuck ([chuck\\_hunter@fws.gov](mailto:chuck_hunter@fws.gov)).

- 1) Are physiographic regional scores still relevant? For example, were they used in your state's CWCS bird prioritization process?
- 2) Are physio area scores needed in order for the database scores to be up to date?
- 3) If Physiographic region scores are not available will certain species fall through the cracks?
- 4) Other comments?

#### Discussion

Who has the role to manage all of these databases (i.e., Audubon databases, BBS, habitat changes database, state databases, etc.)? How do Joint Ventures fit in with monitoring? There is a Director's order to JVs on the role they should play with five functions as guidelines. JVs can be the mechanism to pull things together from an all bird viewpoint. A need for regional oversight exists.

#### **SEPIF Poster, report from Cliff Shackelford given by Catherine**

Migratory Landbirds of the Southeast: Valuable and Vulnerable poster was reprinted in March 2004 and approximately 28,000 posters were purchased by about a dozen states. The supply was completely sold out. Reprinting of this highly informative and widely utilized outreach product was made possible by the generous support of SEAFWA and Texas Parks and Wildlife. Bob Brantley conducted the accounting and billing for the project and TPWD provided personnel that arranged for printing and distribution. Numerous sponsors and fiscal ingenuity of TPWD resulted in funds available for printing and distributing a Spanish version of the poster. Logos from all sponsors are on the back of the poster.

### **Southeast Partners in Flight Newsletter, Laurel**

Anna Huckabee (formerly SCDNR) agreed to do quarterly newsletter for SEPIF, but people did not send information in a consistent manner. The group agreed that the idea has merit but not the means. There are a number of avenues for information exchange: national PIF Newsletter that Terry produces each quarter (submission of items approximately one month in advance), ACJV via Craig Watson, LMVJV website, and SEPIF list serve.

### **Nongame and Private Quail Hunting Initiative, Laurel**

Jeff Holmes, Co-Chair, Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Southeastern United States, asked SEPIF to review a proposal for an initiative between private quail hunting and non-game conservation communities. A similar request was made of the SE Quail Study Group and after discussion that group decided to table the proposal.

The purpose of this initiative is to build bridges between the game and non-game conservation communities by identifying common goals and emphasizing mutual benefits. Privately-managed quail hunting lands represent some of the best examples of pristine habitats in the Southeastern United States. Not surprisingly, the conservation power of privately-managed hunting lands extends far beyond their game-oriented mission. Species lost or declining due to poor management or habitat alteration elsewhere may be quite common on these well-managed lands. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the conservation power of these sporting lands is their private ownership. Understandably, many members of the private hunting community are vocal advocates of landowner rights and opponents of government interference on private lands. The Endangered Species Act and other federal programs are of particular concern to many plantation owners, managers, and patrons. This distrust may, in extreme cases, extend to all non-game conservation-related activities, organizations, and individuals. Despite their wealth of ecological and biological potential, many hunt clubs are hesitant to allow non-game scientists, government agencies, or other biodiversity conservationists on their land.

Although it will take some time to identify the details of how the non-game and private quail hunting communities can best cooperate, there are a few steps that can be taken immediately.

#### *What the Non-game Community Can Do:*

*Expansion and Connectivity:* Many private land trusts focus their efforts on buffering, expanding or connecting existing public lands. We feel that an equal emphasis should be placed on well-managed private quail hunting lands. Where opportunities exist or can be created, land trusts should consider purchasing land to “flip” (donate or sell) to well-managed hunt clubs. These efforts should, where possible, focus on critical habitats and key “connector” tracts, and should be afforded permanent easements that are mutually beneficial to both game and non-game conservation.

*Rewards and Incentives:* Easements and other financial incentives should be fully explored or, where lacking, developed to reward/encourage high-quality ecosystem stewardship on privately-managed hunt clubs. Emphasize voluntary contributions to non-game conservation. Good habitat management should be rewarded.

*Educational Materials and Opportunities:* Provide educational materials, workshops and other opportunities to owners, managers, technicians, and hunters to help them better incorporate non-game wildlife into their list of priorities.

*Remember: Quality Hunting is the Goal:* Whether conducting research or developing management recommendations, the mission of private hunting lands must be respected. The quality of the hunting experience must be considered in every decision made.

*What The Hunting Community Can Do:*

*Baseline Inventory:* Have the non-game biodiversity on your land inventoried to help determine how your management practices are contributing to non-game conservation. These services can be provided by private consultants, academic institutions, select non-government organizations, or some state agencies.

*Incorporate Non-game Biodiversity:* When developing or revising management plans, consult a professional conservation planner on how best to incorporate non-game biodiversity into your plan while simultaneously continuing to improve the quality of the hunting experience you provide. Oftentimes, small steps (retention of old stumps, summer burning through ponds, etc.) can greatly improve non-game habitat on private land. These services can be provided by private consultants, academic institutions, select non-government organizations, or some state agencies.

*Monitor:* Periodically monitor non-game response to your management regimes. If unanticipated changes in non-game populations are observed, consult a professional planner on how best to adjust your management activities. These services can be provided by private consultants, academic institutions, select non-government organizations, or some state agencies.

*Allow Research:* Privately-managed hunting lands are some of our last, best potential field laboratories and may be vital to filling significant gaps in our scientific knowledge of pristine lands and their associated biodiversity. Allow non-game scientists to conduct research on your lands. You will be making an invaluable contribution to conservation that extends far beyond your property boundaries.

*Educate and Protect:* Educate your staff, clients, and guests regarding the importance of non-game conservation and prohibit or carefully regulate the harvest of non-game species. These services can be provided by private consultants, academic institutions, select non-government organizations, or some state agencies.

Discussion

From during the meeting and emails: What goes on at large private quail hunting lands is likely pretty good for several high priority birds in the southeast; Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (and the ESA) may become an issue for some landowners that don't want them but their management may attract them...this may be a place for help via the Safe Harbor Program; how many acres does this speak to; this could build trust and common ground between landowners and biologists but could also make plantations uneasy; seems to directly target quail plantations and not habitat management on private lands in general; in favor of habitat management for private lands; need to find other avenues to join forces; may be a role for Tall Timbers.

The overall consensus was that the initiative had merit if it focused on private lands in general and no further action should be taken at this time.

**Logistics SEPIF Annual Meeting 2005: Texas, Catherine**

The details of the Annual Meeting in McAllen Texas are coming together quickly. AGFC has agreed to host the website and the most up to date information can be found there (<http://www.agfc.com/sepif>).

Lodging

Lodging and meeting accommodations are at the Country Inn and Suites and we are strongly encouraging people to stay at that hotel. If 70 rooms are reserved SEPIF will not have to pay a rental rate for conference rooms. A block of rooms listed under "Partners in Flight Conference" is reserved until February 8, 2005.

#### Registration

Catherine will be handling registration and the early registration fee will be approximately \$75, \$55 for students (subject to change). Lunches will be catered at the hotel and costs are included in the registration fee.

#### Call for Papers

Bob Cooper has developed the call for papers—both oral and poster presentations. Abstracts for oral or poster presentations (< 250 words, not including title or names and affiliations of authors) should be submitted by email to Mark S. Woodrey (<mailto:mark.woodrey@dmr.state.ms.us>) by January 7, 2005.

We are encouraging researchers, agency personnel, and especially graduate students in natural resources, ecology and biology curricula to present papers and posters that summarize research, monitoring, or management projects addressing any aspect of bird conservation. Participation is anticipated from state and federal agencies, universities, state ornithological societies, and non-government conservation organizations contributing to bird conservation under the umbrellas of Partners in Flight and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. The poster session will occur during a special evening social on Thursday, February 17. As in past years, students presenting posters will be eligible for a Best Student Poster cash award.

In addition, we are encouraging southeastern researchers in bird conservation to give oral presentations, which will be organized into concurrent sessions on both Thursday and Friday. We especially encourage graduate students to present, but request that oral presentations be limited to research efforts that are complete or nearly so, rather than presenting preliminary research results that are largely inconclusive (Preliminary results are suitable for posters). Researchers from all regions of the southeast, Mexico and the Caribbean, and those involved with any aspect of bird conservation, are invited to participate. We especially encourage participation from research efforts in Mexico and southeastern Texas

#### Field Trips

Cliff Shackelford is the local host and working on the ground to pull this together while on maternity leave. A list of field trips (morning and after the conference) will be posted to the website as soon as the details are worked out. Morning conference sessions will start late to accommodate early morning birding.

#### Silent Auction

Joni Ellis ([joni@opticsforthetropics.org](mailto:joni@opticsforthetropics.org)) will be coordinating the Silent Auction and proceeds benefit Optics for the Tropics (<http://www.opticsforthetropics.org/>) and student travel. Please contact Joni with questions and to let her know what items you will bring.

#### Sponsorship

Sponsorships are one way to help defray travel and lodging funding and in the past funding of student lodging has come from sponsorship dollars. If you have any ideas or leads for sponsorships contact Catherine (<mailto:cwrideout@aqfc.state.ar.us>)



### **Agenda SEPIF Annual Meeting 2005: Texas, Catherine**

The group reviewed and commented on the outline to date. Wednesday 16 February will be devoted to SEPIF and SEQSG respective steering committee meetings. Thursday and Friday will focus on plenary sessions and breakouts with the poster session scheduled for Thursday evening. Exact details of sessions are still being worked out by the planning committee. In general one session will focus on a range of topics dealing with bird conservation in Northeast Mexico and South Texas, another will focus on population monitoring and habitat objectives and the direction of SEPIF, and a third on management of public and private lands.

One idea for the poster session was to have each state present a poster on their CWCS and have state planners in attendance.

### **Joint SEQSG SEPIF Initiative, Don McKenzie**

The purpose of this joint initiative is to develop, advocate, achieve and implement a major new private-land habitat initiative through the Farm Bill to the mutual benefit of northern bobwhites and priority grassland, early successional and/or savannah species of landbirds. This formal initiative would make conversations become reality and aim for the 2007 Farm Bill. We also need to be thinking about mechanisms to make this stuff happen on the ground.

Three draft white papers have been developed from work that began at the August SEQSG meeting---Cropland Flexible Fallow, Wildlife Woodlands, and Native Grasses for Livestock and Wildlife. Three separate efforts will each define a vision and a plan with the possibility of going to different places in federal code, draft legislation. Determination of where the best fit will be will depend upon timing and being ready when opportunities arise. The closest open window at this time is in the private forest land arena for a number of reasons: pulp prices have crashed; beetle populations are increasing and spreading; and the forest land enhancement program not doing well. Forestry community is asking for help for this program and the SE Forestry and Wildlife Working Group meet in Atlanta recently where a high level of consensus occurred on basic issues. This program needs to be comprehensive and not just focus on tree planting.

A long list of activity within the forestry arena also point to the opportunity for a forest based initiative at this time. The Longleaf Alliance (<http://www.longleafalliance.org/>) held their bi-annual meeting in early October and there was a high level of enthusiasm for conversion across the landscape to longleaf. During the meeting wildlife was a center piece but few biologists attended. Membership to the Longleaf Alliance is a modest \$35 which includes a newsletter and SEPIF needs to become more involved with this group. A longleaf understory restoration conference was held in October in Florida and discussions were on oak savannah restoration in areas where longleaf is not present.

The group also discussed the need to identify based upon the three white papers which species would benefit from the practices by BCR and breeding/wintering season. Action Item: Develop a list of species that will benefit from Cropland Flexible Fallow, Wildlife Woodlands, and Native Grasses for Livestock and Wildlife programs. Practices described related to bird benefits; id suite of birds and how relate to suite of species (grassland, crop, forest) Chuck to start with Dean (and others?) with review by JV's, coordinated through Don.

## **State Reports on CWCS Status, Catherine**

Highlights from several states were presented and discussion ensued.

### Alabama

Terwilliger Consulting has been contracted to assist with development of the CWCS. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Alabama Nongame Conference held in 2002 (using WCRP funds) prioritized species of concern, linked them to primary habitats, ranked the habitats and described general management objectives for high ranking habitats. This symposium addressed the first four of the eight required elements. The expert panels from the symposium have been reconvened to update the information and extend it to more refined “on the ground” management recommendations. An initial series of stakeholder meetings regarding development of the CWCS is nearing completion. Through August, 29 meetings have been held, including more than 400 individuals from state and federal agencies and NGO’s. A detailed outline for the CWCS has been completed and initial drafts of various chapters are in development. When a draft CWCS is completed (by March 2005) it will be available for review by the general public and a series of public meetings will be held.

### Arkansas

- Our planning is being done in-house by AGFC and partners
- Steering Committee is the decision making body in the CWCS process: members from The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Arkansas, USFWS, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.
- Species list was derived from a merge of Arkansas Game and Fish Commission species of concern list and Natural Heritage Commission lists. This list has gone to the species teams.
- Approach has been to use a smaller bird subcommittee team to derive our list. Four members: used Chuck Hunter’s “Proposed State Lists of Priority Bird Species for FWS Southeast Region States” and merged it with our Heritage list. We decided to narrow our list by removing some species that are on the Heritage list but where AR is on the periphery of their range and they are only occasionally recorded in the state. Our list has 79 species currently. We have been working on listing potential and known problems, priority research, monitoring needs and strategies, and conservation actions needed within smaller group. We are getting ready to send out our list to a larger group within the state for review and feedback which will include personnel from the birding community, university professors, federal and state personnel, and non-profit groups.
- Using eco-region approach. There are Habitat GIS/Aquatic systems and Terrestrial systems using similar vegetation classification that the USFS used in their forest plan revision. This approach results in a group of 30 to 35 habitat types. Forest Service lands make up the bulk of 2 of the eco-regions. This made them an important partner to work closely with in the process.
- A database is also being done in cooperation with the Forest Service. It’s intended to be used for data storage and analysis. This database was designed by AGFC for the USFS Plan Revision.
- There is an MOU with TNC to do the GIS work.
- It is likely that the Communication Team will be led by the Cooperative Extension Service, who will develop four eco-regional workshops. County agents and DC’s will be working on public involvement up front. This will lend credibility to the process. Drafts will be taken to all these meetings to facilitate buy-in and different perspectives.

## GENERAL ISSUES

- 1) Consistency of eco-regions across borders and consistency of habitat priorities across borders are an important issue. As we continue to work on our plans, it should be easy to compare lists among states that share borders and, although it may be difficult to use the exact same habitat types, it might be good to address habitats after plans are written to make sure that we understand each other's use of language about habitat types.
- 2) Consistency of species lists across state lines is also important. This should be easy to do as we continue to post information to our state planning websites.
- 3) During the plan updating process, which should occur every 10 years, SEAFWA or IAFWA might sponsor regional meetings for interstate facilitation.

### Louisiana

- Completed our list of priority species (species of conservation concern).
- Determined how we will look at habitats/species in Louisiana:
  - Break state up into eco-regions based on the method developed by The Nature Conservancy.
  - Identify habitats and species found in each eco-region and identify stresses, their sources and methods to address these stresses.
- Finished identifying stresses/sources of stresses for the habitats and species of the East Gulf Coast Plain eco-region.
- Working on addressing ways to lessen/remove these stresses and ways of monitoring future progress.
- Beginning work on Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes eco-region.
- Habitat Rankings – habitats only found in one region are given a higher priority, lesser priority is given to habitats that are multi-regional, but these habitats may be addressed with a higher priority in regions where they are predominate. (Example: BLH – found in almost every eco-region but a dominate habitat in the Mississippi Alluvial Plain).
- Focusing on strategies to protect habitats and species by working with numerous stakeholders to address stresses/sources of stress and methods to abate these stresses.
- In order to facilitate more information exchanges through smaller meetings, will be going to different State, NGO, and Federal agencies instead of holding large public meetings. Will be taking drafts of completed parts of the Strategy in order to get feedback, build partnerships and gain new perspectives. This is planned to begin in November.
- Want to look at species and habitat issues which cross state boundaries to develop a process to crosswalk planning efforts; focus especially on marine and bird issues.
- Aquatics issues will be addressed based on 12 drainage basins. This is the method used by Inland and Marine Fisheries Division to monitor fish habitat. Aquatics habitat issues will be defined within eco-regions and will crosswalk with issues effecting terrestrial habitats.
- Were recently told we would have to include insects (invertebrates).

### Kentucky

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) is now working on identifying threats and finishing up habitat and their conditions for each species. We

have made a species' list, which was sent for review to federal agencies, BCR coordinators, state universities, NGO's (TNC and KY Ornithological Society), and state agencies. An additional review was sent out on habitat and distribution maps. We're in the process of taking those comments and updating the distribution maps and community types. We are also identifying population trends (global and state) and key habitat locations and conditions for each species. Once completed, this will again be sent out for review.

We have had good feedback from reviewers. Almost everyone, except LMJV (have Randy Wilson or Charles Baxter not been receiving our packets?) has responded with helpful comments and suggestions. KDFWR greatly appreciates these comments for they have been extremely helpful in the planning process.

A public outreach page is up: <http://fw.ky.gov/conservstrat.asp>

### Mississippi

The technical staff from the museum and wildlife and fisheries programs has finalized the MS CWCS Species of Greatest Conservation Need List. The list includes 71 bird species and has been prioritized into 4 Tiers. Criteria used to prioritize the list included the following:

- 1) Nationwide Conservation Priority Rank (Natureserve.org) (1-3 points)
- 2) Eligibility of Species to Receive Other Sources of Federal Aid Funding (1-3 points)
- 3) Geographic Range of Species (1-4 points)
- 4) Trend in Population Size (1-3 points)
- 5) Degree of Existing Data Available to Support Designation as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (0-1 points)
- 6) Summary of Knowledge Level of Species (1 – 3 points)
- 7) Statewide Conservation Priority Rank (Mississippi Natural Heritage Program) (1 – 3 points)

Total Possible Points: maximum 19 / minimum 6

The list has been submitted to over 100 people that serve on our Advisory Committee – our external stakeholder group made up of other agency and NGO representatives who will provide input throughout the development of the strategy and will be asked to assist in reviewing and revising the plan periodically.

We held our first Advisory Committee meeting on August 20th and 76 people attended. We will hold another Advisory Committee meeting on November 19<sup>th</sup>.

The technical committee is currently working on identifying and prioritizing key habitats. We have also made progress identifying stresses and sources of stresses as well as conservation actions.

### South Carolina

The taxa groups covered by South Carolina's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan include: Fish (fresh water and marine), Mollusks (all snails, some mussels, and some marine mollusks), Crustaceans (crayfish and some marine crustaceans), Aquatic Insects (selected orders and/or families), Terrestrial Inverts (selected insect species), Mammals, Herps, and Birds. Each taxa team has developed two lists, a comprehensive list of

species known to SC and a priority list. Experts from within the agency as well as partners are helping to write the various species (or guild) accounts.

Actual text for the plan has been drafted and flows in the order of the required elements: DESCRIPTION (taxonomy, basic description, and status); POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND SIZE; HABITAT(S) / NATURAL COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS; THREATS; CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS (state and federal); PRIORITY CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS / OPPORTUNITIES (subsections: habitat protection, management, priority research and survey, monitoring, and education / public outreach/cooperative efforts); PERFORMANCE MEASURES (INDICATORS OF SUCCESS); and LITERATURE CITED. Pictures, maps, and trend graphs are also included. This format was modeled after some of the USFWS recovery plans.

In addition to the priority species, we are identifying priority habitats based on these species/guild accounts. These habitat prescriptions will follow the same format as the animals and will be at fine and coarse scales.

The final chapter incorporates the work of the experts and the comments from our public input into some statewide strategies that fall under these broad topics: (1) Education and Outreach; (2) Private Lands Conservation (the working landscape); (3) Public Lands Management; (4) Urban and Developing Lands -- are there any species that depend on us; (5) Habitat Protection; (6) Survey, Monitoring, and Data Systems; and (7) Regulations (taking and possession). We are creating Issue Committees to write these sections. The overall Public Input Process has been written by our partner, Clemson Institute for Community and Economic Development, and will be updated and incorporated in the final text of the Plan. Material for the Introduction, Executive Summary, and Glossary is being gathered into folders in anticipation of the upcoming task of writing these sections.

According to our internal timeline, we expect a draft of the entire plan to be available for public comment in July 2005. Our website (<http://www.dnr.state.sc.us/wcp/>) has been updated, and we anticipate using this venue to reach many audiences.

### North Carolina

As we enter into the final year of Strategy development here in North Carolina, we have begun the task of actually pulling information together into an organized document. This has required extensive coordination and the technical expertise of many staff within our own organization, as well as representation by staff in many other agencies. As expected, the assembly process is quite iterative in nature, as we are constantly accruing new information, bringing more individuals into the process, and gaining the perspective of other state efforts. Yet this milestone also seems to have given our stakeholders and external partners a clearer vision for the Strategy, allowing them to see where their 'expertise' or 'perspective' fits into the larger picture. Soon, as individual sections of text are completed in a draft format, we will be posting them to our website in an incremental fashion for external review. The final review period will take place in early 2005 at which time we will begin work on final design and publication of our Strategy products, for completion by summer 2005.

As we work towards completing our first iteration of the Strategy, we are cognizant of the fact that we must work to ensure that there is a smooth transition between the 'development' phase and the 'implementation' phase. The Strategy is as much about

the processes and frameworks we have developed as it is about the actual text. Throughout the Strategy development process, the CWCS Coordinator has attempted to build connections with other conservation efforts developing in the state in order to facilitate communication on common interests and enhance opportunities for coordination. The success of our Strategy will be contingent upon those experiences.

#### Discussion

Issue of heritage list versus other lists, huge distraction and spent a lot of time arguing over lists. Problem, heritage lists focus on the rarest of the rare versus PIF more common, not make a high score. Idea should be not to just focus on a group of species that have not been focused on the past. Focus to keep stuff off the endangered species list. For those species we do not what listed---very important part of the plan. Funding may disappear if states only have listed species considered within their plans. Need to think of the plans as a wildlife plan not a funding plan. Finally agree on the lists, time to implement, lets not get tangled up on where put funding. Not limited to only funding g1 listed species. Listing issues will not go away after plans are finished, wrestling will still consider. G ranks are meaningless for birds. Need guidance from IAFWA, thoughts on what might help to Debbie. Worry, plans will not produce a fundamental shift of how agencies will do business. Funding drives agencies. Over time states can change, document can provide guidance and oversight for the entire community throughout the state involved with wildlife, not just changing the state agency. Need to have dollars attached to each plan. All 50 plans will demonstrate a fundamental need for funding for all of the species and projects.

#### **GAP, Chuck**

The primary goal of the Southeast GAP is to provide data on the conservation status of native vertebrate species and to work with natural resource agencies in the implementation of that data. Drawing on their experience from previous state-based GAP projects, SE GAP is working to develop seamless high quality land cover and vertebrate models throughout the region. The region totals over 275 million acres and spans portions of thirteen states.

The SE Gap Analysis Project in cooperation with the USFWS and JV's scheduled a meeting to inform partners of current progress and objectives, obtain feedback on draft aggregation of Ecological Systems into Habitat Types, review the priority bird species selected for each habitat type, review existing avian models for those species, provide the background on ancillary data available for use in modeling and work with partners to identify specific parameters based on their expertise, and get feedback on additional methods/data that could be used to improve modeling.

A key objective is to have habitat and ecological systems matching up over state lines. Work is occurring to identify multiple states and priorities that will be helpful---defining ecological systems and bird habitat groupings to see if they can be consolidated. Not disregarding ecological systems, but trying to aggregate for birds.

**Adjourn:** 4:30pm

### List of Participants

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