

Arkansas Game & Fish Commission

2 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bird Conservation Partners

FROM: Scott C. Yaich, Chair, Interim U.S. National Steering Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative

DATE: September 7, 1999

SUBJECT: “The North American Bird Conservation Initiative in the United States: A Vision of American Bird Conservation”

Roger Holmes, President of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) and Jamie Clark, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, stated in their March 17 transmittal letter of “*A Proposed Framework for Delineating Ecologically-based Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation Units for Cooperative Bird Conservation in the U.S.*” that:

“Recent efforts to formulate a North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) have set the stage for a shift toward comprehensive bird conservation. NABCI was crafted by representatives of federal, state and provincial agencies, as well as nongovernmental organizations, to create a framework that would foster coordination among bird initiatives with the aim of conserving all of North America’s bird resources.”

The draft ecologically-based geographical framework introduced by their letter is a critically important step in advancing comprehensive bird conservation.

At approximately the same time as that document was released, a second important step was taken when the IAFWA Migratory Wildlife Committee at their March meeting in Burlingame, CA, appointed an Interim U.S. National Steering Committee for NABCI. The primary charge given the Interim Committee by Roger Holmes, Chair of the Migratory Wildlife Committee, was:

“...to develop a national conservation plan, serving much as an analog to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), but which would address all birds. The product should be concise, easily understandable, pleasing to the eye, and directed at audiences such as Congress and the general public. The document should be one that can be taken into the offices of our Congressional delegations and used as the basis from which to underscore the importance and urgency of increased support for migratory bird conservation. It should not be a technical document filled with tables of data, methods or rationale. It should be compelling.”

We are pleased to make available for your review and comment a draft of “*The North American Bird Conservation Initiative in the United States: A Vision of American Bird Conservation*” produced to address that charge. (If not attached to this transmittal, the document is available on the webpages of each of the four bird conservation initiatives and the IAFWA: www.sso.org/iafwa; www.fws.gov/r9nawwo/nawmphp.html; www.partnersinflight.org; www.nacwcp.org; www.manomet.org/usscp/nabci) Please provide your comments on the

draft by *January 18, 2000* to: Scott C. Yaich, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, #2 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205. Our current timeline is to accept comment through January 18, and prepare and release a re-draft by mid-February in preparation for further action or approval at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March, 2000. The draft will ultimately be re-formatted and subjected to professional technical editing to reduce some redundancy and stylistic differences, both of which will reduce the page length of the document considerably.

As you will see, the document does not contain “the blueprint” laying out all of the detailed requirements for achieving our collective national bird conservation objectives. That is not possible in advance of completion of plans for each of the individual bird initiatives. However, we have attempted to lay out a process and framework which would facilitate the “shift toward comprehensive bird conservation,” concentrating on common elements and needs among all bird groups. A principal focus of this process is the identification of programmatic support required to provide a common foundation from which to seek additional funding necessary for the advancement of all initiatives, individually and collectively. Thus, the “Recommended Actions” section focuses on activities on which there is general agreement would provide broad benefits to comprehensive bird conservation, and which could be supported by a wide range of partners.

The Interim Committee’s secondary charge was to “develop a recommendation for the structure ... of the permanent NABCI-US Steering Committee.” Our recommendation is contained in the draft’s “Administration” section, and will be presented to the Migratory Wildlife Committee, other appropriate IAFWA committees, and other entities at the IAFWA September meeting in Vermont. The support of all major bird conservation partners will be necessary for that Steering Committee to be successful. We encourage you to review that recommendation carefully and provide comment during the IAFWA meeting in September or through any of the various entities proposed to be represented on that Committee. If generally considered to be an acceptable structure as a starting point, we are recommending that an organizational meeting of individuals who can represent the proposed membership of the Steering Committee be held in late October or early November. This meeting would represent a preliminary step forward for the purpose of fostering a dialogue among the representatives, and allow each to more knowledgeably carry information and perspective back and lead a discussion within their own groups to determine their individual positions with respect to serving on the NABCI-US Steering Committee.

As stated by Roger Holmes and Jamie Clark: “You have contributed to and shared significantly in [bird conservation] accomplishments. However, major challenges lie ahead that require us to find better ways to benefit birds without disrupting ongoing successful initiatives. We invite you and your organization to join us in this effort to take bird conservation in the U.S. and throughout North America to the next level. We hope that the concepts outlined in the report will stimulate further discussion and progress.”