
Increasing the Effectiveness of the
Pacific Flyway Nongame Migratory Bird
Technical Committee
Partners Meeting



Pacific Flyway Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committee

March 2015

Executive Summary

The Pacific Flyway Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committee (PFNTC) hosted a Partners Meeting of western bird conservation entities in December 2014. This meeting was a first step in implementing recommendations from National Flyway Council and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to address a common goal: *To enhance bird conservation and management across the western states through improved coordination and collaboration between PFNTC and regional partners.*

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- 1) Increase awareness of partner organizations and current activities.
- 2) Review the respective roles and responsibilities of western partners.
- 3) Help the PFNTC further define its own unique roles and responsibilities.
- 4) Improve communication and identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration.
- 5) Establish priorities for future action.

With 12 partners in attendance, representing a majority of the bird conservation partners throughout the west, the PFNTC gained valuable knowledge of the roles, responsibilities, and priorities of those partners, and where the PFNTC may become a more effective and important collaborator. Potential areas of collaboration discussed during the meeting can be categorized into four common themes:

- Program Support
- Data Management
- Monitoring
- Habitat

The PFNTC identified actions that were simple, feasible, and effective. This included six items for immediate action by PFNTC:

- Explore mechanism for evaluating Southern Wings projects.
- Potential appointment of a PFNTC member to the Avian Knowledge Network Steering Committee.
- Development of a process to submit National Conservation Needs in support of Pacific Flyway and conservation partner needs.
- Conducting a state-by-state assessment of data sharing limitations and opportunities to explore development of a west-wide data management strategy.
- Endorsement of the Pacific Shorebird Monitoring Program.
- Endorsement of the Nightjar Monitoring Program.

In addition, PFNTC will conduct an assessment and prioritization process, potentially through use of Miradi software, of species and habitat issues of concern to states and partners. Results of that assessment will be presented to Council in July 2015.

Increasing the Effectiveness of the Pacific Flyway Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committee Partners Meeting

Introduction

At the request of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), the respective Flyway Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committees (NTCs) were first established in 2006 to primarily address regulatory issues related to nongame migratory birds on behalf of the Flyway Councils. The NTCs were created so that the States and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) could consult more effectively on nongame migratory bird issues of mutual concern.

Five years later (2011), two independent reviews of the NTCs were conducted by the National Flyway Council (in response to a request from the USFWS's Regulations Committee) (Appendix A), and the USFWS (in response to a request from AFWA) (Appendix B). While conducted independently, these two reviews generated similar results. Both reviews concluded that the NTCs were performing valuable functions that strengthened the North American migratory bird conservation system and should be retained; and there is a need and desire to grow the capacity of the NTCs to more fully address the full spectrum of nongame migratory bird management and conservation. Specific recommendations included:

- 1) Evolving to include more non-regulatory work such as monitoring, species assessment and management, and habitat conservation;
- 2) Developing processes for determining priorities to enhance NTC effectiveness in the conservation of migratory birds;
- 3) Greater integration with the other existing bird programs, such as Partners in Flight (PIF), AFWA Bird Conservation Committees, Joint Ventures (JVs), etc.; and
- 4) Taking steps to coordinate NTC efforts with other groups working on similar issues, to avoid duplication of efforts – and to this end consider having joint meetings with other organizations working on bird conservation and that are addressing topics of mutual interest.

In response to these national reviews and their respective recommendations, the Pacific Flyway Migratory Bird Nongame Technical Committee (PFNTC) informed the Pacific Flyway Council in March 2014 that it was moving forward in its evolution of roles and responsibilities beyond those originally identified as primarily regulatory in nature by holding a Partners Meeting in December 2014.

The first step was to define the role and responsibilities of the PFNTC, and those of its partners in bird conservation within the Pacific Flyway (Flyway).

Goal

The PFNTC goal, as summarized from the two reviews, is: *To enhance bird conservation and management across the western states through improved coordination and collaboration between PFNTC and regional partners.*

Objectives

To accomplish this goal, the PFNTC worked with regional partners to:

- 1) Increase awareness of partner organizations and current activities.
- 2) Review the respective roles and responsibilities of western partners.
- 3) Help the PFNTC further define its own unique roles and responsibilities.
- 4) Improve communication and identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration.
- 5) Establish priorities for future action.

Approach

The PFNTC held a Partners Meeting at its December 2014 working meeting. Invitees included representatives from PIF, the Pacific Flyway JVs, AFWA and Western Association (WAFWA) Bird Conservation Committees, non-governmental organizations, and other bird conservation and management initiatives. The approach was to have the regional partners:

- Identify common goals.
- Identify the resources and access can the PFNTC bring to partners.
- Identify the partner's needs of the PFNTC.
- Identify areas where the partners can help the PFNTC.
- Guide the direction of the PFNTC in the future to be a valuable team player.
- Identify mechanisms for the PFNTC and partners to work together efficiently.

Attendees

On December 9th and 10th, 2014, PFNTC and attending partners met to discuss roles, responsibilities, priorities, direction, needs, and resources. Present were representatives from:

- AFWA Bird Conservation
- WAFWA Bird Conservation Committee
- Central Valley Joint Venture (CVJV)
- Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV)
- Pacific Coast Joint Venture (PCJV)
- Sonoran Joint Venture (SJV)
- Intermountain Bird Observatory (IBO)
- Point Blue Conservation Science (PBCS)
- Western Working Group of Partners-In-Flight (WWGPIF)
- American Bird Conservancy (ABC)
- National Audubon Society (NAS)
- U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council (SCPC)

Objective 1: Increase Awareness of Partners and Activities

Prior to the meeting, PFNTC tasked participants with preparing presentations and consulting with their organization's members to identify roles, responsibilities, and priorities of their organization, and what specific actions PFNTC could take to be a better partner. At the beginning of the meeting, each representative gave a 10-minute presentation regarding their organization's structure, area of influence, and flagship projects. A brief discussion period was available after each presentation for follow-up questions and clarification.

Objective 2: Roles and Responsibilities

The participants were divided into three groups (i.e. JVs, technical committees, and non-governmental organizations) and asked for a broad assessment of their roles and responsibilities (summarized below).

Technical Committees (PFNTC, AFWA, WAFWA)

- Coordination and communication amongst states and to the USFWS.
- Influencing policy and regulations on a state and federal level.
- Inform agency directors and leadership on bird conservation and management priorities.
- Developing monitoring strategies and implementation of long-term monitoring plans.
- Collecting data to enable the USFWS to allow take of certain species and determining take allocation through population monitoring.
- Seek and secure funding for bird conservation and management.

Joint Ventures (CVJV, IWJV, PCJV, SJV)

- Implementation of full life-cycle bird conservation.
- Building partnerships and decision support tools to target bird conservation implementation.
- Leveraging funding and resources on a national and local scale.
- Coordinating and communicating bird monitoring priorities and conservation planning across regional boundaries through public and private partnerships.
- Habitat conservation and mitigation.

Non-governmental Organizations (IBO, PBCS, PIF, WWGPIF, ABC, NAS, SCPC)

- Educating and improving state and federal agency effectiveness for bird conservation, by influencing delivery mechanisms, policy decisions, and outcomes.
- Assisting with the coordination of JVs and technical committees.
- Utilization of diverse funding opportunities and implementation assistance that is geographically and legally unrestricted.
- Advocating bird conservation by emphasizing the social importance to a diverse audience through public-outreach and education.
- Providing population monitoring information.
- Synthesizing data using conservation planning tools and making the information available to the agencies.
- Habitat conservation, monitoring, and restoration.

Through this exercise, the participating members identified some attributes unique of each group, and common roles and responsibilities (Figure 1.).

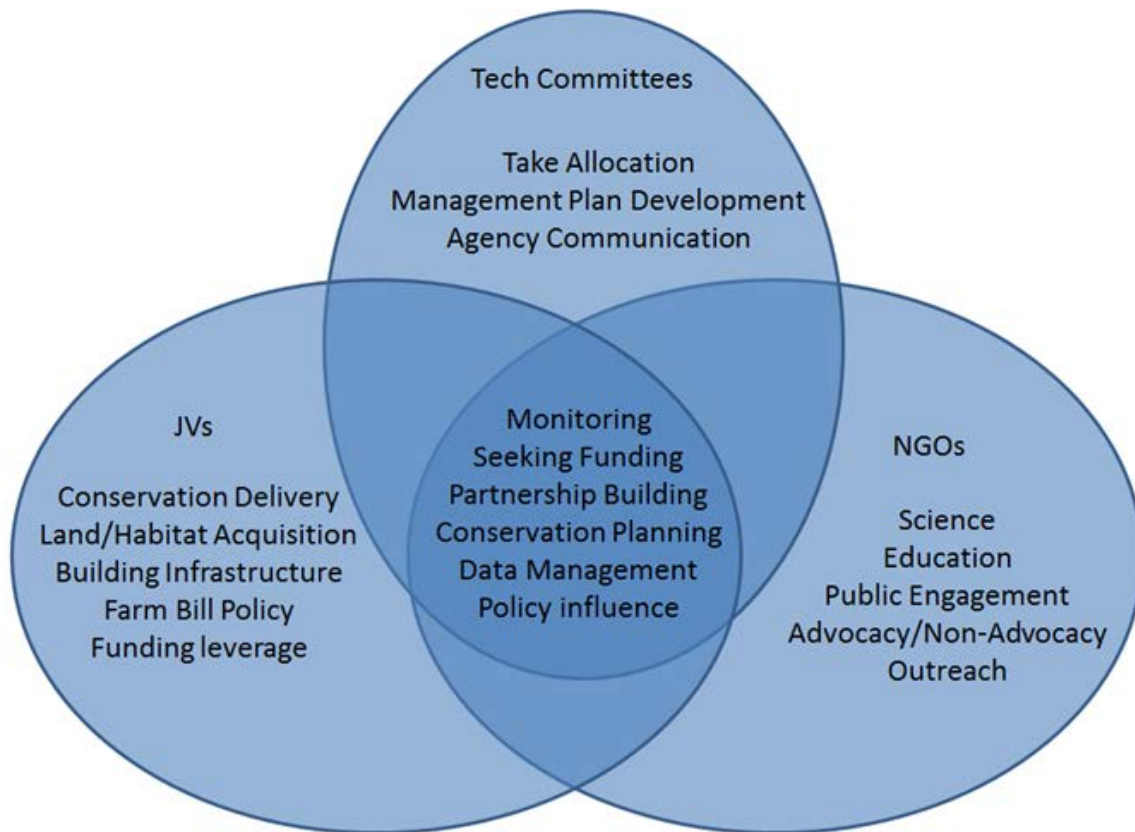


Figure 1. Diagram of current roles/responsibilities of each group (center with common ground items).

Following this exercise, each group was asked to condense the identified roles and responsibilities into main priorities.

Technical Committees

- Implementation of data collection.
- Act as a conduit for relaying priorities to the Directors.

Joint Ventures

- Filling life cycle data gaps through partnerships by coordinating population and habitat objectives across species

Non-governmental Organizations

- Filling data gaps for full life cycle conservation including stop-over use in riparian habitats and the relationship amongst water, birds, and agriculture in the interior west.
- Better integration of bird conservation objectives and public land management plans.

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- Coordinated data management.
 - Development of more effective outreach and coordination tools
 - Development of program to implement Farm Bill funds.

Objective 3: Defining the PFNTC's Priorities, Roles and Responsibilities

After each group identified their roles and responsibilities and established priorities, the participants were asked how the PFNTC can be more effective in helping them accomplish those priorities.

- Collectively identify species that could be state-listed and identify conservation strategies that would preclude the need to list.
- Support coordinated monitoring for species that are not being monitored adequately by implementing monitoring strategies that looks at a suite of species when focusing on species at risk, and include these strategies in State Wildlife Action Plans so that funding can be attained that will enable multi-state partnerships.
- Implement focal bird species monitoring to determine the health of the habitat and ecosystem function.
- Identify population limiting factors, coordinate population objectives at a flyway scale, and develop methodologies for stepping down flyway objectives to a regional scale.
- Protect wintering habitat of priority species through participation in Southern Wings.
- Develop conservation targets for land-bird effectiveness monitoring and proactive habitat conservation.
- Support the PIF Conservation Business Plans.
- Implement a west-wide data management strategy (e.g., Avian Knowledge Network).
- Capture data generated by consultants.
- Identify data gaps on sagebrush dependent birds and implement studies to fill those gaps in order to inform goals and objectives sage brush habitat.
- Help highlight the importance of saline lakes, setting objectives for management of the lakes to sustain avian use of these sites.

In order to help the groups achieve their priorities, participating members identified several actions that could be taken by the PFNTC.

- Program Support
 - Write a letter to the WAFWA Directors recommending that states contribute to the Southern Wings Program.
 - Identify a suite of priority species or a habitat and develop a proposal for submission to WAFWA Bird Conservation Committee.
 - Support PIF Conservation Business Plans – engage CBPs addressing full-life conservation (e.g. Western Forests).
 - Endorse the Pacific Shorebird Monitoring Program, and consider facilitating expansion of the program inland.
 - Support the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) by including a PFNTC member on the AKN Steering Committee

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- Support selection of specific National Conservation Needs for the Multi-state Conservation Grant program for AFWA.
 - Support State Wildlife Grant funding efforts.
 - Support JVs and their Business Plans into State Agency decisions.
 - Integration with Study Committee and JVs through Habitat Subcommittee.
 - Data Management
 - Develop a west wide data management strategy (e.g. Pacific Flyway node of the AKN).
 - Conduct a state-by-state assessment of data sharing limitations and opportunities.
 - Implement state procedures to capture data from consultants.
 - Monitoring
 - Encourage states to participate in established coordinated monitoring of priority Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including the Pacific Shorebird Monitoring Program, Nightjar Monitoring Program and yellow-billed cuckoo monitoring.
 - Develop a water-bird monitoring program that identifies how these species utilize water resources in the west.
 - Coordinate protocols, methods, and data sharing with partners.
 - Implement monitoring programs that focus on indicator species for habitat types.
 - Habitat
 - Endorse dry forest management initiatives
 - Assessment of effectiveness of sagebrush management activities (for sage-grouse) on other sagebrush-obligates.
 - Engage in water management issues in the West (decreasing water supply in arid west; changing water supply and allocation).
 - Map wetlands.
 - Work with NGOs for coordinating protocols, methods, and data sharing.
 - Facilitate extension of shorebird monitoring effort inland.
 - Coordinate funding efforts.
 - Highlight needs and elevate to state directors.
 - Facilitate communication with water resource agencies.

Objective 4: Enhanced Collaboration

At the end of the meeting, participants identified some mechanisms to increase communication between the bird conservation partners.

- Implement a west-wide data management strategy so that information is readily shared between the groups.
 - Include a PFNTC member on the AKN Steering Committee
 - Conduct a State-by-state assessment of data sharing limitations and opportunities.

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- Integrate with the Study Committee and JVs through the Habitat Subcommittee.
 - In developing monitoring programs, coordinate protocols, methods and data sharing with the partners.

Objective 5: PFNTC Prioritization

Following the Partners Meeting in December, the PFNTC dedicated a day of their March 2015 meeting to discuss the prioritization of suggestions to help achieve the goal of the meeting. Initial priorities were identified based upon simplicity, feasibility, and effectiveness. Thus, the PFNTC will focus initial efforts on the priorities described below:

- Explore mechanism for evaluating Southern Wings projects
- Potential appointment of a PFNTC member to the Avian Knowledge Network Steering Committee
- Development of a process to submit National Conservation Needs in support of Pacific Flyway and conservation partner needs
- Conducting a state-by-state assessment of data sharing limitations and opportunities to explore development of a west-wide data management strategy
- Endorsement of the Pacific Shorebird Monitoring Program
- Endorsement of the Nightjar Monitoring Program

In addition, numerous other issues not identified in this exercise are important to state wildlife agencies within the Pacific Flyway. The PFNTC will take those issues, as well as issues identified by stakeholders, and conduct a more comprehensive assessment and prioritization, potentially through use of Miradi software, to be completed and presented to Council by July 2015. This prioritization can be evaluated and revised on a regular basis to reflect new information. In addition, PFNTC anticipates that some of the action identified through this process will provide an opportunity for Habitat Subcommittee, engagement, prioritization, and implementation.

Appendix A. National Flyway Council Review of NTCs.



NATIONAL FLYWAY COUNCIL

Pacific est. 1952 - Central est. 1948 - Mississippi est. 1952 - Atlantic est. 1952

To: Gordon Myers, Chair
AFWA Bird Conservation Committee

Jerome Ford, Chair
FWS Service Regulations Committee

From: Tom Hauge, Chair
National Flyway Council

Re: Review of Flyway Non-game Technical Sections

The National Flyway Council (NFC) coordinated a review of the Flyway Non-game Technical Sections (NTS) following a request by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's (FWS) Regulation Committee at their Denver meeting in February of 2011. Former NFC Chair Jeff Herbert organized a work group to design a standard set of questions regarding NTS operations for the first 5-6 years of their operations.

All Flyways have completed their review. The NFC also invited FWS staff within its Migratory Bird Management Division to offer a Service perspective on the same set of questions and their comments are also included in this summary. This summary is intended to give an overview of the comments provided by the Flyways and FWS.

Summary conclusion: Both the Flyways and the FWS concluded that the Non-game Technical Sections, while still experiencing growing pains, are performing very valuable functions that strengthen the North American migratory bird conservation system and should be retained. There is the need and desire to grow the capacity of the Flyway NTS to more fully address the full spectrum non-game bird management. Similarly, there is a need and desire to grow FWS capacity to support Flyway NTS functions.

Background

The establishment of Flyway Non-game Technical Sections in 2006 resulted from a study commissioned by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Bird Conservation Committee (BCC) in 2004. The BCC formed an ad-hoc Nongame Migratory Bird Consultation Working Group that was tasked to consider ways in which the States and the FWS could consult more effectively on nongame migratory bird issues of mutual concern. The subsequent report and recommendations submitted by the Working Group suggested delivering the desired coordination

and consultation process via an Expanded Flyway System whereby each Flyway would develop a stand-alone nongame migratory bird technical section with one member from each State; the FWS would provide liaisons to the nongame migratory bird technical sections that would collaborate with the existing Flyway representatives; the SRC agreed to consider nongame migratory bird issues at any of its three meetings throughout the year; and the bylaws, MOUs, and operating procedures of the Flyway Councils, technical sections, and the NFC would be updated to reflect an all-bird management approach.

The conclusions reached during this review can be placed into two general categories.

1. Improving internal processes and capacity within the Flyways, and
2. Strengthening the FWS-Flyway relationship.

There are many similarities among the Flyways' conclusions; however, it is important to keep in mind that each Flyway's unique geographical context, culture, and business practices influence their perspectives. This summary does not attempt to provide a detailed Flyway-by-Flyway analysis. On behalf of the NFC, I have chosen to highlight the most common observations.

Improving Flyway Procedures & Capacity

- Roles & responsibilities: The Flyway NTSs are largely pretty clear on their roles and responsibilities, that being to advise and make recommendations to their respective Councils on non-game migratory bird matters. The work of NTSs has been primarily reacting to proposed FWS regulations, but is evolving to include more non-regulatory work such as monitoring (marshbirds), species assessment & management (cormorants), and habitat conservation (Farm Bill).
- Prioritization of issues – To date, regulatory issues (peregrine take, eagle take, rusty blackbird depredation order, etc.) have taken up much of the work time for NTSs. Going forward, there is a need for both NTSs, and their respective Councils, to develop processes that determine both short- and long-term work priorities to enhance NTS effectiveness in the conservation of migratory birds. Potential work issues include: oil spills & natural resource damage assessments, environmental toxins limiting bird populations, wind energy development, bird strike mortality, species management plans (e.g., gulls, vultures, cormorants, white pelicans), Environmental Impact Statement for the FWS Migratory Bird Permit program, scientific collector's permits, coordinated bird monitoring & banding, shorebird management and forest bird assessments. As Flyways engage in these issues, Councils may need to update existing By-Laws.
- Support for NTSs – There is a need to strengthen state capacity to staff and support attendance at annual NTS meetings. Similar to the gamebird technical sections, much of the value of flyway-wide discussions on important migratory bird issues comes during the annual meetings. Most Flyways have their gamebird and non-game technical sections meet at the same location and dates. A common concern in the Flyways is that some state and provincial members have one person serve as both the non-game and game bird technical representative, and are forced to split their time and attendance between NTS and gamebird technical section meetings that occur at the same time and location. When this occurs, state representatives are not able to provide their perspective on key regulatory or conservation issues. Critical conversations are missed and inefficiencies occur as post-meeting attempts are made to gather the missed input.

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- Coordination within & across Flyways – All Flyways have identified procedural changes that would help NTSs work more closely with their counterpart technical committees, as well as improve communication between the NTSs and their respective Councils. A common “best practice” is scheduling both game and non-game technical sections to meet on the same dates and at the same locations. A suggestion for improving across-Flyway coordination is to encourage NTS chairs to have quarterly conference calls to share information and help plan future work.

Strengthening FWS-Flyway Relationship

- Scheduling of regulatory issues – The Flyways want the FWS to create a non-game regulatory schedule that will complement the annual calendar of Flyway meetings. Typically, the Flyways have two meetings a year. The “winter” meetings of the technical committees typically occur in late-February or early March. The Councils then meet in March in conjunction with the North American Wildlife Conference and AFWA meetings. Summer meetings occur in July and the technical committees and Councils meet at the same location. Historically, this calendar was established to work with the meeting schedule of the FWS necessary to establish sport hunting regulations for migratory birds. While non-game migratory bird regulations are not driven by the annual season-setting calendar, the Flyways believe that creating an annual calendar where the potential non-game migratory bird regulatory issues can be discussed at Flyway meetings and will make the state-federal partnership more effective.
- Nexus with SRC – A valuable fixture of the Flyway and FWS communications with regulatory issues is the SRC and use of Flyway Consultants at those meetings. The Flyway Consultants offer direct input to FWS leadership as it considers making final recommendations to the FWS Director on rules. Currently, this process does not occur with non-game migratory bird regulations. Just as Flyways have embraced all-bird conservation, the SRC should play a role in the non-game regulatory process as well using Flyway Consultants to improve communication. Establishment of a non-game bird regulatory calendar that complements the current Flyway schedules would help facilitate this recommendation.
- Pre-regulatory scoping – The Flyways believe pre-regulatory scoping is a very high priority for NTSs. The timing of some past regulatory actions has been problematic and prevented effective scoping dialogue between FWS and the Flyways. The Flyways appreciate FWS efforts to improve timing, and going forward, the Flyways request that FWS engage the NTSs well before an issue gets formally scheduled for rule-making in order to allow full discussion and examine possible courses of action.
- Flow of communication – The Flyways report that the general flow of communication has been adequate with special appreciation of the efforts of FWS’s George Allen to attend NTS meetings when possible and share information. Concern was expressed that in addition to the Division of Migratory Bird Management, other FWS entities (Ecological Services, Endangered Species, NAWMP, etc.) play important roles in non-game bird conservation and that it would be helpful if liaison roles and information conduits could be established between these entities and the NTSs.
- Integration with other bird programs – Both the FWS and the Flyways believe that NTS bird conservation efforts can be enhanced by greater integration with the other existing bird programs (PIF, Southern Wings, JVs, etc.). Coordinated bird monitoring and habitat

conservation will benefit from strong state-level participation, and the NTSs can be effective pathways to achieving this.

The Non-game Technical Section Review is completed and was a valuable check-in on the Flyway's youngest program to help conserve our migratory birds. The Review has yielded some valuable recommendations that when implemented will allow NTSs to grow and become even more effective. Three of the four Flyways are observing their 60th anniversary in 2012 and one is observing their 64th! I don't know if a similar review of the fledgling Flyways was conducted in the 1950's to assess their effectiveness, but I believe if it were they would have documented similar, but normal growing pains. Just as the Flyways have evolved and grown stronger, the NTSs will also do so.

In the coming months, the NFC will work with the Flyways and FWS to move forward on the many suggestions that came out of the review. On behalf of the NFC, we offer our sincere thanks to the NTS members of all the Flyways, the Councils, and the FWS for taking time to reflect on NTS operations, strengths and weaknesses, and making suggestions to improve them.

Sincerely,



Tom Hauge, Chair
National Flyway Council

Cc: Flyway Council & NTS Chairs
Brad Bortner, Chief, FWS Division of Migratory Bird Management
National Flyway Council

Appendix B. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Review of NTCs

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REVIEW OF THE FLYWAY NONGAME BIRD TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

Purpose

To respond, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS's) perspective, to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) survey on how well the Nongame Bird Technical Committees (NTCs) are working.

Similarities and Differences in the Functioning of the four Flyway Nongame Bird Technical Committees

Similarities

All four of the NTCs have primarily worked on regulatory issues to date, although all of the NTCs are discussing or moving toward also working on non-regulatory conservation issues (e.g., species management plans, monitoring programs). All the NTCs have a representative on the Service's Eagle Technical Assessment Team (ETAT) which is working on a management strategy for eagles. While some of the impetus for the ETAT is permitted take, this work could take the NTCs in a new direction, parallel to the way FWS integrates the states' perspectives into the waterfowl population assessment process.

All four of the NTCs meet at least once a year, with some NTCs having two or more meetings a year and conference calls. The NTCs do not currently have a need to meet on a regular basis to review, recommend, and adopt annual harvest regulations, which is required for the game bird committees.

Besides the ETAT, other non-regulatory ideas for the NTCs to work on include: holding joint meetings with groups involved with landbird, shorebird and waterbird conservation, working on potential multi-state State Wildlife Grant projects, developing management plans for selected species (e.g., Double-crested Cormorants, American White Pelicans), and addressing the non-regulatory aspects of Golden Eagle monitoring. It is not always clear how much leeway the NTCs have to get involved in conservation issues or how they will effectively interact with non-state agencies and organizations concerned about these issues. However, currently there are few conservation groups developing species management plans. Development and implementation of State wildlife grants and the validation and implementation of wide-scale monitoring for nongame species are largely funded and coordinated by state and federal agencies. The NTCs could serve a vital role in this type of conservation work. One important advantage to the NTCs addressing conservation issues is that they have a direct line of communication to agency decision-makers, whereas initiative-based conservation groups do not. As a result, the NTCs may have a better chance of gaining administrative support, potential funding, and other resources to implement conservation actions for collaborative, multi-state nongame bird conservation, working on implementation with other conservation groups.

Differences

The amount and level of integration with the Waterfowl and Webless Technical Committees, other flyway technical committees, and the Flyway Councils are currently very different among the four NTCs. Some of the NTCs feel they are very closely involved with these committees, while others feel that they are still not consulted when issues in which they have expertise and could provide substantive input arise. To date, most interactions between NTCs and the game bird technical committees have been limited to a few issues.

What is Working Well in the NTCs?

From the FWS's perspective, the NTCs have provided an additional forum for the FWS's Migratory Bird Program to interact with the states, provinces and territories on issues (especially regulatory ones) affecting nongame birds. We generally feel the NTCs are working well, but there is room for improvement as the NTCs evolve. The NTCs have been useful in facilitating flyway-level review and comments on regulatory documents, and FWS has received fewer, but better, comments than they

used to when each state was commenting independently. FWS also believes that the NTCs have resulted in more states participating in these regulatory reviews than before the NTCs were in place.

What is Not Working Well in the NTCs?

Participation in the NTCs falls under "other duties as assigned" and is an additional workload for both FWS Regional nongame migratory bird staff and most state, provincial, and territorial nongame biologists. Within the FWS, involvement of nongame bird biologists from all of the Regions is necessary. A few states and provinces/territories have not been able to send representatives to the meetings or they have given the game bird representative the impossible task of covering both the NTC and the game bird committees, since meetings are held concurrently and game bird staff don't have the necessary background or time. However, most states/provinces/territories are currently participating fully in the NTCs.

NTC representatives from the FWS and the states/provinces/territories do not always have the appropriate background to address all of the issues before them. Most representatives deal more with non-regulatory conservation issues than regulatory issues in their agency jobs. In addition, travel restrictions affect both state/provincial/territorial agencies and the FWS, sometimes limiting full participation.

The NTCs have indicated frustration with the timing of the FWS's regulation comment periods relative to the timing of flyway meetings. Unlike game regulations, these regulations do not follow a predictable cycle. Although this situation has not yet precluded any of the NTCs from commenting on FWS regulations, the NTCs are largely in a reactive mode, driven in large part by whatever regulatory matters the FWS presents to them. The NTCs currently do not have lists of priority issues, nor a process for developing them.

The NTCs have great potential as scoping entities for the FWS on many regulatory and management issues and could be used by the FWS in this function. Before regulatory issues are developed, FWS Headquarters should lead efforts to meet with the NTCs to gather information and get States' views on the subject matter.

How Can the NTCs Increase their Effectiveness?

Perhaps the most significant issue to resolve is the degree to which NTCs should get involved with non-regulatory issues. Is there a role for the NTCs to play in non-regulatory conservation issues, especially those that may be addressed to some extent by the bird conservation initiatives, Joint Ventures (JVs), Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, focal species working groups, and others? The answer to this question will vary with the issue and the level of activity of these groups. Currently, the NTCs are comprised state, provincial, and territorial agency staff; these agencies play a vital role in bird conservation. However, the NTCs could increase their effectiveness in many conservation issues, particularly in implementation, by including other agencies, academicians, and NGOs in at least a portion of their meetings.

The NTCs could be a very effective means for advancing State Wildlife Grant proposal development and implementation (especially multi-state efforts). Since most JVs are now all-bird in scope, there is certainly opportunity for them to collaborate with NTCs.

Suggestions for improving the function of NTCs

1. Where appropriate, interactions should be increased between Flyway Game and Nongame Technical Committees on issues of mutual concern (e.g., Bird Banding Lab regulations, marshbird monitoring, webless bird management, best monitoring and data practices, habitat conservation, avian health and disease issues). Flyways that have Habitat Committees/Subcommittees, which may include JV participation, should be structured to include NTC members.

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2. When possible, review periods for nongame bird regulations should be timed to coincide with NTC meetings.
 3. When possible, NTCs should serve as a primary scoping group for regulatory actions that affect the states.
 4. The states, provinces, territories and FWS should "institutionalize" NTC work and make a commitment to send biologists with appropriate backgrounds to NTC meetings and to otherwise engage in NTC matters. The NTC members and attendees should make a commitment to devote the necessary time needed to produce the NTC products and achieve the desired outcomes.
 5. The Councils (or NTCs) should consider taking steps to coordinate NTC efforts with other groups working on similar issues, to avoid duplication of efforts. To that end, the NTCs should consider having periodic joint meetings with other organizations working on bird conservation and that are addressing topics of mutual interest. For instance, potentially the bird conservation initiative meetings could be held in conjunction with NTCs, as appropriate.

We believe that the NTCs have been a tremendous asset to the FWS and to the management of migratory birds. A few challenges still remain as these committees evolve. The NTC meetings are an important opportunity (and, in some flyways, the primary opportunity) for state nongame program representatives to meet with each other and with the FWS. There is great potential for growth within the NTCs, as the states and provinces address common issues pertaining to nongame migratory birds among themselves and in collaboration with the FWS; for FWS, the NTCs have increasing value for the conservation of bird species.

Contacts:

Atlantic Flyway: Scott Johnston, John Stanton, Paul Padding

Mississippi Flyway: Steve Lewis, Jim Kelley

Central Flyway: Stephanie Jones, Jim Dubovsky

Pacific Flyway: Tara Zimmerman, Bob Trost

Washington Office: George Allen

Appendix C. Partners Meeting Agenda, December 2014.

agenda — pacific flyway partners meeting

PACIFIC FLYWAY NONGAME MIGRATORY BIRD TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

WESTERN PARTNERS COORDINATION MEETING

December 9—10, 2014 @ [Bahia Resort Hotel](#), San Diego, California

PFNTC:	Carie Battistone, California Department of Fish & Game Allison Begley, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Joe Buchanan, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife Jamey Driscoll, Arizona Game & Fish Department Mike Green, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Andrea Hanson, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Russ Norvell, Utah Division of Wildlife Colleen Moulton, Idaho Department of Fish & Game David Tessler, Alaska Department of Fish & Game Cris Tomlinson, Nevada Division of Wildlife	Secretary, PF Nongame Tech Committee Member, PF Nongame Tech Committee Member, PF Nongame Tech Committee Member, PF Nongame Tech Committee USFWS Rep, PF Nongame Tech Committee Member, PF Nongame Tech Committee Member, PF Nongame Tech Committee Vice-Chair, PF Nongame Tech Committee Member, PF Nongame Tech Committee Chair, PF Nongame Tech Committee
Partners:	Bob Altman, American Bird Conservancy Brad Bales, Pacific Coast Partnership, Inc. Carol Beardmore, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Rob Doster, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Geoff Guepel, Point Blue Edwin Juarez, Arizona Game & Fish Department Greg Kaltenecker, Boise State University Matt Reiter, Point Blue Rex Sallabanks, Idaho Department of Fish & Game Stan Senner, Audubon Dave Smith, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Jamie Stephens, Klamath Bird Observatory San Stiver, Sage Grouse Framework Team Josh Vest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Allison Vogt, AFWA	Conservation Officer, Northern Pacific Region U.S. Coordinator, Pacific Coast Joint Venture Science Coordinator, Sonoran Joint Venture Representative, Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture Director, Emerging Programs & Partnerships Meeting Task Master Executive Director, Intermountain Bird Observatory U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council Meeting Facilitator Pacific Flyway Representative, Audubon Coordinator, Intermountain West Joint Venture Chair, Partners in Flight Western Working Group Vice-Chair, WAFWA Bird Conservation Committee Science Director, Intermountain West Joint Venture Coordinator, AFWA Bird Conservation & U.S. NABCI

Meeting Goal	– To enhance bird conservation and management across the western states through improved coordination and collaboration between the Pacific Flyway Nongame Technical Committee and regional partners
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Meeting Objectives	– Increase awareness of partner organizations and current activities – Review the respective roles and responsibilities of western partners – Help the Pacific Flyway Nongame Technical Committee further define its own unique roles and responsibilities, as well as establish priorities for future action – Improve communication and identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration
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Anticipated Products	– White paper on the future role and function of the Pacific Flyway Nongame Technical Committee within the context of the broader western bird conservation community – Outline of future opportunities for additional communication and collaboration – Development of a standing coordination body between the Pacific Flyway Nongame Technical Committee and regional partners
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agenda — pacific flyway partners meeting

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9

0800—0830	Welcome, introductions, house-keeping, meeting overview and agenda review	
0830—1000	Who are we and what do we do? Part 1 AFWA Bird Conservation Committee (Allison) PF Nongame Tech Committee (Cris & Rex) WAFWA Bird Conservation Committee (San)	<i>[10-Minute presentations + 5-Minute Q&A]</i> Western Working Group PIF (Jamie) Shorebird Conservation Plan Council (Matt) Intermountain Bird Observatory (Greg)
1000—1015	<i>Break</i>	
1015—1145	Who are we and what do we do? Part 2 American Bird Conservancy (Bob) Audubon (Stan) Point Blue (& San Francisco Bay JV) (Geoff)	<i>[10-Minute presentations + 5-Minute Q&A]</i> Pacific Coast Joint Venture (Brad) Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture (Rob) Sonoran Joint Venture (Carol)
1145—1330	<i>Lunch</i>	
1330—1500	Who's responsible for what? <i>[45 mins]</i> General assessment of respective roles and responsibilities @ 30,000 ft. (All)	What are our priorities? <i>[45 mins]</i> Group review of currently established priorities and potential/need for future coordination (All)
1500—1515	<i>Break</i>	
1515—1645	What could the Pacific Flyway Nongame Technical Committee do to be a better partner? Partner perspectives on how the Pacific Flyway Nongame Technical Committee could assist others in meeting their own goals and objectives (Partners)	
1645—1700	Day 1 Wrap-up	

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10

0800—0830	House-keeping items, Day 1 review, goals for the morning	
0830—1000	How can the collective western bird conservation community enhance its effectiveness? Exploring opportunities for enhanced collaboration and coordination, mechanisms for sharing information, identify "demonstration" projects, and potential for joint funding proposals (All)	
1000—1015	<i>Break</i>	
1015—1145	Parking lot, action items and next steps Revisit the parking lot, review meeting action items and assignments, identify next steps (Edwin)	
1145—Noon	Day 2 Wrap-up, meeting adjourn	