

## **Rice and Waterbirds Working Group**

Conference call 20 June; 2pm-330pm DST

Next Call: 16 August 06, 2pm DST.

Participating on call: Chris Elphick (Chair), Paul Baicich, Daniel Blanco, Garry Donaldson, Charles Duncan, Catherine Hickey, Sammy King, Jennifer Wheeler.  
Unable to participate: Ghisselle Alvarado, Lourdes Mugica, Kathy Parsons

Agenda:

1. NAOC update
  - Meeting space (Chris)
  - Display on WS table (Kathy)
2. Best Management Practices Workshop (Catherine/Sammy)
3. Global review of waterbirds in rice fields
  - Proceedings outline (Chris)
  - Symposium proposal
  - Funding (Kathy)
4. Web site mock up (Jennifer/Paul)
5. Connections to other initiatives (discussed on last call – any progress?)
6. Funding (anything to discuss at present?)
7. Group composition
  - Any thoughts on “gaps” in representation?
  - Geographic scope?

Additional item: Charles Duncan to circulate an email about a TNC habitat project involving agriculture, moist soils, shorebirds in the U.S. Pacific Northwest.

### **1. NAOC Update**

No update. Chris has not heard back from the NAOC organizers. At this point, it is unlikely we will be able to display at the poster sessions. We are still hopeful that we can distribute fact sheets from the Waterbird Society display space and find a room where interested parties can meet.

*[July Update: Subsequent to the conference call, the NAOC organizing committee responded to the question of meeting space for a small RWWG meeting at the conference. Chris is working out the details.]*

Charles Duncan reminded the group of another conference opportunity: the Neotropical Ornithological Conference in Venezuela, May 2007. He will be attending and is willing to circulate fact sheets as appropriate.

### **2. Best Management Practices Workshops**

Catherine has been very busy with the Snowy Plover Proposed Rule! She should have something written up about the Central Valley meeting at the end of the month. Sammy described his conversations with staff at the LA Rice

Experimental Station, and plans to talk with people in Texas and Arkansas. The issues regarding prospects for the rice industry vary with state. In LA, there are concerns about a long term reduction in rice cultivation (there is a current slump due to Hurricane Rita) and long term changes in emergent wetland quality and quantity. LA State money is being put towards coastal prairie work in the fall: hiring a research associate to develop priorities and coordinate. In Texas, urban expansion and resulting increases in groundwater demand/cost is an issue; a focus on the Mottled Duck and its need for late season successional wetland habitat is a motivator for participation in best management discussions. (Texas Parks and Wildlife and Gulf Coast JV have been putting money towards this). In Arkansas, the issue of water diversions for rice potentially conflicting with conservation-related water needs complicates the situation. The message from all this: Workshops need to be tailored to specific situations and places.

*We intend to have the next conference call focus on these workshops.*

### **3. Global Review of Waterbirds in rice fields.**

On the call there was discussion about fleshing out information on the rice industry generally (global forces affecting export and import, for example). Paul B. wondered if the global scope was too ambitious; Chris felt it was important to shoot for an ideal, and reduce scope if not feasible. In regards to taxonomic scope, it was confirmed that waterbirds in this context meant all aquatic birds using rice fields, including shorebirds and waterfowl. Inclusion of Bobolinks and other "landbirds" is still under discussion: the selected authors will ultimately be able to decide on that.

Please send additional comments on the draft proceedings to Chris. He will incorporate them, then move ahead with Kathy and Lourdes to propose the symposium for WS 2007.

### **4. Website.**

A draft website was created at:

<http://www.fws.gov/birds/waterbirds/rice/rice.html>

Main comments on the website:

-To avoid confusion about which birds are involved in this effort, we decided we could rename the website "Rice, Water, Birds" as well as have a short description of what we mean by the term. In addition, a broader representation of species should be included in images.

- For credibility and visibility, it might be a good idea to have an endorsement page. We can seek endorsement by partners. (Garry Donaldson will seek a

statement from the NABCI Trilateral Committee, who expressed interest in the topic at their recent meeting.) On the other hand, the feeling was that logos should not be on the “homepage” but rather appear as links.

- It was felt that there should be added some discussion of rice as an agronomic system that is imperiled in some areas. There is a need to “help” farmers where waterbird conservation would benefit; the presence of waterbirds might be able to do that (e.g., hunting leases in off-season fields).

-Once the website is finalized for public announcement, we could solicit input on projects and new research.

-The website can also be our source for fact sheets for various audiences.

*For content, Jennifer is seeking the most relevant, informative items that explore the general themes of the issue. Please send in ideas/content to her.*

#### **5. Connections to other initiatives.**

Catherine/Jennifer will pursue if there could be a role for NABCI.

#### **6. Funding**

Charles will be talking to Peter Stangel of NFWF about possible funding sources in late July. NFWF typically wants to emphasize habitat protection and/or creation. NFWF has already been approached for support for a South American workshop, as part of Charles’ overall WHRSN request. We will try to have a fact sheet prepared by that meeting.

#### **7. Group Composition**

Daniel Blanco requested that Rafael Antunes Dias be invited to the next conference call; Chris will follow up. *[July Update: this has been done].*

The group felt that DU and the Waterfowl interests must be engaged. Catharine will consult with Scott Yaich for a recommendation. Scott Manley was suggested as another contact, which Chris will contact.

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