

Rice and Waterbirds Working Group
Conferec Call: 6th December 2007, 2 pm US Eastern Standard Time.

Present on call: Paul Baicich, Daniel Blanco, Chris Elphick, Catherine Hickey, Kathy Parsons, Jennifer Wheeler.

Apologies from: Sammy King, Garry Donaldson, Charles Duncan,

1. Report on the S. American workshop (Daniel, Charles)

~40 people attended including a few from the rice sector (rice associations in Uruguay and Argentina). A report will be produced to go on the web, and will include Powerpoint presentations and manuscripts. A second workshop has been approved to take place in northern South America (Columbia) using NFWF funding via WHSRN. A proposal has also been submitted to Fund for Americas in Argentina to look at bird, fish and macroinvert indicators in rice fields (goal is to start in Sept 2008 if funded).

2. Report on the Barcelona symposium (Chris, Kathy)

Waterbird Society conference was well attended by people interested in work on rice. The RWWG convened a well attended symposium *Rice and Waterbirds: Science, Management, and Conservation* that included 16 talks and a couple of related posters. The conference also included a field trip to the Ebro Delta where there are extensive areas of rice fields. The field trip included a visit to the RietVell rice farm managed by SEO/BirdLife, where Ignacio Ripolli gave us a tour of the site.

As a follow-up to the meeting, Chris will request that speakers provide copies of their powerpoint presentations so that they can be posted on the RWWG web site.

3. Report on the discussion at Barcelona (Jennifer)

Following the symposium there was a discussion about rice related management issues that involved about 20 people. The main focus was on what can we do with the information we now have. Many specific differences among geographic regions emerged, but there also seemed to be a similar set of general considerations. Jennifer has written up some notes, which have been circulated to the broader group. One question arising from this discussion is whether the RWWG, with input from others at the meeting and elsewhere, can generate a conceptual guide to how one could approach the issue of linking science to management, i.e., by identifying the big picture issues that apply everywhere and need to be considered by anyone trying to influence management.

4. Update on the publication (Chris)

With the symposium over the main science emphasis for RWWG has shifted to the production of a special volume of waterbirds that will build on the symposium talks and bring together global information on birds in rice fields. Chris has nine manuscripts, with several more due within the next month. One author has withdrawn ("Rice as a global crop"), but two other topics have been added (focusing on avian flu and on climate change).

5. Update on funding for the publication (Kathy)

Kathy has sent out summary of the current budget – estimated needs 30-35K, now have ~\$15K. We lost anticipated funding from CWS due to their budget cuts and will need to do follow-up work to seek additional funds. In particular no effort has been made to date to pursue foundations involved in sustainable agriculture.

6. Update on the UMD student project (Kathy, Jennifer)

Products are due in about a week and will include a white paper describing the group's findings with regard to the state of industry in the western hemisphere and potential areas where conservationists may be able to

work with the agricultural community to benefit waterbird conservation. The report will also include an annotated list of potential contacts. What we get from students will be “ours” to use as we wish. We will then need to decide if the document is something that we should release or whether it needs further review/changes, etc., etc. Students have already provided draft materials to Paul Buttner (Cal Rice Commission) for comment.

A presentation of the findings will take place in Arlington on Dec 14th – members of the group are invited to attend, and it will also be possible for people to call in and listen.

7. WHSRN grant submissions (Catherine)

NFWF proposal in process, with conference call planned for tomorrow.(incl PRBO, WHSRN, California Rice Commission and others).

8. Communications issues: Website/Fact sheet updates; listserv (Jennifer)

Jennifer will update web site to provide links to Daniel’s workshop and Barcelona presentations. She will also do a general overhaul of the site, updating fact sheets etc., over the next few weeks. Members of committee should browse the site for things that need updating.

9. Expanding the organizing group for RWWG to get industry involvement

This issue needs to be addressed and should be part of a broader status review on where RWWG is now, and where it should go over the next couple of years. This topic will be the focus of the first meeting of 2008.

10. Set times/dates for calls next year

Dates for calls for the rest of the year are: 3rd Jan, 6th Mar, 1st May, 3rd Jul, 4th Sept, 6th Nov (i.e., 2 pm on the first Thursday of alternate months). The January meeting will be focused on setting goals for the next 2 years.

Waterbird/WSRHN Council meetings take place in Mexico during the week of 14th Jan and will provide an opportunity for members of the group to meet. Likewise there is a possible opportunity to have a follow-up session on science and science implementation at the Waterbird Society meeting in Texas in fall 2008.