

Plan Committee Management Responses to Continental Progress Assessment Report Recommendations

Recommendation # 1 The Plan Committee (PC) should ensure development of a clearer and more robust accountability framework for the achievement of NAWMP biological objectives involving all organizational levels in the Plan Community.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee will work with the Joint Ventures and the NSST to develop and maintain an accountability framework for the achievement of Plan goals. Necessary components will include coherent objectives at continental, national, regional (JV), and sub-regional scales and regular reporting among the committees and organizations responsible for Plan implementation.

Estimates of regional habitat gains (including Plan accomplishments) and losses are essential for estimating net conservation progress. Combined with improved understanding of how landscape conditions affect waterfowl vital rates, plan partners will be better able to set adequate habitat objectives and assess biological progress.

Recommendation # 2 A comprehensive review of Plan objectives should be a high priority leading up to the next Plan Update.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee supports this recommendation and will propose creation of a task force of experts from the NSST, Joint Ventures and flyway technical committees to determine and confirm waterfowl population objectives prior to the 2009 Update, and to develop strategies to account for annual environmental variation. These actions will be coordinated with PC response to the Joint Task Group report (see recommendation #20 below).

Recommendation # 3 Adaptive management, as the way of approaching NAWMP delivery, needs to be embraced and employed more widely.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee will continue to encourage adaptive management by the entire waterfowl community as the way of approaching Plan delivery. This will be fostered through periodic assessments such as this, provision of technical support via the NSST, and the expectation for regular reporting of progress on biological accomplishments by the Joint Ventures.

Recommendation # 4 While technical organizational structures might vary, it is essential that all Joint Ventures develop the ability to address basic biological foundation issues.

Plan Committee Statement: The diversity that has emerged among Joint Ventures in their approaches to conserving waterfowl habitats has been a key strength of the Plan. The Plan Committee encourages and appreciates these distinctive and often times

necessary differences in how Joint Ventures are structured. However, during the continental progress assessment process it became clear that a fundamental characteristic of successful Joint Ventures was a commitment to recognize and address basic biological foundation issues. The Plan Committee strongly recommends all Joint Ventures re-evaluate their approach to this critical aspect of waterfowl habitat conservation and make the necessary adjustments to ensure their work is firmly grounded on science.

Recommendation # 5 Plan progress requires a fundamental commitment to support critical monitoring and evaluation activities, within and among the Joint Ventures and through the NSST.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee will rely on the NSST as a source of technical advice to prioritize needed monitoring and evaluation work. This will include activities that test underlying program assumptions as an ongoing commitment to improve the effectiveness of Joint Ventures.

Recommendation # 6 Implementation of the National Strategy for the Management of Waterfowl and their Habitats in Mexico, along with research to help inform further conservation planning, should be important priorities for Plan partners.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee recommends that a delegation of border state Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors, inclusive of the states of AZ, TX, CA, NM, request this recommendation be placed on the agenda for the next U.S. Governors border states task force with Mexico & the Trilateral Committee. All Joint Ventures are encouraged to engage with Mexican government entities and other Plan partners in technology and information transfer.

Recommendation # 7 Greater progress, and therefore substantially more diverse and leveraged funding, is needed in breeding areas where many waterfowl populations seem to be most limited.

Plan Committee Statement: This assessment reaffirms the finding of the original 1986 Plan that improving reproductive success in the mid-continental prairies continues to be the primary challenge in achieving Plan goals. To the extent that conservation needs in this region cannot be met by direct conservation programs alone, major advances in wildlife-friendly policy and legislation for agriculture, wetland protection, energy, transportation, water availability, and climate change challenges must be achieved in the U.S. and Canada.

Recommendation # 8 Joint Venture actions should be guided by explicit biological models. This should be the standard planning method in all Joint Ventures.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee expects that each JV will clearly state their objectives. With these objectives in mind, a vision of needed landscape characteristics and/or population levels should be identified. Science should guide the programs, practices and/or treatments needed to achieve stated objectives. An adaptive

management mindset needs to be employed to address changes in social, economic, and biological parameters so that plans change as managers learn.

Recommendation # 9 *In biological planning, diving ducks, sea ducks, over-abundant goose species, and species of special concern (e.g., lesser scaup, northern pintails) deserve greater attention.*

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee encourages the NSST, Joint Ventures and Flyway Councils to develop and implement habitat actions and population management for those species of high conservation need (e.g. pintails, scaup, and sea ducks) as defined in the latest Plan Update, and for overabundant species causing habitat degradation. The Plan Committee recommends specific working groups be established and charged with the responsibility of developing assessments/action plans for such species as warranted.

Recommendation # 10 *Global climate change must be given more consideration in JV regional targeting, program emphasis, and project design.*

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee fully endorses this recommendation and will sponsor a workshop on this topic in the future.

Recommendation # 11 *Wetland conservation in the western Canadian and U.S. boreal forest regions should be more explicitly connected to the Plan.*

Plan Committee Statement: Given the Western Boreal Forest's (WBF) importance to waterfowl, the Plan Committee supports the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture's expansion to include the WBF. The Plan Committee expects the PHJV to develop a WBF prospectus for review by the PC by June 2008.

Recommendation # 12 *Increasing engagement in public policy will require development of new funding sources, new expertise, new measures of accomplishment, and new approaches to evaluation. Policy initiatives should be subjected to the same sort of evaluation rigor as is necessary for traditional wildlife programs.*

Plan Committee Statement: Understanding that no one program or approach will achieve Plan goals, the Plan Committee and Plan partners will work to influence public policy and legislation related to water quality, agricultural programs, transportation, and energy developments at the local and national levels. Related metrics and evaluations of the effectiveness of policy work must be developed by Plan partners to assess progress toward Plan goals.

Recommendation # 13 *Programs that lead to long-term protection or restoration of natural wetland systems should continue to play a major role in meeting waterfowl needs.*

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee fully endorses this recommendation and expects the Joint Ventures to maintain these wetland protection and restoration programs as a high priority

Recommendation # 14 North American Waterfowl Management Plan partners should continue to promote farming practices that are economically appealing to producers and benefit waterfowl.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee will advocate for extension programs that promote benefits to waterfowl and are economically appealing to producers and other landowners.

Recommendation # 15 Maintaining or strengthening conservation provisions of the U.S. Farm Bill is crucial for both breeding and non-breeding Joint Ventures. Of similar importance should be expansion and further development of wildlife-friendly farm policies in Canada.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee recognizes that private lands in working landscapes are essential to waterfowl and that effective wildlife-friendly farm policies are critical if waterfowl populations are to be sustained. Therefore, JV partners should engage proactively with governments and with local, state/provincial and national agriculture officials to promote explicit strategies for conserving waterfowl in agricultural landscapes.

The Plan Committee may wish to convene a bi-national workshop among these entities for the purpose of sharing experiences, coordinating actions and attracting high level attention.

Recommendation # 16 Enhancing policy and legislative protection for wetlands should be a major priority in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee agrees that increased protection for wetlands through policy and legislation should be a major priority in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.

Recommendation # 17 Plan partners should promote policy disincentives for converting native grassland to cropland in the U.S. and Canadian Prairies.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee will be advocates for regulatory and incentive programs that restrain conversion of native grasslands to cropland. Where analyses indicate continued grassland habitat losses, Joint Venture partners should develop local, regional, or national policies/regulations to preserve grasslands habitats.

Recommendation # 18 Plan partners should be actively involved in policy decisions that affect wetland water supplies for wildlife.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee believes that adequate, affordable and dependable supplies of water are imperative for the long-term maintenance of waterfowl populations. The Plan Committee recommends that Joint Ventures, State fish and wildlife agencies, and NGO's be proactive and work with appropriate stakeholders and government entities to secure adequate water allocations to address waterfowl conservation needs.

Recommendation # 19 The Plan Committee needs to exercise greater and more visible leadership within and beyond the Plan Community, and more active management of Plan functions.

Plan Committee Statement: The assessment clearly revealed the widespread desire for more consistent and effective leadership from the Plan Committee. The Plan Committee fully endorses the recommendation and is dedicated to improving its leadership performance.

Recommendation # 20 The Plan Committee should advocate that waterfowl harvest and habitat managers develop a coherent and coordinated approach for setting and achieving Plan objectives.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee recognizes that harvest policy can potentially influence whether the Plan's population objectives are met through habitat conservation efforts. The Plan Committee will review the forthcoming report and recommendations of the Joint Task Group for direction and opportunities to unify waterfowl management incorporating habitat, harvest and socio-economic considerations.

Recommendation # 21 The NSST should be revitalized to tackle several follow-on assignments from this assessment and from the parallel JTG on NAWMP population objectives (see sections IV A and D). The NSST also needs greater human and financial resources to advance its work. Plan partners collectively must accomplish this.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee expects its NSST to provide oversight and delivery of many key recommendations. Clear communications are expected between the Plan Committee and the NSST in this regard. The Plan Committee will ensure that contributing organizations understand the importance of NSST capacity needs. The Chair of the NSST is an ex-officio member of the Plan Committee and is expected to attend all Plan Committee meetings and provide reports to the Plan Committee.

Recommendation # 22 The 2005-2006 Assessment experience has been extremely positive for the Plan Community and ought to be repeated periodically.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee will conduct subsequent comprehensive assessments at 10 year intervals in concert with the established Plan update process. The Plan Committee will conduct the next assessment so that the report

will be delivered as a major component of the 2014 Plan update. In addition, we urge the Joint Ventures to include independent peer review of their biological foundations and conservation strategies in the normal course of program planning. Improvements to annual accomplishment reporting resulting from Recommendation #1 above will improve the ability of future assessments to fully assess Plan performance.

Recommendation # 23 *The species and habitat Joint Ventures should communicate more and better integrate their missions.*

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee agrees that species and habitat Joint Ventures should work together to address issues that are common to their respective missions. The Joint Ventures should explicitly assign this task to their science coordinators.

Recommendation # 24 *In order to revitalize communications and strengthen accountability within the Plan Community, the federal secretariats in our three countries should become more thoroughly and continuously engaged in NAWMP business.*

Plan Committee Statement: The federal secretariats of the three Plan signatory countries will assume a leadership role in revitalizing proactive communication with all stakeholders and fostering continual progress by the Plan Committee and the NSST. Similarly, the secretariats will assume the lead in collating accomplishment data and disseminating it accordingly. Development of a strategic communications plan should be considered for guidance in revitalizing communication and outreach.

Recommendation # 25 *The Plan Committee and Joint Ventures must maintain a strong dialogue with the NAWCA Councils around the needs of NAWMP.*

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee will meet periodically with NAWCA Councils beginning with the U. S. Council in July 2007. To these meetings and in other regular, directed communications, the Plan Committee will advance the latest information on trends, themes and concerns in waterfowl and wetland conservation of relevance to the Councils.

Recommendation # 26 *Simultaneously, it is vital for Plan partners to find new, substantive, complementary sources of financial support for programs that are critical for achieving NAWMP objectives.*

Plan Committee Statement: The challenge is to acquire sustained new funding to improve the delivery of the Plan. Finding new funds has been an ongoing challenge for all Joint Ventures. Seeking new resources and policy support must be based on a well developed plan of action complete with the identification of costed and time-bounded outcomes. Toward that end, the Plan Committee will establish a Funding Task Force to develop a “**North American Waterfowl Management Plan value proposition**” and opportunities for stakeholder investment. This needs to be tackled at two scales -

continental (Plan Committee) and JV. The Joint Ventures should focus on new funding sources/partners within the JV area and on influencing increased investments from existing partners. The Plan Committee would focus on government programs and large corporate sources. The Plan Committee and Joint Ventures both require the same basic approach that could build upon the following model:

Identify needs for new investments in the Plan

- Develop a communication/marketing strategy which all parts of the Plan family can use to seek new resources and/or pursue re-allocations of existing funds.
- Package the outcomes to demonstrate what will be delivered for the new investments.

Cost the renewal in North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

- Identify the mission-critical new resource needs (outcomes) for delivering upon the priority recommendations contained in the Plan Committee management response to the Continental Progress Assessment.

Explore and exploit new and existing funding stakeholders.

- Identify the potential sources of new/existing funds and human resources, and tactics for gaining access to these.

Validate the product

- Stakeholder membership/engagement at Joint Ventures.
- Evaluation with performance metrics.

Recommendation # 27 The Plan Community should continually strive to engage more stakeholders in NAWMP.

Plan Committee Statement: The Plan Committee supports this recommendation and will encourage all Joint Ventures to consider partnership expansion, particularly with those agencies and organizations whose land management policies and practices can have considerable impact on waterfowl and wetland conservation, and in order to broaden potential funding support for conservation.