



**Partners in Flight
Northeast Working Group
Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday March 12, 2003
Blacksburg, Virginia**

Welcome and Introductions:

The meeting began soon after 1 pm with the introduction of the 16 attendees (see separate list for attendee affiliations and e-mail addresses). Gwen Brewer was introduced as the new Vice-Chair. She will be serving out the remainder of Chris Eberly's term. Chris was thanked for his service to the committee. He is currently serving as the Co-Chair of the Management Steering Committee of the National PIF group.

Northeast PIF Web Page (Randy Dettmers):

- Templates are available from National PIF to create web pages for regional working groups. These would be linked to from the PIF website. Contact information for the Steering Committee will be posted on the new site, since it is already available via other sources on the web.
- The web page for NEPIF will be a place to post upcoming meetings, meeting minutes, announcements, and links to existing state PIF pages and area plans. A state PIF page could be created on this site if the state needs a space to host their PIF website.
- Fred Caslick has offered to work on designing the NEPIF webpage. If you have suggestions on content for the Webpage, please send them to Fred (fred_caslick@fws.gov). Fred is the Chair of our Information and Education subgroup.

Physiographic Area Plans (Ken Rosenberg):

- Twelve plans have been completed for the northeast, with all additional plans in at least first draft form. Randy will be assisting with their completion. Changes in BBS data, species scoring, and format are being incorporated into all plans. Copies of Version 1.0 Northern Ridge and Valley (#17), and Mid-Atlantic Ridge and Valley plans (#12) were provided. Comments should be addressed to Ken.
- Discussion followed about how to "step down" these plans to conservation actions, management recommendations, etc. These plans have evolved somewhat in this direction, but the purpose of the plans is still as an ecological assessment. They also provide the background needed to work on a landscape scale, and it is important to put recommendations in the context of a region and a landscape. These plans could be used by states through the comprehensive wildlife planning process to create more specific objectives and guidelines at a more local scale. PIF plans are seen as a model for this kind of habitat-specific information (Rick). Recommendations could also be compiled at the BCR level and a management document created at that level (Andrew). Management options and outcomes, geographically explicit targets for actions, and planning for implementation are needed as next steps. Dan suggested that the physiographic area plans be made

available digitally for easier cut-and-paste incorporation into other plans. Stopover habitat concerns should be present in the plans, and they should be updated as new information becomes available (especially for population and habitat objectives).

Further discussion and your input are needed to determine:

- Who should step down plans, and make them more “user friendly” at the level of states, BCRs, and individual landowners?
- How can we facilitate the process? Should we work on an integrated way to step down these plans to the states?

Short-term Goals (Randy Dettmers):

Discussion proceeded with thinking about what NEPIF can accomplish in the next 2 years, and trying to identify a few topics for focus in the short-term. Stepping down physiographic area plans, as stated above, is one potential topic. Another is the implementation of the plans at the Joint Venture level, including through the new Technical Committee and by providing technical assistance for adaptive management review. NEPIF is in better shape now to function at a larger level due to BCR meetings and joint meetings with shorebird and waterbird groups. Specific ideas for potential tasks were listed out and discussed, then smaller groups were formed to come up with specific actions related to their topic. It was recognized that some of these tasks fall into a bigger picture than PIF, are considered at the BCR and JV levels, and may fit into NABCI. However, only PIF will set population objectives for land birds.

NEPIF has suffered from a lack of activity, especially at the committee level. The identification of specific tasks can be used to recruit people and increase committee activity. Two subgroups of tasks that were identified, technical and implementation, correspond roughly to research/monitoring and management/information and education activities, respectively.

The suggested tasks listed below can form the template of a plan of action for NEPIF in the near future. Input from the entire Steering Committee will be collected so that we can proceed on priority items.

Technical tasks:

- **coordinated monitoring**- needed for species that are difficult to monitor; combine data from different sources and across the region; wider monitoring of a species or group; make data accessible
 - suggested actions (Ken, Dan, Deb): join national/continental discussions and initiatives; form active Monitoring Committee to pull these needs from PIF plans and work on what species need targeted monitoring; determine monitoring needs and priorities for the region; coordinate across what each group/agency is already doing (directory, matrix)

- **coordinated IBA selection-** work with PIF priorities and regional perspective; translate PIF priorities and population goals into IBA criteria; determine how IBAs are meeting PIF priorities
 - suggested actions (John, Doug, Rob, Kitt): ensure PIF/NABCI are emphasized; ensure consistency in selection criteria and boundary determination (coordinate with BCI, Audubon, ABC); define “significant population”; ensure “GAPS” are identified and nominated; emphasize, identify off-road monitoring; maintain relationships with state coordinators and national IBA
- **serve as “keepers of the plans”-** provide updated information and revisions
 - suggested actions (Randy, Tom): continue to revise priority species based on best available information; develop specific targets and priorities for migratory stop-over; develop and maintain population and habitat objectives; assess and evaluate success of implementation toward achieving plan objectives; incorporate the most up-to-date best management practices into recommendations; complete unfinished sections of plans
- **provide input on bird conservation issues** such as mountaintop mining.

Implementation tasks:

- **assist with development of state comprehensive wildlife plans**
 - suggested actions (Rick): identify species indicative of state bird population health with emphasis on species of conservation concern (focal species by habitat type/by state as defined in PA plans); identify habitat (type, location, condition) required by focal species- identify priority habitats by state (PA plans), identify special conditions/geospatial parameters (patch size/orientation/context) needed for focal species, if any, and identify studies needed to determine these; coordinate across state lines to meet habitat shortfalls; identify and prioritize conservation actions needed to restore/enhance habitats- extract conservation needs from PIF plans, merge and deconflict multiple PA needs to create state conservation actions list, coordinate across state lines to meet all conservation needs
- **maintain list of priority projects meeting regional needs**
 - suggested actions (Gwen): meet periodically to review priorities; summarize and publicize progress on priority projects through newsletter and website; assist with matching needs to people, projects, funding and direct contact between people that are or could be involved in these projects; put together existing documents (TNC plans, state plans, Audubon goals, etc.); disseminate priority projects to all partners so that they can be used in state plans, as input to NABCI and IBCC

- **market our successes and PIF resources**, including getting the plans to people that need them
 - suggested actions (Chris): identify PIF successes and products through listserv query, direct contact with specific individuals (state chairs, etc.) by phone calls, e-mail, mailings, meetings, etc., and review previous meeting minutes; develop a strategy to make NEPIF products available, possibly through web site, listserv, newsletter (national and NEPIF?); criteria for delivery- to whom, what, how, how often
- **translate plans into spatially explicit recommendations**, possibly using the method that Bryan Watts has developed and create a template
 - suggested actions (Andrew and Tim): target habitats identified in plans by identifying focus areas for habitat-specific species, and mapping habitats for generalists; coordinate with other bird plan areas; make data available at the appropriate scales

Technical/Implementation tasks:

- **develop best management practices**
 - suggested actions (David): make habitat-based recommendations that are at a reasonable geographic scale (BCR?), describe optimal conditions as well as implications for birds of commonly applied management practices, present recommendations in a format available and useful to a wide range of potential partners (landowners, managers, consultants) such as workshops, brochures, etc.; NEPIF should create a list of desired habitat/geographic units for which this product should be developed, and suggested budget for completion of a single product; coordinate with upland and wetland bird initiatives in appropriate habitat types
- **provide technical assistance** to Integrated Bird Conservation Committee and Management Board
 - suggested actions (Andrew and Tim): provide two representatives (Ken and Randy have provided input on impacts on other birds of NAWCA grants, for example); give input to ACJV staff on scientific needs; facilitate/provide access to bird population and habitat, and associated data; inform IBCC members on important bird conservation issues; participate in state and regional integrated bird conservation; provide input to Management Board on priority projects.

Mountaintop Mining (Randy Dettmers, Ken Rosenberg):

The group discussed a draft letter circulated before the meeting. Some comments had also been received by e-mail. The letter was requested by people working on the Environmental Impact Statement for effects of mountaintop mining on birds. Suggestions were made to expand consideration to impacts on species other than Cerulean Warbler, such as Louisiana Waterthrush, Hooded Warbler, etc., and make a coordinated effort to address impacts on forest birds in general. It also needed to be made clear what region was being addressed in the EIS and letter, and where priorities for

grassland and forest interior species fit into that region. The language on what reclamation can and can't do was discussed, and it was recommended that the focus be on the message that this activity creates a loss. Our role in this situation is to provide technical information from PIF plans, refer to priorities for the region, present facts, and endorse facts as correct. A revised statement incorporating these comments will be circulated to the Steering Committee for its approval.

North American Landbird Conservation Plan and Integrated Plan (Ken Rosenberg):

NEPIF and SEPIF Steering Committees met jointly to review a Powerpoint presentation update on these topics. Population estimates were used to set conservation targets for watchlist species and characteristic species (or stewardship species) by region. Population estimates came from 1990's BBS data and some other data. Monitoring needs were highlighted, including targeted monitoring. A coordinated bird monitoring framework has also been discussed, so far within the Western Working Group. The goal is to establish a sufficient level of inventory and monitoring for all bird species in North America to detect existing levels and future changes to bird populations. Connections will need to be established between local, regional, and continental scales. Results will need to be available and usable, and will eventually be out on the web with links to regional plans. The challenge will be to take population targets and apply them to habitat needs and changes. Data from Canada were included in this iteration of the plan, and data from Mexico for breeding and non-breeding birds will be included in the next update.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

List of Attendees:

Name	Affiliation	e-mail address
Ken Rosenberg	Cornell Lab of Ornithology	kvr2@cornell.edu
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