**Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Management Board Meeting**

April 30-May 1, 2014

St. Michaels, Maryland

**Attendees**: Alexandra Wilke (TNC-proxy), Allan O'Connell (USGS), Bernie Marczyk (DU), Breck Carmichael (SC), Craig Rhoads (DE), David Cobb (NC), David Viker (USFWS R4), Steve Rockwood (FL-proxy), Gary Casabona (NRCS), Gwen Brewer (MD), James Connolly (ME), John O’leary (MA-proxy), Kristina Heister (NPS), Larry Herrighty (NJ), Rick Jacobson (CT), Mike Harris (GA), Cal DuBrock (PA), Catherine Sparks (RI), Jocelyn Hunn (USFWS R5-proxy); Mitch Hartley, Tim Jones, Kirsten Luke, Deb Reynolds, Caleb Spiegel, Craig Watson (ACJV); Jake McPherson (DU), Jennifer Greiner (USFWS CBP), David Curson (Audubon); Matt Whitbeck, Suzanne Baird (USFWS Blackwater NWR).

**Welcome-Introductions**

Catherine Sparks and Gwen Brewer welcomed the group to St. Michaels, and attendees introduced themselves. Group decided to change agenda due to the severe rains, and stay indoors all day Wednesday and then meet for a half-day and do the field trip on Thursday.

**Approval of Past Meeting Minutes**

Rick Jacobson moved to approve the minutes from the last Board meeting, held in Mystic, CT. Mike Harris seconded; vote was taken, and minutes were approved.

**Status of Biological Priorities and Workplan**

Mitch Hartley provided a brief overview of both documents. Not much has changed and the document is basically the same as was provided to the Board in Mystic. These documents were presented to the Technical Committees in Hershey. Some raised concerns that we were de-emphasizing waterfowl, based on how the documents were written. We have tried to address that by changing the language to clarify that efforts for waterfowl have not been deemphasized; rather, we are focusing on coastal and wetland habitats that are most important to waterfowl and other bird groups. Some modest level of effort will be increased for shorebirds, but those will be fairly minor overall (e.g., 10% of the time for one or two staff) and are being done because of the increased conservation concerns about this group, and an emerging flyway business plan for this group that may catalyze significant funding for shorebirds, and their habitats (which will also benefit waterfowl and waterbirds).

Bernie M. commented that both documents are both well written and DU feels more comfortable with the documents relative to waterfowl. Bernie asked how we are going to evaluate if these tasks are being completed, and will this be reported back to the Board. The biological priorities document is the basis for our workplan, and that will be used to assess the performance of the ACJV both by management in the Division of Migratory Birds, and our Management Board, when we report out on how well we met our goals in the past year’s plan. Cathy Sparks inquired about how staff are going to track tasks and accomplishments of both documents, and response was that the ACJV will implement a system by the July meeting. Gwen Brewer and John O’Leary both commented on the need to incorporate ACJV goals into State Wildlife Action Plans (i.e., SWAPs). There is a mention of it in the documents, but that could be made more explicit. John suggested that we provide a template for bird/habitat information that can feed directly into the SWAPs. Mitch briefly described what the process for SWAP revisions is in R5 and what some staff of the ACJV are doing. John O. noted that these SWAPs are not only for states, but for many partners. Caleb spoke to how he has been involved; ACJV may want to consider writing a page or two to insert into SWAPs, which is tailored to each state. A process was discussed on how to make this process work. BCR plans could be used for this process, but perhaps are not being used as much as they should be. Cathy noted a shift in the approach from a state based perspective in the original SWAP planning process to a more regional approach, and more partnership based.

**ACTION: ACJV to compile list of state coordinators for SWAPs.** Breck noted that some discussions are already being held; Mike Harris noted that many southern states have the opportunity to participate in multi-layered large-scale conservation planning efforts, and it would be good to streamline that process and make it more meaningful to all conservation planning efforts. Gary C. asked if GIS products at the regional level could be used to inform the SWAP process, Tim said we are getting closer to providing products, but we are not there yet. Some products are available from the NALCC and SALCC, but the bird-habitat models that we have envisioned over the years are not yet produced and usable at a state-wide or regional scale. Tim asked when states need something, and the response was generally as quick as possible. Mitch noted that ACJV can get out some basic information to states by mid-summer.

**ACTION: ACJV to provide multiple products to states for use in their SWAPs by mid-summer (BCR species priorities, Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Conservation Business Strategy, species-specific plans (e.g., GWWA).**

John O’Leary noted that a discussion on climate change should be placed into the Biological Priorities document.

**ACTION: Place language in Biological Priorities document relative to addressing climate change.**

**Strategic Plan Revision**

Mitch noted that he is behind on updating this document and will provide a track changes copy to the JV subcommittee (Bernie, Craig L., Rick, Diane) for review. There was some brief discussion about how much we focus on climate in the Strategic Plan.

**Grants Update**

Craig discussed the grants accomplishments through the various grant programs. There was quite a bit of discussion on National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants and how to utilize this program. States can act as a pass-through agency to NGOs for proposals to be funded. ACJV staff is willing to work with partners in all grant programs. David Viker commented on the great work being done, and that this is the core mission of the ACJV. Mitch announced to the Board that Maine and South Carolina recently received National “JV Conservation Champion” Awards in the partnership category.

**Strategic Communications Plan Presentation and Implementation**

Deb Reynolds provided an overview of the communication planning process. Deb provided a step-by-step explanation of the process, and the major components of the plan. Deb went through a snapshot of one goal of the plan. Steve Rockwood asked where this initiative came from. The answer was generally from staff, and Board members who recognized that we had a loose informal way of communicating and that we needed a more formal plan, particularly to influence Congress. Bernie noted that discussions first took place a few years ago at Tilghman Island. The main need to develop the plan was that it make our communcations needs and goals clear to Board members, especially since there is some turnover in membership; there needs to be a plan in place to assist new members what they can do to communicate the goals and accomplishments of the ACJV. John O. talked about the different needs of various audiences. Board members noted that they need tools to implement the strategy. It was also noted that a major communication strategy should be connecting people with nature, making what we do relevant to people.

Mike Harris asked what is the timeline for approval. Board has time to review plan in the next few months to provide comments for final draft to review and approve at the July Board meeting.

**ACTION: Develop a process of how ACJV goals can be shared by Board members who can integrate our plan into what they are doing.**

John O. noted that it would be good to have easy access and links to all of our partners, and that a link to let people visiting the site see a link on “how can I help conservation” which would be information on purchasing federal and state duck stamps, state hunting and fishing licenses, etc.

Mitch briefly discussed Deb’s detail to External Affairs and that it would only minimally impact Deb’s work with the ACJV.

Bernie asked about reporting out on accomplishments from this plan. Deb noted that was built into the plan, and will be reported out annually.

**Recent Awards and Recognition of Board Members and Partners**

Passing of Greg Smith, USGS Board member

Presentation of Award to Dan Forster for his service as Board Chair 2010-2012

Recognition of Wayne MacCallum in recognition for his long-standing contributions to bird conservation, for which he received NABCI Gary Meyers Conservation Award.

**LCC Update**

North Atlantic LCC – 2013 handout was passed around, featuring highlights of the meeting at NEAFWA, and their emphasis on practical tools; Catherine thought it was gratifying that this is finally coming the point where demonstrations of products are available. ACJV Board members are a part of the NALCC Steering Committee. There was some discussion about how the NALCC can assist with SWAPs. John O. asked if there was a role for the ACJV to be on the NALCC Steering Committee. Mitch explained the relationship with most LCCs and JVs in the country. As of now, there is no formal representation of JVs on LCCs, although multiple ACJV Board members serve on steering committees for both NA & SA LCCs. So while the ACJV is not formally represented, we are through common members being on both boards/committees. Also ACJV staff are very engaged with both LCCs through the partner/technical committees.

SALCC: Version 1.0 of the Conservation Blueprint was released and approved. SALCC is now working on resolving LCC Natural Resource Indicators and USFWS Surrogate Species in the Blueprint. Mike Harris will be the new chair of the SALCC, replacing Marshall Williams of DOD.

Peninsula Florida LCC: almost done with visualization tool, which is a version of the SALCC Blueprint, but the PFLCC version is based on CLIP. A post-doc has been hired to set conservation targets; workshops to be held soon on incentives and easements targeting private landowners. PFLCC is using CLIP and SALCC to integrate data to build a Version 1.0 for PFLCC.

Caribbean LCC – in stages of development, led largely by the US Forest Service and Institute for Tropical Forestry. Designing Sustainable Landscapes (DSL) is a major project being conducted by the LCCs.

**Designing Sustainable Landscapes in South Atlantic**

Tim presented ppt on the DSL project, with overview, current status, ACJV vision, needs, and discussion by all on how to proceed. Tim spent a good bit of discussion on the final areas suggested to support sustainable populations. We felt that the size of the areas needed to conserve all species/habitats are not adequate to meet realistic conservation goals, nor meet the partnership’s specific conservation needs, which is why the maps have not been released. We are at a point where we need to take the existing data that was derived from this project and revisit the population objectives that lead to the areas delineated in the DSL. Generally, the models may be conceptually sound, but because of the population objectives the final priority surfaces are not acceptable. There are decisions that need to be made to produce the final outputs needed by partners in the Southeast. A lot of assumptions were put into production of current optimal areas, and one primary goal is to work with partners to come to consensus on what values need to be used as criteria to build the conservation areas out over 100 years.

Discussions have been held with SALCC staff, but they have a different objective from the orginal purpose of the ACJV’s DSL, in terms of optimizing values for all inputs (e.g., cultural resources, etc.) versus being able to focus on individual species/habitats. It was recognized that the maps produced by the DSL project are conceptually sound, but not really sufficient for the partners. It will take considerable additional funding to realize the original vision of the ACJV. There was some discussion about integrating the efforts of the SALCC and ACJV. Catherine recognized that there were issues, and felt that discussions between the two groups are needed. Perhaps there is a process that could be worked out between the two that would meet objectives of both. Breck suggested that the ACJV and SALCC work together to accomplish mutual goals. Craig and Tim will work with Breck, David V., David C., and Mike Harris, to come up with a business plan.

**ACTION**: Committee of the above to work together with Tim and Craig to work on a business plan for what the ACJV wants as products. ACJV staff to work with SE states to see what they would like from ACJV DSL.

**Budget**

Mitch provided a table explaining the budget allocation for the JV, explaining the figures for overhead, Kirsten’s position, and operations. David V. noted that given reductions to other programs, JV budget seems ok, especially with all the support a JV staff requires. There was some discussion about JVs receiving a $1M increase to bring them back up to 2008 levels, but that has not been proposed to budget office.

Mitch passed out a few handouts regarding outside contributions to JVs, explaining that among the various JVs there is a range of contributions. The ACJV has always relied entirely on USFWS funding, although Craig’s position was initially funded by the USDA Forest Service and southern states within the ACJV (FL, GA, SC,NC, VA). That arrangement lasted a few years, until the position could become permanently through USFWS funding. The first handout outlined how much other JVs rely on USFWS versus partner funding. The second handout described how the ACJV could be supported at different levels through partner funding.

Mitch explained in detail how difficult it is for the USFWS to cover certain costs, due to federal laws and policies (e.g., breaks at meetings, AJVMB dues). These costs are often paid for by NGOs, such as American Bird Conservancy. There are at least three ways that the ACJV could generate additional funds: 1) direct contributions from JV partners, 2) corporate donations to the ACJV, and 3) shared positions. The second option could be promising, given the large amount of corporations in the east, but Larry pointed out that states cannot seek donations from groups that they regulate.

John O. talked about synergy between JV and LCC and suggested that perhaps some LCC funds could be directed to JV implementation.

Mitch provided a few scenarios of contributions that would meet some expectations of the above table. Some needs are support for Kirsten’s position, increasing Deb from half-time status, project seed funds, targeted project delivery, and science projects. David Cobb said he would like a specific project list that is prioritized. Gwen discussed how the Appalachian Mtn JV did this and how that processed works.

Craig mentioned the priority science needs process, and suggested that a similar process could be implemented with the Board for the categories of projects mentioned above. Bernie asked if there had been a push by JVs nationwide for soliciting contributions, and Mitch explained the needs of JVs, particularly the newer JVs. Cal is concerned about consistency from year to year. Kristina Heister asked about grants funds being used for support, and due to grant guidelines, those kinds of activities are not allowed to go back to JV, but can be used by partners or the applicant. Larry H. mentioned that sometimes it is difficult for states to provide funds to certain “bankers”, to seek corporate donations, and to pay registration fees, etc. There was some discussion about joining with AF to gather and hold money. Breck thought the AJVMB could be a possible holder of corporate donations. Mike H. asked if there were any funds from IWMM and the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Business Strategy, and there are no funds from these programs/initiatives to provide support funds to the ACJV. Cal asked about timing of funding and critical needs in budgeting, e.g., for Kirsten’s position. Bernie mentioned that DU works under budget constraints, and there may be a need to pressure USFWS to increase budget. DU has an easier time soliciting corporate donations. Bernie asked to see what the ask is from the other Joint Ventures.

**ACTION**: ACJV staff to provide more details and structure on priority needs by categories, solicit needs from partners to provide as examples, and determine potential bankers. Mitch to gather information on how other JVs solicit funds from outside donors.

**DAY 2**

**Human Dimensions Working Group**

Cal Dubrockpresented an overview of how the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee is involved in stakeholder engagement and he gave a presentation about the national survey being proposed. The Plan Committee is looking for funding to implement the survey. How do individual JV’s incorporate survey work into what we do? We discussed how they would sample people, whether those surveyed would represent the broader public, and how the results would be relevant to states, JVs, etc. Can we get at some of these questions through hunter survey on a national level? Cal said yes, considerable data mining is underway. Gary C. suggested that we add Society of Wetland Scientists to the survey. Allan suggested connecting with the Bird Banding Lab and those working on ecosystems, and ecological goods and services.

There will be chance to review survey questions. Catherine is curious to know if the group is getting support from professional survey people? Cal said yes, there were several HD people on their team. The facilitator is DJ Case. Survey work is difficult but more problematic is accurate sampling framework. They are working through the process that they will go through. Don’t want to invest too much unless money is going to come. JVs will have opportunities to participate in the survey and not necessarily have to provide funds for survey. The Plan Committee will be reaching out to USGS, NABCI, and will be talking about other birds too, beyond waterfowl. The request to Flyway Councils is to support the proposal and consider 50% funding, as well as identifying individuals to take over chair position. They will be working on methodology and overall process, including focus groups.

Survey is about relevancy and managing a public resource. Public part of survey is extremely important. If excluded value is diminished. Mitch’s perspective on national JV meeting: amount seems modest but it’s based on 26 JV’s contributing. Some JV’s are not waterfowl at all or are so small that there has been pushback to have the other JV’s pay for it. Also questioned budget structure and the implication is that the public and viewers would fall off the list if they survey wasn’t fully funded. Cal’s response was that no one thinks JV’s are going to fund anything; they are looking for resources elsewhere. Budgets are tight, but if everyone does a little it adds up to a lot. The HDWG has concluded that if they cannot do all three groups (i.e., professionals, hunters, and wildlife watchers), they won’t do the survey. They may choose to make some assumptions about non-response, which will reduce the cost of the survey.

Mitch wonders if there are any efforts by NABCI or others to do the survey themselves? HDWG isn’t that far in front and NABCI is talking but not there yet. Resources are limited.

**NAWMP Implantation Plan**

Does the ACJV board want to comment on the NAWMP Revision Action Plan formally, with a review and response by July? This is to respond to the IIC Work Plan, which replaced previous technical reports. The longer we wait, the more difficult it will be to influence change of the plan.

Breck reminded folks that the Atlantic Flyway Council has already provided comments. Maybe we should share those and see if they agree? Some of the NGOs on the ACJV Management Board may not have seen those comments yet.

**ACTION**: Circulate the Atlantic Flyway Council comments to NAWMP; attach timeline for additional comments. Mitch will check with Diane for any additional guidance.

Gary noticed some confusion about NRCS in the IWJV. Should he pass this on to leadership in NRCS? Mitch and Gary will tackle this and might reach out to coordinator to follow up. Gary will have the eastern region biologist reach out to the western region biologist.

**Project Reports**

**IWMM is o**n the verge of finding an institutional and administrative home for this program, within the National Wildlife Refuge System’s Inventory and Monitoring program, in Fort Collins, CO. There is a desire to reach out to states, and the group is getting close to that point. Thanks to Kirsten and David Viker for their support of IWMM efforts. Tim talked about how part of the IWMM model may be integrated into the “**LAPS”** program, i.e., the National Wildlife Refuge System’s priority system for acquisition of refuge lands. They want to have an objective national system that ranks lands on the same biological factors. The ACJV was asked to participate in a Structured Decision Making (SDM) workshop to develop a conceptual model that mirror’s the IWMM method of prioritizing and evaluating an area’s biological contribution to waterfowl. Tim is on a national team tasked to develop methodology to rank a list of refuges. HD is not part of the equation yet.

**Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Business Plan**

The shorebird plan is all about funding and on-the-ground actions. NFWF is interested in broadening the American Oystercatcher business plan to include more shorebirds. There is now a 15-member steering committee. That group has gone through an open standards process to develop result chains and actual budgets. They still have a lot of work ahead with the goal of the business strategy model so that NFWF could present this to their board in August as a keystone initiative. Under the banner of the shorebird strategy a couple of projects have already been funded, dealing with hunting in the Caribbean and some Hurricane Sandy projects. The role of the ACJV in the shorebird strategy is to be able to take a leadership role in organizing partners to focus their work to meet some of the plan strategies; particularly in land protection. Caleb took a stab at connecting US projects to what the ACJV tech committee could be doing. We are also working with the Atlantic Flyway Council shorebird committee to see what projects are already being done by states, and trying to find out who would be the best individual state contact. Caleb will be following up with a questionnaire. There is a desire for more targeted outreach, naming the working group, expanding partners.

Have there been any discussions about linking to the IWMM? Jim Lyons is putting links into the result chains that have monitoring and assessment links that are related to the shorebird template projects. Mike Harris said this is really exciting! He recognizes the need to work collectively, and noticed that there were no logos on the business plan.

**Accomplishment Reporting**

Tried to simply things this year. We are now asking each state for just five numbers, dealing with acres protected, restored/enhanced, or managed, as well as costs (if possible). Also, we ask folks to try to indicate what might be a double-count. There was a question about the NRDR program, and whether it is or isn’t a double-count. Mitch will check on that. What about other federal programs that might be counted, such as WSFR? Still interested in getting state and WSFR contributions; if everything that states do gets entered into the new TRACKS database system then maybe we won’t need to bug states and more!

Caleb reiterated that we understand that these numbers really are not accurate in terms of capturing all work within the ACJV. It’s more important to show that something is going on as opposed to zero, so it doesn’t need to be super precise. Lots of partners in the ACJV are reporting, and it paints a decent picture overall of the work our partnership influences. For states that have multiple JV’s, we may need to indicate that some of the work may be double-counted across JVs. There was some discussion about forest fires, and how the US Forest Service does report it in their activity reporting and whether or not it is considered “management.”

**ACTION:** Kirsten to send out a KMZ file to group with ACJV boundary. Mitch will email request out to board member and point of contact.

**New Business**

Craig Rhoades talked about NFWF impoundment workshops. This issue has flyway-wide impacts and needs regional coordination. Keep this on your radar!!!

Mike Harris: talked to Ken and Rua (SALCC) about engaging on the issue of SA DSL. ACJV staff and shared board members will engage with them and then report out to the rest of the board at the next board meeting in July.