

SE-TWS/SEAFWA Wetlands Wildlife Committee Report

Submitted by: Stephen V. Rockwood, Chairman

The Wetlands Wildlife Committee meeting was held on Sunday, October 12, 2003 from 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. in the Magnolia Suite, Adams Mark Hotel, Mobile, Alabama. Present were Nancy Higginbotham, Brad Helmandollar, David Norris, Chuck Hunter, Curtis Hopkins, Chuck Sharp, David Hayden, Marisa Lee-Sasser, Mark Sasser, Don McKenzie, Brandon Jones, Darrell Downing, Erin Holmes, Todd Threadgill, Buddy Baker, Michael Piccirilli, and committee chairman, Stephen Rockwood.

Under old business, Chuck Hunter provided an update on the various water bird conservation initiatives. Of notable concern are the high priority species identified in the Southeast U.S. Waterbird Plan. Populations of high marsh species (i.e., rails and bitterns) and beach nesting species (i.e., terns and oystercatchers) remain particularly vulnerable due to habitat alteration and degradation and human disturbance. Mr. Hunter also briefed the committee on a draft strategic plan entitled "A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds" that is being prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Migratory Bird Program.

This was followed by a discussion on the Wetlands Committee sponsoring a symposium on integrating bird conservation initiatives during the 2004 SEAFWA conference. The committee outlined a plan to pursue with the symposium by obtaining support from the SEAFWA Directors and the SE-TWS Executive Board.

If approved, Mr. Rockwood will work on the logistics of the symposium with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Mr. Hunter will identify a list of guest speakers.

Regarding wetland regulation issues, Mr. Rockwood discussed the letter the wetlands committee sent to the EPA commenting on the Administration's decision to draft new regulations under the Clean Water Act. The committee is opposed to drafting new regulations that would jeopardize millions of acres of wetlands. Mr. Rockwood informed the committee that the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and 31 other conservation organizations, including the Wildlife Society, sent a letter to President George W. Bush expressing their opposition to regulatory changes that would eliminate Clean Water Act protection for wetlands. The committee recommends the SE-TWS Executive Board and SEAFWA Directors consider sending a similar letter expressing opposition. If approved, Mr. Rockwood will prepare and submit the draft letter for review by SE-TWS Executive Board and the SEAFWA Board of Directors.

Under new items, Mr. Rockwood discussed the formation of the SEAFWA wetlands wildlife committee and led a discussion on the purpose and function of the committee. Based on these discussions, Mr. Rockwood will prepare written charges for review by committee members. Charges will then be submitted for review to the SEAFWA Directors prior to the 2004 spring Directors meeting. The committee meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Action Items:

- 1) Request approval and support from the SEAFWA Directors and the SE-TWS Executive Board for sponsoring a symposium on integrating bird conservation initiatives during the 2004 annual SEAFWA conference.
- 2) Recommend SE-TWS Executive Board and SEAFWA Directors send a letter to President Bush expressing opposition to regulatory changes affecting Clean Water Act protection for wetlands.