

**SUMMARY OF THE 7TH
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
SOUTHEAST QUAIL STUDY GROUP**

**January 22-23, 2002
Omni Bayfront Hotel
Corpus Christi, Texas**

**THE NORTHERN BOBWHITE CONSERVATION
INITIATIVE: UNVEILED**



Hosted by :

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department



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The Southeast Quail Study Group provides an open forum for discussion of factors affecting the quail resource within the region and is charged with the tasks of: (1) identifying factors responsible for declines in wild quail populations; (2) identifying gaps in knowledge about quail population dynamics, ecology and habitat management; (3) developing solutions to specific problems; (4) prioritizing regional research and quail management efforts; and (5) providing sound, scientifically based information about quail problems to administrators and policy makers.

Meeting Agenda

Tuesday Jan. 22, 2002

5:00 - 7:00 pm Social / Mixer at Water St. Oyster Bar

Wednesday Jan. 23, 2002

General Session - Nueces A Ballroom

7:00 - 8:00 am Registration
8:00 - 8:20 am Opening Remarks – Vernon Beville (TPWD)
8:20 - 9:30 am Quail Plan Update - Ralph Dimmick
9:30 - 10:00 am Farm Bill Update - Dave Howell
10:00 - 10:15 am Break

Committee Meetings - 10:15 am - Noon

<u>Room</u>	Committee
<i>Laguna</i>	Research
<i>Partnership</i>	Public Relations, Info & Education
<i>Aransas</i>	Forestry
<i>Nueces A</i>	Ag Policy
<i>Nueces A</i>	Habitat Implementation

Noon - 1:30 pm Lunch (on your own)

Committee Meetings (continued) - 1:30 - 3:00 pm

3:00 - 3:15 pm Break

Nueces A - Ballroom

3:15 - 4:15 pm Committee Reports
4:15 - 5:30 pm Business Meeting / Wrap up

3:00 - 6:00 pm **Quail V Registration**
7:00 - 9:00 pm **Quail V Mixer / Poster session**

SEVENTH ANNUAL SOUTHEAST QUAIL STUDY GROUP MEETING

Executive Summary

The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southeast Quail Study Group (SEQSG) was held in Corpus Christi, Texas in conjunction with the Fifth National Quail Symposium from January 22-23, 2002. The meeting was hosted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and sixty-two natural resource professionals representing 14 states attended.

A thirty-two-page document containing twelve state annual reports was made available at the beginning of the meeting. For copies of this document contact Robert M. Perez at rperez@gvec.net. The focus of the meeting was the unveiling of the **Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI)** along with discussion on the implementation of the plan. There were 750 copies of the NBCI distributed at the meeting and the latest version is available for download at <http://seqsg.qu.org/seqsg/index.cfm>. Vernon Bevill, Director of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Gamebird Program, made the opening comments, which are summarized as follows:

“Too often our approach to conserving natural resources is piecemeal management. When it’s gone its gone. The piecemeal construction of natural habitats will not succeed in the restoration of a species. Habitat Fragmentation exacerbates the situation and forces us to find new, more focused approaches to resource management. There are people looking and hoping that we fail at bringing back quail to numbers we can be proud of. The other major issue we are faced with is the population explosion of snowgeese. We must bring these birds down to a manageable level. These are the two litmus tests. What we say about managing a resource we must back up now. There are plenty of models of success such as the wild turkey. Landowner cooperation was the key to these successes. We must focus our attention on creating a culture of love, so people want that resource there and will even forego something that may make them a dollar.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWFP) is expanding to include all birds. Folks, we are in a glass house and we are all in it together. Partnerships are essential to make real headway. We have a quail plan now but it is just paper at this point. We need to make it a living-breathing document by making the next step, to work towards putting it on the ground. We have examples of partnerships right now in the playa lakes region. Native grass buffers are put in around playas to help combat silt issues. This grass is good for quail and pheasants. There are numerous potential partnerships yet to be realized and utilized. We all have full time jobs, the people who made the NAWFP all had full time jobs but they did it. We must make an effort to put the quail plan on the radar screen.

Piecemeal doesn’t mean its gone but piecemeal reconstruction won’t bring it back. I realize it will take tremendous resources to bring quail back but there are a lot of potential partners out there. The group (SEQSG) will need to step up.

The Playa Lake Joint Venture has expanded into grasslands. The Lower Mississippi Joint Venture (LA, TX, OK, AK) is starting to take a whole bird approach. But this does not cover the total area of the states involved. There are many native prairie restoration, and other conservation based groups out there but at this point in time they are working independently of one another. We need infrastructure to bring in dollars and create partnerships that will build momentum and result in projects on the ground. We need to make new partnerships with folks you never thought of working with and we need to work with them now. You need to take it to a higher level. We have a starting point with the plan. We need to take it to an end point."

Dr. Ralph Dimmick then gave a power point presentation covering the NBCI. It was suggested at the end of his presentation that it be made available to members of the group so that they may make presentation in their respective states. Dr. Dimmick agreed to put a script together with the presentation and it is currently available for download through the Quail Unlimited Website (www.qu.org)

Reggie Thackson, Georgia DNR, made the announcement that the next SEQSG meeting would be held August 26-29 in Waynesboro, Georgia.

Don McKenzie, WMI, volunteered to put together an executive summary version of the NBCI and that he could have it available by April 2002. Don then reiterated some of Vernon Beville's comments as follows:

"The easy part is done, the plan is complete. But now the work begins. We need to get others involved and get it done. This group (SEQSG) needs to take the lead role to implement this plan (NBCI). The North American Waterfowl Management Plan is 17 years in existence. It went from a handful of people working on it to hundreds of people revising, updating, and adapting the plan to their states. There have also been many offshoots of the plan, including many of the existing joint ventures.

We are at the point where we need to grow. We need to contact others and get them involved. The plan has received praise but some are taken back by the numbers. We have opportunities to move forward. It will take new infrastructure and joining existing infrastructures like joint ventures."

Later in the meeting, Don also suggested that the group (SEQSG) send delegates to Washington over the next several months to speak the Senate and House on behalf of the group and for the interests of bobwhite quail in the Farm Bill.

Dave Howell, QU, gave a Farm Bill update to the group and mentioned that more details would be available through the Ag. Policy Committee report.

The group then broke out into committee meetings. The general meeting re-convened at 3:00PM and each committee gave a brief update of their activities. A brief business discussion was held and the meeting ended at 5:30PM.

Committee Reports

SEQSG Steering Committee Meeting Minutes January 23, 2002

Mark Gudlin, Chair

The Steering Committee was involved in attending the other SEQSG committee meetings to try and address the needs of the various committees. The major focus has most recently been on completing the final printing of the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, and sketching out a plan for where we need to go from here in promoting the plan and putting it into action.

The Steering Committee and various other members of the Group had a meeting with John Frampton, (SCDNR), Chair of the IAFWA Resident Game Bird Committee. Discussions included:

- Anticipated adoption of the plan by the SEAFWA Directors
- Anticipated endorsement by the IAFWA and commission to expand the NBCI to include quail states not included in the original plan.
- Whether we need a national NBCI Coordinator, and how to approach getting such a position established.

In the brief Business Meeting portion of the one-day SEQSG meeting, the election resulted in Dr. Peter Bromley replacing Dr. Ralph Dimmick on the Steering Committee "academia" position, and two minor bylaws wording revisions. Reggie Thackson, Georgia DNR, made the announcement that the next SEQSG meeting would be held August 26-29 in Waynesboro, Georgia.

Agricultural Policy Committee Report 2000-01

Current Committee Members:

Breck Carmichael, Chair – South Carolina DNR
Steve Capel – Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries
Steve DeMaso – Texas Parks & Wildlife
Elsa Gallagher – NRCS, Missouri
Dave Godwin – Mississippi Dept. of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
Mark Gudlin – Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Dave Howell – Quail Unlimited
Louis Justice – NRCS, Georgia
Don McKenzie – Wildlife Management Institute
Terry Sharpe – North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
Jeffery Sole – The Nature Conservancy, Kentucky

Reggie Thackston – Georgia DNR
Jeff Thurmond – NRCS, Mississippi
Mark Whitney – Georgia DNR

Committee Purpose: The Southeast Quail Study Group Agricultural Policy Committee charge is to monitor agriculture policy with respect to its potential impact on the habitat of northern bobwhite quail. In coordination with the SEQSG Steering Committee, the Agricultural committee will draft position statements and provide recommendations relative to the formulation and implementation of agriculture programs and provisions. Additionally, the committee will work with appropriate state and federal agencies and private conservation organizations to facilitate information transfer regarding the impacts of agriculture policy on southeastern quail habitat.

Committee Activities

- The Agricultural Policy Committee and the Habitat Implementation Committee jointly prepared an instructional flyer entitled “How to Get Involved in Federal Farm Bill Conservation Programs, A Primer for Fisheries Professionals.” This flyer was included with a letter that was sent from the Steering Committee to southeastern state fisheries agency directors requesting their increased involvement in agriculture conservation policy matters.
- A letter was sent to Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman requesting that at least one-half of the \$40 million USDA emergency supplemental portion of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 be committed to the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).
- The Ag Policy Committee developed a concept paper for a “Flex Fallow” program to be considered for inclusion in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), or some other program in the 2002 Farm Bill.
- Committee members Thackston, Carmichael, Sharpe and Capel participated in a tour of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia for new International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) Agriculture Policy Analyst David Walker. The purpose of the tour was to familiarize Mr. Walker with habitat conditions and farm bill program utilization in that portion of the Southeast.
- Comments were provided to Ms. Alison Fox of Senator Harkin’s Agriculture Committee staff relative to the proposed Conservation Security Act.
- A letter was sent to new Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman urging that the administration honor former Secretary Glickman’s commitment of \$20 million to WHIP for FY 2001. The Bush Administration proposed that funding for WHIP be reduced to \$12.5 million.

- Committee members McKenzie and Capel prepared a discussion draft for a Grassland Enhancement Program, with the purpose of promoting conversion of improved pastures and hayfields (including fescue, bermudagrass, bahia, etc.) to native, warm-season grasses suitable both for forage and wildlife habitat.
- The Committee prepared comprehensive recommendations for the 2002 Farm Bill on behalf of the SEQSG. These recommendations were distributed to staff of the IAFWA and the Wildlife Management Institute, who are working with farm bill issues on a daily basis in Washington.
- Committee members Carmichael and Capel served on a working group of the IAFWA Agricultural Conservation Task Force to develop recommendations concerning Farm Bill conservation programs, attending one meeting in Washington, DC.
- Committee members Carmichael, Godwin, Howell, McKenzie, Whitney and Justice attended a meeting of the Southeast Forestry and Wildlife Working Group in Edgefield, SC to discuss potential merging of federal forestry technical assistance and cost-share programs.
- A letter was sent to southeastern members of the House Committee on Agriculture detailing the plight of the region's bobwhite population, and containing recommendations for the 2002 Farm Bill that could help alleviate the situation.
- Likewise, a similar letter was sent to southeastern members of the Senate Agriculture Committee, as well as to the Chairman and Ranking Committee member.
- A draft IAFWA response to questions concerning Farm Bill conservation programs from the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research was reviewed and suggestions submitted to IAFWA.
- Committee members Carmichael, Godwin and Capel comprised the SEQSG Audit Committee and reviewed the financial records and support documents of the SEQSG Secretary-Treasurer and Annual Meeting Treasurer.
- Numerous Ag Policy Committee members participated in development of the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative by writing or editing various chapters of the document.

Future plans for the Ag Policy Committee are to continue to track progress of the 2002 Farm Bill through Congress until passage, taking appropriate actions to have input into the rule-writing process that will follow, and closely monitoring Ag Policy activities and responding to individual issues as needed.

Agricultural Policy Committee Minutes
January 23 2002

Members Present: Reggie Thackston, Steve Capel, Dave Long, Clay Chambers, Ed Hackett, John Hendricks, Don Block, Don Hayes, Mike Burger, Jeff Thurmond, Don Seay, John Cole, Bill McGuire, Dave Godwin

Reggie Thackston chaired the meeting in the absence of Breck Carmichael. Steve Capel volunteered to keep the minutes.

Thackston read the report of last year's activities that were submitted by Carmichael.

David Long volunteered to be the Ag Policy Committee liaison with the PR Committee.

Discussed the limited opportunities for "outside" input into the rule making, and felt that working through Dave Walker with IAFWA would be best.

WHIP:

We would like to get it changed to be able to use some funds for incentives, just like the name says! Current law does not authorize funds for that purpose. Capel will draft language for letter to go out over Breck's name, copy to Dave Walker and Ron Helinski and post on Farm Bill Net if time permits.

Cautioned not refer to "maintenance" practices—raises many objections in USDA admin. Refer to such practices as "recurring management practices."

Need to make sure practices that potentially impact water quality or might be construed as promoting erosion are documented as not being contributors—eg. Wes Burger's student who evaluated strip disking and determined no negative impacts to water or erosion. Capel cited similar data collected by Drl Willy Reay at VIMS showing native grass filter strips and buffers to be superior to tall fescue and even young woody plantings in improving water quality (removing nutrients) and trapping silt. NEED research to document effectiveness of natural vegetation buffers in removing nutrients and trapping silt.

Discussed the inequity of wildlife practices having to fulfill water quality and non-erosion functions while those practices do NOT have to benefit wildlife!!!

In the rule making process, try to insure that "one size fits all" spans "Small to XXXL" and let STCs decide on whether a "small, medium or large" is right for their state.

Need better education within the profession so someone in one part of the country does not accidentally subvert activities in another by either misspeaking or not clarifying the area where their issues are involved (or are being addressed).

items allowing him to serve as back-up editor in the event Dean's new job pressures did not allow him to complete subsequent issues.

3) Quail Educational Module – Dave Godwin, of the Mississippi Dept. of Natural Resources, provided the group with a model of their 4 – H school enrichment program. The program is designed around the bobwhite quail. This was discussed at last year's meeting. Work is still underway on an interactive CD to accompany the program. Dave indicated that the interactive CD would be available to all southeastern states once it was completed.

4) The emphasis at this year's SEQSG meeting was the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI). During the morning sessions each committee was essentially given the charge of determining ways in which they could promote the NBCI. Our committee, therefore, brainstormed about ways we could publicize the NBCI. We want it to be on as many "radar screens" as possible. The following were our ideas to date:

- a) Before many of the following can be accomplished, the SEQSG needs to develop a promotional package concerning the NBCI. This should include the popularized version of the NBCI that Don McKenzie is working on, plus a cover letter from the steering committee explaining why the plan was developed and why it is important.
- b) We are already in the process of getting the NBCI on our web page.
- c) We suggest that all state agency web sites be linked to the SEQSG web site. We are in the process of accomplishing this.
- d) We suggest that all states strive to have a feature story in their respective state magazines concerning the NBCI.
- e) All state biologists need to renew their contacts with outdoor writers, magazine and newspaper, and try to initiate coverage of the NBCI.
- f) We need to become involved with the Outdoor Writers Association of America. We need to find out when their annual convention will be held and try to get a spot on their program. If SEQSG does not have a member, we need to get one.
- g) We need to attempt to get articles published in magazines that reach new audiences, ones such as Audubon, National Wildlife, etc.
- h) We should consider producing a video on the NBCI.
- i) Each state should insure that their law enforcement staffs are well versed about the NBCI and have promotional material available to them.

- j) The NBCI should be publicized through all state chapters of The Wildlife Society. We should also attempt to secure coverage in the section and national newsletters.
- k) The SEQSG may consider working with an add agency to develop a publicity campaign for NBCI.
- l) The SEQSG needs to work to organize a centralized funding mechanism. This would be very helpful in funding projects.
- m) Our members need to work to identify funding sources. We need to pursue grants. There are monies available out there, but it takes research and grant writing to get these funds.
- n) We believe it is important to get a 30 second TV commercial done this year. This could be in conjunction with Quail Unlimited.

Action Items:

- Make sure web page is updated and linked to all state web sites (by the end of April)
- Find out when the next OWAOA meeting is and try to get a spot on the program (asap)
- Begin work on a special issue of the SEQSG Newsletter to introduce the NBCI and provide coverage of Quail V (hopefully in the May/June issue of QU)
- Contact state biologists and determine if they have an article planned to cover the NBCI in their state magazines (by the end of May)
- Begin trying to find a partner for a short infomercial (by the end of May)
- Develop an emblem and slogan for our Group - suggested statement: "If you care, leave some cover there – think habitat."
- Develop a list of outdoor writers (by the end of June)
- Develop a list of "non-traditional" outdoor magazines and determine their submission requirements (by the end of June)

Suggested script for an infomercial:

Identify the problem:

"Many species that inhabit native grass and brush lands such as, ... including the bobwhite quail have declined dramatically in the last 40 years."

Identify the cause:

“The primary reason is habitat loss. Simply stated, they are losing their homes.”

Offer solutions:

“Recently a broad spectrum of conservation partners developed a plan to help reverse these alarming trends.” Some discussion of the NBCI to follow.

We need your help:

“But they can’t do it without you. The best opportunities for helping these animals exist mostly on private lands. You hold the key to their future.”

For more information:

Need a centralized contact in each state, or perhaps one number, with a series of directional phone questions leading them to the right contact, something like, if you are calling from Alabama, call, etc.

“ And remember, Buzz Bobwhite says, “If you care, leave some cover there – think habitat.”

SEQSG ANNUAL MEETINGS AND AWARD RECIPIENTS

MEETING LOCATION	MEETING DATES	AWARD RECIPIENT
Webb Wildlife Research Center Garnett, SC	Aug. 15-18, 1995	None
Ramada Inn/Tall Timbers Tallahassee, FL	Sept. 3-6, 1996	Breck Carmichael
Sheldon's Restaurant & Motel Keysville, VA	Sept. 15-18, 1997	Don McKenzie
Ames Plantation Grand Junction, TN	Sept. 14-17, 1998	Dr. Ralph W. Dimmick
Mississippi State University Starkville, MS	Sept. 27-30, 1999	Reggie Thackston
Camp Kanuga Hendersonville, NC	Oct. 2-5, 2000	Rocky Evans
Omni Bayfront Hotel Corpus Christi, TX	Jan. 23, 2002	Stephen W. Capel

