

# North American Bat Conservation Alliance (NABCA)

## Charter and Terms of Reference

### Overview

The North American Bat Conservation Alliance (NABCA) is an informal alliance among federal, state/provincial and local government agencies; regional bat working groups; non-government organizations; industry; individual scientists and biologists and concerned members of the public interested in bat conservation. The role of NABCA is to facilitate coordination and communication among parties interested in bat conservation in North America, to develop and maintain a North American Bat Conservation Strategy, and to develop and promote Action Plans to implement the priorities identified in the Strategy.

### Background

Bats are among the most diverse groups of mammals in the world, with over 150 species known from North America. Apart from their intrinsic value as a component of global biodiversity, bats provide many ecologically and economically important services. For example, most bats in North America eat insects, including many invasive species and agricultural pests. Other species of bats play a key role in pollinating flowers and dispersing seeds of numerous plant species. In addition, bats contribute to ecotourism, and research on bats has led to new insights in flight and navigation.

Unfortunately, many species of bats in North America are now of conservation concern. Bats are facing a wide range of threats including loss of foraging and roosting habitats, human persecution, emerging infectious diseases such as White-nose Syndrome, and incidental human-caused mortality, especially due to collisions with wind turbines. As a result many species have declined dramatically in recent years, and several species are now considered at risk of extinction or extirpation in one or more countries. Furthermore, the status of many other species is poorly known, and they may also be of concern.

Various efforts are already underway by government agencies, environmental non-government organizations, academia, industry and others within each of Mexico, the USA, and Canada to address some of these threats. For example, Mexico participates in the Latin American Network for the Conservation of Bats (RELCOM), which has developed a Strategy for the Conservation of Bats in Latin America and the Caribbean. The USA has developed *A National Plan for Assisting States, Federal Agencies, and Tribes in Managing White-Nose Syndrome in Bats* to provide the framework for a broad collaboration across agencies, institutions, and organizations to address all manner of actions related to White-nose Syndrome and conservation of affected bat species. Similarly, Canada has prepared *A National Plan to Manage White Nose Syndrome in Bats in Canada* and convened an inter-agency committee to develop and implement work plans to address priority actions. In addition, a number of regional and local

working groups have been formed to address bat conservation needs in their respective regions. Various groups are working to develop recovery plans for federally listed endangered species and other working groups have been developed to address particular threats such as mortality from wind turbines.

These efforts would benefit from improved coordination and cooperation among regions and countries for several reasons. Many of the threats are shared among regions, and strategies and approaches to address them in one area could be relevant elsewhere. Cooperative efforts would result in synergies and improved efficiencies to optimize conservation efforts. Furthermore, bats are highly mobile and travel freely across regional and national boundaries. Thus management efforts in all regions are needed to address their full life cycle conservation needs. Consequently, sharing resources and expertise among regions can lead to more efficient and effective conservation actions.

The North American Bat Conservation Alliance will facilitate communication, coordination and cooperation among all parties interested in bat conservation in Mexico, the United States, and Canada in their efforts to manage and conserve North American bat populations. The concept of NABCA has been developed over many years, and the proposed structure builds upon the strengths of various past efforts to organize bat conservation partnerships in North America.

### **Mission**

The mission of the North American Bat Conservation Alliance is to promote the conservation of bats in North America by facilitating cooperation, coordinating priorities, and elevating awareness of bats, for the benefits of bats, people, and their ecosystems.

### **NABCA Structure**

NABCA is an informal alliance among any and all parties concerned about maintaining healthy bat populations, including federal, state/provincial and local government agencies, industries, non-governmental organizations, researchers, and concerned members of the public. It builds on the structure of existing regional and national bat working groups. NABCA is guided by a Steering Committee with support from a coordinator.

The role of NABCA is to facilitate coordination and communication among parties; to develop and maintain a North American Bat Conservation Strategy that identifies conservation priorities and strategies; and to prepare and guide Action Plans to implement the priorities identified in the Strategy.

NABCA is not a formal membership organization; rather, it is envisioned as a structure to enhance the effectiveness of existing organizations by encouraging communication and cooperation among groups; by identifying continental conservation priorities and strategies to address them; and by creating a cohesive continental voice to enhance support for bat conservation.

## NABCA Steering Committee

NABCA is guided by a Steering Committee, chaired by one representative from each of Canada, the United States of America, and Mexico, with support from a coordinator.

**Mandate:** The role of the NABCA Steering Committee is to provide a continental forum for sharing information and perspectives among and within each of the three participating countries; to prepare and regularly update a North American Bat Conservation Strategy; and to develop approaches to encourage implementation of actions to achieve the priorities identified in the Plan.

**Membership:** The Steering Committee shall consist of 10-12 members, including 3 co-chairs.

- **Co-chairs:** The co-chairs include one representative from each of Canada, the United States of America, and Mexico. These shall be appointed by the respective wildlife agencies of each country, but may or may not be government employees.
- **Working Group representatives:** The four regional working groups (the Northeast Bat Working Group, the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network, the Midwest Bat Working Group, the Western Bat Working Group), the Program for Conservation of Mexican Bats, and Canada's Interagency White Nose Syndrome Committee each appoint one representative.
- **At-large members:** The remaining members are selected by the co-chairs to provide additional perspectives and expertise related to bat conservation.

The Steering Committee must have at least two members (including the co-chairs) from each of the three countries.

Members are expected to provide regular input to the committee through participation in meetings, and through correspondence.

All members are appointed for an initial term of two years, which may be renewed. Members who are consistently unable to attend meetings and do not provide input to the committee in other ways may be asked to step down by the chairs. Members who wish to step down early shall endeavor to provide at least one (1) month notice to enable a replacement to be found.

At-large members may be nominated by any interested persons and are approved by the co-chairs and working group representatives.

**Meetings:** The Steering Committee shall meet at least three times per year, either through teleconference, video-conference or in-person. A quorum of at least 50% of the current membership is needed to conduct formal business of the Alliance.

In-person meetings should be planned to coincide with other meetings related to bats or bat conservation which would be attended by multiple members of the Committee, such

as the North American Bat Research Symposium, annual White-nose Syndrome Workshop, or meetings of one or more of the bat working groups or other agency meetings. To facilitate participation by members who are unable to attend an in-person meeting, options for remote participation will be made available.

### **Coordinator**

The Steering Committee is supported by a coordinator, whose role is to promote communication among Committee members and the Alliance, and to assist in developing documents. Specific tasks include:

- Arranging meetings of the Steering Committee.
- Maintaining records of Steering Committee meetings.
- Helping to develop and maintain the Strategy, incorporating feedback and decisions from the Steering Committee.
- Helping to develop and encourage implementation of the Action Plans.
- Managing the NABCA website and other communications tools.
- Working with the Steering Committee members to engage the North American bat conservation community through NABCA.

### **North American Bat Conservation Strategy**

The Steering Committee, with support from the coordinator, shall prepare a North American Bat Conservation Strategy that sets out Strategic Priorities for bat conservation in North America and a series of objectives to achieve those priorities. These priorities shall be developed after extensive consultation throughout the bat conservation community (i.e., the Alliance).

The Steering Committee and coordinator shall then support these with a series of Action Plans that set out specific prioritized actions that will contribute to meeting the Strategic Priorities, together with timelines to achieve these actions, and indications of the key players who will contribute to their implementation. The Steering Committee will create a series of task forces that will assist with the development of these Action Plans. Each task force shall include at least one member of the Steering Committee, but may include as many additional members as are required for effective participation.

The Committee will ensure that the Strategy is reviewed at least every five (5) years, and updated if necessary. The Action Plans will be reviewed and updated annually.

### **Communication**

NABCA shall maintain a website that will provide basic information on the Alliance, including, as a minimum, the Charter and Terms of Reference, the North American Bat Conservation Strategy and the associated Action Plans.

To the extent possible, content will be made available in the three (3) official North American languages (English, Spanish and French), especially the home page, this Charter and the North American Bat Conservation Strategy.

To the extent possible, the site shall also provide access to other resources related to bat conservation in North America, either through links to related sites, or through posting copies of resources on the site.

NABCA shall also support communication on all aspects of bat conservation through a variety of social media and other communications tools, as appropriate, including Facebook and Twitter.

## **APPENDIX: Membership of the Steering Committee**

### **Co-chairs:**

Charles M. Francis (Environment Canada)

Rodrigo A. Medellín (Instituto de Ecología, UNAM)

Jeremy Coleman (United States Fish & Wildlife Service)

### **Working Group representatives:**

Rita Dixon (Western Bat Working Group)

Brian Carver (Southeastern Bat Diversity Network)

Vanessa Rojas (Midwest Bat Working Group)

D. Scott Reynolds (Northeast Bat Working Group)

Jorge Ortega (Program for the Conservation of Mexican Bats)

Jordi Segers (Canada's Inter-agency White Nose Syndrome Committee)

### **At Large Members:**

TBD

TBD

TBD

### **Coordinator:**

Rob Mies (Organization for Bat Conservation)