

**Webinar Conference Call Notes
 Reddish Egret “Core Working Group” (REEG WG)
 June 15, 2017 noon Central Time**

This informal document is meant to provide general overview. The majority of the notes were taken primarily by Bill Vermillion (thank you) and Kelli Stone developed this document. These notes weren't carefully reviewed before sending to working group; thus there may be some inaccuracies and accidental omissions Please contact Kelli to add to notes and/or get on email-list of participants - kelli_stone@fws.gov, 505-248-6515. See end of document for the agenda and definitions of acronyms.

CALL OBJECTIVES

1. Make decisions on 3 priority action items: monitoring protocol, maintaining webpage, and 2017 Conservation Plan – to do this will require establishing work groups
2. Updates on communication and funding actions among group in last 4 months
3. Select date of next in-person WG meeting?

CALL PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organization
Adrian Varela	ProNatura Noreste MX
Amanda Hackney	Black Cat GIS & Biological Services
Amy Schwarzer	Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
Alfredo Alvarez	ProNatura Noreste AC
Andrew Cox	Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
Ann Paul	Audubon Florida
Ariam Jimenez	ARCI, Univ. of Havana
Bart Ballard	Texas A&M
Bill Vermillion	FWS, Gulf Coast Joint Venture
Clay Green	Texas State University
Joyce Kleen	FWS, Crystal River NWR Complex
Kelli Stone	FWS, Migratory Bird Program, R2
Ken Meyer	Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI)
Mark Rachal	Audubon Florida
Steve DeMaseo	FWS, Gulf Coast Joint Venture
Victoria Vasquez	Audubon Texas

ACTION ITEMS & DECISIONS

1. **Range-wide breeding protocol:**
 - a. **Sub-group formed** to advance current strawman by August 2017. Group lead will be Clay (?) or Kelli. With major input from Steve DeMaseo, Ken Meyer, Samantha Collins (Louisiana Dept. of wildlife and Fisheries) and input/review from Andrew Cox, David Newstead and others. Donna Anderson (FWS, Clear Lake ES office is also interested in being on sub-group. This sub-group will present work to core group.
 - b. **Kelli** will communicate with Peter Fredrick (Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring Network – GoMAMN) about including that group's waterbird working group in the development of protocol.
2. **REEG Working Group Webpage:**
 - a. **Bart Ballard** will provide a graduate student to start and eventually taking over managing site over for Amanda Moore (pHD student with Clay – who has done excellent job but has done her fair share)

- b. Cost of annual fees will be paid for each year by working group member/organization. Approximate cost is \$350 – but Clay can confirm exact cost.
 - c. **Andrew Cox** will investigate if Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission can pay the upcoming bill (due summer 2017). If that isn't feasible, Bart Ballard will pay it in 2017. We need to come up with willing payer for 2018 and 2019.
3. **Update portions of the 2014 REEG Conservation Action Plan**
- a. The 2014 REEG Conservation Plan – some of the timelines have come and gone, we have met some objectives and not others. We will go through the document and update relevant portions to stay relevant. Electronic update.
 - b. **Kelli** will look at plan and identify which sections need to be updated and provide summary to working group in an effort to either find 1-2 people to update the plan.
 - c. Relative to one action item in the plan: **Bart** has made progress on foraging model with data from Central and Eastern shapefiles but needs to get data from Western portion of range.
4. Proposed working group workshop at the **21st Congress of the Mesoamerican Society of Biology and Conservation and International Meeting of Partners in Flight (6th) Meeting** in San Jose Costa Rica, 10/30-11/3 2017
- a. It is very likely that our proposal for 1.5 day workshops sponsored by ProNatura, Rio Grande Joint Venture and the REEG Working Group has been accepted by PIF planning committee.
 - b. Kelli, Jesus Franco and Alfredo: If we have been accepted we need to start determining how to pay workshop fee (\$1,500 total)
 - c. Kelli, Clay (Jesus?): Determine the agenda for the ½ working group session and ask for group members to develop abstracts of the work they would like to present. We also need to develop a presentation/abstract to introduce working group and its activities.
 - d. Put announcement regarding meeting and workshop on REEG WG Webpage.
5. **NEXT WEBINAR AND IN-PERSON MEETINGS (communication w/in WG):**
- a. Likely have webinar in mid to late August to update WG on progress of developing range-wide monitoring protocol and prep for Costa Rica workshop
 - b. In-person WG meeting will be in January 2017 in south Texas.
 - c. Do we need to find a venue other than Griffin Groups to share documents (such as working versions of range-wide breeding protocol)? That site isn't very user-friendly (for many of us). Could use Google Drive but would need a private account to host it (Google Drive within FWS can only be shared with Dept. of Interior employees). Kelli – talk with Victoria. V to see what she found out about Basecamp and/or ask WG members if they would be willing to host a Google Drive account we could all use?

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Range-wide breeding protocol

- a. Current status and moving forward. The original outline and a summary of comments were emailed to group on June 9
- Work had already begun on this (2015?), further discussed at working group meeting (Jan. 2017) in FL, talked about moving forward.
- Range-wide, every 5 years, Metric – breeding population
- Cox, Meyer, Ariam worked up strawman, sent out to core working group in March 2017; comments from 5 people received. Kelli developed summary sheet of comments and theme.
- Before we address details of the protocol, we need to answer “big picture” issues such as who is intended audience?
- Andrew Cox – amenable to addressing the big picture comments strawman based on the protocol used in FL. Steve's email that we should revisit big picture made sense –

- Need to establish subgroup to move forward. Would like to see draft by end of summer or at least substantial progress by end of summer.
- The sub-group will work with GOMAMN Wading Bird Working Group, tie into expertise and increase potential for funding – need to meet their objectives. Are objectives different between REEG working group and GOMAMN wading bird working group?
- Suggested audience - any entity involved in surveys of REEG no matter size of survey anybody doing survey work
- Sub-group: Kelli suggested Samantha Collins (LA), Andrew is willing to work on it but hesitant to commit to end of summer timeline; Clay is willing to commit by end of summer to get another revision out. Steve interested in helping out and interested in monitoring program that helps plan to measure our progress towards meeting goals of 2014 WG's REEG plan. Ariam recommended Ken Meyer. David – currently monitoring in Texas but might be using different methods. He and Owen are to the extent they can) will provide practical input but not take a lead role on developing protocol.
- Are Mexican biologists familiar with GOMAMN? No..
- Mexican representatives are working towards developing standardized protocol from Tamaulipas Veracruz, Yucatan.
- Peter Frederick is the GOMAMN waterbird lead – unclear how much detail they will provide in whatever plan is produced. We discussed and seemed to agree that we need to keep him in on the loop while we develop protocol. Kelli will communicate with him.

2. REEG Working Group Webpage

- a. Keeping it up-to-date, adding content and financial support. Select sub-committee?
 - b. Communication among working group: Griffin Groups and/or Webpage
- Kelli's understanding of former financial support - Clay and Amanda Moore designed original webpage – money came from USFWS (Jennifer Wheeler as National Waterbird Chairperson and Troy Wilson from Migratory Birds R4) but it is long gone. Clay has been shouldering some of the expenses. Need to figure out how to pay for annual updates - \$500 dollars?
 - Kelli was hoping to get FWS \$, but uncertain in current budget climate.
 - Amanda Moore is not going to be around forever. Need a couple of people to volunteer for webpage maintenance in the future. Need someone to make sure it's updated regularly
 - Clay – Amanda wrote code to add or
 - change or delete. She has been migrating website to a more user-friendly platform (Word Press). Now is good time for updates.
 - \$300 / year to keep on server, plus another 20 bucks or so to keep url registered
 - Clay put out request for updates to states, MX etc. but didn't get much response (only LA. Wants to know what's being done at your institute, state, etc.? Would help to keep website current
 - Also a REEG Facebook site which is linked to website
 - Amanda has been recruited to monitor Herons' Specialist website and Waterbird Society website. She doesn't work with REEG so Clay wants to relieve her of the duty
 - Clay will resend request for updates, pictures, meeting synopses, etc.
 - If anyone in MX is interested please contact Clay
 - Bart – can allocate a student to help out at some point has a new student coming on
 - A student would be ideal - periodically check on site every couple months, prod researchers, etc. - one designated source
 - Website reflects us and could affect our ability to continue working on REEG issues
 - Bart will let Kelli know and hopefully will preclude Kelli asking larger group

- Bart – possibly revolve cost through entities who are part of the REEG working group? Shouldn't be a burden that way?
- Amanda – looking into WIX.Com – a lot more like powerpoint – easy to learn – about \$11 month
- Andrew – idea of rotating cost is good – thought WordPress was free but \$300 a year every 4 years or so is doable
- Fee is coming up in August (through JustHost) comes with a free domain, provides 1 terrabyte space on Just Host
- Amanda – working with Google Domain around \$50 a year plus fees for Wix.com
- Can Andrew check into funds for this year? Could pay after the first of July but has to make sure that this fee is allowable. If Andrew's agency can't pay the fee this year, Bart can probably pick up this year if need be.

3. **Update portions of the 2014 REEG Conservation Action Plan** –Kelli, Clay and All

a. Timeline, action items, etc.

b. Incorporate language about how it fits into the Continental Plan ProNatura is developing?

- Clay – idea of updating plan – which came out of 2012 meeting in Corpus then printed in 2014.
- Timelines have come and gone in document, some met some not met – should we go through and highlight objectives and determine whether they've been met or not.
- Electronic update in mind, not written – good for potential funding sources – needs to be current
- Decide whether issues are priorities still and update or drop
- ID core group to review plan and update
- Monitoring protocol would be a good inclusion
- Kelli – need to add/include how plan relates to ProNatura's efforts in Mexico and possibly Continental plan
- Alfredo (actually other MX biologist Morales?) – PIF meeting at Costa Rica – do a workshop to make continental plan – talked with Guy Foulkes – send justification to NBCA in order to use budget designated to MX – can use to develop workshop for continental plan – and create working group
- Has ProNaturas continental plan been started? Constructing table of contents (or protocol?) and other background information for Mexico plan (background, theoretical context of plan – think maybe this summer have a protocol constructed for MX, then planning to adapt to continent with products derived from proposed Costa Rican workshop
- Any other thoughts about updating plan?
- Bart – has been held back on foraging aspect, has gotten Central and Eastern shapefiles done but has had issues with getting info from Western portion
- Setting up shapefiles for foraging habitat
- Kelli will look at plan and put out to rest of group, has already begun to identify where plan needs work

COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER GROUPS

1. **Proposed working group workshop at the Congress of the Mesoamerican Society of Biology and Conservation (21st) and International Meeting of Partners in Flight (6th) Meeting** in San Jose Costa Rica, 10/30-11/3 2017 (see proposal emailed to group). Kelli

- PIF meeting – San Jose Costa Rica – Oct. 30 – Nov 3, in concert with Mesoamerican Biodiversity meeting

- REEG Working Group (Kelli and Clay), Jesús (Rio Grande Joint Venture) and Alfredo Alvarez put in a proposal to host a 1 – 1.5 day workshop (see attachment in Kelli’s 6/13/17 email).
- The objectives of workshop are many but include elevating status and awareness of REEG within PIF. Also to introduce WG to new partners in other portions of species’ range (Central America, etc.), to get information and data from those areas incorporated in developing plans and range-wide breeding monitoring protocol.
- Don’t know yet if proposal for workshop was accepted but thinking it will happen
- ProNatura is planning on 1 day continental plan workshop to introduce the business plan (for Mexico) they are currently developing. The workshop in Costa Rica could be really good opportunity to explore expanding the scope of that plan to be continental? The full day workshop by ProNatura will be moderated by Alfredo .
- The REEG working group will host a ½ day working group session. To introduce WG to biologists (especially those in Mesoamerica) and encourage their involvement and sharing of data/information and input into range-wide protocol development. However, Kelli (FWS) as the chairperson may not get permission to attend workshop. In her stead other members of the WG will moderate the ½ day workshop – such as Clay, David, Bart – etc.
- Unlikely that other WG members could attend CR workshop – but those who are able can represent the WG, host workshop and help expand membership to Mesoamerican biologists and partners.
- Alfredo – with PIF can expand MX group to larger Continental group. Expecting funding for next year from NBCA. Have funds for work in Bahamas and MX complimentary with U.S. plan
- Should know by that time if funding is secure. Alfredo’s portion of workshop (full day workshop at \$1,000) and he can probably afford to invite 7-10 MX biologists
- RGJV willing to provide funds to help cover cost of workshops – either ProNatura’s (1 day = \$1,000) or perhaps the working groups (1/2 day = \$500). Kelli trying to get R4 and R2 \$ for the REEG WG portion (1/2 day workshop) but likely won’t be allowed.
- Is anyone else on call going? What do other members think about this? Trying to elevate waterbird specifically REEG in PIF consciousness?
- Andrew – chances for FL low to nil; Bart – tentatively would like go; David – 20 – 25% chance of him or Owen attending; Clay? If sufficient funds he will go.
- Bart – is there more of a formal tentative agenda? Would be next step if accepted by PIF? Kelli prodding Jesus to ask, chances are good.
- Kelli – good to have abstracts on work working group has done, info on group, plan, etc.

Amanda and MX biologists had to drop off

2. **Increase coordination with the Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring Network’s (GoMAMN) waterbird working group?** Kelli and Clay

- a. Review and use the products they have produced for REEG (i.e., the influence diagram) and include on REEG webpage
 - GOMAMN Waterbird working group, we should be communicating with this group as much as possible. Made somewhat easy because Clay Green is the co-chairperson (with Peter Fredrick) of the GoMAMN waterbird working group and is very active in the REEG WG. However, we need to take extra steps to ensure flow of communication is open between groups. GoMAMN waterbird working group has identified the REEG as one of its priority species and thus is working on a couple of products – including a draft influence diagram with supporting excel sheet of explanation ecological factors impacting the species.

- Kelli sent out the influence diagram this group developed for REEG. Peter Fredrick (co-chairperson of the GoMAMN Waterbird Working Group) would like REEG WG's input on the influence diagram they developed.
- REEG WG should review that influence diagram to see if it is something we could use – include in 2014 conservation plan update?

OTHER ACTION ITEMS

1. Schedule working group meetings

1. 2018 meeting should be in South Texas Coast so Mexican biologists can attend (decision made during Jan. 2017 WG meeting).
 - Thoughts? Sounds good?
 - Can FL travel to TX? Moderate chance of attending.
 - What has been done in the past to pick the date? Doodle poll used in past.
 - Assume 2 days of meetings and half day field trip? Yep
 - Kelli will send out Doodle poll – let her know if there's a bad block of time in Jan asap
 - Will need to look at location/city
2. Communication within WG
 - Kelli is maintaining a list of action items and status – can post on Griffin Groups?

FUNDING

1. Proposals Submitted

- a. National Academy of Science: Clay (LOI was emailed to group by Kelli)
 - Proposal submitted – NAS – GOMAMN folks (Randy Wilson and Jeff Gleason – provided feedback and some guidance) helped with LOI – another good reason for linkage because of link to potential funding and funders look at planning documents
 - Clay, Ken, and Bart worked on LOI
 - Feedback on LOI – REEG too narrow focus – expanded to other long-legged waders – look at eco drivers for wading bird populations- expand Everglades work to larger GOM – prey base, salinities, etc.
 - Got discouraging feedback suggesting no full proposal – too vague, too species specific, unclear about what was being proposed under concept of monitoring
 - Opted to not submit full proposal
- b. CBBEP's Proposal: Owen Fitzsimmons
 - David provided information on the proposal they submitted to NFWF – for management of islands off of Texas. The activities they requested funding for are for a suite of nesting waterbirds not just REEG.
 - David- submitted NFWF Gulf Environmental Benefits fund not specific to REEG but NFWF does put a lot of weight into relevant plans
 - Proposal is for island habitat management continued like what they've been doing
 - NFWF is metric centric so caution in promising birds over span of grant proposal (2 years or so)

- Monitoring will be a bit more organized as part of grant guidelines. – can possibly incorporate some of the proposed breeding protocol for REEG. Most monitoring tied to actions on the ground and tied to acres and sites vs birds
- Grant will basically provide funds for continued effort and extra dollars for more intensive efforts like predator control
- Were there needs in the plan identified that jumped out as needing updates?
- Lots of overlap between JV plan and plan but JV plan is more specific but both are fundamentally similar
- Didn't delve into timelines in range-wide plan
- One thing in range-wide conservation plan – state has no committed coastal bird person
- Ongoing processes are difficult – one time actions don't cut it

2. Funding Opportunities

- a. NFWF Update: Kelli
 - Kelli has left phone messages and email with NFWF – Bridget Collins to follow up on conversation they had at GoMAMN meeting in Lafayette, (April 2017) regarding potential funding opportunities
- b. Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees' Gulf Spill Restoration funding (<http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/frequently-asked-questions>), Ken Meyer
- c. Others?

3. Communication among WG – especially relative to funding proposals and opportunities

- Kelli – good for working group to communicate about funding opportunities and what was submitted – small world – we need to be aware of each other's proposals especially if submitted under aegis of working group
- Steve – a lot depends on funding proposal but good to have everyone in the loop, some pots of \$ gulfwide, some very specific, but could be beneficial and improve funding possibilities
- Not sure how to complete the loop to let people know about what's been submitted and funded
- GOMAMN core group has been sharing verbal information about proposals
- A private gmail account could work
- Amy – Griffin Groups was not overly satisfactory- did not find particularly intuitive – has used Google drive or Dropbox in past
- Next meeting – possibly August but maybe on an as needed basis – would be good to meet to talk about efforts to assist with continental plan
- One last question – on website – okay to post minutes that will contain participants' names on website? Privacy issues? No issues expressed.
- Where can this sort of info be stored? Kelli, Amy and others (?) are not overly-impressed with Griffin Groups because it isn't very intuitive and other issues.
- We could use Google Drive (instead of Griffin Group) but would need someone willing to use private Google address (not government) – in order to share the Google drive with a variety of partners (state, NGO, private, etc).

Acronym	Definition
CBBEP	Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program
GCJV	GULF COAST JOINT VENTURE
GoMAMN	Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring Network
NFWF	National Wildlife Federation
PIF	Partners in Flight
USFWS/FWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	US Geological Service
WG	Working group (i.e, Reddish Egret Working Group)

AGENDA
Reddish Egret “Core Working Group” (REEG WG)
Webinar Agenda
June 15, 2017 noon Central Time

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

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 - d. Timeline, action items, etc.
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2. Kelli is maintaining a list of action items and status – can post on Griffin Groups?
3. Database: status and continuing to populate - Clay

FUNDING

3. **Proposals Submitted**
 - a. National Academy of Science: Clay (LOI was emailed to group)
 - b. CBBEP’s Proposal: Owen Fitzsimmons
 - c. Others?
4. **Opportunities**
 - a. NFWF Update: Kelli
 - b. Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees’ Gulf Spill Restoration funding (<http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/frequently-asked-questions>), Ken Meyer
 - c. Others?