



Sonoran Audubon Society

P.O. Box 8068
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To: Ad Hoc Chapter Committee Members
From: Sonoran Audubon Society Board of Directors
Date: December 1, 2004

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations.

Sonoran Audubon Society is a new Chapter based in the West Valley of the Phoenix, Arizona Metro area. Our all-volunteer Chapter is focused on education and conservation and watching birds for pure enjoyment. We have a very active group of volunteers working on Important Bird Area efforts in the Agua Fria River watershed and the Salt River (Rio Salado), the dry river that is being restored through the City of Phoenix. We support the new Tres Rios Nature Festival in the West Valley, volunteers conduct Introduction to Birding Classes year round at local birding hotspots, we generously give of time at several Christmas Bird Counts here and our Board members (several) are regular attendees at the state Audubon Council meetings.

The Sonoran Audubon Society (SAS) Board of Directors has read your Committee's report completely and generally agrees with the Ad Hoc Committee Statement of Vision and Guiding Principles. A collaborative model is to our liking. Our guiding principles are several; however, in this response to your recommendations, we would like to state two in particular. We believe in the central role of the Chapter Audubon Council for the State and we believe that the key education function of the Chapters should not be diminished in the discussion about the relationship among Chapters, National Audubon and the state offices.

On Financial Support, Sonoran Audubon disagrees that financial support from National should be decoupled from membership numbers. We do not like the idea of Chapter grants as a substitute for dues share because it is a competitive model for support from National. We believe that the financial relationship between National and individual Chapters should be more stable and cooperating than a grantor-grantee relationship. Sonoran Audubon does not believe collaboration is promoted if National Audubon uses the state office for allocating funds to the Chapters as you recommend. This notion simply continues the perception that the state offices already suffer under that they were superimposed on the Chapters without Chapters input or consent. Therefore, Sonoran Audubon supports the idea contained in the Tucson Audubon response # 3 that recommends the State Office and the Chapters determine the amount of financial support the Chapters will receive from National Audubon's State allocation **jointly** during the state's annual planning meeting at state Audubon Council where conservation priorities are also set.

Sonoran Audubon is committed to assisting our fellow Chapters and the State Office in identifying new funding sources which support our important IBA work and other initiatives in the state. The idea of having National Audubon grants available to Chapters for projects is a good one too!

On the proposed allocation models, we support the principle that costs of membership should be supported by membership dues. If National Audubon determines that these costs have risen, raise the membership dues to cover these costs; do not respond by cutting the dues share to the states! We agree with Tucson Audubon's statement #4 that dues should support the costs of membership and that Chapters and National Audubon work together to make sure this is the case.

On State Support for Chapters (Service Support), we generally agree with the recommendations with a particular concern and emphasis on leadership development among younger demographics. We plan to research the idea of state or multi-state assemblies.

Following on our recommendation above about dues share decisions, we recommend that annual technical assistance support to Chapters be discussed and determined during the annual planning meeting in our state amongst the Chapters and state office personnel at Audubon Council.

On Membership, we prefer the Optional Shared Membership model and believe that that model will best "spread the word" about Audubon and birds.

The additional recommendations and options in the report seem reasonable to Sonoran Audubon.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment; we look forward to working with National Audubon, the state offices and our fellow Chapters to advance our causes to preserve and increase bird habitat in Arizona, to gain new participating members and have fun while we do this.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. A. McCormick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob McCormick, President