

THE U.S. SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION PLAN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

9 September 2003, 1:00–6:30 pm

International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting
Best Western Inn on the Park, Madison, Wisconsin

Vice-Chair Catherine Hickey opened the meeting and Council members and observers were introduced. Changes to the agenda were suggested and adopted. Much of the discussion at, and subsequent to, the meeting focused on the role of the Council and implementation of national and regional conservation plans.

Council Purposes

The purposes of the Council, as stated in the April 2002 Terms of Reference, were reviewed and there was general agreement on their continued relevance. These purposes are:

- 1) provide coordination among the partner organizations who are implementing the Plan,
- 2) support regional working groups and technical committees,
- 3) monitor the progress toward implementing objectives of the Plan and evaluate achievement of goals at five-year intervals,
- 4) help support shorebird conservation work of individual partner organizations by guiding development of coordinated implementation programs, sharing information on opportunities for funding, and coordinating fund-raising efforts where appropriate,
- 5) provide input to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Shorebird and Waterbird Working Group on shorebird conservation issues and needs,
- 6) provide input to the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network Council on national shorebird conservation issues and needs, and
- 7) select and provide guidance to the Plan representative on the U. S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative Committee.

The remainder of the report is structure around these purposes. Specific actions are identified under these broad purposes, and a description of work to be performed by the National Coordinator is provided. Note that about 17% (of 2080 annual work-hours) of the coordinator's time is expected to be expended for holiday leave, annual leave, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administrative duties.

National Coordination and Council Function

Council members present stressed the need for organizations and individual Council members to more strongly commit to fulfilling the vision and meeting the goals of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan. Commitment to the Council involves three main components: 1) regularly

attend Council meetings and respond to e-mail inquiries (at least 50% of meetings and messages), 2) communicate information on shorebird conservation through the member's organization and solicit organizational support to achieve shorebird conservation objectives, and 3) agree to work cooperatively to accomplish shorebird conservation goals and objectives. Based on continued interest and involvement, the following organizations and individuals are suggested to constitute the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council:

Executive Committee Members

Chair: Brian Millsap, Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management, USFWS
Vice-Chair: Catherine Hickey, PRBO Conservation Science
NABCI Representative: Ellie Cohen, PRBO Conservation Science
Monitoring Working Group Chair: Jon Bart, Snake River Field Station, USGS
Education and Outreach Working Group Chair: OPEN
Research Working Group Chair: Stephen Brown, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
IAFWA Waterbird/Shorebird Working Group: Larry Niles, co-chair, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife
Joint Ventures: Carol Lively, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, USFWS
NGO: John Cecil, National Audubon Society, Important Bird Areas Program
Federal Agency: Susan Skagen, U.S. Geological Survey, Fort Collins Science Center
State Agency: Brad Winn, Georgia DNR, Wildlife Resources Division

General Council Members

Canadian Shorebird Plan: Garry Donaldson, CWS
Department of Defense Partners in Flight: Chris Eberly
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.: Jasper Lament
International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: Debbie Hahn
Natural Resource Conservation Service: Wendell Gilgert
North American Waterbird Conservation Plan: Jennifer Wheeler
North American Waterfowl Management Plan: Seth Mott/David Smith
Shorebird Sister Schools Program: OPEN
The Nature Conservancy: David Mehlman
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: Cal McCluskey
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System: Jon Andrew
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nongame Coordinators: Bill Howe/Stephanie Jones
U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, International Programs: Jack Capp
U.S. Geological Survey, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center: Bruce Peterjohn
U.S. NABCI Coordinator: Bob Ford
Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network: Charles Duncan
Wetlands International: Melanie Steinkamp
Northern Atlantic Region: Brian Harrington, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
Southeastern Coastal Plain/Piedmont Region: North Carolina State University

Lower Mississippi Valley/Western Gulf Coast: Randy Wilson, Lower Miss. Valley JV
Upper Mississippi Valley/Great Lakes: Bob Russell, USFWS
Northern Plains/Prairie Potholes: Lisa Gelvin-Innvaer, Minnesota Wildlife Division
Central Plains/Playa Lakes: Suzanne Fellows, USFWS
Intermountain West: Don Paul, Intermountain West Joint Venture
Southern Pacific: Gary Page/Nils Warnock, PRBO Conservation Science
Northern Pacific: Joe Buchanan, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Alaska: Brian McCaffery, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
American Pacific Islands: Maura Naughton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

National Coordinator Work Plan: For the 2004 Federal fiscal year (FY04), spend 10% of time maintaining Council communication networks, developing materials for the Council, and answering general inquires about the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan.

Technical Working Groups

Monitoring

Jon Bart presented the Coordinated Bird Monitoring approach and its general concept was supported by the Council. Regional assessments for breeding and non-breeding are occurring in several areas of the country and proposals have been developed to further implement regional assessments. The arctic work is progressing. A proposal has been submitted to develop shorebird information databases through the USGS NBII program. PRISM is continuing to work with other programs (e.g., South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative) to harmonize approaches and reduce duplicate effort.

Action: Monitoring Chair to distribute Coordinated Bird Monitoring document to the full PRISM committee for review. Convene meeting in winter 2004 to evaluate PRISM progress and determine next actions.

National Coordinator Work Plan: For the 2004 Federal fiscal year (FY04), spend 12% of time developing and reviewing PRISM components. Specifically, develop and track strategy to complete regional assessments, participate in arctic PRISM components, and interface PRISM objectives with those of National Wildlife Refuge System.

Outreach

As Hilary Chapman has left her position as coordinator of the Shorebird Sister Schools Program, the Education and Outreach Working Group Chair is currently open. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends to replace Hilary in the near future. In August, several offices in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were able to fund initial work to revise the Shorebird Management Manual. Before Hilary left, the working group was discussing vehicles to distribute more information on shorebird management to private landowners.

The revision of the management manual may afford the opportunity to develop a good outreach strategy to get these on-the-ground methods to landowners and managers.

Action: Fill Education and Outreach Working Group Chair by March 2004.

National Coordinator Work Plan: For the 2004 Federal fiscal year (FY04), spend 8% of time maintaining shorebird management list-serve, developing habitat management outreach materials, and fostering revision of *Shorebird Management Manual*. Spend an additional 8% of time providing technical support to the Shorebird Sister Schools Program.

Research

Over the last year or so, North American shorebird specialists have realized that the answer to why shorebirds are declining will require a coordinated international, multi-disciplinary effort across the range of a few species, which is being called the Hemisphere Shorebird Project. Emerging from these discussions were five most likely causes for declines: climate change, avoidance of predators, contamination, human disturbance, and habitat loss/degradation. Stephen Brown lead a discussion of the Hemisphere Shorebird Project and the need to generate researcher interest and financial support to accomplish its objectives.

Action: Re-form the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Research Working Group to focus on further developing and accomplishing objectives of the Hemisphere Shorebird Project. The Council endorsed the idea of developing a joint Canada-U.S. committee similar to PRISM, which may include participants from other countries. The group should consider how to incorporate high-priority research needs within the shorebird planning regions and outreach to academic institutions for involvement in the project.

Action: Stephen Brown to serve as interim co-chair. Need to organize this group and nominate a co-chair by March 2004.

Regional Implementation

Regional Working Groups

The Council is concerned about the vitality of the regional working groups. Clearly, success of the shorebird conservation plans relies on implementation of regional conservation objectives. The Council is interested in ways they can assist the regional working groups implement actions identified in the plans. Central to a functional regional working group is the maintenance and periodic consultation of a network of regional shorebird experts. In April 2003, a report was distributed on activities of the regional working groups. Below are listed recent or planned meetings of the regional working groups.

Northern Atlantic Region – September 2002, high priority network in December 2003
Southeastern Coastal Plain/Piedmont Region – high priority network in December 2003
Lower Mississippi Valley/Western Gulf Coast – ???
Upper Mississippi Valley/Great Lakes – December 2004; various state meetings in 03/04
Northern Plains/Prairie Potholes – October 2003, JV implementation plan
Central Plains/Playa Lakes – March 2004
Intermountain West – November 2003
Southern Pacific – April 2003; interior and coastal
Northern Pacific – winter 2003/2004
Alaska – December 2003
American Pacific Islands – ???

The National Audubon Society has chosen the Mississippi Valley as a focus area for waterbird conservation. Shorebirds could also benefit from conservation actions undertaken there.

Action: Work with regions to develop a brief action plan to implement the regional shorebird conservation plans. Venues to discuss implementation could be coordinated with JV technical committees, BCR planning meetings or other opportunities.

Action: Regional contacts should provide a brief report to the National Coordinator by March 2004 on activities of the regional shorebird working groups over the last years and status of objective achievement.

Joint Venture Implementation Plans

As Joint Ventures move towards developing conservation strategies for all birds, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee has decided that they will focus only on the technical review of JV implementation plans with respect to waterfowl. The Council discussed the need to provide a similar review process to evaluate objectives for shorebirds. Equally important is the involvement of regional shorebird experts in development and updates of implementation plans.

Action: Executive Committee and Regional Chairs to develop a process to review JV implementation plans for adequate coverage of shorebird objectives by March 2004.

State Comprehensive Wildlife Plans

Beginning with the Council meeting, a lengthy discussion developed that focused on stepping down shorebird, and other bird group, habitat and population objectives for incorporation into state comprehensive wildlife plans. The plans, at a minimum, need to include a discussion of priority species and habitats for conservation action. The discussion continued in IAFWA working group meetings. Clearly, there is a need to compile information for use at the state level, although states vary in their need for

assistance. Bird conservation plan coordinators, regional working group chairs, and regional U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff may be asked to provide assistance to these state planning efforts.

Action: Work with IAFWA and state partners to identify shorebird information needs and identify who can provide regional assistance if needed.

National Coordinator Work Plan: For the 2004 Federal fiscal year (FY04), spend 31% of time working with regional working group chairs, state partners, and Joint Ventures to develop processes for setting shorebird habitat and population objectives. Spend an additional 8% of time of time facilitating coordinated science approach for Delaware Bay shorebird-horseshoe crab research and monitoring effort.

Funding

As previously reported, results of the funding workshop in January 2003 focused on increases in five areas: 1) North American Wetlands Conservation Act, 2) Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, 3) Joint Ventures, 4) State Wildlife Grants, and 5) research and monitoring. To date, no effort has been made to develop a cooperative strategy to pursue these focus areas. Although funding targets have been identified for the first 4 items, no dollar figure has been generated for research and monitoring. However, the NABCI monitoring working group will be working on this during winter 2004. The Council responded to the summary of the workshop and pointed out that some preliminary estimates for monitoring and research did exist in the bird conservation plans. The Council also suggested that the “priority” funding items were really a set of urgent needs and that the fledgling initiatives had additional needs that were perhaps less urgent (e.g., outreach). The Council discussed other ways to pursue shorebird conservation project funding but had concerns over Federal participation, the perspective of being a team player, and the current fiscal climate. Further discussion is needed to decide whether or not some shorebird-specific funding issues should be pursued (e.g., PRISM).

Action: Distribute list of general shorebird funding opportunities to Council members and other organizations and individuals interested in shorebird conservation.

WHSRN and International Involvement

Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences has just hired a new director for the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. The new director, Charles Duncan, will oversee the finalization and implementation of a new WHSRN strategic plan. The plan will likely suggest a stronger role for the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council to play in the implementation of the WHSRN strategy in the U.S., and the Council will need to define its role in implementation of the WHSRN strategic plan. The Council, WHSRN, Audubon’s IBA program can work together to strengthen site-based shorebird conservation efforts. The draft WHSRN strategic plan is being, or has been, discussed at international meetings in Paraguay, Brazil, and Chile.

Involvement by international partners will greatly increase the chances of successful implementation.

Action: Determine role of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council in implementing U.S. portion of the WHSRN strategic plan (when finalized).

National Coordinator Work Plan: For the 2004 Federal fiscal year (FY04), spend 8% of time consulting with partners on development and funding of international projects that benefit migratory shorebird populations.

NABCI Representation

Ellie Cohen, Executive Director of PRBO Conservation Science, currently serves as the shorebird plan representative to the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative committee. Thanks to Steve Miller, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, for support and interest over the past several years. The committee met in August 2003, and Ellie presented the pros and cons of how the NABCI committee is assisting the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan. Although some specific desires regarding implementation of national and regional shorebird conservation plans have not been met, NABCI has raised the level of awareness of all-bird conservation. Regional implementation, including at the state-level, is the biggest hurdle. Ellie suggested that all national plan coordinators develop annual work plans that can be shared with the Committee to inform them of initiative priorities. The role of the funding group remains unclear, particularly in relation to the NGO sub-committee. Funding has been, and will be, an important issue for implementation of the Shorebird Plan. There was interest in expanding NABCI beyond Canada and Mexico and the Shorebird Council could play a lead role in exploring ways to increase effectiveness throughout the Western Hemisphere. There was some discussion of the revised Duck Stamp proposal, but no solid recommendations were forwarded by the Committee. Several of the topics noted in previous sections were discussed as were the following items. Monitoring and Federal Agency working groups were tasked with developing a cost of science support for integrated bird conservation, which was not generated in the WMI funding summary. Trinational projects were funded by CEC and there is continued interest in building regional alliances in Mexico that have multinational components. The Monitoring Working Group was encouraged to continue with development of an integrated approach and to reach out to all science partners. Initiatives were encouraged to develop annual work plans that could be shared among all bird conservation groups. The NABCI committee will be invited to participate in the conservation forum on the USFWS migratory bird strategic plan. A draft copy of the US NABCI Committee summary and highlights are sent concurrently with these minutes.

Action: Decide who should represent the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council if Ellie Cohen can not attend a U.S. NABCI Committee meeting.

Next Council Meeting

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, St. Patrick's Day, 17 March 2004, 2:00–6:00 pm, Double Tree Hotel, Spokane, Washington.

Minutes of Council meetings, Shorebird Plan documents, and other Shorebird Plan information is posted at <http://shorebirdplan.fws.gov>. For hard copies of any documents, or for general questions, contact: Brad A. Andres, National Coordinator, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Division of Migratory Bird Management, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., MBSP 4107, Arlington, VA, 22203, USA; 703/358-1828 (phone); 2217 (fax); Brad_Andres@fws.gov (e-mail).