

Advocating for Shorebird Conservation – The Role of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council

20 September 2004

Periodically, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council (Council) is asked to provide written comments, information, or other assistance about the effect that certain actions could have on shorebird populations or habitats. To date, the Terms of Reference does not define the role of the Council in advocating for shorebird conservation with respect to public and private policy and legislative actions. Outlined below is a process for how the Council will take such actions.

Herein *advocacy* is defined as actively supporting the goals of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan that includes providing educational background information for interested parties but excludes direct lobbying for funding. *Lobbying* is defined as attempting to directly influence the votes of Federal and/or state legislators in the U.S. on funding for shorebirds, shorebird habitat, and related programs.

1. The Council will advocate for actions that could help, or against actions that hinder, attainment of the goals of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (Shorebird Plan) throughout the range of North American–breeding shorebirds.
2. The Council will only advocate for conservation issues that affect broad shorebird landscapes, high priority shorebird populations, important stopover sites (following WHSRN criteria) or other issues deemed of major significance by the Executive Committee (per the process outlined in Section 3 of this document). In general, local shorebird conservation issues should be brought to the attention of local Council partners and/or local conservation NGOs.
3. The person or organization seeking Council support for a particular position will provide a draft letter with supporting materials at least two weeks before comment deadlines to the National Coordinator. The National Coordinator will circulate the materials to the Executive Committee that will decide, by a majority vote if necessary, if the action warrants Council advocacy. If the Executive Committee decides to advocate for the action, they will suggest changes to the response, if any, and the Coordinator will distribute (time permitting) a revised draft to the entire Council for review and final input. All comments will be incorporated into the Council’s response as appropriate.
4. Any Council member can abstain from participating in a response if s/he believes there is a conflict of interest within her/his organization. The National Coordinator will keep a record of all abstentions. The Council Chair and/or an Executive Committee member who is not affiliated with the agency or organization proposing the action will sign the comments on behalf of the Council.

5. The Council has a clear role, and has set a precedent, in developing funding projections and identifying funding needs for implementation of the Shorebird Plan. However, the Council, as an entity, will not directly lobby U.S. Federal, state, or local legislators regarding budgets and other funding issues. The Council will be available to provide educational and background information to legislators and their staff as requested. In addition, the Council will provide information to member organizations that wish to champion implementation of the Shorebird Plan's goals and objectives through direct lobbying.

The Council Executive Committee will review this process after the first full year of implementation to evaluate its effectiveness and make improvements as necessary. The Executive Committee welcomes any feedback from Council members.