

Desired Characteristics for the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP) Partnership

USSCP Partnership Vision: Ensure that stable and self-sustaining populations of all shorebirds are distributed throughout their range and habitats in the U.S. and across their entire ranges, and that species which have declined in distribution or abundance are restored to their former status to the extent possible at costs acceptable to society.

<i>Element</i>	Sub-element/ Product	Technical Expectations		Assessment and Needs		
		Minimal Content	Comprehensive Content	Progress to Date	Progress Assessment	Improvements Needed
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE	Coordination	A vision for the Partnership's future is developed; strategies to achieve the vision are established and implemented. Partnership develops and maintains relationships with Habitat Joint Ventures and other regional, national, and international alliances, if consistent with the Partnership's mission. Partnership office is established and provides leadership to develop, with the Council, a strategic implementation plan to define and achieve the goals of the Partnership.	Partnership office and Council actively work to broaden Partnership with relevant individuals and organizations. Partnership maintains strong professional contacts and connections, networking to keep the Partnership abreast of current conservation issues, research findings, and management techniques. Partnership office identifies partner capabilities to address the Partnership mission and works with partners to address any missing capabilities through additional staff, partners, contracts, or training. The Partnership participates in development of common Partnership messages to Congress, agency policy-makers, and other relevant organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tasks set at annual meeting and progress reviewed through periodic teleconferences. No specific implementation plan. ● Moderate communication and interaction with JVs. ● Some regional alliances formed outside of JVs (e.g., Delaware Bay, Alaska, Great Salt Lake). ● Capacity is one 50%-time coordinator. Partners contribute in-kind to accomplish tasks. ● Partners have worked to establish funding messages through NABCI and the Bird Funding Coalition. ● Coordinator actively engages in developing funding initiatives within the USFWS. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased capacity to enhance communication and outreach. ● Represent shorebird interests at appropriate bird conservation committees, including AFWA working groups. ● Ensure shorebird objectives are considered in other implementation programs. ● Identify and contact groups that could benefit from shorebird expertise. ● Outreach to non-traditional groups/organizations.
	Council	Operations and administration of Council are defined and supported by Partnership office. Council has broad, inclusive representation of federal, state, non-profit, and private organizations, and members regularly participate in meetings. Some members participate on an Executive Committee, which has decision-making authority. Member organizations commit energy and resources to developing a shared vision and common goals for shorebird conservation for the Partnership and coordinate their otherwise independent actions in the cooperative pursuit and refinement of that vision.	Council members bring significant resources to the Partnership, engage in current issues facing the Partnership, share responsibilities for Partnership progress, follow through on commitments, and responsibly use their influence for the betterment of the Partnership. Council develops and adopts a process for periodic self assessment that includes relevant goals and metrics for both programmatic and organizational performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Terms of Reference established for operations of the Council, who seeks recommendations from a variety of shorebird conservation stakeholders. ● Structure re-defined to increase efficiency and commitment. ● Advisory team and committees formed; purpose and operational procedures defined. ● Open meetings held annually and minutes produced and posted on website. ● Administration provided by USFWS. ● Evaluation currently being developed (herein). 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase representation of private enterprises in decision-making and consultation bodies. ● Extend leadership on committees beyond national coordinator. ● Increase representation of habitat conservation organizations. ● Increase representation of scientific groups.

<i>Element</i>	Sub-element/ Product	Technical Expectations		Assessment and Needs		
		Minimal Content	Comprehensive Content	Progress to Date	Progress Assessment	Improvements Needed
	Funding	Partnership office maintains working knowledge of pertinent funding opportunities. Partnership office works with partner organizations to obtain grants and other funds to implement priority conservation actions.	Partnership financial system is sophisticated enough to manage grant/contract funds as appropriate. Administrative personnel are on or available to Partnership office. Partnership seeks and attracts funds from a broad range of traditional and non-traditional conservation programs and other funding sources to implement priority shorebird conservation actions. Working with the Council, Partnership office directs the preparation of annual and long-range development planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinator regularly distributes funding announcements to partners. ● No dedicated funding for partnership operation. ● No coordinated efforts to develop revenue stream for funding basic operations of partnership. ● Support for participation on Council provided by members. 	Major Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Secure dedicated funding to ensure basic operations of partnership, including travel support of some Council members. ● Identify potential funders beyond U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
	Technical Community	Technical expertise needs are identified. Partnership has access to technical staff either directly or through Partnership. The Partnership applies practices of Strategic Habitat Conservation and Adaptive Management and works to address effects of emerging conservation issues for shorebirds (e.g., climate change).	Partnership has science expertise on staff or available through partners as appropriate. Technical committees for specific shorebird conservation science needs are in place as needed with full participation from relevant Partnership organizations. Technical committees are improving the science foundation of the Partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broad geographic and organizational technical expertise identified and used in moving science foundation forward. ● Interest-based teams (4) established to capitalize on expertise and minimize volunteer fatigue. ● Participation by experts in multi-taxa groups addressing bird science needs. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One of the strongest components of the USSCP community. ● Ensure shorebird technical expertise is available to emerging initiatives. ● Tap early career scientists to participate on technical teams.
BIOLOGICAL PLANNING AND CONSERVATION DESIGN	Coordination	Partnership leads a collaborative effort, often through a technical committees appointed by the Council, to build a biological foundation of shorebird conservation needs that is both based on, and informs, international, national, and regional bird conservation initiatives. Partnership works with the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) to address international and site-based biological needs.	Partnership develops and implements strategies to use Partnership science products to better target and enhance conservation and management programs at the regional, national, and international levels to benefit shorebirds. Partnership office or Council members build strong relations with decision makers in state and federal public institutions, private industry, and partner organizations to strengthen their understanding of the Partnership's conservation activities and capabilities. Partnership is actively involved in WHSRN.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good representation on JV science teams by partnership participants, although JVs polled indicated only a moderate capacity to plan, deliver, and evaluate shorebird conservation actions. ● Partnership priorities transparent and are regularly shared among agencies and organizations. ● Partnership participation in review of NAWCA, Farm Bill, JV policies and implementation. ● WHSRN-US committee established and has accomplished assigned tasks. 	Moderate Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participate on JV and emerging LCC technical teams. ● Actively participate with JVs in newly formed Tri-Initiative Science Team. ● Increase participation in Farm Bill policy and assessment increased. ● Actively implement WHSRN strategic plan in the U.S.

<i>Element</i>	Sub-element/ Product	Technical Expectations		Assessment and Needs		
		Minimal Content	Comprehensive Content	Progress to Date	Progress Assessment	Improvements Needed
BIOLOGICAL PLANNING AND CONSERVATION DESIGN	Strategic Plan	Preliminary conservation plan completed to guide actions at continental, national, and regional scales.	Council-approved strategic plan revised every 5 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No national strategic plan developed after original plan, but greater shorebird coverage in JV implementation plans. 	Major Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of outcomes of the “matrix” to develop a five-year strategic plan.
	Taxa of High Conservation Concern	Assessment criteria are developed and applied, and shorebird taxa of high continental, hemispheric, or international conservation concern are identified.	Assessment criteria and resultant outputs are periodically reviewed and updated by a technical committee. Assessment criteria and output lists of shorebird taxa of high conservation concern are as consistent as possible among agencies and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria developed (2000), applied (2001), and re-fined (2004) for assessing shorebird taxa of high conservation concern. Review of list and attempt to harmonize criteria with other bird groups planned for 2011. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly updates population sizes, coinciding with Waterbird Population Estimates cycle.
	Important Shorebird Areas	Sites and landscapes important to breeding, passage, and wintering North American-breeding shorebirds are identified.	Important shorebird sites are included in the WHSRN and Important Bird Area program. Sites are periodically assessed for the continuing importance to shorebirds. Land managers are aware of important shorebird areas in their jurisdictions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential sites identified, based on numerical abundance. Sites important for Atlantic Coast Red Knots identified. Virtually all sites supporting >100,000 shorebirds annually are designated in the WHSRN. Revised polygons of “Nationally Important Shorebird Areas” used for NAWCA evaluation. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify sites important to individual species and populations. Improve delineation of NAWCA priority sites.
	Population Objectives	Population objective variables (e.g., abundance, vital rates) are identified and a general process is developed for determining objectives.	Explicit set of population objectives for each taxon at a continental scale. Objectives stepped down to smaller scales for application with Habitat Joint Ventures or Bird Conservation Regions. Periodic revision of population estimates, trends, and objectives by a technical committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continental population objectives set in 2001 plan. Some Objectives stepped down to JV scale (e.g., UMGLJV, IWJV, CVJV). Process initiated (2010) to step down objectives in systematic and comprehensive way. Population sizes and trends reviewed by US-Canada team every 4-5 years. 	Minor Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop methods to set population and habitat objectives and evaluate progress toward objectives. Continue with cycle of revising population sizes and trends.
	Species Conservation/ Management Plans	Preliminary conservation plans exist for some species covered by the Partnership. These plans use information obtained through Research, Science, and Monitoring elements and in cooperation with WHSRN.	Prioritized list of information needs for each taxon and specific tasks that need to be accomplished to facilitate effective conservation and management. Plan actions are integrated into implementation plans of Habitat Joint Ventures and those of other agencies and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focal Species Conservation Plans completed for 17 species. Some actions being implemented from plans. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate focal species actions into JV, LCC, and state plans and other efforts. Complete three remaining plans and evaluate actions of existing plans. Prioritize plan actions to secure funding.

Element	Sub-element/ Product	Technical Expectations		Assessment and Needs		
		Minimal Content	Comprehensive Content	Progress to Date	Progress Assessment	Improvements Needed
CONSERVATION DELIVERY	Habitat	In the U.S. and Canada, the Partnership informs, assists and influences Habitat Joint Ventures implementing habitat conservation programs for shorebirds. In other countries, the Partnership works with agencies and NGOs to implement habitat conservation actions.	The Partnership works actively with Habitat Joint Ventures and other organizations to attract additional partners, leverage and generate new funding, and support implementation of habitat conservation programs, all which achieve established objectives at appropriate scales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of habitat targets in some JVs. ● Review of NAWCA Standard Grant Proposals for benefits to shorebirds. Since 2007, 78% of submissions have had moderate to high benefits for shorebirds. ● Partners have assisted NRCS in developing programs that benefit shorebirds. 	Minor Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With all JVs, establish habitat targets. ● Bring new partners into grant-making to improve shorebird habitat. ● Increase involvement in NRCS special initiatives.
	Non-habitat	The Partnership informs, assists and influences organizations implementing a broad array of conservation actions for shorebirds (e.g., policy, contaminants), often focusing on high priority species and important sites.	The Partnership works actively with organizations to attract additional partners, leverage and generate new funding, and support implementation of conservation programs, all which achieve established objectives at appropriate scales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Since 2002, >\$9.9M in NMBCA grant have been awarded to projects that benefit shorebirds. ● Partners have worked with Packard and the NFWF to develop shorebird funding initiatives. ● State Wildlife Grants have been used to support projects that benefit shorebirds. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop strategies to take advantage of LCC funding opportunities. ● Ensure shorebird projects are submitted for AFWA's Southern Wings project. ● Determine shorebird benefits of SWG projects.
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	Coordination	Partnership Office works with the Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM) committee and stakeholders to identify biological monitoring needs.	Partnership Office, Council, and PRISM committee work with stakeholders to achieve consensus and implementation of appropriate and preferred monitoring approaches and methods. Stakeholder involvement includes partners throughout taxa ranges. Partnership ensures monitoring information is fed into appropriate decision-making structures and is useful for guiding conservation and management decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strategy to implement PRISM concepts developed. ● Partners contributed to development of NABCI monitoring recommendations. ● Refinement of PRISM goals in 2007 and current effort to update PRISM strategy underway. ● Funding secured to improve data management of the ISS. 	Minor Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrate monitoring information into decision-making processes. ● Update PRISM strategy. ● Improve communication among PRISM Committee to maximize monitoring effectiveness. ● Communicate PRISM role and accomplishments.
	Vital Rate Monitoring	Preliminary list of which vital rates to monitor for which taxa is developed.	Partnership provides technical assistance to partners responsible for designing and implementing monitoring programs. Data provide a reliable basis for evaluating vital rates over time and space and guiding management and conservation decisions at various scales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Localized demographic of high priority species have been undertaken. ● Network established to standardize monitoring of AMOY. ● Network established to standardize vital rate monitoring of arctic-breeding shorebirds. 	Minor Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrate vital rate monitoring results into decision-making processes. ● Determine species-issue interactions where vital rate data provide information for decisions, particularly for boreal and temperate breeders.

<i>Element</i>	Sub-element/ Product	Technical Expectations		Assessment and Needs		
		Minimal Content	Comprehensive Content	Progress to Date	Progress Assessment	Improvements Needed
	Population Monitoring	Preliminary plan for development of appropriate survey techniques to monitor distribution, abundance, and trends is established.	Partnership provides technical assistance to partners responsible for implementing monitoring programs. Data provide a reliable basis for evaluating population status and trends at appropriate scales and guiding management and conservation decisions at various scales. Monitoring programs inform decisions about setting population objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of wintering program in California. ● Technical assistance provided on implementing monitoring across the hemisphere (e.g., Colombia, Peru, Chile, Mexico). ● Completion of range-wide surveys for temperate-breeding species (e.g., AMOY, LBCU, SNPL) and a host of arctic-breeding species. ● Arctic PRISM monograph is completed. 	Minor Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and implement population surveys for high priority species/regions. ● Link monitoring programs to habitat management and change. ● Centralize and make readily available recommendations and survey technique references ● Identify and solve gaps in monitoring science. ● Link current monitoring efforts to PRISM objectives.
SCIENCE AND RESEARCH	Coordination	Priority research needs, many which come from species conservation plans, are identified and distributed to Partnership members, research institutions, and partners within WHSRN.	Partnership provides a structure and process that generates, attracts, leverages, and implements assumption-driven research activities in support of Partnership-established biological targets from a variety of sources. Strong relationship between Partnership key research organizations, such as the U.S. Geological Survey, NGO, and university research programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partnership includes research representatives from USGS, universities, and NGOs. ● Partners have taken advantage of funding from government programs and foundations. ● Some research linked to plan actions or assumptions of conservation models. ● Research needs assessment completed in 2001. ● Shorebird Research Group of the Americas formed in conjunction with regular meetings of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group. ● Arctic shorebird demographics network coordinating large-scale research to understand shorebird declines. ● Focal species groups formed. ● Climate change vulnerability assessments will help prioritize which species to coordinate research on regarding this issue. 	Minor Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Link current research efforts to management and conservation decisions. ● Determine how to incorporate climate change scenarios into shorebird conservation decisions. ● Advertise shorebird plans to researchers and funders.

<i>Element</i>	Sub-element/ Product	Technical Expectations		Assessment and Needs		
		Minimal Content	Comprehensive Content	Progress to Date	Progress Assessment	Improvements Needed
	Population Delineation	Preliminary assessment of functional population units is completed.	Links among breeding, stopover, and wintering areas are adequately described for all target taxa at a range-wide level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessment completed in 2001 and reviewed periodically. ● Flags/geo-locators provide linkage for some species. 	Minor Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue use of new technology to understand linkage of populations across annual cycle. ● Promote genetic and stable isotope analyses with existing blood/feather samples.
	Population Dynamics	Conceptual model of habitat and non-habitat limiting factors and vital rates critical to target taxa is developed.	Vital rates identified as important are estimated and population models are developed for target taxa. Models include range-wide information from across the shorebird's annual cycle. Model assumptions are evaluated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conceptual models developed for only a few species (e.g., UPSA, MOUP, AMOY, REKN). ● ASDN working on this with WESA and DUNL. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use conceptual models and other methods that consider the annual cycle to target the most effective conservation actions.
	Habitat Requirements	Important shorebird habitats are identified and trends in habitats and site conditions determined throughout the annual cycle, by the Partnership working with Habitat Joint Ventures and other organizations.	Seasonal habitat use is characterized, and its status ascertained. Models are developed to link population objectives to habitat requirements. Where habitats are determined to be limiting, decision-support tools are developed to guide and prioritize protection, enhancement, and restoration of shorebird habitats, in conjunction with appropriate Habitat Joint Venture and other entities. Assumptions of habitat models are evaluated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For most habitats, general trends are available, but lacking is specific details on cover types. ● Decision support tools developed to guide protection in prairie potholes. ● Energetics approaches have been used to target management action (e.g., LMVJV, IWJV, CVJV). ● Stopover sites generally well-known and serve as basis for protection, enhancement, and restoration activities. 	Minor Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More development of decision-support tools to guide conservation action throughout the annual cycle. ● Expand to wintering areas and other JVs.

<i>Element</i>	Sub-element/ Product	Technical Expectations		Assessment and Needs		
		Minimal Content	Comprehensive Content	Progress to Date	Progress Assessment	Improvements Needed
COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH	Coordination	Preliminary assessment of outreach and education needs is completed. Partners urged to identify where outreach and education are necessary to support above elements.	Functional technical committee is formed and a communication and outreach strategy, focused on key messages and audiences, is developed and implemented. Measurements of success of outreach are developed and dissemination vehicles are identified. The Partnership participates in development of common messages to Congress, agency policymakers, and other relevant organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education and outreach plan developed in 2000. ● Directory of shorebird education materials developed in 2002. ● Expansion of Shorebird Sister Schools Program, but now only operated at local scale. ● Management workshops held periodically. 	Major Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase the audiences for shorebird conservation outreach. ● Increase effectiveness of the Shorebird Sister Schools Program. ● Ensure shorebirds are included in efforts of Bird Education Alliance for Conservation (BEAC), Flying Wild and other programs. ● Elevate role of outreach/communication/education as a tool for shorebird conservation. ● Re-invigorate management workshops and update manual.
	Website	Website is established to provide information relative to functions and operations of the Partnership.	Website is updated by Partnership Office in a timely manner and information is easy to retrieve. Partnership decisions and history well-documented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website developed and updated regularly. ● Serves as archive for Council business and committee reports. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update features more regularly. ● Expand and update management section.
	Management Electronic Forum	Electronic forum to discuss shorebird management questions established.	Electronic forum is regularly used by a broad range of national and international participants to seek solutions to shorebird management questions. Responses are summarized by Partnership office and posted in a timely manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Management listserv of >300 participants maintained and used periodically to post questions. 	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage use and advertise availability.

Definitions

Partnership – Broad collection of individuals, organizations, and agencies who believe in the vision of the bird conservation plan and its goals and objectives.

Partnership Council – Collection of individuals, organizations, and agencies who set the direction for how to implement the bird conservation plan’s goals and objectives.

Partnership Office – Paid staff charged to oversee operation of the Council and implementation of the bird conservation plan’s goals and objectives.