

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network U.S. Committee (WHSRN-US)

Terms of Reference – 3 October 2017

Background

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) was established in 1985 and today serves as a voluntary, non-regulatory network of public and private partners working to protect the most important breeding and nonbreeding habitats for shorebirds throughout the Americas. WHSRN is managed by an Executive Office that is administratively housed at Manomet (1998 - present), a U.S.-based nonprofit that champions better practices in conservation, business sustainability, and science education. Overall direction for WHSRN and oversight of its progress in achieving its mission and vision is provided by an advisory body, the Hemispheric Council. The mission of WHSRN is to: *Conserve shorebird species and their habitats across the Americas through a network of partners at key sites designated and managed effectively for shorebirds.*

The current WHSRN Terms of Reference (revised in April 2017) promotes the formation of regional and national councils, or other thematic task forces, to support WHSRN site partners, suggest new WHSRN sites, develop and implement work programs, and promote the Network. A representative from each of these Councils generally participates on the Hemispheric Council. With the development of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP) and governing Council in 2001, the first WHSRN U.S. Committee was formed in 2004 under the auspices of the USSCP Council. Roles for that committee were to: 1) design an annual work plan consistent with the overall WHSRN strategic plan, 2) identify shorebird conservation priority sites and solicit nominations of new Network sites, and 3) provide the coordinating office with recommendations on site nominations. The USSCP Council would: 1) approve and support implementation of the annual work plan by collaborating with site managers and by identifying and pursuing funding sources for accomplishing the work plan; 2) identify opportunities for collaboration and ensure communication and coordination among member sites and partners; 3) nominate representatives for the Hemispheric WHSRN Council; 4) nominate members for the Scientific Advisory Committee and any other advisory or ad hoc committees created by the WHSRN Hemispheric Council; and approve membership, including chairs, of WHSRN-US Committee. Since 2004, the WHSRN-US Committee has had variable amounts of activity and participation but has been consistent in reviewing U.S. site nominations and providing a representative to the Hemispheric Council.

In 2014, the WHSRN Executive Office and the USSCP Council developed a brief survey to 1) determine the current knowledge of WHSRN and shorebirds at designated sites in the U.S., 2) assess the perceived value of being a WHSRN site, and 3) determine how sites can be assisted by WHSRN and the USSCP Council with regards to technical assistance for various components of shorebird conservation. The questionnaire, consisting of 28 questions, was originally sent to contacts at all 44 WHSRN sites in the U.S. with the option of completing the questionnaire and returning it by email or by setting up a phone interview. After follow-up calls, information was

received from 33 sites. A report was produced by the USSCP Council that summarized the response information and was distributed to site partners and the WHSRN Executive Office. The revision of the WHSRN Hemispheric Council Terms of Reference and update of their strategic plan provide an opportunity to review the purpose, roles, and potential actions of a WHSRN-US Committee. The results of the U.S. site survey clearly provide a set of actions that could be undertaken by WHSRN-US. In the survey, one of the questions asked about the willingness of respondents to participate on a WHSRN-US Committee, of which 37.5% of respondents indicated they would be willing to serve and 40.6% of respondents indicated that they might be willing to serve. Thus, there seems to be interest in re-invigorating WHSRN-US.

Purpose and Roles

As described above, the purpose of WHSRN-US is to support WHSRN site partners in the U.S., identify new WHSRN sites, develop and implement work programs, and promote the Network among site partners. Respondents in the site survey indicated their desire to see increased linking and networking of sites, particularly in the U.S.

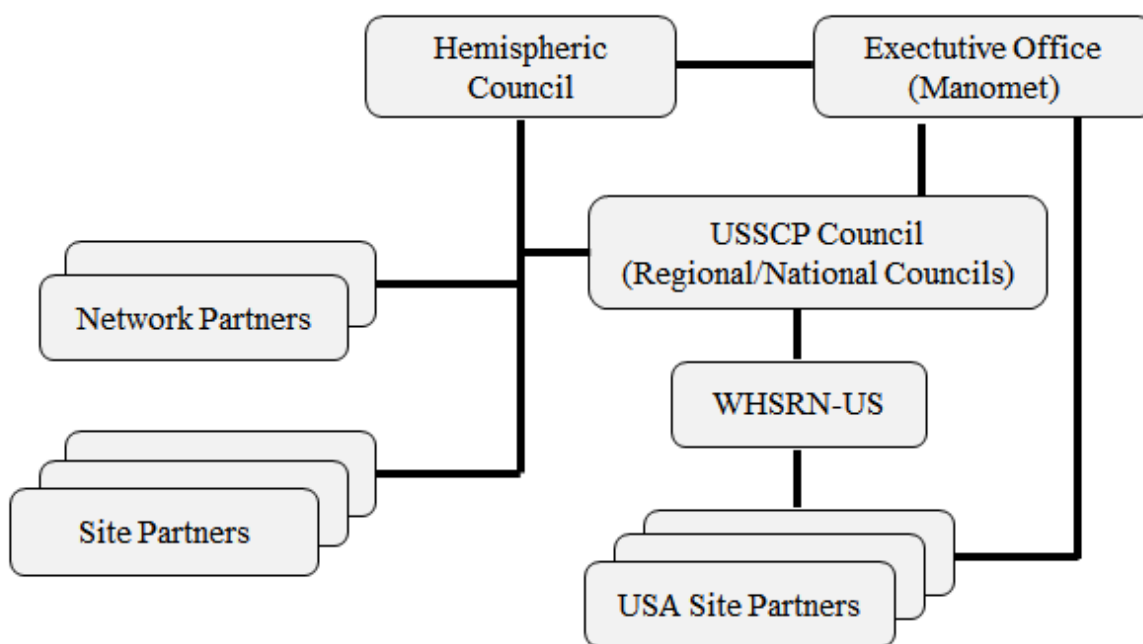
The roles described in 2004 for WHSRN-US remain appropriate today:

- 1) develop an annual work plan that is consistent with the overall WHSRN strategic plan,
- 2) identify shorebird priority sites and solicit nominations of new sites in the U.S., and
- 3) provide review of nominations of U.S. sites.

WHSRN-US would operate as a committee of the USSCP, and the USSCP Council would:

- 1) approve membership, including the Chair, of WHSRN-US;
- 2) nominate a representative for the USSCP on the Hemispheric WHSRN Council; and
- 3) approve and support implementation of the annual work plan.

WHSRN-US will be governed by a Chair that is approved by the Council. The Chair will serve on the USSCP Council and will be responsible for communication between WHSRN-US and the USSCP Council. The Chair may represent the USSCP representative on the WHSRN Hemispheric Council. The Chair will serve a three-year term and can serve repeated consecutive terms (subject to approval by the USSCP Council). The National Coordinator of the USSCP would serve as staff to the Chair and WHSRN-US overall. In addition to the Chair, WHSRN-US will consist of 8-10 members that represent the geographic and designation distribution of sites in the U.S. WHSRN-US members will be expected to participate regularly in calls, contribute to implementation of the annual work plan, and assist with site nomination reviews if appropriate. The figure below shows the relationships among stakeholders involved in WHSRN. Note that network partners are entities not associated with a physical network site but are interested in and contributed to the mission and operation of WHSRN.



WHSRN-US Committee Members (2017)

Member	Affiliation	Email
Brad Andres (staff)	USFWS, USSCP	brad_andres@fws.gov
Joe Buchanan	Washington DFW	joseph.buchanan@dfw.wa.gov
Glen Hensley	USFWS - Salt Plains NWR	glen_hensley@fws.gov
Monica Iglesia	Manomet - Habitats for Shorebirds	miglecia@manomet.org
Stephanie Koch	USFWS - Monomoy NWR	stephanie_koch@fws.gov
Rob Penner	TNC - Flint Hills/Cheyenne Bottoms	rpenner@tnc.org
Khara Strum	Audubon California	kstrum@audubon.org
Darrin Welchert	USFWS - Loess Bluffs NWR	darrin_welchert@fws.gov
Alex Wilke	TNC - Virginia Coast Reserve	awilke@tnc.org

USA Site Nomination Review

The following process will be used to review U.S. WHSRN site nominations.

1. WHSRN Executive Office receives a nomination, and after internal review, forwards the package (including any WHSRN staff notes) to the USSCP National Coordinator.
2. USSCP National Coordinator reviews the nomination and finds an additional two reviewers who are familiar with the site or region. The WHSRN-US Chair will be copied on this request.

3. After a three-week review period, the National Coordinator will compile any comments and recommendations and forward to the WHSRN-US Chair and USSCP Council, who will have one week to note concurrence. The Council will not be asked to review the whole package, but rather to base a decision on the compiled comments and recommendations. However, if there are questions, Council members can request the complete package for review.
4. The WHSRN-US Chair will transmit the USSCP's recommendation via email to the WHSRN Executive Office.
5. WHSRN Executive Office will present the results of the reviews, the USSCP recommendation and the nomination package to the WHSRN Hemispheric Council.

WHSRN Review Criteria

Two major criteria need to be met before a site is accepted into the Network —the importance of the site to shorebirds and the agreement of landowners. All site nominations should be reviewed according to the criteria listed below. This information will be transmitted to reviewers along the site nomination materials.

Importance to shorebirds

Based on peak species counts or on calculated turnover rates, qualifying sites or landscapes may be in one of the following three categories. These criteria pertain to all sites that serve as breeding, stopover/staging, or "wintering" areas.

- 1) Hemispheric Importance: $\geq 500,000$ shorebirds annually or $\geq 30\%$ of the biogeographic population for a species.
- 2) International Importance: $\geq 100,000$ shorebirds annually or $\geq 10\%$ of the flyway population for a species.
- 3) Regional Importance: $\geq 20,000$ shorebirds annually or $\geq 1\%$ of the flyway population for a species.

Agreement of the owner(s)

Landowners must agree in writing to the following three conditions:

- 1) make shorebird conservation a priority at the site,
- 2) protect and manage the site for shorebirds, and
- 3) contact the WHSRN Executive Office in the event of changes in the site's status (boundaries, degree of protection) or the contact information.