

# The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network in the USA

## The WHSRN-USA Committee Implementation Plan

6 December 2018

### **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 (EO) that is administratively housed at Manomet (1998 - present), a USA-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.*

With the development of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan/Partnership (USSCP) and governing Council in 2001, the first WHSRN-USA 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 sites of high conservation priority and solicit nominations into the network, and 3) provide the EO with recommendations on site nominations. Since 2001, the USSCP has furnished a representative to the Hemispheric WHSRN Council and has been consistent in reviewing USA site nominations. However, the WHSRN-USA Committee has had variable amounts of activity and participation.

In 2014, the WHSRN EO and USSCP Council developed a brief survey to: 1) determine the current knowledge of WHSRN and shorebirds at the 44 designated sites in the USA, 2) assess the perceived value of being a WHSRN site, and 3) determine how sites can be assisted by the WHSRN EO and USSCP Council in regards to technical assistance for various components of shorebird conservation. Most of the 33 respondents indicated a desire for a stronger, more interactive network and stressed the importance of having information on shorebird populations and conservation status that can add context to their sites and actions they are undertaking. In that sense, there is a need for WHSRN to be a "learning network", where ideas and

information on shorebird monitoring, conservation status, management techniques and responses and awareness and outreach can be freely exchanged.

The survey results indicated a clear need to enhance WHSRN in the USA; the WHSRN-USA Committee was re-invigorated in 2017 to address this need. Concurrently, Manomet increased the delivery of their long-standing shorebird management workshops and appointed an Assistant WHSRN Director for North America. This document outlines a general plan for the WHSRN-USA Committee to enhance and expand the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network in the USA.

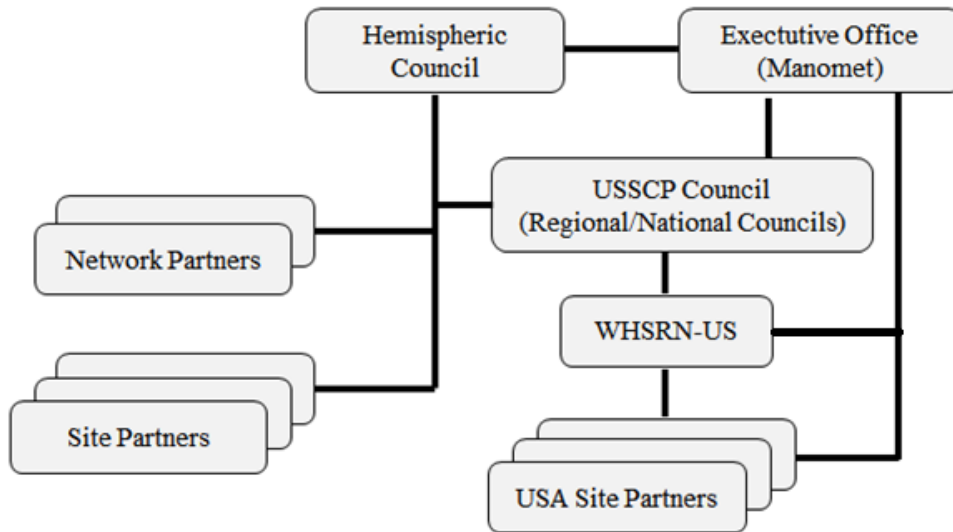
### **Purpose of the WHSRN-USA Committee**

The purpose of the WHSRN-USA Committee is to support current activities of WHSRN site partners, identify and assist nomination of new WHSRN sites and modifications to existing sites, and promote the Network among site-based and other conservation partners. Although the focus is on sites in the USA, the WHSRN-USA Committee will also contribute to hemispheric goals of WHSRN.

### **WHSRN-USA Committee Governance and Participation**

The WHSRN-USA Committee operates as a committee of the USSCP. The USSCP Council 1) approves membership, including the Chair, of the WHSRN-USA Committee; 2) approves a representative for the USSCP on the Hemispheric WHSRN Council; and 3) approves and supports implementation of the Committee's annual work plan. The Chair of the WHSRN-USA Committee serves on the USSCP Council, is responsible for communication between the WHSRN-USA Committee and USSCP Council, and represents the WHSRN-USA Committee on the WHSRN Hemispheric Council. The Chair serves a three-year term and can serve repeated consecutive terms, subject to approval by the USSCP Council. The National Coordinator of the USSCP serves as staff to the Chair and WHSRN-USA Committee overall.

In addition to the Chair, the WHSRN-USA Committee will consist of 8-10 members that represent the geographic and designation-level distribution of sites in the USA. The WHSRN-USA Committee members are expected to participate regularly in calls, contribute to implementation of annual work plans, and assist with site nomination reviews if appropriate. Current WHSRN-USA Committee members are listed in Appendix 1. 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 contribute to the mission and operation of WHSRN.



This implementation plan, notes from teleconferences, and other materials pertinent to the WHSRN-USA committee will be archived at <https://www.shorebirdplan.org/shorebird-habitat-management/whsrn-us-committee/>. Additionally, a shared Google Drive folder will be established to gather comments and edits on specific documents.

### **WHSRN Goals and WHSRN-USA Committee Strategies**

Below are general strategies for the WHSRN-USA Committee to achieve the goals of the WHSRN Hemispheric Council's Strategic Plan, 2018-21 (draft as of 1 November 2018). These strategies will be reviewed by WHSRN-USA Committee members to set specific (SMART) objectives and evaluate progress toward meeting objectives. The evaluation will provide the basis of the USSCP Council/WHSRN-USA Committee's annual report to the WHSRN Hemispheric Council. Rather than fixing a time-period for the plan, the WHSRN-USA Committee strategies will be reviewed if WHSRN Hemispheric Council's Strategic Plan goals change.

*Conservation Goal – Ensure the sustained management of all WHSRN sites.*

1. Review biological criteria to target USA sites at the hemispheric or international numerical levels and USA sites at all levels for shorebird populations of high conservation concern (e.g., Snowy Plover, American Oystercatcher) for inclusion in the Network. Work with USA site managers/owners to nominate these identified new sites; it is useful to conduct a site assessment prior to nomination.

2. Provide timely, independent review of all USA site/landscape nomination packages (see Appendix 2).
3. Provide technical assistance to current and potential USA sites on topics such as: a) site assessments, including evaluation of existing management plans for inclusion of shorebird objectives; b) shorebird monitoring, following accepted standards; and c) habitat management, in conjunction with Manomet's Habitat for Shorebirds program. The WHSRN-USA Committee will be the point of contact on the WHSRN website for nomination of new USA sites and modification to existing sites.

*Communications Goal* – Facilitate communication, exchange of information and sharing of experiences amongst the Network partners.

1. Assist Manomet in developing and maintaining a viable electronic forum to address multiple topics of shorebird conservation and management. Assist in distribution of shorebird literature, monitoring guidance and habitat management resources.
2. Provide periodic communication to all USA sites, including assisting EO with distribution of new site packages. Incorporate WHSRN information, when relevant, into member and site organizations' communication resources (e.g., social media posts, news articles, web content, brochures, educational activities, or interpretative signs) and local and national media. Members will need to balance their organization's needs with those of WHSRN.
3. Produce USA-based articles for the WHSRN Newsletter and social media.
4. Collaborate with the EO to provide WHSRN representation at USA site dedications, anniversaries and other events.

*Capacity-building Goal* – Strengthen the capacity of WHSRN to address issues affecting the conservation of WHSRN sites.

1. Ensure WHSRN-USA Committee representation on the WHSRN Hemispheric Council. Provide USA representatives to participate on hemispheric task forces to address specific issues (e.g., biological and landowner criteria).

2. Review products, websites, policies and tools developed by the WHSRN EO and work with them to develop linking opportunities among Network sites.
3. Identify USA sites with an interest in undertaking ecosystem services assessments or implementing community engagement strategies. Collaborate with the EO to create resources to build these capacities.
4. Assist EO in assessing how USA sites are mitigating for climate change and other environmental stressors.
5. Assist Manomet's Habitat for Shorebirds program in developing and delivering shorebird management workshops in the USA, including involvement by Migratory Bird Joint Ventures.
6. Help inform the use of WHSRN's Rapid Action Fund by identifying appropriate USA partner and site needs.

*Resourcing Goal* – Strengthen the financial and technical capacity of WHSRN (with a focus on the Executive Office) to effectively implement the Strategic Plan.

1. Provide WHSRN-USA Committee representation at fundraisers, if appropriate.

*Partnerships Goal* – Strengthen existing and seek new partnerships to foster the conservation of shorebirds sites.

1. With the EO, work with USA site partners to increase and maintain engagement with non-traditional stakeholders at priority USA WHSRN sites.

## Appendix 1. WHSRN-USA Committee Members (December, 2018)

Member	Affiliation	Email
Brad Andres	USFWS, USSCP (staff)	brad_andres@fws.gov
Joe Buchanan	Washington DFW	joseph.buchanan@dfw.wa.gov
Laura Chamberlin	WHSRN Executive Office	lchamberlin@manomet.org
Glen Hensley	USFWS - Salt Plains NWR	glen_hensley@fws.gov
Monica Iglesia	Manomet - Habitats for Shorebirds	miglesia@manomet.org
Stephanie Koch	USFWS - Monomoy NWR	stephanie_koch@fws.gov
Rob Penner	TNC - Cheyenne Bottoms/Flint Hills	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

## Appendix 2. WHSRN Criteria and USA Site Nomination Review

### USA WHSRN Site Review Process

1. WHSRN EO 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-USA 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-USA 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-USA Chair will transmit the USSCP's recommendation via email to the WHSRN Executive Office.
5. WHSRN EO will present the results of the reviews, the USSCP recommendation and the nomination package to the WHSRN Hemispheric Council.

## WHSRN 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 EO in the event of changes in the site's status (boundaries, degree of protection) or the contact information.