



# United States Shorebird Conservation Plan

January 10, 2001

## Shorebird Business Plan for the North American Bird Conservation Initiative

This outline was prepared in response to the request from the U.S. NABCI Steering Committee for input on shorebird needs relevant to the development of an overall business plan for NABCI. This document outlines both short-term staffing needs and high-priority implementation needs.

### 1) Short-term funding needs

#### *Highest Priority:*

Stable funding for development of implementation activities within each region, in coordination with the Joint Ventures and BCR's, in the form of dedicated shorebird conservation biologists for each shorebird region.

The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan was designed to be implemented within 11 Shorebird Conservation Regions each made up of several NABCI Bird Conservation Regions. The attached map shows both the shorebird regions and the BCR's included in each region. Activities within several of these regions are currently coordinated by staff within state or federal agencies with secure positions. The remainder of the regions are currently lacking ongoing staff support or any stable funding to maintain the activities of the regional groups. Even in regions with secure coordinators, their workload generally allows little time for addressing Shorebird Plan priorities, and the support of a shorebird biologist is needed. These positions are not primarily intended to act as coordinators, but rather to directly carry out implementation activities in conjunction with Joint Ventures, states, and the regional shorebird groups.

The highest short-term priority for funding is securing shorebird biologist positions within each shorebird planning region so that implementation activity can continue. These positions will focus on practical implementation activities in association with Joint Ventures and Bird Conservation Region activities. The projects carried out will vary according to the goals established in the regional plans, but will include development and funding of habitat restoration and management projects, supporting appropriate management regimes on managed public lands, outreach to private landowners, and further refinement of the priorities, goals, and objectives established in the regional plans. These positions could be housed in a variety of organizations as deemed appropriate

within the region, including states, NGO's, or regional offices of the USFWS. Within several regions, it may be possible to combine activities with implementation for the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan. However, for most regions the work load is large, and a dedicated staffperson will be required. The Intermountain West region proposes two full-time people each working on implementation of both the shorebird and waterbird plans, but with a geographic focus on half of the larger region because of it's large size and the resulting logistical challenges.

#### **Shorebird Regions**

Alaska

Northern Pacific

Southern Pacific

Hawaii

Intermountain West

Northern Plains\*

Central Plains/Playa Lakes

Upper Miss. Valley/Great Lakes

Lower Miss./Western Gulf Coast

Northern Atlantic

Southeastern Coastal Plain

/Caribbean

#### **Current Status of Regional Coordination**

USGS/USFWS Co-coordinators

USFWS Non-game Coordinator

NGO, no stable funding source

NGO, no stable funding source

NGO, no stable funding source (2 positions proposed, in collaboration with NAWCP)

NGO, no stable funding source

USFWS, need additional staffing

USFWS, need additional staffing

NGO/USFWS Co-coordinators, need add'l funding

State, need additional funding

USFWS Non-game Coordinator

#### ***High Priority:***

A) Development of a second position within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for coordination of Service activities related to shorebirds.

At the most recent meeting of the U.S. Shorebird Plan Council, the newly created position within the USFWS for shorebird coordination was discussed. The Council commended the Service for establishing the position, but also raised the concern that the work load for the entire country is clearly larger than one person can handle, particularly when coordination within the service is added to coordination of the broad partnership developed under the U.S. Shorebird Plan. The Plan Council recommended that the Service seek funds to support a second national position, so that national coordination needs within the Service and external to the Service could both be addressed. These positions would be parallel to the current national coordinators for Partners In Flight.

B) Development of a national shorebird research and monitoring coordinator position.

The high priority activities related to development and coordination of the national research and monitoring committee have up to this point been handled on a volunteer basis by the members of the Research and Monitoring Working Group. While the group continues to be active in seeking funding for high priority projects and further refining implementation needs, the group needs the support of a staffperson to be effective. This position would support the activities of and be guided by the national working group. In addition, the support person would participate in the development of an overall NABCI



monitoring program by representing shorebird needs in the areas of methodology, data collection, and systematic data analysis as the overall program develops.

## **2) Major Implementation Needs**

### **A) Research and Monitoring**

Many species of shorebirds are declining significantly, but the causes of the declines are only understood for a few species. To reverse these declines, conservation activity must be based on sound scientific understanding of the causes for the declines. In addition, many other species may be in decline, but current information is inadequate to determine the extent of the losses. Monitoring activity is critical for these species to document which are actually declining so that targeted conservation activity can be successful in preventing serious losses.

The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan proposes targeted research and monitoring activities to address these issues. While the magnitude of the support required is considerable, it is important that these programs are established soon so that the most pressing work can begin. The Plan estimates that \$1.5 million is needed annually for comprehensive monitoring, and \$3.75 million is needed for high priority research projects. Short term priorities include startup funding for shorebird monitoring projects, and research on limiting factors for high priority species, as detailed in the Plan.

### **B) Habitat Protection**

Each shorebird conservation region developed critical habitat protection priorities for shorebirds. The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan envisions Joint Ventures as the lead organizations working to implement these habitat conservation projects in coordination with the regional shorebird groups. Most Joint Ventures are eager to implement shorebird conservation, but require funding in addition to their current budgets to accomplish these newly added or expanded goals. The North American Wetlands Conservation Council has indicated that implementing the habitat conservation objectives of the Shorebird Plan is an appropriate use of Act funds, and is exploring adjusting the proposal scoring criteria to ensure that appropriate shorebird projects can compete for recently increased funding under the Act. The overall need is either for increased funding of shorebird habitat protection projects through NAWCA or an increase in other sources of dedicated funding to protect critical habitats.

### **C) Education**

Ensuring that future generations appreciate the value of wetland diversity, and understand the unique conservation issues related to conservation for highly migratory species, is a central goal of the Shorebird Plan. The Education and Outreach Working Group is concentrating on the development of the Shorebird Sister Schools project as the major program to meet this need. Currently, the program is expanding with the goal of providing services in all of the major national flyways.

# Shorebird Planning Regions and Bird Conservation Regions

