

WHSRN-US Committee - Terms of Reference

U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council

3 March 2006

Purpose

The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (Shorebird Plan) recognizes that management and conservation of important shorebird sites is critical for meeting the conservation goals of the plan. Furthermore, the plan acknowledges the need to consider conservation activities across the full annual cycle, and hence geographic range, of North American shorebird populations. Site-based conservation actions are the foundation from which to build shorebird-sustainable landscapes, and many of the conservation actions identified in the Plan focus on actions at the site scale.

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) was established to identify critical stopover and wintering areas and promote their conservation through recognition of an international network of sites. Enrollment in the Network requires that a site meet biological criteria and that site stakeholders agree to participate. Over time, the WHSRN designation has come to be recognized internationally as a symbol of a site's critical conservation importance for shorebirds. A thorough reexamination of the Network's purpose and structure was initiated in May 2003 to ensure that the Network was well-adapted to changes since its creation (20 years ago) and to craft a strategy for the ensuing five years.

As a result of WHSRN's new strategic direction, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council (Shorebird Plan Council), in March 2004, agreed to officially take on responsibilities of implementing the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network strategy in the U.S. The Council suggested that a WHSRN-US Committee (Committee) be formed to address implementation issues. The Committee would operate under the auspices of the Shorebird Plan Council to ensure coordinated implementation of the WHSRN strategic plan and the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan. This document provides general operating procedures, roles, and responsibilities for WHSRN-US Committee.

Membership

The WHSRN-US Committee will be governed by a chair and vice-chair that are approved by the Council. Chairs will be responsible for communication between the Committee and the WHSRN Coordinating Office and between the Committee and the Plan Council. Chairs will maintain a list of Committee participants and will include the National Coordinator in all correspondence related to Committee business. The Committee will strive to obtain consensus on all issues and to work cooperatively to advance the goals of WHSRN and the Shorebird Plan. Chairs will serve two-year terms

and can serve repeated consecutive terms (subject to approval by the Shorebird Plan Council). Current members are listed below.

Chair: John Cecil, National Audubon Society
Vice Chair: Catherine Hickey, PRBO Conservation Science

Brad Andres, National Coordinator, USSCP
Stephen Brown, Manomet Center for Conservation Science
Jim Chu, U.S.D.A. Forest Service
Bob Gill, U.S. Geological Survey
Debbie Hahn, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Sue Haig, U.S. Geological Survey
Brian Harrington, Manomet Center for Conservation Science
Chuck Hunter, National Wildlife Refuge System
Carol Lively, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture
Dave Mehlman, The Nature Conservancy
Larry Niles, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

General Roles and Responsibilities

The WHSRN strategic plan provided a set of roles and responsibilities for national councils. To facilitate timely communication and action, roles and responsibilities are divided into those taken directly by the WHSRN-US Committee, in collaboration with the WHSRN Coordinating Office, and those taken by, or through, the Shorebird Plan Council.

WHSRN-US Committee

- 1) develop an annual work plan that is coordinated and consistent with the overall WHSRN strategic plan.
- 2) use regional shorebird working group partners to help identify important shorebird sites that meet biological criteria and solicit nominations of new Network sites.
- 3) review site nominations and provide coordinating office with recommendation on acceptance into the Network.
- 4) recommend, to the Shorebird Plan Council, a U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan representative to serve on the WHSRN Hemispheric Council.

U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council

- 1) continue to identify challenges to shorebird conservation, especially those

specific to the U.S.

2) 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.

3) identify opportunities for collaboration and ensure communication and coordination among Member Sites and Partners.

4) nominate representatives for the Hemispheric Council, Science Advisory Committee, and other ad hoc committees created by the Hemispheric Council.

5) approve membership, including chairs, of WHSRN-US Committee.

U.S. WHSRN Site Nomination Review Process

All nominations are first sent to the WHSRN Coordinating Office, who logs them and responds to the nominator with an acknowledgment. The nomination is then forwarded to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the WHSRN-US Committee and to the Shorebird Plan's National Coordinator. The review will be completed in 60 days.

The Chair then distributes the nomination to reviewers for recommendations. If questions about the nomination arise, the Chairs will work with the WHSRN Coordinating Office to get additional information or, if needed, technical support. The review team will vary depending on the site location, but each nomination will be reviewed by three of the five following individuals:

- 1) one WHSRN-US committee member,
- 2) the National Coordinator of the Shorebird Plan,
- 3) the regional shorebird plan coordinator or other regional shorebird biologist,
- 4) Audubon's State, or National, Important Bird Areas Coordinator, and
- 5) a shorebird population biologist to help evaluate the numerical criteria.

The Chair will compile reviews and will forward an acceptance recommendation to the WHSRN Coordinating Office who, in turn, transmits the nomination recommendation to the Hemispheric Council for final action.

Nomination Review Criteria

WHSRN has suggested that 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.

Importance to shorebirds

Based on peak species counts or on calculated turnover rates, qualifying sites 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) Sites of Hemispheric Importance - at least 500,000 shorebirds annually or at least 30% of the flyway population for a species.
- 2) Sites of International Importance - at least 100,000 shorebirds annually or at least 10% of the flyway population for a species.
- 3) Sites of Regional Importance - at least 20,000 shorebirds annually or at least 1% of the flyway population for a species.

Agreement of the owner(s)

Landowners must agree in writing to the following three conditions:

- 1) to make shorebird conservation a priority at the site,
- 2) to protect and manage the site for shorebirds, and
- 3) to update the Network at least annually in the event of changes in the site's status (boundaries, degree of protection) or the contact information of the person responsible.