

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

Basic Instrument

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Member Nations

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, France, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay

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Budget

ACAP's current annual budget for 2013 is AU \$696,310, based upon ACAP's membership fee schedule, which assigns dues (up to a maximum of 22%), proportionally based upon nations' GDPs. As the United States is currently not a member, it does not pay dues at this time. However, it is estimated that joining ACAP would require the United States to pay membership dues of approximately U.S. \$140,000 annually.

Organizational Structure

Annex 1 of the Agreement contains a list of species identified as in need of conservation action by ACAP Parties. This list is comprised of: 22 albatrosses and 8 petrel species with known fisheries interactions. Annex 2 of ACAP contains an "Action Plan" which outlines the major conservation elements of the Agreement. The Action Plan emphasizes several major conservation strategies that Parties must undertake to conserve seabirds. ACAP's conservation provisions are implemented by its Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee meets annually and oversees the activities of three working groups: 1) Population and Conservation Status Working Group (which was formed in August 2011 when the Advisory Committee merged the Breeding Sites Working Group and the Status and Trends Working Group), 2) the Seabird Bycatch Working Group, and 3) the Taxonomy Working Group.

U.S. Representation

Nations and Regional Economic Integration Organizations may participate in ACAP as either Parties or Observers. The United States, via NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has participated in ACAP meetings as an Observer due to its interest in seabird conservation and its status as a Range State under ACAP. NOAA Fisheries participates on the established Seabird Bycatch Working Groups as an invited expert and has been attending since this group's first meeting in 2007. This participation has granted the United States influence over some ACAP proceedings, although only full Parties have voting rights and the ability to Chair any of ACAP's working groups or propose amendments to the Agreement. The United States is pursuing accession to the Agreement.

Programs

ACAP's working groups have made significant progress in reviewing the population status and trends of threatened seabird species, addressing taxonomic issues, collecting information on breeding sites and assessing threats to species from factors associated with these sites, and engaging Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to address seabird bycatch. In particular, the ACAP Secretariat, on behalf of its member nations, has participated as an observer at key RFMO meetings to offer expertise and assistance to help RFMOs address seabird bycatch. The Secretariat also works with non-governmental organizations, such as BirdLife International, to develop informational materials detailing seabird distribution and its overlap with specific fisheries for discussion at RFMO and other relevant meetings.

Recent Activities

ACAP entered into force in 2004, and is the only multilateral agreement that coordinates international activity to mitigate known threats to albatross and petrel populations. ACAP held its first Meeting of the Parties in 2005. A major outcome of that meeting was the establishment of an Advisory Committee to guide the implementation of the Agreement. Since ACAP's inception, its Parties have sought to expand its membership and efforts. They have actively recruited new members from the Northern Hemisphere and South America, where many imperiled seabird species breed, forage, and interact with fisheries. For example, an ACAP meeting was held in Brazil to encourage representatives of Brazil and other South American nations to attend. ACAP is also active within the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, providing technical assistance and expert advice regarding minimization of bycatch of albatrosses and petrels in high seas longline and trawl fisheries.

At the 3rd Meeting of the Parties in May 2009, ACAP added the three North Pacific albatross species to Annex 1 of the Agreement. The 6th Meeting of the Advisory Committee to ACAP was held from 29 August to 2 September 2011, in Guayaquil, Ecuador. The Seabird Bycatch Working Group and the Advisory Committee undertook a major revision of ACAP's pelagic longline mitigation advice. Best practice measures in the updated advice include using a combination of branchline weighting, night setting, and streamer lines. The advice for streamer lines is now split between vessels less than 35m and those greater than 35m to reflect operational differences. Technical specifications were recommended for each measure. During the 4th Meeting of the Parties in Lima, Peru (23 to 27 April 2012), the Balearic Shearwater was added to Annex 1 of the Agreement.

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