



Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI) Purpose and Organization

Vision

Migratory species of the Western Hemisphere, their key habitats and migratory routes are conserved through international cooperation and communication benefitting people and enhancing biodiversity conservation.

Mission

The mission of WHMSI is to contribute significantly to the conservation of the migratory species of the Western Hemisphere by strengthening cooperation and communication among States, international initiatives and civil society, and by expanding constituencies, awareness and political support.

WHMSI is a non-binding mechanism that shall not be used in any way to support claims of sovereignty over disputed territories among any of the interested States. Its principles and objectives were agreed upon by all participants.

All countries of the Western Hemisphere are parties to international conventions, treaties and accords regarding which they are committed to the conservation of migratory species. WHMSI is an initiative to assist countries in fulfilling this commitment.

Guiding Principles

WHMSI will operate in a transparent and open manner and will encourage participation by partners throughout the hemisphere. It will provide added value to existing conservation efforts, and will ultimately measure its success on the basis of on-the-ground conservation achievements. It will not duplicate other endeavors, and will build on past and ongoing accomplishments and initiatives throughout the hemisphere. Its efforts will be based on a commitment to conservation, applying the best available information, including indigenous and local knowledge, and it will respect cultures and

values throughout the hemisphere. It will address biological, socio-cultural, economic, legal and administrative aspects among others, in its endeavor to mitigate the main threats to migratory species and their habitats, including non-breeding areas. Its Steering Committee will operate on the principle of cooperation, its decisions will be based on consensus among its members, and it will be accountable to its constituency. WHMSI's main mechanism for achieving its goals and objectives will be through facilitation and coordination among nations, communities, sites and initiatives as they relate to migratory species and their habitats across the Western Hemisphere.

Preamble

Considering that native wildlife populations and biodiversity as a whole face increasingly large and complex threats at the local, regional, hemispheric and global scales;

Considering that migratory species as diverse as birds, marine turtles, marine and terrestrial mammals, fish and invertebrates, are a shared resource and a unique component of biodiversity whose conservation requires coordinated action through international cooperation throughout the Western Hemisphere;

Taking into account that a significant number of migratory species of the Western Hemisphere are threatened or endangered with extinction;

Acknowledging that conservation of migratory species can benefit endemic and non-migratory species, as well as their habitats;

Taking into account that migratory species are key indicators of local, hemispheric and global change;

Recognizing that migratory species can contribute to human welfare, including economic development, and have great significance for many cultures;

Acknowledging that the aesthetic, scientific, spiritual, cultural, recreational and economic values of migratory species are increasingly recognized;

Considering that achievement of this vision can only be realized through enhanced commitments of financial, institutional and human resources;

Recognizing that all Western Hemisphere countries have committed to the conservation of migratory species or their habitats under one or more regional or global environmental treaties, and the importance of strengthening the implementation of these instruments;

Taking into account the wish to advance the hemispheric conservation of plants, animals and ecosystems expressed by the leaders of Western Hemisphere governments in their Plan of Action adopted at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec in 2001;

And answering the call by the Summit for a hemispheric strategy to support the conservation of migratory wildlife throughout the Americas;

The following objectives have been agreed upon, in principle:

Threat Mitigation

1. Promote the adoption of best management practices that ensure the conservation of migratory species, including, among other measures:
 - Significant mitigation of the incidental impact of natural resource use and extraction on migratory species, including silviculture, ranching, agriculture, mining, power development/generation, fisheries, tourism, transportation infrastructure, and urban development, among others;
 - Include migratory species and their habitats among the criteria to be considered in environmental impact assessments;
 - Avoid the overexploitation of migratory species, and ensure sustainable use of those resources on which these depend.
2. Take the steps necessary to restore threatened populations of migratory species and their habitats within migration routes as well as within relevant stopovers.
3. Reduce the vulnerability of migratory species and their habitats to the impacts of climate change.
4. Address other threats to migratory species including contaminants, barriers to movement, loss of important habitats, among others.

Conservation planning

5. Support existing or new strategies from other relevant initiatives at appropriate geographic scales and to strengthen and expand the effectiveness of conservation of migratory species.
6. Promote conservation efforts for migratory species that also benefit other components of biological diversity.
7. Articulate conservation efforts for migratory species of the Western Hemisphere with ongoing initiatives to catalyze the delivery of conservation results, including the creation of mechanisms for collaboration and coordination between conventions and other agreements in the hemisphere.
8. Promote cooperation to implement existing national and international laws, and to create or modify legal instruments as necessary to conserve migratory species.

9. Address the ecosystem level needs of migratory species, including, among others:
 - Identify and protect sufficiently large areas of habitat for breeding and non-breeding periods, feeding and migration of migratory species;
 - Identify corridors needed for daily and seasonal movements of migratory species and seek to protect and restore habitats within those corridors;
 - Reduce habitat fragmentation through protection, management and restoration;
 - Ensure the health of populations of species upon which migratory species depend;
 - Strengthen measures for improved management and control of invasive species, and prevention of the introduction of invasive species, with particular regard to threats posed to migratory species;
 - Promote cooperation to control the illegal extraction and trade of migratory species and of the species upon which they depend;
 - Collaborate to implement monitoring and conservation activities within migration routes as well as within relevant stopovers;
10. Enhance scientific research and monitoring in support of migratory species conservation.

Information, awareness, capacity building, engagement

11. Facilitate and promote the compilation, generation and sharing of information and training regarding:
 - distribution, seasonality, density, productivity, and population status and trends of migratory species;
 - impact of environmental change at hemispheric, regional and local levels on populations of migratory species and their habitats;
 - research, monitoring and management of migratory species;
 - planning and management of protected areas for migratory species conservation;
12. Promote the implementation of public awareness campaigns and other relevant activities to increase the participation of civil society in the conservation of migratory species.
13. Address as appropriate the role of migratory species in the epidemiology of disease.

14. Inventory and map areas of importance for migratory species, taking into account existing information, programs and other relevant initiatives.
15. Facilitate and promote the compilation and generation of information regarding:
 - ecological, economic and cultural importance of migratory species;
 - the role of migratory species as indicators of environmental change at hemispheric, regional and local levels.
16. Communicate and raise awareness of the ecological, economic *and cultural* importance of migratory species throughout the hemisphere.
17. Seek to increase the constituency that supports the conservation of migratory species, including through the promotion of local initiatives.
18. Strengthen conservation through effective communication, information exchange, and the development of shared visions at all levels and geographic scales. To ensure informed decisions and effective planning processes throughout the range of species, and to encourage cooperative identification of key research needs, information sharing requires the enhancement of institutional arrangements as well as efficient operative mechanisms to work efficiently.
19. Maintain a catalogue of conservation resources, including organizations and funding, pertinent to migratory species.
20. Strengthen coordination among treaties and promote participation among countries in their implementation as they relate to migratory species and their habitats.

Resources needed

21. Help increase the funds available for the conservation of migratory species and the use of these funds for accomplishing the objectives of this initiative
22. Encourage partners to work within their means and capabilities to make financial, institutional and human resources available to this initiative, including through the development of coordinated initiatives on specific topics such as capacity building.

Implementation

Action Plan

The development of an action plan can help facilitate achieving the objectives of WHMSI. To this end, the Plenary may want to consider in a timely manner the development, review, and implementation of such an action plan.

Participation

In accord with WHMSI's mission and vision, participation is open to all potential partners, such as states, territories, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, initiatives, entities in the private sector, grassroots community groups and individuals, interested in the conservation and sustainable use of the migratory species of the Western Hemisphere and their habitats.

To this end, WHMSI is a forum for dialog and action, based upon promoting partnerships across the full spectrum of society. As such, it is not a membership organization. It is open to all entities with a strong belief in partnership and that conservation can be more effectively achieved through working towards common goals, than by each sector working in isolation.

In the interest of focusing upon common goals and working in partnership, decision-making is undertaken by consensus. Such is the case both in the Plenary and the Steering Committee. Matters of interest to some participants, but not all, may be considered under other mechanisms, which may exist for such issues.

Meeting of Partners

Plenary meetings serve as a forum for partners to engage in implementing the vision and objectives of WHMSI. This includes sharing information and ideas, making decisions that guide the initiative, and conducting WHMSI business.

Plenary meetings are held approximately once every three years. Steering Committee representatives will be selected at the meetings.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee serves to carry out the business and activities of WHMSI during the period between Plenary gatherings. The Steering Committee contains a cross-section of partner representation. This includes six governments of the Hemisphere, ten representatives of civil society and any Convention and hemispheric or sub-regional governmental bodies, interested in migratory species and their habitats. The Steering Committee, at its discretion, might add at-large representatives.

Selection of all representatives might most appropriately reflect a broad array of interests including geographic regions and perspectives of civil society. Seats on the Steering

Committee are understood to belong to the selected nation, convention, or NGO, and not to individuals, unless specifically decided to the contrary.

The suggested governmental representation might most appropriately include two representatives from South America, one from Central America, one from North America, and two from the Caribbean.

Selection of Steering Committee representatives, other than at-large representatives or intercessional substitution of representatives, takes place at the Plenary meetings. Governmental partners select their six representatives and the other sectors select their 10 representatives in separate caucuses.

Should an institution choose to leave the Steering Committee between Plenaries, the Steering Committee decides whether to temporarily refill the seat until the next Plenary or to leave it vacant.

The term of representatives is from the Plenary at which they are selected until the subsequent Plenary. Each representative, other than the conventions and regional organizations, serves no more than two terms consecutively. To ensure an appropriate staggering of terms, three governmental and four other sector representatives of the initial Steering Committee might consider not seeking a second term.

The Steering Committee is comprised of at least the following officers: Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Other positions can be created at the discretion of the Steering Committee. The term of Officers is from the plenary at which they are selected until the subsequent plenary. Officers will not serve consecutive terms in the same position. Once a new Steering Committee has been installed at each plenary meeting, it will be responsible for selecting its Officers.

The Steering Committee may create subcommittees, task forces and working groups as necessary.

The Steering Committee meets regularly, preferably at least once per year. In the spirit of transparency, observers may be admitted to meetings of the Steering Committee.

Terms of Reference:

The Steering Committee's roles and responsibilities are to:

1. Take actions to fulfill the vision and mission stated above, by facilitating and guiding implementation of the agreements made during Plenary meetings;
2. Conduct periodic assessments of the implementation of priority conservation actions identified by this initiative and produce and disseminate periodic reports on their status;
3. Create progress reports and relevant public relations information, as appropriate, for the plenary and interested entities;

4. Announce decisions in a timely manner;
5. Seek funds to sustain this initiative;
6. Organize and convene Plenary meetings and others as required;
7. The responsibilities of the Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary) shall be defined by the Steering Committee; and
8. Review this initiative to consider expanding its scope to address all species, or perhaps, some broader array of biological diversity conservation issues.