

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Alaska Shorebird Group**

February 2003

#### **I INTRODUCTION**

Because of its size, northerly position and pristine habitats, Alaska provides breeding habitat for more shorebirds than any other state in the U.S. Seventy-one species of shorebirds (one-third of the world's species) occur in Alaska; 37 of these regularly breed there while 9 others breed irregularly, or annually but in small numbers. Alaska is unique in that it hosts most of the world's population of three shorebird species, entire population of five subspecies and large portions of North American populations of six other species or subspecies. In total, Alaska hosts between 7 and 12 million shorebirds, or as much as 50% of all the shorebirds that occur in North America. Using the species prioritization process developed for the U.S. Shorebird Plan, 14 species or subspecies occurring in Alaska are considered Birds of Conservation Concern by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In terms of critical habitat, Alaska has over 50 shorebird migration staging or stopover sites that qualify as Western Hemisphere or East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network sites. At 10 of these sites concentrations exceed 1 million birds with sites like the Copper River Delta hosting between five and eight million shorebirds each spring. The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta likely supports an equal number shorebirds but they occur mostly during summer and autumn. Indeed the world's largest aggregations of shorebirds are thought to occur on the Copper River Delta.

This vast network of migration sites coincides with the arrival and exodus of shorebirds to and from Alaska during each spring and fall. Only 6 of the 43 taxa that regularly occur in Alaska winter there. But of these 43 regularly occurring taxa, some portion of the populations of 38 winter outside the U.S. while entire populations of 18 others migrate to Central and South America or East Asia-Australasia and South Pacific countries (Oceania). Alaska's shorebirds are not only a national resource, but they provide international links to over 40 countries distributed on five continents.

Based on these facts, and the overriding political and social responsibility to perpetuate this valuable resource, the Alaska Shorebird Group is hereby formed. It will operate under the following tenets and structure:

#### **II GOALS**

- A. To raise the public's awareness of shorebirds.
- B. To promote research, monitoring, management, conservation and education/outreach relevant to shorebirds in Alaska, and integrate the goals and objectives of the Alaska Shorebird Group with regional, national, and international programs.
- C. To provide a structured forum to facilitate, coordinate, and enhance the exchange of

shorebird information among biologists, managers, and the public.

- D. To promote the range-wide management and conservation of shorebirds in Alaska.

### **III OBJECTIVES**

- A. To implement the U. S. Shorebird Conservation Plan and the Conservation Plan for Alaska Shorebirds.
- B. To facilitate the development and implementation of monitoring, research, conservation, and outreach programs.
- C. To implement applicable goals and objectives of international and other national-based shorebird programs.
- D. To identify current and emerging shorebird conservation, management and research issues and opportunities along the migration and wintering areas (North/Central/South America, Central Pacific Ocean and East Asian-Australasian regions) of shorebirds breeding in Alaska.
- E. To periodically revise the Conservation Plan for Alaska Shorebirds, including determining species, habitats, conservation priorities and action items for species and habitats by Bird Conservation Region.
- F. To maintain an Alaska Shorebird Group listserv and website.
- G. To complete, and deliver to Alaska Shorebird Group members, an annual compilation of project abstracts involving shorebirds in Alaska.

### **IV ADMINISTRATION**

#### **A. Participation**

The Alaska Shorebird Group (hereafter also as Group) includes representation from a wide variety of public and private entities, which support the conservation of shorebirds. Membership in the Alaska Shorebird Group is voluntary and open to all individuals in and outside Alaska.

#### **B. Chair**

A Chairperson administers the Alaska Shorebird Group. The Chair is responsible for governing meetings, overseeing the Group's business between meetings, helping to develop long-term goals and objectives for the Group, and reporting on the activities of the Group to other state, national and international entities. The Chair of the Alaska Shorebird Group will serve as the Chair of the Group's Executive Committee and be the Alaskan representative to the U.S. Shorebird Council.

#### **C. Executive Committee and Secretary**

The Executive Committee (hereafter also as Committee) will be responsible for (1) assisting in organizing and planning meetings of the Alaska Shorebird Group, (2) soliciting and assembling agenda items from group members to be presented at Alaska Shorebird Group meetings, (3) collectively prioritizing needs and seeking ways of getting work accomplished, and (4) providing written recommendation on advisory or policy issues presented to the Group from non-

members or on advisory or policy issues deemed pertinent to the Group interests. For issues to be considered pertinent to the Alaska Shorebird Group, a member of the Group must present information on a particular issue at an annual meeting (or in writing to the Committee). A majority vote of the members present at the annual meeting or of the Committee is needed to pursue an issue. Ad-hoc and Standing Technical Committees will be formed on an "as-needed" basis to assist the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee will be composed of eight people, representing various diverse backgrounds and interests in shorebird conservation. Designated positions on the Executive Committee include the Chair, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 7 shorebird coordinator, a U.S. Geological Survey shorebird researcher, and the Secretary. The Committee will strive to have geographic diversity, and representation from non-governmental organizations, private organizations, and state and federal agencies.

A Secretary will be appointed from the group of elected Executive Committee members. The Secretary will take and prepare typed minutes of the meeting. Minutes will include items that were discussed and any actions that were agreed upon. Minutes will be distributed to all Alaska Shorebird Group members and others interested in implementation of the Conservation Plan for Alaska Shorebirds via the listserv. Minutes will be prepared within one month of a meeting's occurrence, and will be available at the following year's annual meeting.

#### **D. Staff**

The Shorebird Coordinator for Region 7, USFWS, will serve as the staff person for the Alaska Shorebird Group. The duties of the Coordinator will include:

- 1) Distributing minutes of Group's meetings (compiled by the Secretary) and reporting on progress of action items identified at either the Group's annual meeting or during Committee meetings,
- 2) Developing and maintaining a website that provides updated information on the Group (and its Executive Committee), the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and other shorebird issues in Alaska,
- 3) Keeping a current list of contact information of Group members and others interested in implementation of the Conservation Plan for Alaskan Shorebirds,
- 4) Supporting the Chair and Executive Committee in developing agenda items for and facilitating discussion of issues at Group meetings,
- 5) Maintaining a listserv to facilitate communication on shorebird research, monitoring, and education efforts among Group members and others.

#### **E. Meetings**

General Meeting

The Alaska Shorebird Group will meet at least annually or as often as necessary

to fulfill the objectives of the Group. The Chair is responsible for determining the time and location of meetings. The Group representative(s) in the host community will be responsible for meeting arrangements and expenses. Meetings are open to all.

#### Executive Committee Meeting

A quorum of five of the eight members of the Executive Committee is required to conduct business. If an Executive Committee member is unable to attend a meeting, a proxy may be designated to serve on their behalf. The proxy will be authorized to participate fully in the Group discussions, including voting. All Group members are welcome to attend Executive Committee meetings, but voting is limiting to Committee members. Notification of an Executive Committee meeting will be sent to all Group members prior to the meeting.

#### **F. Expenses**

Unless there is prior agreement, anyone attending Group or Executive Committee meetings is responsible for their own travel and per diem expenses.

#### **G. Decision-Making Protocols**

The Alaska Shorebird Group will strive to obtain consensus on all issues and to work cooperatively to advance the goals of the Conservation Plan for Alaska Shorebirds. In situations where consensus is not possible, but a decision or action is required, the Group will take official action only with approval of five of the eight Executive Committee members (or a majority of the assembled members). Each member, regardless of the positions held, is allotted one vote. Between Group meetings, the Chair will make administrative decisions, while the Executive Committee will make advisory or policy decisions. At annual meetings, official decision or action will occur only after receiving a two-thirds majority vote of members present at the meeting. The Alaska Shorebird Group is not under the auspices of any government organization, and thus the positions and recommendations stated in its working documents should not be construed as those of any government agency.

#### **H. Election of Chair, Executive Committee, and Secretary**

The Chair and Executive Committee members will be elected by the general membership at annual meetings. Election to all positions will be decided by simple majority vote. The Chair will serve for a two-year term. An effort should be made to have the Chair rotate from among members representing non-governmental, state, and federal organizations. Executive Committee members and the Secretary will serve for two years, with at least one-half of the Committee members being elected during each annual meeting. The Executive Committee will fill unanticipated vacancies by a majority vote of the Committee, and the identified person will serve the remaining portion of the term.

#### **I. Amendments to the Terms of Reference Bylaws**

Changes to Terms of Reference bylaws will occur by a simple majority vote of

the members present at an annual meeting.

**J. Logo and Stationery**

The Alaska Shorebird Group will have an official logo and letterhead stationery. Changes to the logo and stationery are only possible by a two-thirds majority vote in subsequent meetings.