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North American Waterbird Conservation Initiative and Plan

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1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter describes the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative and the Service's general strategies for implementing the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan.

1.2 What is the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative?

A. The Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative (Waterbirds initiative) is an independent, international, broad-based, and voluntary partnership created to link the work of individuals and institutions having interest and responsibility for conservation of waterbirds and their habitats in the Americas. Waterbirds are species that are dependent on aquatic habitats to complete portions of their life cycles. Waterbirds covered by this initiative include 209 species known commonly as seabirds, coastal waterbirds, wading birds, and marshbirds. Other kinds of birds relying on aquatic habitats (for example, shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, and many songbirds) are the focus of other initiatives.

B. The vision of Waterbird Conservation for the Americas is to sustain or restore the distribution, diversity, and abundance of populations and habitats of breeding, migratory, and nonbreeding waterbirds throughout the lands and waters of North and South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. The Service has a leadership role in the initiative, but does not direct it.

C. As part of the Waterbirds initiative, partners from governmental and nongovernmental organizations, the scientific community, and local citizenry developed the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (Plan) (Version 1 - 2002). The Plan provides a common framework for managers and conservationists to proceed with actions intended to benefit waterbirds. It aims to facilitate:

- (1) Continent-wide planning and monitoring,
- (2) National-State-provincial conservation planning and action,
- (3) Regional planning and coordination, and
- (4) Local habitat protection and management.

1.3 What are the authorities for this chapter?

A. Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended ([16 U.S.C. 703-712](#); Ch. 128; 40 Stat. 755).

B. Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, as amended ([16 U.S.C. 2901-2911](#), 94 Stat. 1322).

1.4 Who in the Service is responsible for the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative and Plan?

A. The Director provides:

- (1) Overall guidance and direction to the Service for engaging in the Waterbirds initiative, implementing the Plan, and ensuring Servicewide coordination.
- (2) The U.S. Federal leadership and direction in promoting the priorities identified in the Plan.

B. The Assistant Director – Migratory Birds assists with the implementation of the Plan by:

- (1) Developing policy guidance,
- (2) Ensuring Plan goals and objectives are built into the Migratory Bird program strategic plan, and
- (3) Ensuring Service representation in the Waterbirds initiative.

C. Regional Directors:

- (1) Ensure that our Migratory Bird and other staff are aware of the goals and objectives of the Plan and are permitted to participate in regional working groups, the Waterbird Conservation Council or Council committees, joint venture science committees, and focal species working groups.
- (2) Ensure that Regional programs encompass goals and objectives of the Plan and step-down regional-scale conservation plans when appropriate.
- (3) Encourage development of all migratory bird species planning, implementation, and evaluation capacity within joint ventures.

D. The Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management:

- (1) Provides a full-time National Waterbird Coordinator position to promote and facilitate Plan implementation throughout the Plan area, and
- (2) Ensures integration of Plan goals and objectives into Division activities and projects.

E. The Chief, Division of Bird Habitat Conservation, encourages other Service programs to include the goals and objectives of the Plan into the grant programs we manage and our joint venture implementation plans.

1.5 What other Federal agencies are involved in the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative?

A. All Federal agencies with responsibilities for natural resource protection or environmental quality have a role in implementing the Plan. Examples include, among others:

- (1) Army Corps of Engineers,
- (2) Bureau of Land Management,
- (3) Department of Defense,

- (4) Environmental Protection Agency,
- (5) Minerals Management Service,
- (6) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
- (7) U.S. Forest Service, and the
- (8) U.S. Park Service.

B. Within Canada, Mexico, and the U.S., the partners in the Waterbirds initiative have an opportunity to interface with those involved in other bird initiatives through the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). The Service has a leadership role in the NABCI. Directly and through NABCI, the partners in the Waterbirds initiative can form alliances to plan and implement waterbird conservation cooperatively with those involved in other bird initiatives such as:

- (1) The North American Waterfowl Management Plan,
- (2) Partners in Flight, and
- (3) Shorebird Conservation Plans.

1.6 How is the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative

administered? The partners in the Waterbirds initiative facilitate, but do not direct, waterbird conservation. Each partner organization involved in the Plan implements the parts best suited to its focus and skills. Partners established the Waterbird Conservation Council to administer the initiative.

A. The Waterbird Conservation Council. The international Waterbird Conservation Council is the “keeper” of the Plan. It has responsibility for coordinating, supporting, and communicating implementation. The Council operates by terms of reference or guidance adopted by the Council, and it does not have regulatory authority.

- (1) The goal of the Council membership is to represent all of the interests and stakeholders involved in waterbird conservation.
- (2) Collectively, Council members provide perspectives that cover the geographical extent of the Plan area, including taxonomic groups of birds, the range of habitats, species and resource management issues, communication and outreach, and monitoring. It includes representatives of political entities, nongovernmental organizations, research and scientific organizations, and other stakeholders.
- (3) The Council conducts business by working committees open to all interested parties. The committees meet about every month and produce annual workplans. The full Council meets once a year, in January. Meetings are open to the public. The Executive Committee, which monitors and assists the working committees, is made up of Plan area (Canada, U.S., Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, South America) representatives, one of whom serves as Chair, the Past Chair, and Chairs of working committees. The Executive Committee identifies new members to fill gaps in topical or geographic representation, nominates them, and with consensus from all its members, invites them to serve. Outside of annual meetings, the Executive Committee makes decisions on Council business.

- (4) The Council has the following responsibilities:

- (a) Sponsor the Plan document, overseeing its dissemination and revision.
- (b) Conduct planning and implementation at the continental scale and facilitate conservation at all levels, from continental to local.
- (c) Identify implementing agencies, entities and individuals. Through interactions, intervention, and collaborations, leverage opportunities for waterbird conservation.
- (d) Facilitate the acquisition of resources to support waterbird conservation throughout the Plan area.
- (e) As invited, select or nominate representatives to various committees and councils.
- (f) Promote and support work of regional working groups.
- (g) Interact with other bird conservation initiatives, habitat joint ventures, provinces/States, national governments, local interests, and others.
- (h) Facilitate and support the Waterbird Monitoring Partnership.
- (i) Help identify and provide scientific information.
- (j) Facilitate and support the waterbird conservation communication program combining communication, education, and public awareness activities.
- (k) Maintain the [Plan's Web site](#).
- (l) Assure coordination of the Plan with other international bird conservation programs and initiatives.
- (m) Periodically evaluate if goals of the Plan are being met and modify plans and activities accordingly.
- (n) Recruit new members to the Council.

B. Regional Waterbird Working Groups. Regional waterbird working groups are networks of interested parties. They develop, undertake, and review actions at the regional scale needed to meet the Plan's goals and objectives. The regional working groups do not have regulatory authority.

1.7 How often is the Waterbird Conservation Plan updated? The Plan is a comprehensive document that needs constant review and periodic updating to remain viable and effectively deal with changing conditions and arising issues. The Council posts supplements and revisions to Plan components, as well as regional plans, on the Plan's Web site. The site also includes links to other Waterbirds initiative products such as technical guidance and project announcements. The Council will make a full revision of the Plan available at appropriate intervals (e.g., every 5 years).

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