

**WATERBIRD CONSERVATION COUNCIL  
POLICY AND CRITICAL ISSUES  
WORKPLAN FOR 2007  
(Approved by Council May 2007)**

**Background**

On March 20th, Jennifer Arnold, acting as “Policy Advisor” for the Council, circulated a request for input to the whole Council: “...if someone has an issue that they think would benefit from Waterbird Council support, they [may] send me an email describing the issue and how the Council could help. We will then go through a process of vetting this, bringing it to the Executive Committee, then full Council and then, (if there is no opposition), ultimately developing a letter, making a phone call, or doing whatever is necessary to support the issue.” In one week, responses included such suggestions as an information letter about Midway, assistance with ACAP awareness in Panama, pursuing involvement in climate change policy, and helping Bermuda Audubon raise awareness about inappropriate development. These responses re-confirmed the breadth of policy issues that concern waterbirds, as well as the need for the Council to truly focus on a manageable number of tasks for a given year so not to overwhelm existing capacity or dilute effort.

Subsequently, Jennifer W. and Jennifer A. returned to the discussions held at Quito, the two reports we were charged to “mine” for guidance (the NMBCA “Range-wide” project synthesis and the “Strategic Engagement in Seabird Conservation”), and other Council documents, including “Involvement in Advocacy and Public Policy.” From these, we developed the following work plan.

**Work Plan 2007**

- Based on the evaluation of the Council’s strengths and weaknesses, principles set forth by the Council in terms of membership and policy involvement, and the clear message from the last meeting to emphasize seabirds, we suggest that the overarching goal of the Council in terms of policy involvement for 2007 should be to raise awareness of seabird and seabird issues within responsible government agencies with the nested goal of empowering individual Council members and affiliates to take action to promote seabird conservation in their own countries.
- To achieve this goal, we will focus on 2 to 5 countries for 2007 for which the Council will ultimately send a formal letter to an appropriate government official that outlines the threats to seabirds, the value of seabirds, and requests the government to seriously consider one or two specific ways to protect seabirds. Producing this letter will be the Council’s measurable action, but the letter will actually represent a milestone on an in-country individual’s or group’s path towards greater involvement in seabird conservation in their country.
- The Council’s policy engagement in a given country must be spearheaded by an in-country contact (individual or organization), preferably a current or potential Council affiliate. The “local” perspective and expertise is key to providing the influence of a local constituency, assessing and/or confirming what the critical seabird issues are in the

country and what activities are already underway to address those issues, identifying the right person in the government to take the actions that will be requested, and reacting to whatever the government response is. This individual (or group) might overtly spearhead the development of the letter (e.g., a person involved in government outreach) or act as a more behind-the-scenes contact. Council affiliation (e.g., membership or other engagement in Council committees, tasks or projects) is also necessary if this approach is to increase Council influence and visibility.

- Efforts in each country will be built on ongoing policy efforts, so as to bolster, not replicate, those efforts. For example, if the ACAP Secretariat has already approached the country to request involvement, or Birdlife or ABC has been promoting other seabird policies or actions, the Council might request that a government give these requests serious consideration. This principle of engagement will increase the chances that the Council letter will have an impact; moreover, it ensures that the individual or group spearheading the Council action is tied into an existing network of support.

### **Additional Considerations**

We acknowledge that there are many policy issues of high importance to waterbirds, however the above tasks will take precedence over other policy actions by the Council in 2007. We are not implying that seabirds will always be our focus, but that for 2007 raising awareness of seabirds as a mechanism to empower Council members or Council Affiliates within their own countries will be our goal.

We have identified in-country contacts interested in advancing seabird conservation via policy engagement in Panama and Ecuador and are pursuing a contact in the Caribbean. The network of identified in-country activists, and the other Council members and affiliates who assist them, will in essence, be a Policy and Critical Issues 2007 Task Force.

We will tap into other committees for support as necessary (e.g., Communications Committee for any needed communications tools/support).

We will re-evaluate our success in 6 months or a year.

### **Update for 2008 Meeting**

To be presented at Mexico meeting by J. Arnold