

The California Current Marine Bird Conservation Plan

Chapter 12

Implementation of the California Current Marine Bird Conservation Plan



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Foundation



A publication of PRBO Conservation Science
www.prbo.org



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Version 1.0

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April 2005

CHAPTER 12. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CALIFORNIA CURRENT MARINE BIRD CONSERVATION PLAN

SEABIRD CONSERVATION IMPLEMENTATION IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Implementation of any marine bird conservation plan requires actions that protect seabirds at sea as well as on land. There is the need to protect colonies and important roost sites from threats such as disturbance, “predator spills” (the introduction of new predators to a sensitive area), and the introduction of non-native species. There is also a need to restore lost or degraded habitats, for example by eradication of introduced mammalian predators from colonies.

Somewhat more of a challenge is the need to properly manage resources at sea, where different management tools are usually required. Effective management of this vast oceanic domain will require comprehensive cross-jurisdictional approaches, innovative tools, and new partnerships. The ocean cannot be protected by unilateral or private action to purchase easements or fee titles on key areas in the way that land can be protected. Nevertheless, marine protected areas offer a similar solution by protecting key habitats that may provide foraging opportunities for seabirds or protect prey stocks.

Regulatory change is one of the most effective tools for addressing threats that seabirds face in the ocean. Seabird biologists and managers need to work closely with organizations and agencies that regulate fisheries such as the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, Oregon’s Policy Advisory Council, and the various state fish and game agencies. Open communication is key to minimizing seabird bycatch, protecting foraging reserves for seabirds, and beginning the process of ecosystem management.

12.2 LINKAGE WITH ONGOING CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) is a multinational independent partnership between individuals and institutions to conserve bird species and their habitats by enhancing communication and collaboration among nations and agencies. NABCI facilitates coordination of the four major bird initiatives: the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP), Partners In Flight (PIF), and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP). The NAWMP, USSCP, and PIF bird conservation plans have largely been developed and are in the implementation stage, whereas the NAWCP is at an earlier stage of development.

The NAWCP includes all species not covered under any of the other plans, including seabirds, wading birds (gulls, terns, pelicans, and cormorants), and marshbirds (grebes and bitterns); the geographic range is Canada through Central America and the Caribbean (28 countries, 209 species) (1). Importantly, the NAWCP provides a continental framework for regional planning efforts; however, conservation ultimately happens at the local scale, and individual regional plans are therefore essential.

Within the Pacific region, two marine bird conservation plans have been completed. The **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Pacific Region Seabird Conservation Plan** is a strategic planning effort to review seabird conservation and identify USFWS priorities for management, monitoring, research, and outreach in California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, and the U.S. Pacific islands. The intent is to provide an overarching review and discussion of seabird conservation in the Pacific region and outline priority actions needed to ensure the long-term health of these populations. The plan includes the coastal and marine populations of over 60 bird species in the orders Procellariiformes, Pelecaniformes, and Charadriiformes. The plan facilitates collaborative efforts between the USFWS and various local, national, and international partners in seabird conservation. Contact Maura Naughton for more information (Maura_Naughton@fws.gov).

The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) has developed an adaptive seabird conservation plan for the British Columbia region (the **Pacific and Yukon Regional Seabird Conservation Plan**) with an overarching goal of restoring seabird populations to historical numbers. To achieve this goal, priority actions include developing programs that address the threat of introduced predators to seabird habitats, seabird bycatch, and oil-spill preparedness. The protection of important seabird colonies and foraging areas is also considered high priority (2). Contact Mark Hipfner for more information (Mark.Hipfner@ec.gc.ca).

Marine bird conservation planning in the Pacific coastal and marine regions is well underway, with several conservation plans already having been developed. The overall goal is the same for each of these planning efforts: long-term conservation of Pacific seabirds. The CCS Plan, which links the various planning efforts, forms the Pacific Coast regional plan (excluding Alaska) as part of the NAWCP.

During the process of development of the CCS Plan, PRBO consulted with the USFWS and the CWS to coordinate efforts, receive input, and decrease the possibility of material overlap. Portions of the USFWS plan have been modified and incorporated into the CCS Plan in an ecosystem backbone. With other conservation plans as models, the CCS Plan had a solid framework upon which to build, ultimately benefiting both migratory and resident Pacific seabirds.

12.3 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementation and success of the CCS Plan requires involvement and collaboration with regulatory authorities at the local, state, national, and international levels. The hallmark of an ecosystem approach in the CCS will be integrative, cross-border planning, monitoring, management, fisheries management, restoration, research, and education.

Additional strategies for promoting the recommendations of the CCS Plan include highlighting seabirds as sentinels of ecosystem health and making the link to human health; increasing funding or access to existing funds for seabird/ecosystem conservation; creating linkages to ongoing marine reserve initiatives; and increasing research at sea and on habitat use.

Increased collaboration among researchers and fishers will be fundamentally important to the plan's success. Fisheries pose a serious threat to Pacific seabirds; as such, research into gear types and fishing practices that minimize seabird bycatch in commercial fisheries is needed. Fisheries observer programs are necessary to accurately monitor the scope and magnitude of seabird mortality associated with commercial fisheries and to evaluate the response when regulations are enacted to benefit seabirds (see Chapter 11).

Identifying high-priority conservation activities is a potentially contentious but necessary step in plan development and implementation. Several key conservation actions include the development and implementation of a standardized system for monitoring seabird population trends. Species diversity, high priority species, and threats to the habitat need to be evaluated and the habitats and species with the highest conservation priority need to be identified. A typical CCS Plan implementation project might involve the removal of invasive species from areas that have declining populations, such as the removal of rats from Anacapa Island (Channel Islands, California) to protect Xantus's Murrelets (*Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*) and Ashy Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma homochroa*).

A critical element for measuring the success of a conservation plan is a comprehensive seabird monitoring program (3). A program designed to detect population trends will in turn help determine whether conservation actions are effective or if they need adjustment, thereby implementing an adaptive management approach.

Monitoring of conservation projects needs to be sensitive to detect declining population trends in a relatively short period of time. Standardization of monitoring programs is crucial for comparing data sets and detecting trends. Collaboration and increased coordination among the many government agencies and private researchers collecting seabird data also will be required to ensure consistent long-term monitoring of key areas and populations. Given the importance of monitoring programs to measuring success of a conservation plan, dedicated funding needs to be secured for such long-term monitoring.

12.4 THE JOINT VENTURE MODEL FOR COORDINATED CONSERVATION

A *joint venture* is a voluntary partnership among a unique set of partners who are seeking to achieve a set of natural resource objectives in a specific geographic region. Joint ventures have been used as successful plan implementation tools for other conservation efforts such as the NAWMP, PIF, and the USSCP.

The formation of a joint venture has potential as an effective method of bringing together the various stakeholders for seabird conservation plan implementation. Any such "California Current Joint Venture" established to address seabird conservation in the CCS will be most effective if its vision and goals embrace a holistic approach to marine management, including a focus on other taxa.

The Pew Oceans Commission recommended in 2003 that a cohesive National Ocean Policy establish the primacy of protecting, maintaining, and restoring our nation's marine and coastal ecosystems. It further recommended that Congress establish regional ocean ecosystem councils consisting of appropriate federal, state, and tribal representatives, with permanent advisory committees to obtain the views and advice of fishermen, environmental organizations, and others (4).

The Pew Commission description of regional ocean ecosystem councils is not very different from the joint venture model, with the exception that joint ventures are completely voluntary. A joint venture management board would include federal, state, and tribal representatives as well as industry and interest groups. One or more joint venture technical committees would function as scientific advisory board(s).

12.5 A PROPOSED JOINT VENTURE FOR THE CALIFORNIA CURRENT

A “California Current Joint Venture” (CCJV) is proposed as the primary vehicle for implementing the CCS Plan. Its overarching function will be to bring the combined programmatic capabilities of many partners to bear in a coordinated fashion to effect seascape-scale change in the CCS where it is truly needed.

A CCJV will focus on the health of top ocean predators as both a conservation goal in itself as well as an indicator of changes in ocean conditions (both natural and anthropogenic); it will also provide a means to gauge the success of marine management.

A CCJV will bridge cultural barriers in ocean and wildlife management; promote data sharing, information exchange, and collaboration among disparate entities; and provide a forum for “apolitical” discussions to identify common problems and interests that will lay the groundwork for implementation of conservation goals. A broad array of user groups will be recruited for the CCJV management board.

The goals of a CCJV are to:

- recognize and protect the food webs and habitats that support marine predators, including whales, dolphins, seabirds, turtles, swordfish, tuna, sharks, and many commercial and recreational fish;
- ensure that biodiversity conservation and fisheries health is promoted over short-term economic or political gain;
- recognize that fish are an integral part of the food web, and hence must be managed as such, including an accounting of fish species interactions with other species in the ecosystem;
- develop management, mitigation, or action plans demanded by the public for anthropogenic influences in the system, such as bycatch and pollution;
- implement multi-species adaptive conservation plans that are regularly updated with the most current scientific data;
- seek to protect and support our marine economy through all of the approaches listed above, as well as an openness to working directly with fishers and other marine-dependent industries.

The projects of a joint venture are dependent upon the interests and expertise of joint venture partners. Joint ventures are *not* meant to duplicate government-led processes already in place.

The potential benefits of working in the context of a joint venture partnership include:

- a long-term, programmatic approach vs. individual, disconnected projects;
- “front-loading” support for projects from a broad self-directed constituency;
- elevating ecosystem/top predator issues within management agencies;
- reflecting jurisdictional realities while enhancing cross-border and cross-jurisdictional cooperation;
- creating and publicly highlighting beneficial partnerships with business, particularly the fishing industry;
- developing the capacity to fund and execute research and conservation projects, including pooling of resources;
- coordinated action in space and time (also attractive to funders);
- achieving objectives that are beyond the scope of any single entity while reducing competition and redundancy.

The CCJV vision is to join conservation science with real-time management in a true adaptive management framework.

The functions of a CCJV will be to:

- Identify crucial research questions and information gaps.
- Identify critical conservation opportunities.
- Identify opportunities for win/win projects; create good news.
- Identify economic, political, and international concerns relative to conservation efforts.
- Jointly raise funds for projects.
- Test ideas through project implementation; successes can serve as pilots for more widespread adoption and implementation.
- Identify attainable and realistic conservation targets and identify mechanisms to monitor success in attaining targets.
- Provide a forum for making recommendations to appropriate bodies (governments, industries, etc.) to voluntarily develop and implement tools to mitigate negative impacts and to reverse declines in marine life populations.
- Incorporate new findings into the California Current Marine Bird Conservation Plan by adding data, analyses, and conservation recommendations from additional disciplines and taxa.
- Train and conduct outreach to marine managers and other user groups in current marine science applications.

Two meetings of regional seabird managers and scientists, the skeleton of a CCJV seabird technical committee, were held in September (covering the northern CCS) and November 2003 (covering the southern CCS). These meetings resulted in a consensus to move forward with formation of a joint venture management board (recruiting high-level agency heads).

Although these meetings were seabird focused, participants agreed that a CCJV will be ecosystem focused. Also as a result of these meetings, informal working groups have formed to address various ecosystem-wide issues, such as creation of a seabird stranding network and range-wide cross-border population assessment of Xantus's Murrelets.

PRBO Conservation Science is currently researching opportunities and avenues for the implementation of a California Current Joint Venture. For further information on the progress, contact PRBO Conservation Science at www.prbo.org.

Appendix D offers a list of *potential* future partners envisioned for a CCJV.

CHAPTER 12 LITERATURE CITED

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The California Current Marine Bird Conservation Plan Appendix 6

Potential Future Partners Envisioned for a CCJV

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April 2005

APPENDIX 6: POTENTIAL FUTURE PARTNERS ENVISIONED FOR A CCJV

The following is a partial list of *potential future partners envisioned for a California Current Joint Venture*:

American Bird Conservancy	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
American Sportfishing Association	Natural Resources Defense Council
Audubon Societies (local organizations)	The Nature Conservancy
British Columbia Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management	The Ocean Conservancy
California Department of Fish and Game, Marine Region	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
California State Parks	Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
California Wetfish Industry	Pacific Coast wildlife refuges
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society	Pacific Fisheries Management Council
Canadian Wildlife Service	Pacific Seabird Group
Chevron	Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
CIBNOR (Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas de Noroeste; Mexico)	Packard Foundation
CISESE (Centro de Investigación Científica y de Estudios Superiores de Ensenada; Mexico)	Parks Canada
Coastal Commissions (state/province)	Point Reyes National Seashore
CONABIO (Comisión Nacional para El Conocimiento de la Biodiversidad; Mexico)	PRBO Conservation Science
Council on Environmental Cooperation	Resources Law Group
Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada	Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca, y Alimentación (Mexico)
Environmental Defense	Comisión Nacional de Acuicultura y Pesca (Mexico)
Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas (Mexico)	Secretaría de Gobernación (Mexico)
Island Conservation	Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Mexico)
International Halibut Consortium	United Anglers
Marine Conservation Biology Institute	U.S. Department of Interior
Marine Mammal Commission	U.S. Coast Guard
Monterey Bay Aquatic Research Institute	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
The Moore Foundation	Wildlife Trust
National Audubon Society	
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	