



Building on the Past... Preparing for the Future

*A Strategic Plan for the
Division of Migratory Birds
Southeast Region*

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Introduction

Building on the Past . . . Preparing for the Future is a strategic plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Region. It represents a current, critical review of who we are, what we do, and what we should be doing as a regional migratory bird program, keeping proper perspective on the larger community of stakeholders who each contribute their own unique functions and services in support of bird conservation.

The title of this plan, *Building on the Past . . . Preparing for the Future*, is apt. While rededicating ourselves to functions and services that reflect traditional expectations and priorities of the program, we recognize a need to continue evolving in a manner that best positions our program to meet the bird conservation challenges of tomorrow.

From origins that reflect concerns about over-harvesting of waterfowl and large scale loss of wetlands, to more recent challenges implicit in the threats of a proliferation of communication towers, invasive species, urban sprawl, hydrologic alteration, and alternative energy technologies, the Division of Migratory Birds has diverse legal, ethical, and societal obligations that manifest themselves in myriad ways. Determining and responding to the obligations that most warrant the attention of our limited resources, while remaining poised to address others as we anticipate their growing significance, is a challenge that predates all others we face. This plan, and the substantial thought and collaboration it represents, reflects our most current response to that challenge.

The work of the Division of Migratory Birds consists largely of initiating, coordinating, and facilitating activities undertaken by the Service and our partners that contribute to on-the-ground bird conservation delivery. We spend substantial time applying unique regional, national, and international perspectives to guide local actions in ways that support bird conservation objectives at successively larger scales.

However, we are also quite fortunate in the Southeast Region to maintain a cadre of staff who contribute directly and significantly to conservation delivery at the field level – a capacity made possible in large part through the fiscal support of the Service’s National Wildlife Refuge System and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. We also engage heavily in activities that support monitoring, research, regulation development, geospatial analyses, evaluation, and outreach pertaining to migratory bird conservation.

Given the breadth of responsibilities we are challenged with, maximizing the effectiveness of our relatively small work force remains a constant management dilemma. With an entire regional staff of less than 30 people to lead migratory bird conservation in 10 States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands – including fulfilling specific legal obligations and coordinating efforts continentally and internationally – prioritization of effort is absolutely critical. *Building on the Past . . . Preparing for the Future* articulates certain prioritization decisions made to date and outlines a strategic framework within which future decisions will be approached.

Among other things, this document attempts to step-down to our regional program all relevant responsibilities from the national Migratory Bird Program’s (2004-2014) strategic plan, *A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds*. The *Blueprint* describes a full universe of program activities, but lacks specific guidance regarding relative importance of these activities or how the national and regional programs will share in their implementation. Part of the strategic vision expressed in this plan is identification of those *Blueprint* activities that our regional program will emphasize and their relative priority. From this will follow annual station work plans that detail the more specific “who, when, and how” beyond the larger “why and what” articulated in this plan.



USFWS/George Gentry

This document begins with a description of what is legally and administratively required of us – Significant Expectations and Considerations. Emerging Paradigms and Approaches to Consider follows and describes conventional wisdom to further refine our decision making processes. Following those are Mission, Goals, and Strategies sections that outline a hierarchical rationale for the activities we envision as priorities. The plan closes with a section entitled Geographic and Programmatic Organization that coarsely describes how our human and fiscal resources will be deployed to support our mission. While necessarily shaped by the constraints of current resource capacity, the strategic vision expressed in this plan reflects a realistic expectation for growth to better fulfill our mission. Funding and staffing resources needed to reasonably achieve this increased capacity are addressed accordingly.

We acknowledge that our effort here is one in a sequence of similar planning efforts undertaken by our program in the past, each succeeded by another, “better” approach. While initially disconcerting, this realization did not keep us from addressing the challenge anew. Indeed, it is widely appreciated that the collaborative process of developing purposes, priorities, functions and services is as – or more – important than any products that punctuate that process. Management guru Peter Drucker once said, “plans are worthless, but planning is invaluable.” Though this assertion seems extreme, the concept worth considering is that a plan’s relevancy diminishes from conception, whereas the process of planning maintains continuing relevancy.

It is with this understanding that we approached this document. Although we intend for it to serve importantly in communicating direction, philosophy, organization and other strategic aspects that presently define our program, it represents but a single iteration of the ongoing process of self-evaluation and redirection. Changes, refinements and improvements will be sought in keeping pace with the complex and dynamic set of factors that influences what we do and how we do it. We commit to this ongoing process through annual internal program reviews, as well as more extensive program evaluation involving partners approximately every five years. The objective, of course, is to keep our efforts well aligned with shifting priorities, and the constraints that define the conservation environment we operate within. Accordingly, this plan does not identify an out-year planning horizon, but instead will be revised periodically to the extent it is necessary to effectively communicate shifts or refinements in our strategic thinking.

However we choose to define it, we clearly cannot undertake our regional migratory bird conservation mission in isolation. Effective bird conservation requires close coordination among an array of stakeholders who work collaboratively to achieve population sustainability across landscapes. We recognize the substantial past contributions of Federal, State and private partners to this end, and note the continuing need for proactive cooperation and coordination of our collective effort. We remain especially grateful to leadership and staff of the Service’s National Wildlife Refuge System, Ecological Services, Office of Law Enforcement, and External Affairs for their essential assistance to our program in support of the Service’s trust responsibilities toward migratory bird conservation. We anticipate extensive future collaboration in hopes of accomplishing collectively what would be difficult or impossible to do individually.

Significant Expectations and Considerations

Legal Requirements

The Service is authorized by more than 25 primary conventions, treaties, and laws to ensure the conservation of more than 800 species of migratory birds, including several dozen that may be legally hunted as game birds. Some of the more notable authorities that direct our efforts include the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp Act) of 1934, Endangered Species Act of 1973, North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989, and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 2000. Our policies that promulgate from these

To be clear, the Federal trust or responsibility for migratory birds is not a sole trust, rather a shared trust with States and myriad other conservation partners.

Though we spend the vast majority of our efforts to improve migratory bird populations and habitats, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act imposes legal requirements on our program to protect individual birds. Migratory bird permitting is an especially noteworthy legal responsibility that requires three full-time employees to administer, as well as a significant amount of administrative assistance, supervision, or other oversight from at least four other employees. As authorized by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Service issues permits to qualified applicants under guidance in the Code of Federal Regulations for a variety of migratory bird-related activities, including falconry, raptor propagation, scientific collecting, rehabilitation, education, salvage, take of depredating birds, taxidermy, and waterfowl sale and disposal. In the Southeast Region in 2005, we managed approximately 5,000 active permits in 23 different categories.

Executive Orders and Director's Orders are additional instruments that are usually limited to temporary delegations, emergency directives, special assignments, and initial policy or guidance for evolving activities. For example, Executive Order 13186, signed on January 10, 2001, directs federal agencies whose actions could have a measurable negative impact on migratory bird populations to develop Memorandums of Understanding with the Service to promote conservation of migratory birds. Developed in accordance was a Director's Order issued March 2004 that describes how the Service will implement the Executive Order with respect to its own programs and lists specific strategies for individual programs.



Tupper Ansel Blake

laws are found primarily in the 700 Series of the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual: Migratory Bird Management (Part 720), Migratory Bird Conservation (Part 721), Migratory Bird Surveys (Part 722), Migratory Game Bird Hunting (Part 723), Migratory Bird Permits (Part 724), and Grants for Migratory Bird Conservation (Part 725).



John and Karen Hollingsworth

Birds of Management Concern

Birds of Management Concern (2002) are a list of 412 species, subspecies, or populations protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which pose special challenges because of a variety of factors. The Migratory Bird Program is required to place priority emphasis on these birds which include nongame birds that have been determined to be of conservation concern due to declining abundance and other factors; game birds; birds that are considered overabundant in part or all of their range and thus potentially damaging to natural ecosystems or human interests; and those birds listed as endangered or threatened. There is much we can do to assist with endangered or threatened bird conservation, but we recognize that the Service's Division of Ecological Services has lead responsibility, as well as larger staff and fiscal resources to address their needs. Our involvement with endangered or threatened bird management will be carefully calibrated.

Flyway Councils

Waterfowl migration has been characterized as generally following four major migratory pathways or "Flyways" in North America: Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic. State and Federal wildlife agencies within each Flyway adopted an administrative structure, called a "Flyway Council," for the management of migratory game bird resources. These are administrative bodies that forge cooperation among public wildlife agencies for the purpose of protecting and conserving migratory game birds.

Flyway Councils have responsibilities in the annual process of setting migratory bird hunting regulations within the United States, and they conduct and contribute to migratory bird research and management throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The Councils are generally composed of one member from the public wildlife agency in each state and province in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The national Service office maintains one official representative to each Council, but Service staff in the various Regions play a large role contributing information to and coordinating with the various technical committees that support each Flyway.

In 2006 "Nongame Flyway Technical Sections" are being established to begin addressing regulatory issues concerning nongame migratory bird species. There is excellent potential to enhance communication and cooperation for nongame species within this new forum, as has been the case for decades with the Flyway Councils for game migratory bird species.



Jim Rathert / MO Conservation

PART – Focal Species

At the national level, the Migratory Bird Program was evaluated by the Office of Management and Budget using its Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), and findings suggested that the Migratory Bird Program was lacking suitable performance measures to evaluate its mandated conservation activities. In response to the PART evaluation the Migratory Bird Program developed outcome goals, including one that carries significant new expectations on the priorities we set: “Long-term Outcome 1 — *Increase the percent of species of migratory birds that are at healthy and sustainable levels.*” The target for the percent increase was agreed upon to be equivalent to five “focal species” (species of priority emphasis) by fiscal year 2007. An additional five species would be added after subsequent five-year increments.

Focal species selection (Table 1.) was conducted by a team of representatives from across the national Migratory Bird Program, and based on results from extensive consultations with partners and processes and criteria established over many years. Focal species must demonstrate at least one of the following characteristics to be considered: high conservation need, representative of a broader group of species sharing the same or similar conservation needs, high level of current Migratory Bird Program effort, potential as a unifier for partnerships, and high likelihood that factors affecting status can realistically be addressed. The focal species that the Southeast Region has lead responsibility for currently is the painted bunting, and we will also play a substantial supporting role in developing and implementing action plans for snowy plover; cerulean warbler; Henslow’s sparrow, mottled duck, American woodcock, American oystercatcher, king rail, and northern pintail.

We also note that PART Outcome 1 also requires that the status of other species generally does not decline, i.e., the goal is a net increase in the percent of migratory species at healthy and sustainable levels. Thus, the direct attention on focal species cannot preempt the national strategic plan, *Blueprint*, or our regional strategic plan, *Building on the Past ... Preparing for the Future*. Instead, the focal species strategy is intended to be representative of larger, ongoing strategic plans, specifically in the context of landscape-scale, integrated bird conservation.

Table 1. Top Three Tiers of the 139 Recommend Focal Species

Tier 1

(addressed beginning in Fiscal Year 2005):

Common Eider (Pacific), Laysan Albatross, Black-footed Albatross, Snowy Plover, Long-billed Curlew, American Woodcock, Cerulean Warbler, and Painted Bunting.

Tier 2:

Canada goose (resident populations), Northern Pintail, Common Eider (Atlantic), Peregrine Falcon, King Rail, American Oystercatcher, Black Oystercatcher, Henslow’s Sparrow, and Tricolored Blackbird.

Tier 3:

Brant (Black), Cackling Goose, Canada Goose (Dusky), Trumpeter Swan (Rocky Mountain), Mottled Duck, Lesser Scaup, Yellow-billed Loon, Short-tailed Albatross, Ferruginous Hawk, Yellow Rail, Black Rail, Clapper Rail, Wilson’s Plover, Mountain Plover, Red Knot (Atlantic), Caspian Tern, Burrowing Owl, Sprague’s Pipit, Golden-winged Warbler, Bachman’s Sparrow, Baird’s Sparrow, and Chestnut-collared Longspur.



Steve Hillebrand

Government Performance and Results Act

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) mandates that all federal agencies set long-term and annual goals, measure performance, and report on the degree to which goals are met. The national Migratory Bird Program is required to support the below listed goals found in the Department of the Interior Draft Strategic Plan for 2004-2008 and the Draft Fish and Wildlife Service Operational Performance Plan. Our support is anticipated to be in varying degrees; e.g., our involvement in number (3) below would not be near as substantial as with others.

- Resource Protection – Biological Communities, Strategy 2, targeted at sustaining biological communities on DOI managed and influenced lands and waters;
- Resource Protection – Biological Communities, Strategy 3, targeted at increasing information and knowledge necessary for decision making;
- Resource Protection – Cultural and Heritage Resources, Strategy 1, targeted at increasing the knowledge base of cultural and heritage resources managed by DOI; and
- Recreation Strategy 1 targeted at increasing the quality of recreational activities involving DOI managed resources, and Strategy 2 targeted at providing effective interpretation and education programs.

Workforce Planning

Workforce planning, a component of overall strategic planning for a program, has been described in simplest terms as “. . . getting the right people in the right place at the right time.” Workforce planning includes the following six basic steps:

- Supply Analysis
What internal/external staff and funding do you have now?
- Demand Analysis
What will we need to reasonably fulfill our mission?
- Gap Analysis
Identify the gaps between the supply and the demand.
- Solution Analysis
Develop solutions that address the gaps.
- Implementation Planning
Implement the solutions.
- Evaluation
Evaluate the impact and adjust accordingly.

Our regional strategic plan is being developed under the principles listed above through the experience of program staff with the best information to date. A national workforce planning conference for the Service will be held February 2006, to learn from the progress of various Service programs who have undertaken a workforce planning effort thus far. The national Migratory Bird Program is anticipating its workforce planning effort to commence in 2006, and a final workforce plan will likely take between two-four years to produce. Such a plan will likely detail greater prioritization of strategies in the *Blueprint* and also provide recommendations about how to deploy staff to best meet our mission. Our regional strategic plan will be revised as better information is learned from national workforce planning efforts.



Wyman Meinzer

Emerging Paradigms and Approaches to Consider

North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI)

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), a coalition of United States, Canadian, and Mexican governmental agencies and private organizations, is the most inclusive framework for bird conservation ever assembled on this or any other continent. Its goal is to facilitate the delivery of the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships. The primary role of NABCI is to coordinate, not duplicate, the efforts of the four major bird conservation plans: North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and North American Waterbird Plan. Many of the birds targeted by these plans share the same habitats. We can improve the outlook for bird conservation by participating in NABCI's following three functions:

- Represent the U.S. internationally.
- Foster coordination among U.S.-based bird conservation initiatives and integrated delivery of conservation activities.
- Identify and facilitate the delivery of those resources needed to achieve conservation objectives for the birds of the U.S. wherever they may occur over the course of their entire life cycles.

NABCI will play a leadership role in identifying and building support for common objectives through development of a shared vision. Such a shared vision can be a powerful tool for increasing partnerships for comprehensive bird conservation while preserving independence of various initiatives and partners. NABCI will not set policy, rather establish a framework within which its constituents and other groups can contribute operations.

Reporting Requirements:

The Migratory Bird Program nationally is operating at a level of higher accountability than ever before. Future work must be demonstrably within the scope of *A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds* and must relate clearly to Department of the Interior and Service strategic plan goals and strategies. Performance will be measured in terms of the Government Performance and Results Act's long-term and annual measures. We will also be accountable for reporting on expenditures at the "Activity Based Costing (ABC) code" level. Finally, the degree to which we are successful at integrating our work and improving efficiencies under these various planning networks will be critically evaluated during the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) process. Our ability to successfully integrate all this requires the development and implementation of a rigorous planning process program-wide.



John and Karen Hollingsworth

Science-based Decision Making and Science-Alliances

The latest and best scientific information available is essential to properly assess the effectiveness of actions relative to objectives in various bird plans, to deliver effective habitat programs on-the-ground, and to assist in refining regulations and permitting processes. *A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds* noted that the national Migratory Bird Program needs to strengthen and expand its internal scientific capabilities in monitoring and assessment, as well as increase the use of research results generated by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), academic institutions, and others, in an adaptive resource management framework. In the recent past, under the leadership of the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture, the Service has made a cross-program commitment of resources to develop a capability for conservation planning and assessment at ecoregional scales. These efforts were further encouraged by the goal and vision of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) that the conservation community would establish “regionally-based, biologically-driven, landscape-oriented partnerships” in exercising a shared trust to the conservation of migratory birds.

The Service believes that the conservation targets implicit to national bird conservation plans – landscapes capable of sustaining priority species, range-wide at prescribed levels – is substantially increasing the need for applied science. Specifically, we have a need for methods and approaches to biological planning that are multi-scaled in application and population based with respect to outcome. From this need has emerged a non-traditional relationship with USGS that is defined less by research as an activity and more by the functions of predicting, monitoring, and assessing biological responses to human-caused changes at multiple spatial scales.

USGS describes its “Science-Alliance” model as a new approach to strategically design science programs that will enhance its partnerships to the point of becoming true alliances characterized by a continuous interplay between science and application. These alliances, perhaps most effective for addressing complex problems at a landscape scale over a long period of time, are anticipated to produce scientific information that is delivered and assimilated in such a way that leads to changes in management practices, policies, regulations, engineering applications, conceptual models, or other aspects that drive on-the-ground conservation. The old “Needs-Response” model represents a traditional framework for direction of science production and delivery, and is based on users of scientific information identifying specific research needs and science providers attempting to meet those needs. The “Needs-Response” model will still be important for high priority, especially urgent, concerns; however, the “Science-Alliance” model will receive a much greater focus, as it places emphasis on a function-based relationship to guiding interactions between scientists and those who use scientific information to make decisions. The “Science-Alliance” model is not based on single project results and the pursuit of science that seeks to answer individual questions in isolation.



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National Ecological Assessment Team (NEAT)

The Division of Migratory Birds, through the leadership of the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture (LMVJV), has been involved for nearly two years with the National Ecological Assessment Team (NEAT), which is charged with defining and propagating an approach within the Service to ecoregional conservation planning and assessment that is applicable across programs. Recognizing that most of the Service's experiences in affecting conservation at ecoregional scales have arisen from within the bird conservation community, the applicability of joint venture-type approaches to other programs, and especially the Endangered Species and more recently Fisheries program, has always been at the fore of discussions and concerns.

There is now a formal connection between the bird conservation community's approach to conservation planning and assessment as defined by LMVJV partners and ivory-billed woodpecker recovery planning. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker Recovery Team is about to apply the LMVJV "Population-based, Multi-Scale Conservation Framework" to ivory-billed recovery planning and assessment, specifically the five functional elements of NEAT (establishment of population-based goals and objectives, landscape characterization and assessment, conservation design and tracking, decision-based population and habitat monitoring, and assumption driven research).

The LMVJV approach to conservation planning and assessment are not entirely synonymous with a NEAT approach in that the NEAT's work is not yet completed. However, the LMVJV approach is close enough to what NEAT will recommend that we are about to embark upon a real world test of the NEAT concept to endangered species recovery. To be clear, this does not mean that we will be increasing our emphasis on threatened and endangered birds relative to our more traditional responsibilities. As mentioned previously, there is much we can do to assist with endangered or threatened bird conservation, but we recognize that the Division of Ecological Services has lead responsibility and larger staff and fiscal resources to address their needs. Our involvement with endangered or threatened bird management will be carefully calibrated.

If the results of our NEAT efforts are positive, the Division of Migratory Birds can continue expanding its leadership role in ecoregional conservation planning and assessment that is applicable across all programs to benefit wildlife conservation.



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Mission, Operating Principles, and Over-arching Priorities

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends to accomplish its mission by: “working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.” Stepped down from that mission, to more specifically help fulfill the Service’s legal responsibility of conserving migratory birds and their habitats, is the National Migratory Bird Program Vision Statement:

Through careful management built on solid science and diverse partnerships, the Service and its partners restore and sustain the epic sweep of bird migration and the natural systems on which it depends – fostering a world in which bird populations continue to fulfill their ecological roles while lifting the human spirit and enriching human lives in infinite ways, for generations to come.

The Vision Statement for the Service’s national Migratory Bird Program describes a very broad paradigm of the role of the Program in the Service for the American people. More focused on priorities and the appropriate regional role, our regional Mission Statement articulates our two-pronged approach [Joint Venture offices (planning) and field stations (implementation)] in support of our national Vision:

In alliance with a diverse array of concerned partners and through the leadership of our field offices and rapidly expanding joint venture offices, we will deliver high priority, science-based migratory bird conservation planning and on-the-ground projects to improve the status of migratory birds in the Southeastern United States and beyond.

Operating principles are the basic tenets or values that both underpin and guide our efforts. Our regional operating principles more fully describe and flow from the more broad national operating principles to, “. . . consistently adhere to the principles of sound science and collaborative partnerships.”

Regional Operating Principles:

- Science-based decision making
- Adaptive Management as a means for operating and making decisions in the face of uncertainty or insufficient data
- Actions and efforts guided by Program priorities and linked to accountability, evaluation, or accomplishment tracking
- Input to Flyway harvest regulations consider both populations and habitats
- Resources must be effectively balanced between landscape scale efforts (e.g. planning) and local efforts (e.g. project implementation) in order to effectively achieve bird conservation
- Ecoregional in approach, with biological planning organized by Bird Conservation Regions, implemented by state boundaries, and harvest regulations support by Flyways.

During a national strategic plan consultation in the fall of 2003, and with the help of partners and constituents at the national Migratory Bird Conservation Forum in January 2004, the Service identified the following top three over-arching priorities for the Migratory Bird Program:

- Address the loss and degradation of migratory bird habitats
- Increase and improve scientific information on migratory bird populations
- Strengthen and expand regional, national, and international partnerships to achieve comprehensive bird conservation



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Goals

The national Migratory Bird Program has identified the three overarching goals listed below to support its mission and fulfill requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act.

Goal 1

Protect, restore, and manage migratory bird populations to ensure their ecological sustainability and increase their socioeconomic benefits.

Goal 2

Protect, restore, and manage migratory bird habitats to ensure long-term sustainability of all migratory bird populations.

Goal 3

Improve hunting, bird watching, and other outdoor bird-related experiences and opportunities, and increase awareness of the value of migratory birds and their habitats for their intrinsic, ecological, recreational and economic significance.

In support of national goals, we have identified the following desired regional outcomes, which can also be considered our regional goals for our Division of Migratory Birds.

- Healthy, sustainable populations of migratory birds throughout the Southeast
- Landscapes and habitat conditions that support sustainable migratory bird populations
- Ecosystem processes important for sustaining migratory bird populations conserved or restored in perpetuity
- Spatially explicit habitat objectives where appropriate, recognizing the need for shifting mosaics of early-successional habitats in many areas
- Internal and external recognition as the Service program with primary responsibility for migratory bird expertise and input into regulations development
- Capacity to respond to internal and external requests regarding migratory bird issues
- Recreational and other human use compatible with conservation needs

Strategies

The national strategic plan, *A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds*, grouped its “strategies” into five broad areas of responsibility (listed immediately below), and then further divided them into 16 functional elements.

- Population Monitoring, Assessment, and Management
- Habitat Conservation
- Permits and Regulations
- Consultation, Cooperation, Communication
- Recreation

We chose to organize the *Blueprint* strategies within the following seven “functions” that are appropriate for the Division of Migratory Birds in the Southeast Region to perform in support of the national Migratory Bird Program:

- Biological Planning;
- Population and Habitat Research and Monitoring;
- Technical Assistance and Technical Support in Conservation Delivery;
- Outreach and Partnership Development/Coordination;
- Harvest Regulations Development Support;
- Permitting and Other Legal Compliance; and
- Information Technology Management.

The strategies below are tiered into Highest Priority, Important, and Other groupings as they pertain to the intent of effort with our current resources. A strategy’s designated tier does not indicate a relative value we place on the activity, rather its appropriateness for us to address with current regional resources.



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Those which we list under Highest Priority are activities which are most appropriate for us to tackle in our regional role, i.e. the highest and best use of our time. The Important activities are those which have high value as well, but are less appropriate for our Region to undertake; however, Important items may be addressed as opportunities present themselves. Lastly, the Other tier of activities are involvements best addressed with resources of the National office or another Region. Our involvement in this latter category would be very minimal in most cases.

This overarching strategic plan will not detail specifics of how individual strategies will be approached; those are decisions best determined individually by Joint Venture offices, regional office staff, or field stations in their annual work plans. Steven Covey, world-renowned management and leadership author and speaker, wrote “. . . if our planning is centered on an overall purpose or vision and on a commitment to a set of principles, then the people who are closest to the action (can use) their own expertise and judgment to make decisions and take actions . . .”

The alphanumeric designation before each objective enable a cross reference to the *Blueprint* document, with the letter corresponding to the area of responsibility (noted above at the beginning of this section), and the number simply a unique identifier (and not a designation of priority). Additional comments follow each objective and are in blue color and *italicized*. We acknowledge that the strategies listed below could be captured under numerous function categories, so we present them in a (hopefully) logical category, recognizing that the primary idea to impart below is the relative priority of each strategy.

1. Biological Planning

Highest Priority:

A-1 Establish clear, quantifiable, and measurable objectives for all survey and monitoring projects undertaken or funded by the Migratory Bird Program. *All offices.*

A-4 Facilitate periodic, independent evaluations of survey objectives, designs, operations, data management, and analyses and reporting of survey and assessment information, including critiques of data coverage and quality, for all Service supported migratory bird surveys.

Primarily a national office function. All offices should contribute.

B-1 Work with partners range-wide to establish habitat conservation objectives for Birds of Management Concern through existing bird conservation planning efforts.

All offices, especially Joint Ventures.

B-2 Work with partners range-wide to integrate migratory bird population and habitat data using biologically-based geospatial planning tools to create sustainable landscape designs for Birds of Management Concern. *Joint Ventures.*

D-1 Actively support and participate with partners in developing, implementing, and evaluating bird conservation plans at appropriate geographic scales. *All offices.*

Important:

A-18 Periodically review and adjust desired population levels and objectives based on the results of research, monitoring, and assessment. *All offices.*

D-5. Support NABCI efforts to facilitate and coordinate integrated bird conservation planning and implementation at the international, national, regional, and state levels. *All offices, particularly the Memphis Field Office as regional NABCI lead.*



2. Population and Habitat Research and Monitoring

Highest Priority:

A-11. Support research aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of monitoring protocols, increasing power, precision and accuracy of analyses, and expanding the availability and utility of data. *All offices. Emphasis given to supporting research aimed at geospatially identifying important migratory stopover sites and migratory pathways, as well as assessing important features of migratory paths and stopover sites.*

B-11. Promote research to better assess landscapes changes and their impacts on Birds of Management Concern at local, regional, and continental scales. *All offices.*

Important:

A-2. Complete a review of all Service supported migratory bird surveys as a first step toward identifying gaps, reducing redundancy, and increasing efficiency. *Primarily a national office function. All offices should contribute, especially Atlanta Regional Office while coordinating with other Regions and the national office.*

- A-3. Evaluate the design and operation of Service supported migratory bird surveys relative to objectives, and institute improvements or discontinue surveys where appropriate. *Primarily a national office function. All offices should contribute.*
- A-5. Work with partners to develop and implement statistically-rigorous surveys and range-wide monitoring programs for Birds of Management Concern. *All offices; for the Atlantic Flyway, notably, the (South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative) SAMBI monitoring effort for monitoring wintering waterfowl, migrating shorebirds, and shorebird habitat.*
- A-9. Work with partners to track changes in migratory bird habitats across the entire ranges of Birds of Management Concern. *Joint Ventures.*
- A-12. Support range-wide research on factors that (may) directly affect migratory bird populations, such as disease, predation, competition, brood parasitism, environmental factors, and human-caused mortality. *All offices.*
- A-13. Support range-wide research on factors that (may) affect bird populations through reducing habitat quality and quantity, such as invasive species, agricultural and other land use practices, and habitat fragmentation. *All offices.*
- A-21. Support efforts by the USGS National Wildlife Health Center and other partners to identify, study, and address traditional and emerging bird disease problems such as avian influenza, botulism, avian cholera, Newcastle disease, and West Nile virus. *All offices.*
- B-10. Work with partners to coordinate population monitoring with habitat monitoring, where necessary, to develop sustainable landscape designs for Birds of Management Concern. *All offices, particularly Joint Ventures.*



Kristine Souel

3. Technical Assistance and Technical Support in Conservation Delivery

Highest Priority:

A-7. Provide private and public land managers with technical assistance in selecting and implementing appropriate bird survey and monitoring techniques.

All offices, particularly the field offices (Hazen, Jackson, Manteo, and Memphis), and especially supporting the National Wildlife Refuge System and Private Lands Programs. Emphasis given to developing or assisting with development of standardized quantitative survey/monitoring protocol.

A-14. Evaluate the effectiveness of management actions and develop or refine best management practices for migratory birds using an adaptive management framework. *All offices.*

A-17. Provide federal land management agencies, states, and other land and water management partners with technical support necessary to undertake conservation and management actions consistent with bird conservation plans. *All offices, particularly the Hazen, Jackson, Manteo, and Memphis Field Offices, and especially supporting National Wildlife Refuges.*

A-20. Identify and implement actions to respond to threats to migratory birds from diseases and invasive species, including alien wildlife. *All offices.*

B-3. Protect, restore and manage priority terrestrial, aquatic, and marine habitats for birds through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, and other appropriate funding opportunities. *All offices, especially Joint Ventures, Atlanta Regional Office, and other offices addressing increasingly disconcerting marine/pelagic bird issues.*

B-5. Participate in promotion, delivery, and evaluation of non-Service habitat conservation programs that have the potential to affect the quantity and quality of migratory bird habitat.

Jackson, Manteo, Hazen, and Memphis Field Offices, particularly through established or proposed Private Lands Programs, in coordination with Joint Ventures.

B-7. Provide technical assistance to Service field stations and private and public partners on the most effective protection, restoration and management practices for migratory bird habitats.

Hazen, Jackson, Manteo, and Memphis Field Offices, and especially supporting the National Wildlife Refuge System and Private Lands Programs. This strategy would include various biological workshops.

B-8. Coordinate with public and private partners that manage resources, such as agricultural land, timber, grasslands, fisheries, and energy, by communicating migratory bird requirements to minimize the adverse impacts and maximize the benefits of these programs to migratory birds. *All offices.*

D-7. Provide technical assistance to partner agencies and organizations through federal project reviews and other means to integrate migratory bird conservation objectives into their project planning and implementation.

All offices, especially technical assistance to Service Ecological Service's Division biologists for relevant 404 permits.

D-11. Provide technical assistance to other Service Programs to increase their ability to meet trust responsibilities for migratory bird conservation. *All offices, particularly Hazen, Jackson, Manteo, and Memphis Field Offices, and especially supporting the National Wildlife Refuge System and Private Lands Programs.*



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D-12. Provide information to private landowners to assist them in protecting and restoring bird populations and habitats on a voluntary basis.
Jackson, Manteo, Hazen, and Memphis Field Offices, particularly through established or proposed Private Lands Programs.

Important:

B-6. Coordinate with other Service habitat programs by communicating bird population and habitat requirements to maximize the benefits of these programs to migratory birds, as required by Executive Order 13186.
All offices, especially Atlanta Regional Office.

D-10. Assist other nations and U.S. partners in assessing the status of migratory birds, identifying important habitats, and developing strategies to conserve shared resources through national and international grant programs and direct technical assistance.
Often a national office function, but all offices should look for opportunities.

D-13. Provide technical assistance to industry on ways to avoid or minimize impacts of communications towers, wind turbines, fishing bycatch, and other hazards to migratory birds and recognize positive industry efforts that results in increased conservation.
Often a national office function, but is high priority for certain issues and geographic areas; all offices should consider opportunities.

4. Outreach and Partnership Development/Coordination

Highest Priority:

A-6. Establish formal, periodic consultation processes with the states, flyway councils, and other partners to determine regional and national priority survey, monitoring, and management issues for game and nongame migratory birds.
All offices, but especially for Flyways:

Hazen Field Office – game species regional lead for Mississippi;

Memphis Field Office – nongame regional lead for Mississippi;

Manteo Field Office – game species regional lead for Atlantic;

Deputy Regional Chief – nongame regional lead for Atlantic;

Regional Chief – regional lead for Service Regulations Committee.

D-3. Work with partner agencies and organizations to obtain additional funding for all-bird conservation and to leverage resources towards agreed upon goals identified in bird conservation plans and sustainable landscape designs.
All offices.

D-6. Expand existing or create new Joint Ventures to encompass all bird habitats (terrestrial, aquatic, and marine) in North America, and initiate and strengthen similar partnerships beyond North America.
All offices.

D-8. Coordinate and communicate with the USGS Biological Resources (Division) to obtain directed research and development information and technical assistance on migratory birds and their habitats and factors affecting them. *All offices, especially those with representatives serving on the Regional Research Team.*



D. Lindsey Hayes

D-14. Review and expand existing and develop new products, programs, and venues that increase awareness of the value of conserving migratory birds and their habitats.

In particular, support International Migratory Bird Day. All offices, especially the Atlanta Regional Office. Emphasize importance of maintaining native vegetation in developments and planting natives in backyards that support migratory birds.

D-16. Increase sales of Federal Duck Stamps by expanding public awareness of this program, beyond its traditional hunting constituency, as the most direct way for citizens to protect migratory bird habitat.

In particular, support the “Duck Stamp Challenge” program. All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.

D-17. Increase student and school participation in the Junior Duck Stamp Program and strengthen its educational content by incorporating its curriculum into national and state science and art education standards. *All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.*

E-3. With partners, identify and implement projects and programs to improve the quality of hunting, birdwatching, and other recreational opportunities related to migratory birds. *All offices.*

Important:

D-2. Coordinate bird conservation planning efforts with other ongoing planning efforts, including State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies. *All offices.*

D-4. Coordinate bird planning and implementation efforts with Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and other nations that share migratory birds.

Primarily a national office function; however, Memphis Field Office will remain engaged in developing Mexico/ Yucatan partnerships, and Atlanta Regional Office will address Caribbean issues as appropriate until proposed Florida-Caribbean Field Office is established.

D-9. Strengthen range-wide migratory bird management by improving international partnerships among Migratory Bird Treaty Act nations and other nations within flyways used by migratory birds. *All offices.*

D-14. Review and expand existing and develop new products, programs, and venues that increase awareness of the value of conserving migratory birds and their habitats (e.g. IMBD). *All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.*

D-15. Promote and expand existing programs that increase awareness of the value of comprehensive integrated approaches to bird conservation that conserve all priority bird species across geopolitical boundaries, taxonomic groups, and sociocultural divides. *All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.*

D-18. Increase involvement of organizations and individuals representing ethnic and culturally diverse communities in bird conservation efforts. *All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.*

D-19. Take actions to ensure the nation’s students are knowledgeable about the conservation needs of migratory birds and to instill stewardship of natural resources by promoting awareness, appreciation, and knowledge of birds. *All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.*

John and Karen Hollingsworth



E-1. Work with the NWRS to actively implement the provisions of the Refuge Improve Act to improve the quantity and quality of migratory bird-related recreation on NWRS lands, as compatible with refuge goals and authorizing legislation.
All offices.

E-2. Actively support state efforts to provide bird-related recreation through the Service's Federal Assistance programs, including the State Wildlife Grants program.
Atlanta Regional Office.

E-4. With partners, identify and promote recreational opportunities associated with migratory birds, such as hunting and birdwatching.
All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.

E-5. Open dialogs with federal, regional, state and local managers of land and water resources to encourage recreational opportunities related to birds.
All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.

Other:

E-7. Maintain and expand existing conservation partnerships with hunters and the hunting industry to increase awareness of hunting opportunities and the importance of bird conservation.
Primarily a national office function.

E-6. Work with birding industries, rehabilitators, and other stakeholders to create new partnerships and venues that increase public awareness of non-consumptive bird recreation and bird conservation.
All offices, particularly the Atlanta Regional Office.

5. Harvest Regulations Development Support

Important:

A-15. Work with other nations, flyways, and bird conservation initiatives to develop explicit, unambiguous management objectives for Birds of Management Concern.
Staff serving on various bird conservation initiative teams.

A-16. Within an adaptive management framework, undertake conservation and management actions, consistent with bird conservation plans, to achieve desired abundance levels or to reintroduce desired species.
All offices.

C-4. Continue to implement and improve an objective, streamlined process for establishing annual hunting regulations and strengthen the working relationships with flyway councils and individual states.
Mostly a national office function, but some important input at the Technical Section committee level from Hazen Field Office (game species regional lead for Mississippi Flyway) and Manteo Field Office (game species regional lead for Atlantic Flyway), as well as coordination by Regional Chief with representatives to the Service Regulations Committee.

Other:

C-5. Enhance the use of Adaptive Harvest Management as an effective approach to managing migratory game bird harvest.
Primarily a national office function.

C-6. Continue to provide an effective forum for public review and comment during the development of annual hunting regulations.
Primarily a national office function.

C-8. Work with Native American tribes to improve the process for establishing annual hunting regulations.
Primarily a national office function.



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6. Permitting and Other Legal Compliance

Highest Priority:

A-19. Based on valid scientific data, reduce to acceptable levels the abundances of migratory bird species that create economic and ecological damage and human health and safety concerns.

Atlanta Regional Office (particularly Permits Office) and Flyway Leads in Hazen and Manteo Field Offices.

C-1. Implement actions outlined in the Service's document *Leaving a Lasting Legacy: Permits as a Conservation Tool* to streamline the migratory bird permit program, provide better customer service, and support conservation.

Atlanta Regional Office (Permits Office)

C-2. In cooperation with partners, develop and implement biologically sound permits, regulations, policies, and procedures to effectively manage and assess the take of migratory birds, while decreasing the administrative burden for permit applicants.

Atlanta Regional Office, especially in collaboration with Permits Office staff

C-3. Implement the recommendations in the Service's Permits Workload Analysis to provide resources to meet customer needs.

Atlanta Regional Office (Permits Office)

Other:

C-9. Develop and implement MOUs with other federal agencies to promote bird conservation under Executive Order 13186 through adoption of processes and measures that avoid or minimize the negative impacts of agency actions on migratory birds.

Primarily a national office function.

C-10. Work with the Service's Office of Law Enforcement and state and tribal law enforcement officials to ensure compliance with the laws and international conventions applicable to migratory birds.

Primarily a national office function.

7. Information Technology Management

Highest Priority:

A-8. Increase capabilities for analytical support, including survey design, data storage and management, and analysis.

Joint Ventures (especially LMV) and Regional Budget/IT Lead.

Important:

A-9. Create a dynamic, user-friendly information and communication system to provide universal access to survey data and analysis.

Continually consider opportunities, especially Joint Ventures and Regional Budget/IT Lead.

Other:

A-10. Report regularly on the status and trends of bird populations based on information derived from monitoring and research programs.

Primarily a national office function.

Table 2. The 10 Bird Conservation Regions located in the Service's Southeast Region

- Central Hardwoods
- West Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachita Mountains
- Mississippi Alluvial Valley
- Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes
- Appalachian Mountains
- Piedmont
- Peninsular Florida
- Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands
- Southeastern Coastal Plain (separated into East Gulf Coastal Plain and South Atlantic Coastal Plain)

Geographic and Programmatic Organization

Historically, geographic areas of coverage of our field stations were influenced greatly by State boundaries or some sub-regional Service administrative unit such as National Wildlife Refuge System management districts. Henceforth, to be more congruent with contemporary migratory bird resource issues, we will primarily organize geographically by Bird Conservation Regions (Table 2.) Excellent partnerships exist with other Service Regions and Joint Ventures that impact the southeastern United States whose staff are not Southeast Region employees. These include the South Atlantic Coordinator's Office of the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, Gulf Coast Joint Venture, East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture, and the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture. Their diverse focus, experience, and partnerships in our cross-regional, shared responsibilities creates an enormous synergy of conservation efforts.

We will organize towards maintaining a collective "full capacity" Division of Migratory Birds staff in the Southeast Region that is comprised of field stations, joint ventures, and a regional office juxtaposed so as to provide geographic accessibility and responsiveness to the breadth of priority migratory birds conservation demands.

The "coverages" by field offices include providing technical assistance and advice and biological planning (particularly via biological reviews, especially to guide the preparations of comprehensive plans) for various entities such other Service programs, private lands, nonprofit organizations (e.g. Ducks Unlimited, Audubon), State agencies and State land management units (e.g. State Parks, State Forests), and other Federal agencies (e.g. NRCS, EPA) and Federal land management units (e.g. Military Bases, National Parks, National Forests, Bureau of Land Management sites).

Joint Ventures are self-directing, regional partnerships composed of private and government organizations that have the mandate, capacity, and/or interest to plan, implement and evaluate bird conservation and management objectives across an agreed upon geography. They have formally accepted the responsibility of implementing national or international bird conservation plans within a specific geographic area (e.g. Gulf Coast or Central Hardwoods Joint Venture) or for a specific taxonomic group (e.g. Black Duck Joint Venture), and have received general acceptance in the bird conservation community for such responsibility.

Joint Ventures are not to be confused with Bird Conservation Regions which are the primary hierarchal ecological units within which biological foundation issues are resolved, the landscape configuration of sustainable habitats is designed, and priority projects originate.

There are currently 12 habitat joint ventures in the United States, and within the Southeast Region there are several in varying degrees of development from the well-established Atlantic Coast and Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Ventures to a new BCR planning effort for the Southern Piedmont that may one day become a joint venture. Some Joint Venture Coordinators are Fish and Wildlife Service employees and are supervised by a Service Regional Office, while others' supervision is by a non-Service entity. In all cases, Joint Venture Coordinators are responsible to their management board who direct joint venture activities. Working both together and independently, joint venture partners conduct activities in support of bird conservation goals, including biological planning and prioritization; project development and implementation; and monitoring, evaluation, and applied research activities among other things.

Bird Conservation Map

Bird Conservation Regions in the Service's Southeast Region, excluding Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

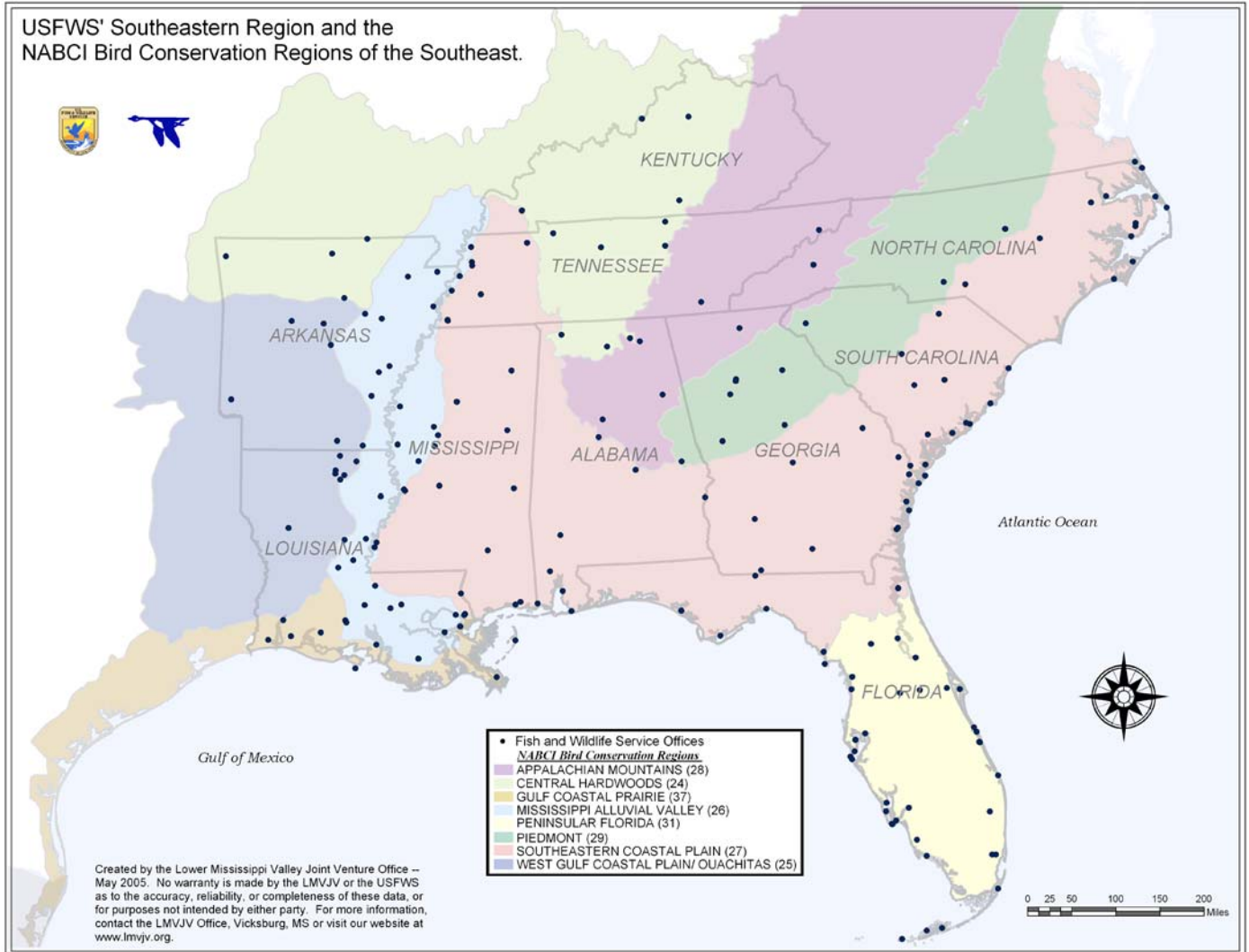


Table 4. Summary of desired permanent Service positions listed in priority order to support the Southeast Region, Division of Migratory Birds for the one-five year timeframe.*

- 1 Private Lands Biologist, Hazen Field Office
- 2 Senior Field Biologist for a proposed Florida-Caribbean Field Office
- 3 Senior Field Biologist for a proposed Coastal Louisiana Field Office
- 4 Private Lands Biologist, Memphis Field Office
- 5 Private Lands Biologist for a proposed Coastal Louisiana Field Office
- 6 Private Lands Biologist for a proposed Florida-Caribbean Field Office
- 7 Administrative Assistant for a proposed Florida-Caribbean Field Office
- 8 Administrative Assistant for a proposed Coastal Louisiana Field Office

* [note: these positions would support the implementation facet of our regional migratory bird program to cover existing large geographic gaps; we envision these being funded mostly by increases in 1261 (National Wildlife Refuge System) and 1121 (Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program) dollars; we would concurrently work diligently with partners to establish new priority positions within our Joint Venture offices]

A long-term goal is to facilitate the establishment across the Southeast Region of “wall-to-wall” joint ventures with a partnership building and biological planning focus, and have those Joint Ventures complemented by field stations with a technical assistance and “on-the-ground” project implementation emphasis. These field stations will also grow in number according to priority Bird Conservation Region (BCR) support needs, as Service funding priorities enable, with a Peninsular Florida and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands BCRs office being the next highest priority. A Coastal Louisiana Office has been suggested as a high priority to address bird conservation needs in association with massive restoration efforts proposed on the magnitude of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan in Florida. Extensive habitat alteration resulting from three major hurricanes impacting coastal Louisiana in 2005 also elevates a priority of an office there.

Having the focused expertise of both Joint Ventures and field stations enables the Division of Migratory Birds to capitalize on varied opportunities, being clearly recognized by Service partners and others as having diverse but complementary functions. For example, the landscape level planning abilities of the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture Office resulted in a proposed \$400,000 increase to the Division of Migratory Birds for fiscal year 2007 to address Ivory-billed Woodpecker recovery needs. The well-known technical assistance skills of field offices have resulted for many years in the Division receiving roughly \$300,000 from Ecological Service’s Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and \$400,000 from the National Wildlife Refuge System to address myriad overlapping program priorities for migratory birds and other wildlife.

Some program responsibilities do not necessarily conform or lend themselves well to a BCR context, and identifying a BCR lead office does not imply a geographic exclusivity of work areas. Lead responsibilities for either Region-wide or Flyway-oriented “programs,” such as wood duck banding, dove call counts, etc., will be assigned to individuals after considering both the program’s importance to the Field Office’s BCR as well as the abilities of field station staff.

What follows is a summary of our geographic and programmatic responsibilities of note, including our next highest priority field station to address Florida and Caribbean needs.

Hazen Field Office

Geographic Coverage Area: Mississippi Alluvial Valley BCR (Secondary) W. Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas BCR (Secondary)

State Agency Lead for Mig Birds: Arkansas

Regional Program Lead for: Refuge System planning assistance for Ivory-billed Woodpecker; Regional Wood Duck Coordinator; Midwinter waterfowl (co-lead with Memphis Field Office); Mississippi Flyway contact and Technical Section representative for hunting regulations and cooperative Flyway partnership programs

National Wildlife Refuges: All NWRs in Arkansas and north Louisiana (Red River, Upper Ouachita, D’Arbonne, Handy Brake, Black Bayou Lake, and Tensas River)

Ecological Services Field Offices: Conway, AR

Migratory Birds *Strategic Plan*

Jackson Field Office

Geographic Coverage Area:

Gulf Coastal Prairies and Marshes BCR (Co-Lead) Mississippi Alluvial Valley BCR (Co-Lead) East Gulf Coastal Plain BCR (Secondary)

State Agency Lead for Mig Birds:

Louisiana and Mississippi

Regional Program Lead for:

Louisiana coastal restoration initiatives; Lower Mississippi Valley Ecosystem Team (co-lead for Mig Birds with Vicksburg Field Office)

National Wildlife Refuges:

All NWRs in Mississippi, southwest Alabama (Choctaw and Bon Secour), and south Louisiana (those below Hazen FO's north LA coverage)

Ecological Services Field Offices:

Jackson, MS, Lafayette, LA, Daphne, AL, and Panama City, FL

Manteo Field Office

Geographic Coverage Area:

South Atlantic BCR (Co-Lead)

State Agency Lead for Mig Birds:

North Carolina and South Carolina

Regional Program Lead for:

Savannah-Santee-Pee Dee and Roanoke-Tar-Neuse-Cape Fear Ecosystem Teams; Atlantic Flyway Midwinter Waterfowl surveys, dove surveys, wood duck, and Technical Section representative for hunting regulations and cooperative Flyway partnership programs

National Wildlife Refuges:

All NWRs in North Carolina, South Carolina, and coastal Georgia

Ecological Services Field Offices:

Raleigh, NC, Charleston, SC, and Brunswick, GA

Memphis Field Office

Geographic Coverage Area:

East Gulf Coastal Plain BCR (Co-Lead) Central Hardwoods BCR (Co-Lead)

Mississippi Alluvial Valley BCR

(Secondary) Appalachian Mountains BCR (Secondary)

U.S. Virgin Islands BCR (Co-Lead) – Acting

State Agency Lead for Mig Birds:

Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee

Regional Program Lead for:

NABCI; Mexico/Yucatan partnership; Partners in Flight implementation; Midwinter waterfowl (co-lead with Hazen Field Office) and dove surveys; Mississippi Flyway Technical Section representative for nongame regulations

National Wildlife Refuges:

All NWRs in Kentucky, Tennessee, north Alabama (Wheeler NWR Complex, and Mountain Longleaf, Cahaba, Watercress Darter, and Eufaula), and northwest Arkansas (Logan Cave)

Ecological Services Field Offices:
Cookeville, TN and Lexington, KY

(Florida-Caribbean) Field Office (Location TBD) (Vacant)

Geographic Coverage Area:

Peninsular Florida (Co-Lead) – Atlanta Regional Office (Stefani Melvin), Acting; Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands BCR (Co-Lead) – Memphis Field Office (Bob Ford), Acting

State Agency Lead for Mig Birds:

Florida, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands

Regional Program Lead for:

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) initiatives

National Wildlife Refuges:

All NWRs in Florida, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands

Ecological Services Field Offices:

Vero Beach, FL, Jacksonville, FL, and Boqueron, PR

Asheville Field Office – Appalachian Mtns. Joint Venture (under consideration)

Geographic Coverage Area:

Appalachian Mountains BCR (Lead)

***Auburn Field Office – East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture**

Geographic Coverage Area:

East Gulf Coastal Plain BCR (Co-Lead)

***St. Louis Field Office – Central Hardwoods Joint Venture**

Geographic Coverage Area:

Central Hardwoods BCR (Co-Lead)

***Charleston Field Office – Atlantic Coast JV – South Atlantic Coordinator's Office**

Geographic Coverage Area:

South Atlantic BCR (Co-Lead) Peninsular Florida (Co-Lead)

Puerto Rico & U.S. Virgin Islands BCR (Co-Lead)

***Lafayette Field Office – Gulf Coast Joint Venture**

Geographic Coverage Area:

Gulf Coastal Prairies and Marshes BCR (Co-Lead)

Note: * Joint Venture whose coordinator's supervisor is not a Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Region employee

Vicksburg Field Office – Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture

Geographic Coverage Area:

W. Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas BCR (Lead)

Mississippi Alluvial Valley BCR (Co-Lead)

Atlanta Regional Office

Geographic Coverage Area:

Piedmont BCR (Lead)

State Agency Lead for Mig Birds:
Georgia

Regional Program Lead for:

Overall Program Policy; Field Office and Joint Venture Supervision; Permitting; Atlantic Flyway Technical Section representative for nongame regulations (Deputy Chief); Flyway Council and Service Regulations Committee meetings (Chief)

National Wildlife Refuges:

Non-coastal Georgia (Bond Swamp and Piedmont)

Ecological Services Field Offices:

Athens, GA

**Division of Migratory Birds
Organizational Chart 1 - Current**

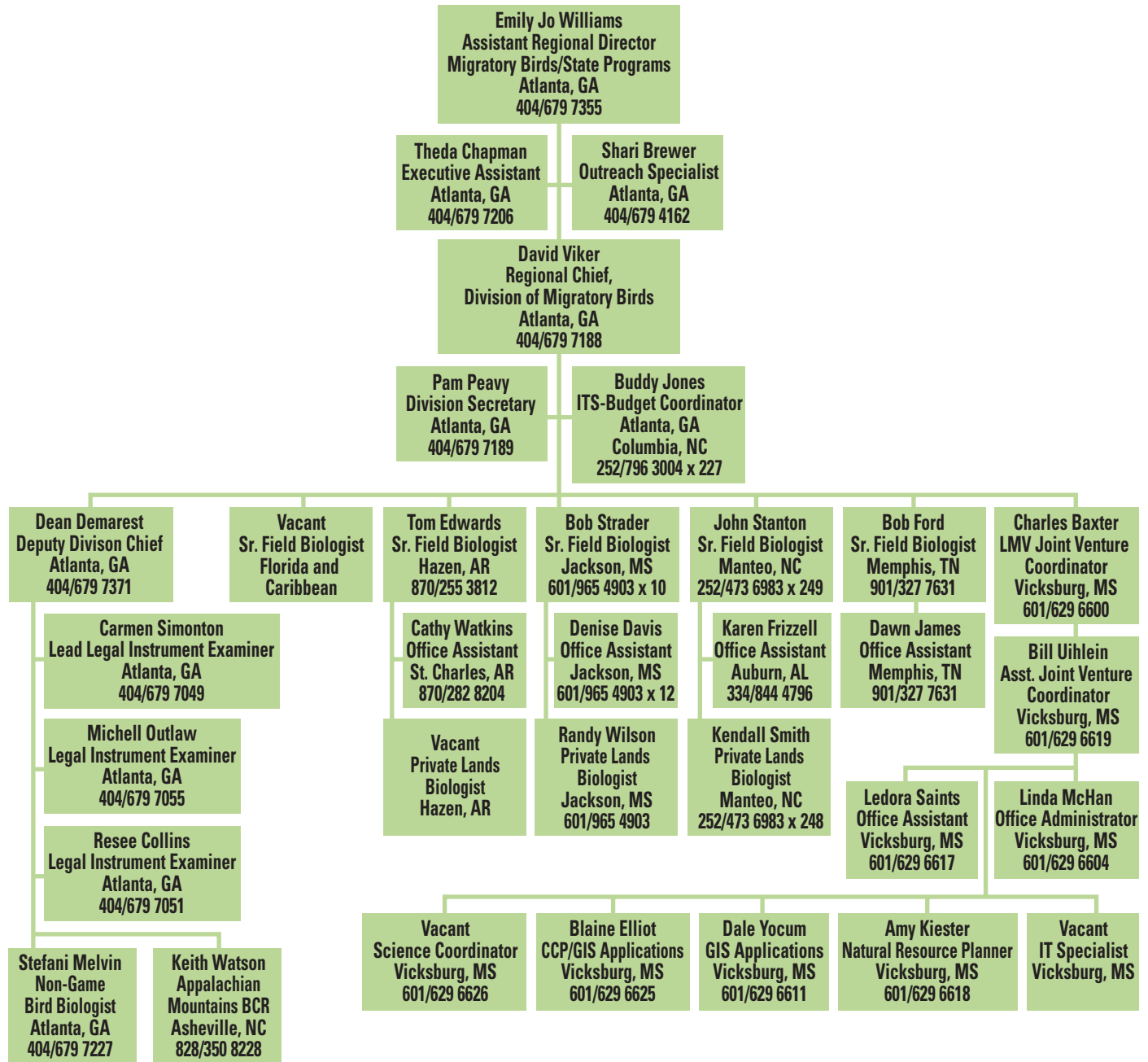


Figure 3. Current permanent Service positions supporting the Southeast Region, Division of Migratory Birds as of March 2006.

**Division of Migratory Birds
Organizational Chart 2 - Desired 1-5 year time-frame**

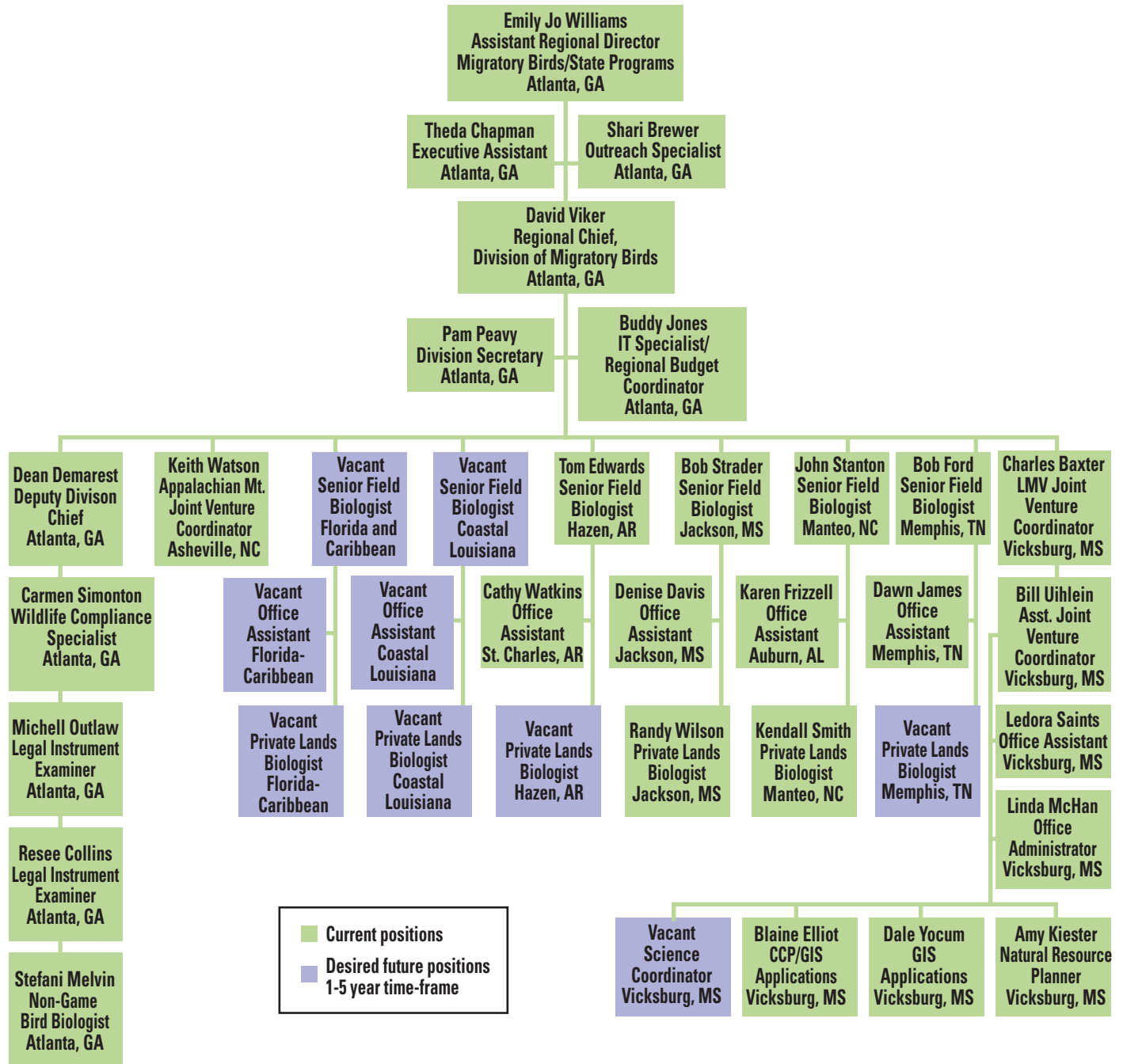


Figure 4. Short-term Staffing Plan – Desired permanent Service positions to support the Southeast Region, Division of Migratory Birds for the one-five year timeframe.

Desired Year 2020 Organizational Chart

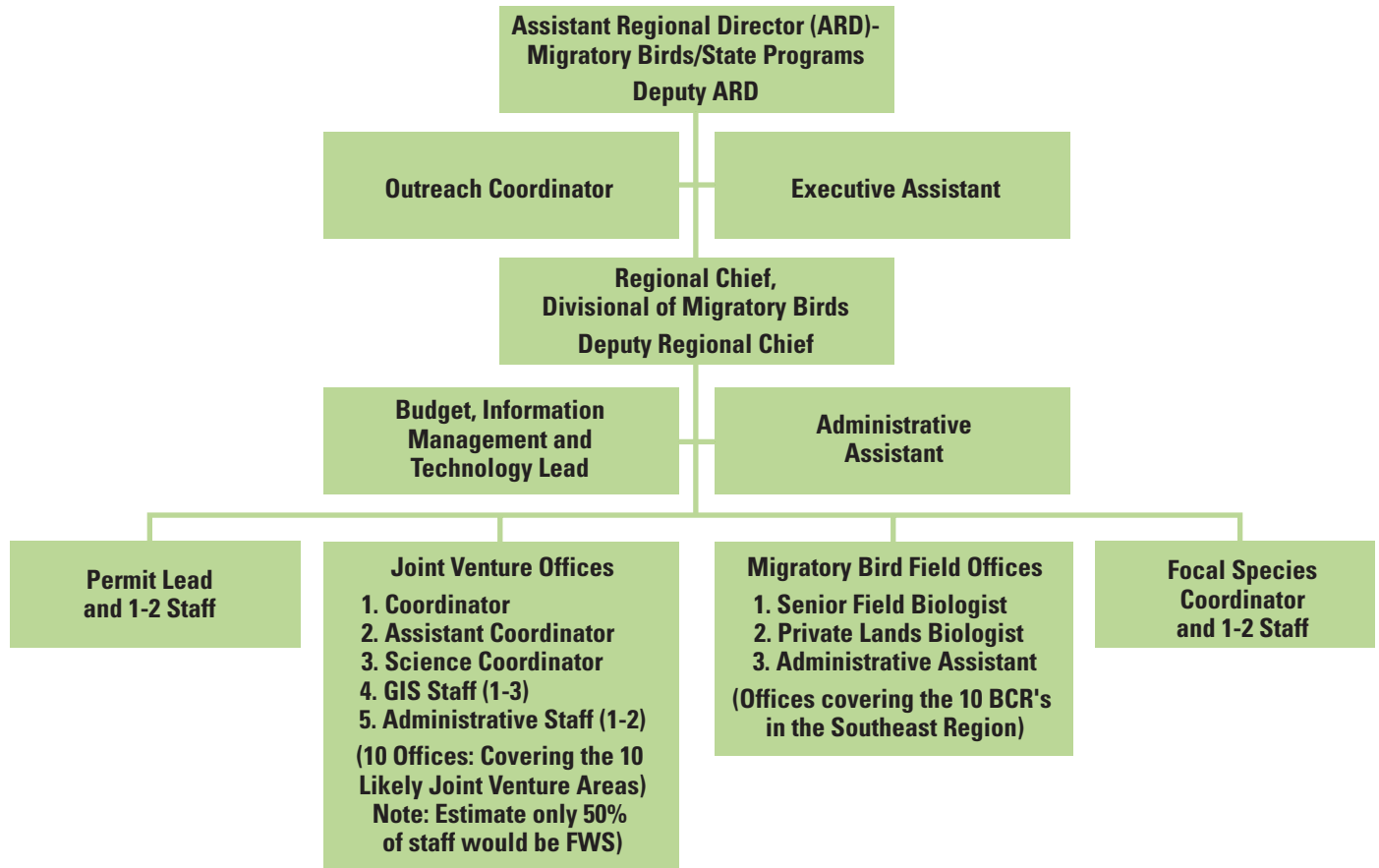


Figure 5. Long-term or Ideal Staffing Plan* – desired permanent Service positions or Partner positions (i.e., Joint Ventures) supporting southeastern United States migratory bird conservation for the 15-year timeframe.

* [note: for the various Joint Venture offices, the organizational structure, office location, percentage of Service versus partner positions, etc. would flow from individual JV plans; we simply attempt to represent here a basic need for or concept of, under ideal conditions, well-funded and well-staffed JV offices to coordinate Bird Conservation Region partner activities; JV Coordinator supervision could be by other Service Regions or partners.]



John and Karen Hollingsworth

Communications

Effective outreach that cultivates advocacy and resulting action is absolutely essential for effective conservation of migratory bird trust resources and the very survival of the Migratory Bird Program, especially in austere budget times.

To most effectively communicate with our target audiences the threats to – and myriad needs of – migratory bird conservation, we will leverage the outreach efforts of our small staff by relying largely on the network of professional education and interpretation specialists in the Service’s External Affairs, National Wildlife Refuge System, and Ecological Services programs. Field and regional staff “collateral duty” outreach leads will be fostered in the Division of Migratory Birds who will coordinate closely with our Regional Outreach Coordinator to ensure that Service priority migratory bird conservation priorities and messages are conveyed to appropriate external audiences.

Our communications efforts within the conservation community, however, must become part of our very fabric, viewed not as “something we stop to do,” rather “something that is continually done.” Without constant, effective communication of migratory bird threats, program priorities, and tangible accomplishments with our partners we remain subject to deep program reductions due to partners’ shifting priorities.

John and Karen Hollingsworth



Funding and Budgets

The national Migratory Bird Program budget structure contains five components for appropriations and execution processes referred to as subactivities:

- Conservation and Monitoring
- Permits
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan (Joint Ventures)
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act
- Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act

In addition, the Southeast Region Division of Migratory Birds receives funding from other sources, such as the National Wildlife Refuge System and the Division of Ecological Services' Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Endangered Species Program, to support planning and project delivery programs that would benefit migratory bird conservation.

Other Notes:

- relevant subactivities increase by \$100,000 with each new full-time equivalent position to capture the cost (salary, benefits, travel, etc.) of filling desired positions
- all subactivities increase by 5% annually for inflation
- new position priority #1 (see bottom of page 29) would be filled in 2006, priority #2 would be filled in 2007, priority #'s 3-4 would be filled in 2008, priority #'s 5-6 would be filled in 2009, and priority #'s 7-8 would be filled in 2010.
- 2006 figures do not include the two-year 1231 \$130,000 subactivity project money for focal species nor 1234 \$238,000 passing through to support the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture.
- Description of Subactivities; funding received from:

1231 = National - Division of Migratory Bird Management to support surveying and monitoring (operations)

1232 = National - Division of Migratory Bird Management to support permit program

4581 = Regional - Permit program fees collection

1234 = National - Division of Bird Habitat Conservation to support Joint Ventures

5840 = National - Division of Bird Habitat Conservation to support NAWMP efforts

1121 = Regional - Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to support efforts on private lands

1261 = Regional - National Wildlife Refuge System to support efforts on and around refuges

1113 = Regional - Endangered Species program to support ivory-billed woodpecker efforts

4524 = National - Division of Migratory Bird Management to support Junior Duck Stamp Program efforts

Fiscal Year	Funding Subactivity (\$000)									Total
	1231	1232	4581	1234	5840	1121	1261	1113	4524	
2005	1,209	147	35	715	25	283	380	0	10	2,804
2006	1,228	151	65	687	5	298	368	198	3	3,003
2007	1,376	153	68	711	5	313	386	210	3	3,225
2008	1,545	161	71	747	6	429	405	221	3	3,587
2009	1,622	169	75	784	6	650	425	232	4	3,967
2010	1,903	177	79	823	6	682	446	243	4	4,363
2020	12,979–16,850*									

Table 5. Funding levels to achieve staffing needs 2006-2010, as well as an estimate of what is needed to achieve an ideal staffing level (~2020).

* Important note: this funding range (which includes inflation) would be to support the proposed 57-74 positions while maintaining a 15 percent operation margin