



SONORAN JOINT VENTURE

STRATEGIC PLAN

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Introduction

Plan Purpose and Contents

The Sonoran Joint Venture (SJV) is a multi-faceted partnership of organizations, agencies, and individuals that works to conserve the unique birds and habitats of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. The SJV Strategic Plan (Plan) guides the overall direction of the SJV and provides a framework for a successful and sustainable conservation program. We also include a summary of the History and Significance of the SJV and the Structure and Responsibilities of the Management Board, committees, and staff. The intended audience for the SJV Strategic Plan is the SJV Management Board, Science Working Group, and SJV staff.

Mission, Goal, and Principles

The SJV partnership is based on a strong biological foundation, a landscape approach to bird conservation, and robust and diverse partners.

Mission

Work in partnership to steward healthy and resilient ecosystems for the unique birds, other wildlife, and people of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico.

Goals

Through multi-faceted partnerships, the SJV integrates strategies, goals, and objectives of existing regional, national, and international bird conservation plans and programs into a single strategic effort to conserve the birds and ecosystems of the SJV region. Strategies to accomplish this include:

1. Collaborate with partners to protect, conserve, restore, and enhance wintering, migration, and breeding habitat for all birds within the SJV region.
2. Coordinate planning and activities to maximize effectiveness of bird conservation efforts.
3. Share information in an open forum.
4. Work with partners to develop bird conservation proposals, projects, and programs.
5. Increase public awareness of bird conservation issues.
6. Use and disseminate the best information available.
7. Increase funding and support for projects and programs.

Guiding Principles

1. Undertake conservation actions that are biologically and culturally sound.
2. Support voluntary and cooperative projects.

3. Consider and be sensitive to the social, cultural, and economic needs of the communities in which conservation actions occur.
4. Foster a culture of belonging and openness. Any organizations and/or individuals interested in bird conservation are invited to be part of the SJV.
5. Maintain equal representation from the United States and Mexico in the SJV organizational structure and conservation initiatives.
6. Publish all communications, articles, plans, and reports in English and Spanish when appropriate.
7. Encourage and support education and training of students and conservation professionals.

Migratory Bird Joint Ventures: A Brief History

The Sonoran Joint Venture is one of twenty-four Migratory Bird Joint Ventures in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Established by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in 1986 as the on-the-ground mechanism for waterfowl and wetland conservation, Joint Ventures now strive to address the needs of all North American birds.

The Migratory Bird Joint Ventures have a three-decade record of success at bringing together partners to address bird and habitat conservation issues. They use a variety of mechanisms to reach their goals, including:

- *Non-regulatory solutions* – Joint ventures use voluntary and proactive conservation to reduce the need for additional regulations by getting ahead of actions such as Endangered Species Act listings.
- *Economically sound business approach* – The Joint Ventures’ strategic business model approach makes conservation investments more efficient. In fact, the Joint Venture program has one of the highest returns on investment in the conservation world, leveraging every federally appropriated dollar with \$31 in non-federal funding.
- *Working lands conservation* – Joint Ventures support conservation that works not only for wildlife, but also for the people who depend on those landscapes. From collaborative conservation on private lands to active management of public lands, this approach helps sustain the economic vitality of rural communities.
- *Sporting and outdoor traditions* – Joint Venture habitat conservation provides hunting and fishing opportunities, as well as places to hike, camp, and enjoy nature, ensuring future generations of hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy their natural heritage.
- *Resilient urban and rural communities* – Joint Venture projects contribute to clean and sustainable water supplies; flood and wildfire prevention; storm surge protection; pollution control; sustainable agriculture; and improved forage production for ranching.

Over the course of their history, the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures have collectively engaged with over 5,700 partners, helped enhance, conserve, and restore nearly 27 million acres of essential habitat across North America for people and wildlife, and leveraged 31 non-federal partner dollars for every federally appropriated dollar.

History and Significance of the Sonoran Joint Venture

A Coalescing of Bird Initiatives

In 1999, at the request of The Nature Conservancy of Arizona, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a meeting of interested individuals and agencies from the United States and Mexico was convened to discuss the development of a new Joint Venture to address bird conservation needs of the Sonoran Desert region. The opinion of the participants was that if a "new" bird conservation delivery model was to be created, it should be an international effort between the United States and Mexico because of shared species and habitats. Participants also agreed that it should be "all bird," reflecting the principles of the emerging North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). The SJV was initiated at a time when existing and new bird initiatives were moving toward coordination and integration. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan was undergoing its 1998 Update; Partners in Flight was beginning to roll out its plans; the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan and the North American Waterbird Plan were under development; Audubon's Important Bird Area Program was intensifying its work in the U.S.; and Mexico was about to publish its landmark book, *Áreas de Importancia para la Conservación de las Aves en México*. Other conservation forces at work at the time included The Nature Conservancy's Sonoran Ecoregion Plan, the Arizona Partners in Flight Plan, the challenge by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to create a "new" bird conservation delivery model for upland birds, and the genesis of the NABCI.

The Sonoran Joint Venture was officially formed in 1999, housed in the Migratory Bird Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region, and based in Tucson, Arizona. Over the next several years, the SJV Coordinator (the only original staff member) worked to form a strong partnership, develop foundational documents such as the first draft of the SJV Strategic Plan, identify conservation priorities, and receive formal acknowledgement and official recognition as a North American Waterfowl Management Plan Migratory Bird Joint Venture from the NAWMP Plan Committee. The Coordinator also began the SJV Awards Program to get funds into the hands partners to address these conservation needs.

In 2003 the SJV staff increased from one to three full-time employees with the addition of a Science Coordinator and Education & Outreach Coordinator. Over the next ten years, the SJV

expanded its efforts and reach, growing collaborative partnerships and achieving conservation successes throughout the region. The Technical Committee (now called the Science Working Group) developed an in-depth Bird Conservation Plan and Waterfowl Management Supplement, originally published in 2006 and 2007 respectively. These tools take the bird conservation priorities from national and international plans and initiatives and look at them through a regional lens for the SJV region. From identifying the biggest conservation priorities to establishing broad population objectives for priority species, these plans help guide the efforts of the SJV partnership. This time was also foundational for the Communications, Education, and Outreach Program. The SJV developed a website and other outreach tools and materials, created a social media presence, started the SJV eBulletin, and created and supported training opportunities for SJV partners on both sides of the border in everything from ecotourism to bird monitoring.

In 2023 the SJV added a fourth full-time position, a Mexico Coordinator (based in Mexico). This significant milestone represented the creation of a fully transnational staff and strengthened the foundation of the SJV's partnership in Mexico. With the publication of the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan in 2025, the Sonoran Joint Venture moved into a new phase of adaptive management that takes into consideration the multifaceted biological, political, and social landscape of the transnational environment in which we work. By taking a biocultural view of our work and integrating conservation social science and strategic communications into conservation priorities identified by the best available biological science and Indigenous knowledge, we can be more effective in addressing the complex conservation issues affecting the region.

International Bird Conservation Initiatives

The Sonoran Joint Venture works to “step down” the goals and objectives of the major bird conservation initiatives to a regional level and to support our partners in addressing these issues. The following sections describe the major bird conservation initiatives and partnerships. The SJV Strategic Plan and the actions of the SJV coordinate closely with the below plans and programs to integrate their conservation recommendations on a regional level and contribute our successes to the larger effort.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), signed by the United States and Canada in 1986 and by Mexico in 1994, was written to address declining waterfowl populations by conserving, restoring, and enhancing wetland habitats throughout North America. The NAWMP seeks to restore waterfowl populations in Canada, United States, and Mexico to their 1970 levels. This pioneering document has served as a model for other bird conservation initiatives. Joint Ventures evolved from the NAWMP and are the regional delivery mechanisms

for waterfowl conservation. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) was passed to fund the wetlands projects that support the NAWMP.

Partners In Flight

Concern raised by declining trends shown in Breeding Bird Survey results from 1966 to the late 1980s brought Neotropical migratory birds to the attention of wildlife conservationists. Partners in Flight (PIF) was organized in 1990 to focus resources on the improvement of monitoring, research, management, and education programs to benefit Neotropical migratory birds and their habitats. PIF soon became the champion for both resident and migratory nongame landbirds. PIF's goal is to restore populations of species at risk and to keep common birds common. The PIF North American Landbird Conservation Plan highlights priority species in the PIF Watch List and suggests population objectives and habitat needs for these species.

U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan

The United States Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP) is a partnership committed to the conservation of shorebirds. On a regional scale, the goal of the USSCP is to ensure that an adequate quantity of good quality habitat is identified and maintained to support the different shorebirds that breed in, winter in, and migrate through each shorebird region. On a national scale, the USSCP's goal is to stabilize populations of all shorebird species known or suspected to be in decline due to limiting factors occurring within the United States. At the same time, it strives to ensure that common species are also protected from future threats. On a hemispheric scale, the goal is to restore and maintain populations of all shorebird species in the Western Hemisphere through cooperative international efforts.

North American Waterbird Conservation Plan

The North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP) is a partnership of researchers, private individuals, academics, and federal and state agencies that works to develop a strategy to advance the conservation of waterbirds and their habitats. Its mission is to create a cohesive, multi-national partnership for conserving and managing waterbirds (seabirds, wading birds, gulls, terns, pelicans, and marsh birds) and their habitats throughout North America. Its goal is to produce healthy populations and habitats for waterbirds in North America in their breeding, migratory, and wintering ranges.

Important Bird Areas / Áreas de Importancia para la Conservación de las Aves en México

United States Important Bird Areas (IBAs) administered by National Audubon Society, and Áreas de Importancia para la Conservación de las Aves en México (AICAs), administered by Sección Mexicana del Consejo Internacional para la Preservación de las Aves (CIPAMEX) and BirdLife International, are programs that nominate and work to conserve a collection of sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of birds, including sites for breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. IBAs/AICAs may include a few acres or thousands of acres

but are usually discrete sites that stand out from the surrounding landscape. IBAs may include public or private lands and may be protected or unprotected. The goals of the U.S. IBA Program are to identify IBAs in all 50 states; increase the protected status of all IBAs; promote sensible management of IBAs; involve local communities, conservation groups, landowners, and the public; maximize the use and dissemination of IBA data; and monitor IBAs to understand changes and provide feedback for conservation initiatives. Mexico's AICA program is equivalent to the U.S. IBA program and has a similar mission and goals.

North American Bird Conservation Initiative

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) is not a plan, but rather a vision. Its role is to support and facilitate on-the-ground delivery of conservation for all native North American birds by increasing the effectiveness of existing and new programs and initiatives. It also works to enhance coordination and foster greater cooperation among the nations and peoples of the continent. It is the umbrella under which the major bird conservation plans come together to address the bird conservation needs of North America. NABCI partners have developed a consistent ecological spatial framework, dividing North America into 67 Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs), which are used by the SJV.

Geographic Scope

The SJV region includes Arizona from the Mogollon Rim south, southern California (including the Channel Islands), the Mexican states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Baja California, and Baja California Sur, and the Gulf of California and its islands (Figure 1). The boundaries were determined by partners in the U.S. and Mexico and approved by the SJV Management Board.



Figure 1. Map of the Sonoran Joint Venture Region, with Bird Conservation Regions and State boundaries.

Importance of the Area

The SJV region includes in whole or part ten Bird Conservation Regions, or BCRs (Figure 1). The SJV region holds the fourth-greatest level of biological diversity on earth. An estimated 750 bird species breed in, winter in, and/or migrate through the SJV region. This is nearly two-thirds of all bird species that occur in northern Mexico, the United States, and Canada. The SJV region includes 11% of Mexico's protected areas, 41 Ramsar wetlands of international significance, 18 Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network sites, 67 Important Bird Areas and 60 Áreas de Importancia para la Conservación de las Aves de México, and 4 major binational watersheds.

Administrative Structure

The Sonoran Joint Venture has a core staff that supports day-to-day operations of the SJV partnership. Staff is supported by an active and engaged Management Board and Science Working Group, as well as other ad-hoc committees. The following section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Management Board, committees, and staff.

The Sonoran Joint Venture has four full-time staff positions (Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, Science Coordinator, and Communications & Partnerships Specialist). Except for the Assistant Coordinator, staff are employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The Assistant Coordinator position is based in Mexico and is hosted by SJV partner Pronatura Noroeste, A.C. The SJV Management Board comprises partners from federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, academia, industry, tribes, and private citizens. The SJV also receives technical guidance and direction from a Science Working Group, and ad-hoc committees provide support as needed in other areas.

Boards/Committees

Management Board

The SJV Management Board is the guiding body of the SJV. The board maintains leadership, guidance, resources, commitment, and support to accomplish the goals and objectives of the SJV. Members of the Board include representatives from federal, state, corporate, non-profit conservation organization partners, and private individuals interested in the conservation of birds and their habitats within the boundaries of the SJV region. While board members provide advice and recommendations, they do not have fiduciary responsibilities for the SJV.

The Management Board supports the SJV partnership in the following ways:

1. Review, provide guidance, and approve organizational policy, program priorities, and long-range planning.
2. Identify and help secure partnerships and funding sources.
3. Use board member agency/organizational program resources to contribute to the SJV partnership, either financially or in-kind.
4. Endorse significant budget changes.
5. Endorse significant changes in the duties of SJV staff and new SJV staff positions.
6. Recruit new board members and select new Executive Committee members.
7. Actively participate in one or more board sub-committees; appoint members from board member agencies/organizations to sub-committees as appropriate.
8. Keep Congressional (U.S.) members informed of SJV accomplishments and needs (as appropriate/allowable).
9. Evaluate Federal, State, and local policies as they relate to SJV goals and objectives.
10. Approve the list of SJV Awards and rank grant proposals submitted to NAWCA.
11. Support SJV staff in the revision and updating of this plan every 5 years.

Meetings and Representation

The Board meets in person two times per year, once in the spring (generally May) and once in the fall (generally November), with a third shorter, virtual meeting in August. We will always strive to provide virtual/hybrid participation options. The Board may meet more frequently if determined necessary by the Executive Committee. Board meetings will alternate between the United States and Mexico and the Board will strive to meet in each of the states participating in the SJV at least once every three years. The Board will strive to maintain representation from each state participating in the SJV, and equal representation from Mexico and the United States.

Decision Making

The board strives to make decisions by consensus, engaging in conversation until everyone is comfortable with the decision. If consensus is not possible and a decision is necessary, decisions will be made by majority vote, requiring a quorum of 50% of board members plus one for a valid vote. In the event of a tie, if it is not time-sensitive, the decision will be postponed until the board can host a special session so that 100% of members engage in the vote. If it is time-sensitive, or if there is still a tie after the special session, the board chair will cast the tie-breaking vote.

Term Limits

Board members serve three-year terms with no limits to renewal, pending active participation and board approval. Continued participation by an individual member will be evaluated every three years by the Board and either approved or denied by majority vote.

Expectations

Board members are expected to participate in meetings either in person or virtually. Each Board member will designate an alternate to act on their behalf in the event of their absence. Members who miss two consecutive meetings without sending an alternate or communicating their absence in any way shall be considered for removal from the Board and/or may be invited to become non-voting special advisors to the Board. Board members are expected to actively serve on a minimum of one committee, to respond to requests for input and feedback from the Coordinator, staff, and Executive Committee, and to generally engage in Board activities.

Nominations

New Board members may be nominated by any existing member or by SJV staff. The nominee is invited to submit their CV, along with a short paragraph describing their interest in joining the SJV Management Board. They will be invited to attend the next meeting as a guest so the board and the nominee can get to know each other. At the end of the meeting the nominee will be asked to leave the room so existing Board members can discuss the nomination, which will be accepted or denied by majority vote (see “Decision Making” above).

Management Board - Chair

The Chair will be elected by majority vote by the Board and serve a two-year term with an optional second two-year term if desired and approved by the Board. The Board will strive to alternate the Chair position between Mexico and the United States. The Chair leads Board meetings and facilitates and participates in the decision-making process of the Board.

Management Board - Vice-Chair

A Vice-Chair will be elected by a majority vote of the Board and serve a two-year term with an optional second two-year term if desired and approved by the Board. In the event of the Chair’s absence, the Vice-Chair will act as Chair. Ideally, the Vice-Chair becomes the Chair at the end of the Chair’s term, although this is not required.

Management Board - Executive Committee

The Executive Committee addresses important issues requiring a definitive action in the time between Board meetings. The Executive Committee comprises the Chair, the Vice-Chair, Past Chair, and the SJV Coordinator. Issues resolved by the Executive Committee will be submitted to the Board as soon as possible by email or at the next Board meeting. The Executive Committee meets virtually every month.

Management Board – Other Committees

As part of the regular functions and responsibilities of the Management Board, committees of the board serve to support special needs of the SJV. All board members are expected to serve on a minimum of one committee. In addition to the following standing committees, temporary ad-hoc committees may be formed as the need arises to address specific issues.

- **Legislative Outreach Committee:** This committee provides strategic communications and guidance around outreach to legislators. It may include working with SJV staff to develop appropriate communications tools, representing the SJV on the Association of JV Management Boards, participating in the annual AJVMB “Hill Visit” to Washington D.C. to meet with legislators, decision makers, and key agency personnel, and supporting visits and outreach to legislators in their home districts.
- **Fundraising Committee:** This committee helps identify novel and creative funding sources for the SJV in ways that are value-added to partner fundraising efforts. Its work includes building and strengthening relationships with potential funders, providing feedback and input on grant proposals, and thinking strategically about how to support the SJV’s financial needs in the short-, mid-, and long-term. T

Science Working Group (formerly Technical Committee)

The Science Working Group is an open forum of information exchange for bird and habitat stewardship, research, monitoring, and evaluation. It translates goals and objectives of the bird initiatives to meaningful goals and objectives at the JV, BCR, state, and local scales, and supports the design and implementation projects to address these goals and objectives. One of the Working Group’s prime functions is to help write and update the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan, Bird Conservation Plan, and other conservation planning and design documents. Anyone with an interest in bird and habitat conservation in the SJV region is invited to participate in the Science Working Group, and there is no formal membership list. The Science Working Group meets twice per year (once in spring, once in fall), with virtual participation options, and strives to meet alternately in Mexico and the U.S. The SJ provides simultaneous translation (English/Spanish) for Science Working Group meetings.

The Science Working Group’s responsibilities include:

- Develop, maintain, and communicate a strong scientific foundation for planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, researching, and evaluating bird conservation.
- Identify and prioritize species, habitats, and Focus Areas for the SJV.
- Assist partners in identifying and developing bird conservation projects and programs.
- Provide operational guidance on implementation strategies and technical advice to partners developing bird conservation proposals.

- Actively participate in the development, implementation, and revision of the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan and Bird Conservation Plan.
- Provide input to help monitor and evaluate progress on the objectives of the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan and Bird Conservation Plan.
- Provide input into funding priorities for the SJV Awards Program.

STAFF

SJV Coordinator (Director)

The SJV Coordinator (Director) coordinates and facilitates the overall implementation of actions and projects in support of the SJV Implementation Plan. The primary duties include:

- Oversee the day-to-day operations of the Sonoran Joint Venture.
- Supervise and support SJV staff in the U.S. and Mexico.
- Manage SJV budget, including administration of grants and cooperative agreements.
- Coordinate the development and implementation of SJV partnerships.
- Develop and manage the SJV Strategic Plan and SJV Conservation Implementation Plan.
- Track accomplishments and evaluate progress towards the goals and objectives of the SJV Strategic Plan and SJV Conservation Implementation Plan.
- Provide guidance to partners in the development of projects and programs.
- Generate and leverage funds for SJV projects and programs.
- Work closely with the Management Board to organize Board meetings, provide SJV briefings, serve as an intermediary for communication among Board members, and provide annual updates and annual progress reports.
- Support all Management Board committees through their respective chairs.
- Represent the SJV on regional, national, and international committees and working groups.
- Work with the Science Coordinator and SJV Science Working Group to administer the SJV Awards Program.

SJV Mexico Coordinator

The SJV Mexico Coordinator (based in Mexico) helps sustain and grow the SJV partnership in Mexico. The primary duties include:

- Represent the SJV in Mexico and share the work and priorities of the SJV at meetings and on working groups.
- Engage with working groups to develop goals, objectives, and protocols for bird and habitat conservation that align with SJV priorities.
- Build and maintain relationships with Mexican federal, state, Indigenous, and local conservation agencies and organizations.

- Work with Mexican agencies and organizations to identify research need and facilitate projects that address SJV conservation goals and objectives.
- Work with SJV Coordinator to monitor and evaluate progress of conservation projects and manage information on accomplishments.
- Serve as co-chair of the SJV Science Working Group (in conjunction with the SJV Science Coordinator).
- Serve on the review committee for the SJV Awards Program.
- Develop or assist in the development of grant proposals.

SJV Science Coordinator

The primary responsibility of the Science Coordinator is to maintain the Biological Foundation, Conservation Design, and Research and Monitoring of the SJV and ensure their continuous improvement. The primary duties include:

- Maintain and update the SJV Bird Conservation Plan and Waterfowl Management Supplement.
- Lead the SJV Science Working Group with the SJV Assistant Coordinator.
- Act as the SJV liaison to the major bird initiatives, science teams, and partner organizations involved in conservation within the SJV region.
- Provide support to federal, state, and local conservation groups in the interpretation and implementation of SJV conservation plans.
- Work with partners to coordinate bird monitoring throughout the SJV region.
- Develop and maintain SJV science databases.
- Provide consultation, training, and expertise to SJV partners on conservation projects and activities.
- Lead the review and ranking SJV Awards Program's proposals.
- Monitor and evaluate the progress of SJV conservation projects and provide information on accomplishments.
- Develop or assist in the development of grant proposals for the SJV and partners.

SJV Communications, Education, and Outreach Coordinator

The primary responsibility of the Communications, Education, and Outreach Coordinator is to support the goals and objectives of the SJV through strategic communications, education, and outreach projects, programs, and activities. The primary duties include:

- Lead the Communications, Education, and Outreach Ad-Hoc Working Group.
- Develop, maintain, and implement a Strategic Equitable Communications Plan that links SJV Conservation Implementation Plan objectives with key concepts and audiences, appropriate messages, and tools or programs for delivering those messages.
- Implement and/or facilitate SJV equitable communications and partnership development activities.

- Assist partners in identifying and developing appropriate communications, education, and outreach projects, programs, and funding sources.
- Develop and help implement training and capacity building opportunities for SJV partners.
- Develop and maintain the SJV website and listserv.
- Edit and publish the SJV eBulletin.
- Manage SJV social media channels.
- Develop and distribute SJV communications, education, and outreach materials to SJV partners and other key audiences.
- Provide technical assistance to partners developing communications, education, and outreach grant proposals and/or programs.
- Develop or assist in developing SJV grant proposals.
- Represent the SJV on the National JV Communications, Education, and Outreach Team, the NABCI Communications Working Group, and other groups as appropriate.

ELEMENTS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

This section describes the five framework elements of Strategic Habitat Conservation. Together, these are critical to the protection, conservation, restoration, and enhancement of bird populations and their habitats within the SJV region: Biological Planning, Conservation Design, Delivery of Conservation Actions, Monitoring and Research, and Communications, Education, and Outreach. The description of each element is followed by objectives, which are specific and measurable, and strategies (actions) that will help us accomplish the objective. The strategies are collectively intended to be a five-year overview of needed actions.

Partner participation is key to the delivery of the five elements. The SJV will provide an open forum for collaboration among partners and facilitate activities to coordinate and accomplish collective goals. This collaboration will allow partners to be most effective and efficient, work on shared priorities, and combine conservation actions to achieve the greatest effect.

Biological Planning

A strong biological foundation is critical to the credibility and efficacy of the SJV. This will be accomplished by identifying the highest priority bird populations, developing population objectives, describing species-habitat relationships, compiling this information into the SJV Bird Conservation and Waterfowl Management Plans, and developing strategies as part of the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan.

Objective 1

Identify priority species: Of the approximately 750 bird species documented in the SJV region, partners should focus actions on those with the highest risk from direct threats, small population size, small ranges, and declining population trends, as well as those for which we have stewardship responsibility (endemics and species that have a large percentage of their population within the SJV region).

Strategies

Assess the status of all bird species breeding in, wintering in, and/or migrating through the SJV region by using existing objective species assessments (e.g., Partners in Flight, NAWMP) to identify Priority Species.

Objective 2

Formulate population objectives: Population objectives are measurable. These may be expressed as abundance, trend, vital rates and/or other measurable indices of population status and are based on biological information that define what constitutes a healthy population.

Strategies:

- Calculate population objectives for priority species by using processes from the bird initiatives, PIF objectives for landbirds, and NAWMP objectives for waterfowl.

Objective 3

Identify limiting factors: Informed assumptions about the factors limiting populations or ecosystem functions provide the basis for achieving population objectives. Much of what we can identify at present will be from other areas or from surrogate species.

Strategies:

- Determine from literature or partner expertise the factors limiting species populations.
- Design research to determine demographic parameters for management strategies in the SJV.

Objective 4

Describe and model species-habitat relationships: Collect and organize descriptions of needed habitat elements for a species to be sustained, including microhabitats, into models for analysis in the conservation design element.

Strategies:

- Conduct a literature review and/or use partner expertise to identify habitat needs for priority species, including microhabitat needs.
- Compile species-habitat relationship data, population response to treatments, population response to edge effects, isolation, other threats and limiting factors, and conservation recommendations for priority species by habitat type.
- Produce ecological models for representative species that express responses to various habitat conditions.

Objective 5

Develop and maintain SJV Conservation Plans based on the above assessments, analyses, and habitat data.

Strategies:

- Maintain the SJV Bird Conservation Plan.
- Maintain the SJV Waterfowl Management Plan.
- Continue to update and refine assessments, analyses, and recommendations in the SJV Bird Conservation Plan and Waterfowl Management Plan and related documents.

Conservation Design

Conservation Design takes the results of the biological planning element into products that are accessible to SJV partners. We use biological objectives and other factors to design a landscape approach to stewardship that will be applied at the species, habitat, community, or site level.

Objective 1

Formulate habitat objectives: Models and priority area descriptions can help estimate the amount and condition of habitat of each type required to attain our population objectives.

Strategies:

- Develop models to estimate the amount and type of habitat needed to achieve bird population objectives.

Objective 2

Characterize habitat and landscape: Use GIS and remote sensing to describe the SJV region.

Strategies:

- Compile remote sensing data that describes vegetation type, condition, and patch size.

- Assess the conservation status of the landscape by landownership category and protection status.
- Combine 1 and 2 into a GIS.

Objective 3

Develop species and habitat decision support tools: A decision support tool combines geospatial data (from Conservation Design - Objective 2) and ecological models (from Biological Planning - Objective 4) into a format that helps managers decide what conservation actions to apply and where.

Strategies:

- Use ecological models combined with landscape GIS analyses to determine key areas for work to meet habitat and population objectives for priority species. If Focus Areas are not sufficient, identify additional areas for work.
- Produce easy to understand maps that indicate where partners can work to achieve habitat and population objectives.

Objective 4

Designate Focus Areas: Designate Focus Areas that help achieve habitat and bird population objectives, offer overlapping benefits, and where a group of similar conservation actions can be applied.

Strategies:

- Use Decision Support Tools and ecological models to identify Focus Areas (areas identified for stewardship action).
- Select Focus Areas based on biological value, direct threats, conservation opportunities, and other appropriate factors.
- Write Focus Area summaries that describe strategies for the SJV to support.

Conservation Delivery

Implementation of on-the-ground actions based on Biological Planning and Conservation Design results in the application of conservation actions.

Objective 1

Guide the development, implementation, and maintenance of habitat conservation projects or programs.

Strategies:

- Provide input and/or technical assistance to partners on development, implementation, and maintenance of conservation projects or programs.
- Develop and maintain a competitive Awards Program for pilot projects or innovative efforts that contribute to the SJV mission and objectives.
- Provide partners with training on key conservation tools and actions to address threats to birds and habitats.
- Compile a working list of stewardship programs in the SJV region.

Monitoring and Research

Monitoring and Research are fundamental elements of SHC that enable improvement of models, tools, and on-the-ground stewardship strategies. The SJV will take an adaptive approach to inventory and monitoring by performing a needs assessment that includes a baseline inventory, trend monitoring, and activity-based monitoring.

Objective 1

Establish a monitoring program in support of Planning, Design, and Delivery that includes baseline inventory of species and habitat, population trends, and impacts of stewardship actions on bird populations and habitats. The monitoring program will be coordinated with other existing and emerging programs such as NABCI, PIF, Arizona Coordinated Bird Monitoring (AZ-CBM), and IBAs/AICAs. The Avian Knowledge Network – Borderlands Avian Data Center helps support uniformity and transparency in how data are compiled, analyzed, and shared for regional, national, and international stewardship efforts.

Strategies:

- Assess monitoring needs.
- Inventory current monitoring projects.
- Develop a monitoring program in coordination with the major bird initiatives, states, and NABCI's monitoring program.
- Support, coordinate, initiate and/or facilitate short- and long-term trend and project-based monitoring that meets SJV needs.
- Coordinate with and contribute to national and international bird monitoring programs to improve methodology, analysis, information dissemination, data contribution, coordination, etc.
- Support partner ability to contribute data to the Avian Knowledge Network – Borderlands Avian Data Center.
- Organize and write the SJV Inventory and Monitoring Plan.

Objective 2

Increase the knowledge of SJV bird populations and habitats by focusing research to provide the highest value to stewardship.

Strategies:

- Assess and prioritize a list of research needs regarding responses of populations and habitats to stewardship actions.
- Support partners in conducting research that addresses SJV needs.
- Maintain a directory of completed and ongoing bird and habitat related research in the SJV region.
- Work with regional, national, and international groups to standardize, coordinate, and improve research efforts.
- Coordinate with and participate on the NAWMP Science Support Team, the PIF International Science Committee, and other bird initiative science teams.
- Incorporate research results and science teams' information into SJV plans and work.

Objective 3

Increase the number of trained ornithology professionals and citizen scientists.

Strategies:

- Develop, conduct, and/or sponsor monitoring, research, and other biological training for conservation professionals, professional-track students, and community scientists.

Objective 4

- Ensure that biological information and data are available to partners and easily accessible and understood.

Strategies:

- Summarize and disseminate monitoring and research assessment results to partners and managers in a user-friendly format, including presentations and online.
- Publish stories about SJV partner projects in the eBulletin and through other mechanisms.

Management and Coordination

Provide the structure, forum for coordination, and assistance to attract partners, leverage and generate funding, and support, implement, and maintain conservation programs and projects.

Objective 1

Maintain an open, working forum and increase capacity to facilitate partnerships.

Strategies:

- Maintain the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan, including an annual Work Plan.
- Maintain a Management Board, Science Working Group, and Communications, Education, and Outreach Committees that include participation of key participants in the United States and Mexico.
- Encourage participation by informing and working with existing and new partners and partner organizations, agencies, and institutions.
- Support an engaged and involved SJV staff.
- Initiate, facilitate, and/or assist working groups that address topical or geographical conservation needs or issues of concern.
- Communicate SJV goals and objectives by participating in meetings, workshops, symposium, and conferences, and sharing on the SJV website, eBulletin, listserv, and other means.
- Manage and implement the SJV Strategic Plan and update it every 5 years.

Objective 2

Work with partners to coordinate efficient, effective, and sound stewardship projects and programs.

Strategies:

- Communicate information to partners regarding focal species and habitats.
- Work with partners to implement, evaluate, and improve projects and programs.
- Disseminate SJV Conservation Plans and other scientific, conservation, and management information to partners to facilitate coordination of projects and programs.
- Stay current on conservation issues affecting the birds and habitats of the SJV region and share this information with the board, committees, and partners.
- Provide scientific information to the public, decision-makers, and/or elected officials on issues that impact our mission.

Communications, Education, and Outreach

Communications, Education, and Outreach (CEO) are a critical component to successful bird conservation efforts. The SJV's communications, education, and outreach program communicates the biological, social, cultural, and economic value of birds and their habitats and supports the objectives of the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan. The SJV Strategic Communications Plan (to be developed) links the conservation issues, objectives, and

recommended actions in SJV conservation plans to existing communications, education, and outreach tools and programs relevant to different key audiences. It also guides the future development of communications, education, and outreach programs and resources.

The long-term success of the SJV depends on effective and strategic communication with existing partners, potential partners, and the public. With the large size, biological complexity, and cultural diversity of the SJV region, regular communications are critical. Communications, education, and outreach are linked to our mission and guide what we fund and support. They are also important to set the stage for an informed citizenry in the future.

Objective 1

Improve the effectiveness of partner actions throughout the SJV region by establishing a Communications, Education, and Outreach Program that supports partners in using strategic CEO to meet conservation objectives.

Strategies:

- Develop and implement a Strategic Communications Plan that connects conservation objectives from the SJV conservation plans with on-the-ground communications, education, and outreach actions to benefit bird populations and habitats.
- Support internal communications among partners, including developing and maintaining a listserv, newsletter, website, and social media channels.
- With partners, provide (sponsor or facilitate) training to professionals and professional-track students on conservation education, outreach, habitat management, birding ecotourism, and other appropriate topics.

Objective 2

Inform external audiences of SJV goals and objectives, including members of U.S. Congress.

Strategies:

- Identify key audiences, develop appropriate messages, create or find appropriate tools or programs for reaching those audiences, support SJV staff and partners in delivering those messages, and evaluate impacts of messaging.
- Support existing CEO programs that advance the goals and objectives of the SJV.
- Develop and distribute CEO materials to appropriate audiences as determined by the CEO planning tool.
- Support SJV efforts to seek funds by developing appropriate informational materials.

Objective 3

Develop a program to increase the number of birding trips to the SJV region and assist in creating or improving economic incentives for conservation for local communities.

Strategies:

- Support and help publicize birding ecotourism efforts of SJV partner organizations (articles in publications, SJV website, social media.)
- Develop partnerships with other ecotourism organizations that help facilitate conservation-based birding trips to the SJV region.
- Work with other organizations to provide ecotourism training opportunities for local communities and individuals interested in becoming birding guides.

Funding

To be effective over a large area, at multiple scales, and with our broad mission, the SJV will need increased funding for both capacity and implementation. The SJV should clearly document its need to maintain sufficient support through base funding provided by Congress through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. SJV staff and Management Board Members will also work together creatively to identify other sources of funding necessary to administer the SJV program and support stewardship projects.

Objective 1

Seek additional SJV funds.

Strategies:

- As appropriate/permitted, participate in the Association of Joint Venture Management Boards “Hill Visit” to garner support for Joint Ventures.
- Maintain a budget tracking system and database to inform Congress and partners.
- Approach participating partners, institutions, and individuals for funding to support SJV projects and programs.
- Submit proposals to granting institutions.
- Work with partners to seek new sources of funding.
- Announce funding opportunities on website, eBulletin, and listserv.

Evaluation of Conservation Actions

The SJV reports its accomplishments to many entities including funders, conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, media, and Congress. It is essential that the SJV be able to quickly and accurately measure and report accomplishments. In some cases, the

measure of accomplishment is simply completion of a particular activity. In other cases, success can be far more difficult to measure and requires significant time and effort (e.g., examining long-term trends in bird populations).

Objective 1

Track annual accomplishments. Conduct an annual review to determine progress on the objectives and strategies of the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan, including asking board members and partners for their input.

Strategies:

- Develop and maintain a database to track SJV and partner accomplishments.
- Solicit and compile staff and partner contributions.
- Submit annual accomplishments to USFWS Migratory Birds HQ staff.

Objective 2

Report annual accomplishments to the Management Board and partners.

Strategies:

- Prepare an annual progress report with input from the Management Board, Committees, and partners for the SJV Conservation Implementation Plan, detailing progress made and next steps.
- Update the SJV Strategic Plan and Conservation Implementation Plan every five years.
- Conduct self-evaluations of the Management Board every five years.