C. Regional Population and Habitat Goals

1. Population Goals

Overall Objective:

Maintain, stabilize, or increase populations of high priority breeding, transient, and wintering species.

Goals:

Shorebirds:
- Presently, maintain breeding populations and ensure high reproductive success to ensure sustainable populations of each of the highest priority species in the region.
- During the next 50 years double the breeding population size for each of the highest priority species in the region and/or through population viability analyses, determine population levels needed to ensure long-term viability.
- The objectives would be to maintain enough high quality habitat to support a present breeding population of 900 pairs of American Oystercatchers, 45 pairs of Snowy Plovers, 850 pairs of Wilson's Plovers and 55 pairs of Piping Plovers, and to attempt to at least double this number during the next 50 years.

For more detailed information on national and regional shorebird conservation, please visit: National Shorebird Plan, Southeastern Coastal Plain-Caribbean Region Report, respectively.

Landbirds:
-Stabilize or increase populations of high priority breeding, transient, and wintering bird species.

For extensive detailed information on national and regional landbird conservation, please visit:
North American Landbird Conservation Plan, South Atlantic Coastal Plain, respectively.

Waterbirds:
-Recover declining and otherwise vulnerable high priority species and subspecies (especially listed taxa) to healthy population levels region-wide.
-Maintain healthy populations of other species, again by identifying population and habitat objectives.
-Manage depredation issues, including the establishment of maximum acceptable population reduction objectives if justified.

The following quantitative objectives are for the entire portion of BCR 27, which includes the East Gulf Coastal Plain, but are broken out by region and state in many instances. Quantitative objectives for states presented here (Southeast U.S. Waterbird

Conservation Plan), Hunter et al. 2006)) may differ from objectives determined by State Working Groups.

Whooping Crane

Support at least 65 non-breeding individuals and prepare for at least 100 non-breeding individuals, primarily in BCR 31, Peninsular Florida, but also BCR 27 (Southeastern Coastal Plain), and during migration also BCR 28 (Appalachians) and BCR 29 (Piedmont)

Sandhill Crane

Support 425 pairs in the South Atlantic subBCR (Okefenokee Swamp in GA)

(160 pairs based on mid-1980s estimates)

Black Rail

Support 15,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~7,000 pairs today)

King Rail

Support **6**,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~830 pairs today)

Yellow Rail (non-breeding populations)

Support high survival of almost all individuals remaining for this species, with global population estimate based on BBS of about 215,000 individuals, occurring each year in the Southeast U.S.

~20 percent in the Southeastern Coastal Plain

American Bittern (non-breeding populations)

Support high survival of about a third of all individuals, with global population estimate based on BBS of about 830,000 individuals, either migrating through or otherwise occurring each year in the Southeast U.S.

BCR Objectives: Support (regardless of actual population sizes) the following percentages of non-breeding individuals:

~30 percent Southeastern Coastal Plain

Least Bittern

~Increase from 50,000 to 100,000 pairs to 90,000 to 200,000 pairs category.

BCR Objectives: Support long term average of 150,000 pairs (~70,000 pairs today)

6,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~1,500 pairs today)

Purple Gallinule

~Increase from 5,000 to 10,000 pairs to 9,000 to 20,000 pairs category.
BCR Objectives: Support long term average of 15,000 pairs (~8,000 pairs today)
1,500 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~850 pairs today)

Limpkin

~Increase from 4,000 to 6,000 pairs to 9,000 to 20,000 pairs category.
BCR Objectives: Support long term average of 15,000 pairs (a minimum of 5,000 pairs today)
~3,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (1,000 pairs today)

American Coot

~Increase from 9,000 to 20,000 pairs to 10,000 to 50,000 pairs category (these numbers may need to be revised downward when co-occurring non-breeding populations can be surveyed separate from breeding populations).
2,500 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~850 pairs today)

Pied-billed Grebe

~Increase from 10,000 to 50,000 pairs to 40,000 to 60,000 pairs category (these numbers may need to be revised downward when co-occurring non-breeding populations can be surveyed separate from breeding populations).
BCR Objectives: Support long term average of 50,000 pairs (~23,000 today)
~10,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain, Appalachians, and Piedmont combined (~2,300 pairs today)

Clapper Rail

~Increase from 10,000 to 50,000 pairs to 40,000 to 60,000 pairs category.
BCR Objectives: Support long term average of 50,000 pairs (~37,000 pairs today)
~25,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~18,000 pairs today)

Little Blue Heron

~9,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (SACP: ~1,350 pairs today in North Carolina, ~2,000 in South Carolina, ~1,000 in Georgia, ~1,000 in Florida; EGCP: ~1,500 in Alabama, ~600 in Mississippi,

Wood Stork

Support a long-term average of ~2,000 pairs in Florida's portion of the Southeastern Coastal Plain (as high as 1,500 pairs today),

Support a long-term average of ~2,000 pairs in Georgia's portion of the Southeastern Coastal Plain (<1,500 pairs today),

Support a long-term average of ~1,000 pairs in South Carolina's portion of the Southeastern Coastal Plain (<1,000 pairs today).

White Ibis

Support a long-term average of 75,000 pairs in Southeastern Coastal Plain (~17,000 pairs today in NC, ~16,000 pairs today in SC, ~10,000 pairs in GA, ~10,000 pairs in FL, ~1,000 pairs in AL),

Tricolored Heron

In the SAMBI area for Tricolored Heron, support a long-term average of 7,500 pairs (<5,000 pairs today) as follows:

(a) Support a long-term average of 1,500 pairs (~1,000 pairs today) in NC,

(b) Support a long-term average of 3,000 pairs (~2,000 pairs today) in SC,

(c) Support a long-term average of 2,000 pairs (500-1000 pairs today) in GA,

(d) Support a long-term average of 1,000 pairs (<1,000 pairs today) in FL.

Double-crested Cormorant

Maintain no more than 4,000 pairs in SAMBI area (FL, GA, SC, NC, VA; ~400, 50, 900, 500, and 200 pairs today respectively)

Anhinga

Maintain between 10,000 and 50,000 pairs of Anhingas in the Southeast U.S. (~10,000 pairs today in region) with the following distribution:

44 percent in SAMBI area (AL, FL, GA, SC, NC; ~100, 1,000, 1,000, 2,000, and 400 pairs today respectively),

Cattle Egret

Reduce and maintain no more than 30,000 pairs (~60,000 pairs today) in the Southeastern Coastal Plain

Gull-billed tern

Support a long-term average of ~850 pairs in Southeastern Coastal Plain (~250 pairs today in NC, ~300 pairs in SC, ~50 pairs in GA, <50 pairs in FL, ~75 pairs in AL)

Least tern

Reverse declines and support a long-term average of ~15,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~1,700 pairs today in NC, ~1,200 pairs in SC, ~750 pairs in GA, ~4,000 pairs in FL, ~500 pairs in AL, and ~2,000 pairs in MS),

Black skimmer

Reverse declines and support a long-term average of 7,500 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~600 pairs today in NC, ~600 pairs in SC, ~300 pairs in GA, ~800 pairs in FL, ~250 pairs in AL, and ~300 pairs in MS),

Common tern

Reverse declines and support a long-term average of 2,000 pairs in the South Atlantic Coastal Plain (~1,000 pairs today in NC, ~10 pairs in SC),

Forster's tern

Support a long-term average of 2,000 pairs in the SAMBI area (~1,000 pairs today in NC),

Royal tern

Support a long-term average of 40,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~11,000 pairs today in NC, ~5,500 pairs in SC, ~8,000 pairs in GA, ~2,500 pairs in FL, ~2,500 pairs in AL, and ~100 pairs in MS),

Sandwich tern

Support a long-term average of 10,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~2,500 pairs today in NC, ~1,500 pairs in SC, ~700 pairs in GA, ~150 pairs in AL, and ~1,000 pairs in MS),

Laughing Gull

Support a long-term average of 25,000 pairs in the Southeastern Coastal Plain (~32,000 pairs today in NC, ~7,500 pairs in SC, ~800 in GA, ~1,000 in FL, and ~5,000 pairs in AL),

Objective: Reduce Herring Gull numbers and maintain no more than 750 pairs (~1000 pairs today in NC).

Objective: Reduce Great Black-backed Gull numbers and maintain no more than 75 pairs (~200 pairs today in NC).

Pelagic:

- Foraging gadfly (*Pterodroma*) petrels and other seabirds should be protected from contaminants (e.g., mercury and oil spills from ships, potential from future off-shore exploration drilling), longline fisheries (where known concentrations overlap heavily fished areas), and from collisions with night lights.
- In addition, work should begin on a range-wide conservation strategy for both gadfly petrels, Audubon's Shearwaters, and other South Atlantic Seabirds.
-Increase surveys in both pelagic BCRs to determine species and numbers and to fine tune distribution, especially where heavy ship traffic or potential for future oil exploration occurs.

For more detailed information on national and regional waterbird conservation, please visit:
North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, and Southeast U.S. Waterbird Conservation Plan
,respectively.

Waterfowl:

- Recover declining species by enhancement of breeding grounds.
- Maintain or manage existing healthy populations through knowledge of current population and habitat status and objective population status.
- Continue to revise population reduction objectives that concern the managed harvest of waterfowl, while maintaining that harvest of waterfowl can be desirable and consistent with conservation.
-Maintain or restore traditional distributions of waterfowl in North America, consistent with long-standing patterns of waterfowl utilization.

-The following are directional objectives for ducks that have stated NAWMP continental objectives.

Species	Population Objective
American Black Duck	Increase
Green-winged Teal	Maintain
American Wigeon	Increase
Canvasback	Increase
Gadwall	Increase
Mallard	Increase
Northern Pintail	Increase
Northern Shoveler	Increase/Maintain
Redhead	Increase

Table 3. Directional Objectives for Ducks in the SAMBI Planning Area.

For additional information on national and regional waterfowl conservation, please visit: North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Waterfowl Implementation Plan, respectively.

Northern Bobwhite-Early Successional-Grassland Bird Species:

-The following populations objectives (Coveys) for Northern Bobwhite are taken directly from the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. Population goals (coveys) are provided for each state for the SAMBI Planning Region.

Convert to Native Warm Season Grass **Site Prep, Burn, Thin**

State	Pop. Goal Coveys	CRP Grass		Improvable Ag Land		CRP Pines		Southern Pines	
		Acres	**Coveys**	Acres[1]	**Coveys**	Acres	**Coveys**	Acres	**Coveys**
FL	**44,688**	5.1	**1,275**	120,024	**30,006**	114.8	**345**	4,354.3	**13,062**
GA	**180,469**	18.0	**4,500**	613,960	**153,490**	482.3	**1,446**	7,010.9	**21,033**
NC	**105,703**	4.8	**1,200**	378,364	**94,591**	13.0	**39**	3,291.2	**9,873**

SC	**70,469**	37.7	**9,425**	213,000	**53,250**	152.0	**456**	2,445.7	**7,338**
VA	**15,469**	8.5	**2,125**	47,292	**11,823**	8.2	**24**	499.1	**1,497**
Total	**346,798**	74.1	**18,525**	1,372,640	**343,160**	1534.3	**2,310**	17,601.2	**52,803**

Table 4. Population goals (coveys to be added) and recommended management practices (acres x 1,000) by land use type for 10 states comprising BCR 27 (NBCI 2002).

For additional information on please visit: Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative.

2. Habitat Goals

Overall Objectives:

- Provide adequate high quality habitats for high priority breeding, transient, and wintering species.
  - Increase the number of acres/hectares of managed wetlands for shorebirds and waterbirds, particularly for shorebirds during fall migration.
  - Increase quality and availability of stop-over habitat for transient landbird species.
  - Protect remaining forested wetlands.
  - Restore and manage longleaf pine forests.
  - Protect shoreline, beaches, and dunes.
  - Restore and protect estuaries.
  - Protect remaining maritime forests.

Goals:

Shorebirds:

-Provide optimal breeding habitat to maintain and increase priority species in the planning region. The goal for breeding habitat is to provide sufficient habitat to maintain and increase priority species in the planning region. The objectives would be to maintain enough high quality habitat to support a present breeding population of 900 pairs of American Oystercatchers, 45 pairs of Snowy Plovers, 850 pairs of Wilson's Plovers and 55 pairs of Piping Plovers, and to attempt to at least double this number during the next 50 years.

-Provide high quality managed habitat to support successful migration through and over-wintering within the planning region, particularly during fall migration.

-Maintain disturbance frequencies at breeding, foraging and roost sites below that which would be expected to exceed tolerance levels for successful reproduction or for maintaining fat stores needed for long-distance migration.

-Maintain washovers, sandflats, and mudflats, especially on barrier islands created by hurricanes; that is, do not immediately attempt “repairs” to hurricane created habitat.

For more detailed information on national and regional shorebird conservation, please visit: National Shorebird Plan, Southeastern Coastal Plain-Caribbean Region Report, respectively.

Landbirds:

-Retain and restore approximately 526,000ha of native warm season grass habitats.

-Provide at least 121,400ha of five year idle lands, 121,400ha of annuals, and 242,800ha of ten-twenty year idle lands.

-Maintain and improve the habitat quality of eight forested wetland sites for Swallow-tailed Kite, maintain and stabilize at least one forested wetland site for Cerulean Warbler, at least ten sites for Wayne’s Black Throated Green Warbler, and thirty sites for Swainson’s Warbler, which requires ten patches over 40,407ha, fifteen patches over 8,094ha, 7 patches over 4,407ha, and 30 patches over 2,428ha.

-Protect 100 % of remaining maritime communities and increase acreage wherever restoration is possible.

-Increase long leaf pine forest acreage form 607,050ha to over 890,340ha and improve conditions favoring warm season grassy ground cover, on at least 263,055ha by year 2025.

-Increase the quality and availability of stopover habitat for transient species.

For extensive detailed information on national and regional landbird conservation, please visit:
North American Landbird Conservation Plan, South Atlantic Coastal Plain, respectively.

Waterbirds:

-Protect existing acreage from extensive disturbance, predators, contaminants, and conflicts with fishing gear.

-Identify emergent wetlands that are most important for waterbirds and work to provide permanent protection.

-Identify the best candidate sites for restoration and restore emergent wetlands that have been degraded, altered, or converted to non-wetland uses.

-Control exotic and invasive species, such as Phragmites.

-Controlled burning can be an important management tool, but careful consideration must be given to timing (avoiding breeding season and other important use periods), extent of the tract to be burned, species present, and desired result.

Habitat Objectives for Emergent Wetlands (Restoration):

30,000 acres in South Atlantic Coastal Plain (SAMBI) as follows:

- 10,000 acres in North Carolina
- 10,000 acres in South Carolina
- 5,000 acres in Georgia
- 5,000 acres in Florida

Pelagic Habitat and Species

The pelagic regions off the Atlantic Coast (Pelagic BCR 77) and the Gulf of Mexico (Pelagic BCR 74) of the southeastern United States provide critical habitat for many waterbird species. These offshore waters support non-breeding and transient pelagic seabirds, loons, gannets, and several tern species.

Seabirds are widely distributed throughout the offshore waters of the Southeastern United States and Gulf of Mexico with few areas where significant concentrations occur. The most significant congregating site is located approximately 70-75 km ENE of Cape Hatteras, NC, in a region from 50 to 500 fathoms on the outer Continental Shelf (Lee and Socci 1989, Lee 1995). The area, locally known as "The Point," is where the Labrador Current and Gulf Stream meet forming a rich and productive foraging area that has the greatest diversity of pelagic seabirds in the western North Atlantic (Lee 1986). The area supports significant numbers or is one of the few known non-breeding congregating sites for Black-capped Petrel, Bermuda Petrel, Audubon's Shearwater, Greater Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, White-tailed Tropicbird, Red-billed Tropicbird, Masked Booby, and Bridled Tern (Lee and Socci 1989, Lee 1995).

Pelagic seabirds tend to congregate in great numbers off the North Carolina coast, but this should not be interpreted to mean that this is the only pelagic region important for seabirds. These birds are generally widely scattered throughout the offshore waters, but tend to congregate in areas with large *Sargassum* mats (Haney 1985). The entire South Atlantic Bight and offshore Gulf of Mexico should be considered important for conservation planning purposes as seabirds are exposed to similar threats throughout the region. Threats to waterbirds in offshore waters include oil spill and discharge, collisions with lighted structures, interactions with fishing gear and discarded line, discarded plastics or other debris, *Sargassum* harvest, and any other factors that threaten *Sargassum*. Potential threats include competition for fisheries resources and exposure to mercury levels in prey.

Conservation strategies for pelagic seabirds and other waterbird species in offshore ocean and Gulf waters should consist primarily of preventative measures to reduce or eliminate

the likelihood of interactions with fishing gear and line, oil spills or discharge, oil and natural gas extraction structures, and discarded plastics, along with the protection of *Sargassum* 'reefs.' Additional information is needed on the impact of commercial harvest of prey species; *Sargassum* harvest, and bycatch of seabirds in commercial fishing operations.

Recommendations:

-Assess impact of seabird bycatch in commercial fishing operations and commercial harvest and bycatch of important prey species.

-Protect Sargassum from harvest or other threats.

-Review all proposals and assess impacts locating new oil/natural gas extraction structures on seabirds in offshore waters of the southeastern U.S.

-Include protection of waterbird habitats in all rapid response plans for oil spills.

-Establish a network of volunteers and professionals to identify and respond to seabird die-offs, and develop a reporting/data collection mechanism to record and track such die offs.

-Protect pelagic habitats through policy development with the various Fisheries Management Councils and Commissions operating on the Atlantic Seaboard.

-Identify and protect roosting and loafing areas during the non-nesting season.

-Identify pelagic focus areas where seabirds congregate seasonally.

-Reduce, minimize, or eliminate conflicts with pollution, fisheries, and oil and hazardous materials in pelagic foraging habitats.

-Minimize harvest or overharvest of sargassum (prey-base habitat) and menhaden populations (prey-base).

For more detailed information on national and regional waterbird conservation, please visit:
North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, and Southeast U.S. Waterbird Conservation Plan
,respectively.

Waterfowl:

-Continue to manage breeding and foraging sites for the long-term success of the 11 stable populations of waterfowl.

-The following habitat goals (acres) for waterfowl presented here are for waterfowl focus areas for states within the ACJV (Waterfowl Implementation Plan, Revision March 2005). Generally, these waterfowl focus areas fall within the geographical boundary of the SAMBI area, and therefore, can be used as habitat objectives for waterfowl in the SAMBI planning region and for each state (see State Goals and Objectives section below and (Figure 20). However, some boundaries of these waterfowl focus areas do fall outside of the SAMBI planning region, indicating waterfowl objectives may or may not adjusted for a particular focus area.

State	Focus Area	Protect		Enhance		Restore		Total	
		Hectare	Acres	Hectares	Acres	Hectares	Acres	Hectares	Acres
Georgia									
	Coastal							40,696	100,562
	Savannah River							51,050	126,146
	Oconee/Ocmulgee/ Altamaha							54,129	133,756
	Chattahoochee/Flint Rivers							49,011	121,109
	Dougherty Plains							4,728	11,682
	Carolina Bays							16,005	39,548
	Ogeechee River							3,358	8,298
	Okefenokee Basin							3,804	9,401
Florida									
	Gulf Coast							0	0
	Tallahassee Area Lakes							0	0
North Carolina									
	Roanoke / Chowan Rivers	4,047	10,000	81	200	202	500	4,330	10,700
	Northern Albemarle	405	1,000	81	200	81	200	567	1,400
	Currituck Sound / North River	1,214	3,000	202	500	202	500	1,618	4,000
	Albemarle / Pamlico Peninsula	2,023	5,000	809	2,000	1,012	2,500	3,844	9,500
	Southern Outer Banks	40	100	405	1,000	40	100	485	1,200
	Neuse / Pamlico Rivers	4,047	10,000	1,012	2,500	1,619	4,000	6,678	16,500
	New River	202	500	81	200	40	100	323	800
	Lower Cape Fear River	4,047	10,000	809	2,000	1,214	3,000	6,070	15,000
	Carolina Bays	2,023	5,000	405	1,000	81	200	2,509	6,200
	Waccamaw River	405	1,000	81	200	81	200	567	1,400
	Lumber River	809	2,000	202	500	405	1,000	1,416	3,500
	Upper Neuse River	202	500	81	200	81	200	364	900
	Outside of Focus Areas	809	2,000	81	200	81	200	971	2,400
South Carolina									
	ACE	8,094	20,000	4,047	10,000			12,141	30,000
	Santee River	8,094	20,000	6,677	16,500			14,771	36,500
	CAWS	4,047	10,000					4,047	10,000
	South Lowcountry	8,094	20,000	4,047	10,000			12,141	30,000
	Santee Lakes	8,782	21,700	6,880	17,000			15,662	38,700
	Winyah	34,398	85,000	607	1,500			35,005	86,500
	Great-Pee Dee -Lynches	4,047	10,000					4,047	10,000
	Little Pee Dee/Lumber	12,141	30,000					12,141	30,000

State	Focus Area	Protect		Enhance		Restore		Total	
		Hectare	Acres	Hectares	Acres	Hectares	Acres	Hectares	Acres
	Upper Waccamaw	6,070	15,000					6,070	15,000
	Cowasee Basin	2,023	5,000	607	1,500			2,630	6,500
Virginia									
	Southeast Virginia	12,180	30,097	2,436	6,019	1,218	3,010	15,834	39,126

Table 5. Habitat Objectives for Waterfowl Focus Areas in SAMBI.

For additional information on national and regional waterfowl conservation, please visit: North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Waterfowl Implementation Plan, respectively.

Northern Bobwhite-Early Successional-Grassland Bird Species:

-The following objectives for Northern Bobwhite are taken directly from the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. Habitat goals (acres) are provided for each state for the SAMBI Planning Region.

1) Increase the amount and enhance the quality of the agricultural lands for nesting, brood-rearing, and roosting by bobwhites and other grassland species of wildlife by adding native warm season grasses and other conservation plantings such as shrubs and forbs.

2) Enhance the management practices on pinelands and mixed pine-hardwoods by thinning, controlled burning, and site preparation in a fashion that benefits bobwhites and other wildlife, and increase acreage devoted to longleaf pine where it is ecologically feasible.

3) Preserve and enhance the quality of rangelands by utilizing vegetation management practices and grazing regimes that favor the retention and improvement of native plant communities beneficial to bobwhites and other wildlife.

Convert to Native Warm Season Grass **Site Prep, Burn, Thin**

State	Pop. Goal Coveys	CRP Grass		Improvable Ag Land		CRP Pines		Southern Pines	
		Acres	Coveys	Acres[1]	Coveys	Acres	Coveys	Acres	Coveys
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Table 4. Population goals (coveys to be added) and recommended management practices (acres x 1,000) by land use type for 10 states comprising BCR 27 (NBCI 2002).

For additional information on Northern Bobwhite conservation, please visit: Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative.