



Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring Network Operational Terms of Reference

Effective Date: December 1, 2020

VISION: Collaborative monitoring for restoration.

MISSION: A Community of Practice working collaboratively to leverage existing resources, capacities and expertise to develop and implement Gulf-wide, coordinated and integrated avian monitoring.

VALUE PROPOSITION STATEMENT: Conservation partners along the northern Gulf of Mexico need information related to bird-habitat relationships and targeted monitoring to evaluate programmatic and project-level restoration to inform decision-making in an adaptive management context. GoMAMN provides a nexus to bird monitoring experts and products that facilitates coordination, collaboration, and implementation of cost-efficient monitoring to assess population and habitat status, as well as to evaluate restoration actions at multiple spatial-scales.

DESCRIPTION: GoMAMN is a self-directed, non-regulatory network of conservation partners. Partners within the Network collaborate to facilitate and coordinate monitoring plans that address current and future needs of bird populations and their habitats in the Gulf of Mexico. GoMAMN builds upon well-established and accepted monitoring protocols and programs to facilitate development of new monitoring efforts where needed to connect, leverage, and integrate efforts into efficient and comprehensive Gulf-wide avian monitoring. Monitoring plans that emanate from GoMAMN are advisory in nature, are nonbinding on any party, and are intended as recommendations to improve avian conservation through coordinated monitoring across the Gulf of Mexico region.

OBJECTIVES:

The Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring Network (GoMAMN) supports bird monitoring by:

- (1) Creating and maintaining a forum by which stakeholders can coordinate and integrate monitoring efforts for priority birds and their habitats;
- (2) Establishing clearly articulated core-values, data needs, and fundamental objectives underpinning monitoring efforts including;
 - a. status and trends assessment of bird populations and habitats;
 - b. evaluation of management and restoration actions; and
 - c. evaluation of ecological processes affecting bird populations and their habitats in the Northern Gulf of Mexico.
- (3) Facilitating the identification and implementation of scientifically robust regional monitoring plans;
- (4) Facilitating data synthesis across scientifically robust monitoring projects;
- (5) Creating standardized data collection and data management protocols that support adaptive management.
- (6) Measuring and evaluating progress and success to improve our strategies and actions

MEMBERSHIP: The GoMAMN Community of Practice is open to any individual interested in advancing and implementing bird monitoring within the northern Gulf of Mexico region.

Participation is voluntary and subservient to the participant's agency/organization/institution mission, authorities, and budgetary capabilities. Anyone interested in becoming a Member of the GoMAMN Community of Practice can join following the instructions on the GoMAMN Website, or by emailing the Community Manager.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: GoMAMN is comprised of three bodies:

- (1) Community of Practice;
- (2) Coordination Committee;
- (3) Working Groups.

Community of Practice – The Community of Practice includes an array of stakeholders that advance bird conservation by providing a forum to unify and share knowledge to design, integrate, and implement coordinated bird monitoring at appropriate temporal and spatial scales. The Community of Practice is an opportunity for partners to identify priorities, standards, issues, concerns and needs underpinning bird monitoring. The Community of Practice also promotes and enables support for bird monitoring via a distributed outreach and education network.

A meeting open to the entire Community of Practice shall be held at least once annually (either virtually or in-person) with meetings organized and conducted by the Coordination Committee. As practical, in-person meeting locations will rotate amongst the 5 states in the Gulf of Mexico region to facilitate increased attendance and ensure local travel.

Coordination Committee – Beyond the operational oversight responsibilities, the Coordination Committee serves as the forum to enable formal decision making. All decisions made by the Coordination Committee will be via consensus, and when that is not possible, decisions will be determined by vote, with a simple majority needed. In cases of a vote-based decision, a short minority report will be included in the notes. No decisions will be made without participation of at least 75 percent of the Coordination Committee members being represented in person or electronically. Members may assign their vote by written or electronic proxy to another member. The Coordination Committee will have a meeting (either virtual or in person) at a minimum once annually, and, this may be concurrent with the Community of Practice annual meeting. Agendas will be proposed by the Chair to the Coordination Committee at least 28 days prior to the meeting and approved 4 days prior and any member may add to the agenda.



The Coordination Committee will be led by a Chair, Vice-Chair and Past Chair, with each serving 2-year terms. At the end of each term, the Chair will automatically transition to the Past Chair position and the vice-chair will transition the Chair, with a new vice-chair elected by the Coordination Committee.



Chair: (most-recent vice-chair)

Duties:

Lead monthly calls, preparing and circulating agendas

Planning future in-person meetings

Communicating with funding/other decision makers

Vice-Chair: (elected by coordination committee)

Duties:

Provides operational support as warranted (e.g., leading calls, taking notes, etc.)

Point-person for presentations and communications regarding products and activities

Assists or coordinates with outreach and communication to Community of Practice on decisions, votes, nominations, and other GoMAMN operations

Past Chair: (most recent chair)

Duties:

Institutional knowledge/organizational thinking/long-term planning

Confirm nominations and oversee elections

The Coordination Committee is responsible for:

- (1) the operational management of GoMAMN (planning meetings, seeking funding to support the organization, etc.)
- (2) the growth, development, and evolution of GoMAMN based upon input from the Community of Practice;
- (3) the development and distribution of information and products, information needs, and recommendations to decision-makers, land managers, and other interested parties;
and
- (4) the establishment and coordination of Working Groups as needed.

The Coordination Committee shall include voting members as defined below. The representative of each organization should be someone with expertise and connection to on-the-ground science and conservation actions. One person, one vote, such that if a person represents an organization defined below, and is also a chair of a working group, they will only have one vote. Multiple roles can be held by one person, but they only vote once.



- (1) One person representing each of the Federal Agencies with a direct role in conservation/restoration and/or habitat management for birds in the northern Gulf of Mexico and,
 - a. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, RESTORE Council, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Natural Resources and Conservation Service.
- (2) One person representing each Non-Governmental Organization which has a direct role in restoration/ conservation of birds in the northern Gulf of Mexico and,
 - a. National Audubon Society, American Bird Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited.
- (3) One person representing the northern Gulf of Mexico Joint Ventures,
 - a. Gulf Coast Joint Venture, East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, Rio Grande Joint Venture and Lower Miss Valley Joint Venture
- (4) One person representing from each of the five northern Gulf of Mexico state's wildlife agencies and,
 - a. Florida (FWCC), Alabama (ADCNR), Mississippi (MDWFP), Louisiana (LDWF), and Texas (TPWD),
- (5) One person representing the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Monitoring Community of Practice
- (6) Chairs of each GoMAMN Working Group.

If, for any reason, a Coordination Committee member must step down, the Vice-Chair and Chair will work with the member agency/organization to identify a replacement.



The composition of these voting member seats will be re-evaluated annually each spring. An organization not represented on this committee can submit a request to the GoMAMN Coordination Committee Chair for consideration during the annual review period (which will be advertised via the Community of Practice). For organizations that do not fit into these categories (such as universities) participation is encouraged via participation in working groups and membership on the Coordination Committee as working group Chair-person. Representatives who are not voting members of the Coordination Committee may be invited to participate in Coordination Committee meetings on an ad hoc or regular basis as warranted and deemed appropriate by the Chair.

Coordination Committee Positions

These positions provide technical and logistical support to the Chair, Vice-Chair and Past Chair related to day-to-day operations of GoMAMN.

Each position will be elected from among the members of the Coordination Committee, and each term will be two-years in length. Elections take place every other year at the first in person (when possible) Coordination Committee meeting of the year. If an elected position is vacated a position prior to the original end date a replacement can be nominated, who will serve the remainder of the term. Nominations open 45 days prior to the election, and close 10 days before the election. Self-nominations are allowed. The ballot is circulated to the Coordination Committee at least 5 days before the election. The candidate receiving the most votes is selected for the position.

Communications Manager: (elected by Coordination Committee)

Duties:

- Recording and distribution of notes from monthly Coordination Committee calls and other Coordination Committee and Community of Practice meetings
- Maintaining the GoMAMN website
- Managing the quarterly Newsletter
- Maintaining current GoMAMN Newsletter recipient list and contact info



Community Manager: (elected by Coordination Committee)

Duties:

- Recruitment and retention of GoMAMN Community of Practice members
- Maintaining current GoMAMN Community of Practice membership and contact info
- Contact person for internal communication/organizational issues
- Working with Chair / Vice-Chair to ensure the Terms of Reference are followed

Mentorship Program Manager: (elected by Coordination Committee)

Duties:

- Leads Mentorship Program
- Creates and maintains GoMAMN onboarding materials
- Develops and maintains information related to professional development

Working Groups –

Working Groups will be established by the Coordination Committee as needed. Membership of the working groups will be ad-hoc, voluntary, not limited in number, and include any professional/organization as warranted. Working Groups will elect a Chair and Vice-chair by simple majority to oversee work activities and produce solution-based products (e.g., proposals, technical reports, recommendations, etc.). At a minimum, each Working Group must maintain records of all decisions and products. Working Groups are considered ad hoc in nature and may be abolished by the Coordination Committee at any time if the purpose of the group is no longer warranted.



Recommend positions and responsibilities;

Chair: Leading working group meetings, circulating agendas, participating in the Coordination Committee calls

Vice-Chair: Provides overall support to Chair as needed to facilitate working group activities; Fills in for the Chair in the Chair's absence. Recording and distribution of notes of WG meetings and other activities.

Working Groups will meet on an as-needed basis in person or virtually. All decisions made by the Working Groups will be via consensus, and when that is not possible, decisions will be determined by vote, with 2/3 majority needed to make a decision, where a 2/3 majority is not possible, the decision gets sent up to the Coordinate Committee level. In cases of vote, a minority report will be included in the notes. No decisions will be made without participation of at least 75 percent of the Working Group members being represented in person or electronically.

OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES - GoMAMN will operate according to these identified principles to ensure an effective, inclusive forum for all.



- ❖ **Individual Reflection** – We all have a responsibility to develop ourselves as effective and inclusive members of the bird conservation community. To support individual reflection by members of GoMAMN, the Mentoring Program Manager will provide a list of resources related to diversity, inclusion, and personal development, as well as links to resources provided by professional societies.
- ❖ **Mentoring Program** - GoMAMN will provide an open and safe forum for the professional development of early career scientists involved in bird conservation in the Gulf of Mexico. This professional development will be aided by participation in Coordination Committee meetings, Working Groups and the Community of Practice, as well as participation in a GoMAMN-specific Mentoring Program.
- ❖ **Meeting Platform** – All GoMAMN meetings not conducted in-person will be hosted using a virtual platform and recorded as warranted. Participants are encouraged to “raise their hand” and wait to be recognized by the meeting organizer or designated person. The list of participants and any comments within the “chat box” shall be recorded and included with the meeting notes for future reference.
- ❖ **Open Communication – Everyone’s voice is important and deserves to be heard.** When communication issues arise within a meeting (either virtual or face-to-face) or via other discussions, the concern(s) shall be brought to the attention of the Community Manager: who will assist in determining the best means to address the concern in an appropriate and confidential manner.
- ❖ **Transparency** –To aid in our institutional memory and assist in keeping Coordination Committee members up-to-date, all meeting notes and decisions will be made available by the Communications Manager to all members of the Coordination Committee via an

online platform (e.g., GoMAMN Google Drive) as determined to be most effective by the Coordination Committee. Decision points along with a justification and summary of alternative options shall be included within the meeting notes.

- ❖ **Letters of Support** – GoMAMN does not write letters of support for specific projects, proposals or ideas. Those seeking support for their project or proposal should use the GoMAMN Community of Practice to connect with people or organizations, whom have the authority to draft letters of support.

MODIFICATIONS and EFFECTIVE DATE: The Terms of Reference contained herein, become effective as of the date approved by the Coordination Committee. These Terms of Reference may be subsequently amended or supplemented by the Coordination Committee and/or as directed by the Community of Practice via written petition submitted to the Coordination Committee Chair.