

March Conference Call
MA Piping Plover HCP Work Group
March 3, 2015
Draft Call Summary

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW or MassWildlife) convened a conference call of a Working Group of municipalities, land managers, and affected stakeholder groups to discuss Chapter 4 in draft of the HCP. A list of attendees is attached.

Section 4.2: Goals and Objectives and Section 4.3.1: Avoidance and Minimization Measures

ICF noted that this section builds on drafts and ideas already discussed and reviewed by the group. A participant asked what was the definition of “long-term” in this section. ICF noted that it means at least 25 years, the desired term of the permit, but it is purposefully vague to allow for similar actions beyond that term potentially.

ICF noted that section 4.3.1 are the avoidance and minimization measures more fully detailed in Chapter 3 and that have already been reviewed by the group.

Section 4.3.2: Mitigation Measures

Predator Management. This section details the key mitigation measure proposed to offset take. The general idea is that there must be sufficient effort to protect 2.5 pairs from predation to offset every 1 pair of take. For these measures, ICF has analyzed both a conservative scenario and a more realistic scenario to ensure that under either, there would be a net benefit to the species. The following questions/comments were made.

- It would be helpful to list the 11 sites mentioned, or, at least mention the techniques used across those eleven sites to provide more detail.
- *How do you design predator control to ensure 2.5 pairs protection?* We lay this out further in Chapter 5 under implementation, but we would pick predator management sites with a sufficient number of breeding pairs based on past census data and work with the implementer of the measure (say USDA) to monitor effects of actions both before and after the action.
- *Does anyone who wants a sub-permit have to do predator control?* No, they do not. It may be that they engage in other robust activities on site, not predator control (though this alone would be the exception). It may be that they fund predator control and a variety of other conservation measures via the state-wide fund we will describe in Chapter 5. Or, they may implement predator control on their site.
- *Should it be called predation management, rather than predator control? After all, it's important to prevent predation through managing trash, etc., as well as capture or remove predators.* It's a good point but we want to be as clear as possible as to what we are doing. For the FWS, the thing that can be measured, quantified, and therefore counted as a conservation action is direct predator management. It is worth noting that during the public comment for the

Orleans HCP of some 54 comments, not one was related to concern about predator control. Under adaptive management we do want to make sure there is room for experimental techniques like non-lethal predator management.

Education, Outreach and Increased Law Enforcement. This second measure is not quantifiable, but nonetheless important. It’s important to note under MESA we do include these in ascertaining overall net benefit.

Nesting Habitat Improvement. This third measure is most likely to be done selectively and in pilots or demonstrations to test its effectiveness. The following questions/comments were made.

- This could be added cover as well as removing it, depending on what is desired (say more vegetation provides cover from avian predation).
- DEP noted that vegetation removal in beaches may come in contradiction to MA wetland laws and thus may be difficult to do. This section should note these difficulties.
- Please make explicit mention that this measure is primarily for pilots or demonstrations.

Benefits and Net Effects. The tables in section 4.3 seek to quantify the net benefits. As you can see from our previous table regarding numbers and amount of take allowed, if and when overall population numbers diminish, the conservation measures begin to lose their net benefit. Hence, the importance of basing “take” on overall population numbers.

Section 4.4: Monitoring and Adaptive Management

This section describes both compliance monitoring (i.e., are the subpermittees doing what they said they would do in regards to actions), which is relatively straightforward, and effectiveness monitoring of the measures, which is more complex. Our draft approach builds on the existing monitoring efforts, but in a more systematic way.

Next Steps

The group will discuss this Chapter and Chapter 5 in next week’s meeting in more detail.

Attendees

Name	Organization	Title
Jorge J. Ayub	MA DCR	
Nina Coleman	Barnstable	Sandy Neck Park Manager
David Deconto	Sandwich	
Robert Duncanson	Chatham	Director of Health & Environment
Patrick Field	CBI	Facilitator
Daniel Gilmore	DEP	Biologist
Anne Hecht	USFWS	Endangered Species Biologist
Russell Hopping	TTOR	Ecology Program Director
Kate Iaquinto	Monomoy Wildlife Refuge	

Karen Johnson	Dennis	Director of Natural Resources
Luanne Johnson	Biodiversity Works	
Ross Kessler	Kessle DMF	
Kerin McCall	Plymouth	Environmental Technician
Kerry Muldoon	Yarmouth	Conservation Administrator
Jon Regosin	MassWildlife	Chief of Conservation Science
Andrew Vitz	MassWildlife	Ornithologist
Susi vonOettingen	USFWS	Endangered Species Biologist
David Zippin	ICF	HCP Contractors