

# Atlantic Marine Bird Cooperative

## Decision-making Processes Version 2

July 2024

### I. Selection of At-Large Atlantic Marine Bird Cooperative (AMBC) Steering Committee Member

- Selection initiated by **AMBC Coordinator**<sup>1</sup> for  $\geq 1$  At-Large **AMBC Steering Committee member**<sup>1</sup> when either a current member steps down, or two years after a Committee Member begins their term.
- Nominations shall be announced to all **AMBC members**<sup>1</sup> on the listserv and/or during an annual meeting by the AMBC Coordinator.
  - *i) If unopposed, the nominee will begin their term with the AMBC Steering Committee within 21 calendar days of announcement, unless a **formal objection**<sup>2</sup> is provided to the AMBC Coordinator (e-mail or phone).*
  - *ii) If competitive (i.e., more than 1 nominee vying for a slot), the AMBC Coordinator will post a poll to the listserv for all AMBC members. Person selected by majority of respondents is elected to a two-year term, renewable at the discretion of the AMBC Coordinator if no new nominees volunteer for the position*

<sup>1</sup>See ‘**Definitions of AMBC Roles**’ section below

<sup>2</sup>**Formal objection by an AMBC Member (Steering Committee decision)** – Any AMBC member may submit to the AMBC Coordinator a formal objection (via phone or e-mail) opposing a proposed nominee within 21 calendar days of nomination announcement. The AMBC Steering Committee will then consider the objection and decide whether to support it or not via a *majority vote*. If the objection is *supported*, the nominee will no longer be considered for the two-year term, and another nominee shall be sought; if the objection is *overruled*, the nominee is elected to the term. A Steering Committee member can abstain from this vote by informing the AMBC Coordinator or by not responding to the vote request within 7 calendar days. In the case of a Steering Committee vote, an “abstain” neither counts as supporting or overruling the objection to the nomination. If more than 1/2 of Steering Committee members abstain, a Steering Committee decision will not move forward resulting in an ‘interim nomination’, but the objection can be resubmitted at any time.

## II. World Seabird Union (WSU) decision request, including selection of a WSU board member or representative

- Decision request initiated by an ask to the [AMBC Coordinator](#)<sup>1</sup> from the WSU Chair or another WSU Board Member who is authorized to request a decision on behalf of the WSU
- AMBC Coordinator proposes a decision as a recommendation to all [AMBC Steering Committee members](#)<sup>1</sup>.
- Recommendation is advanced to WSU as official AMBC vote unless an **alternative recommendation**<sup>2</sup> is proposed by  $\geq 1$  Steering Committee member. This triggers a vote for either the proposed or alternative recommendation(s). Whichever recommendation wins majority support by the AMBC Steering Committee is advanced by AMBC Coordinator as an official AMBC vote.

<sup>1</sup>See **'Definitions of AMBC Roles'** section below

<sup>2</sup>**Alternative recommendation for a WSU decision triggering an AMBC Steering Committee vote** – Any AMBC Steering Committee member who does not support the AMBC Coordinator's original recommendation may propose an alternative recommendation for a response to the WSU decision to all AMBC Steering Committee members. Proposition of an alternative recommendation triggers a vote by the AMBC Steering Committee. As each Steering Committee member can propose an alternative, multiple alternatives may be considered during one vote. The recommendation selected by the majority of votes advances. A Steering Committee member can abstain from the vote by informing the AMBC Coordinator or by not responding to the vote request within 7 calendar days. In the case of a Steering Committee vote, an "abstain" does not count towards supporting any of the recommendations. If more than 1/2 of Steering Committee members abstain, a recommendation on the requested decision will not be provided to the WSU on behalf of the AMBC.

### III. Amending and/or adding an AMBC Organizational Processes, including decision-making, and Steering Committee roles and composition

- Any AMBC member<sup>1</sup> (including AMBC Steering Committee members<sup>1</sup>) may suggest a change or addition to AMBC organizational processes or Steering Committee composition at any time by recommending it to the AMBC Coordinator<sup>1</sup> OR any AMBC Steering Committee member. Recommended changes or additions may also arise from discussions that occur during annual meetings.
- Any proposed change or addition will be submitted by the Steering Committee member to all Steering Committee members for consideration and:
  - *i) Accepted without changes: the suggested process amendment or addition moves forward as a recommendation to all AMBC members*
  - *ii) Accepted with changes: Steering Committee members discuss and agree to make specific changes to the proposed process amendment or addition through informal discussion. If Steering Committee consensus cannot be reached through informal discussion, a vote<sup>2</sup> on whether to support the proposed specific change(s) is triggered with a simple majority of the Steering Committee voting to either support the changes or oppose them. If the majority supports, the change(s) is made and the suggested amendment or addition moves forward as recommendation to all AMBC members*
  - *iii) Opposed by  $\geq 1$  Steering Committee member: If one or more Steering Committee members oppose the suggested process amendment or addition, a vote<sup>2</sup> is triggered. If a majority of the Steering Committee votes to oppose the proposed amendment or addition, it is not accepted and does not proceed any further for consideration; If the majority votes to overturn the objection (i.e., support the suggested process amendment or addition), the suggested process amendment or addition moves forward as recommendation to all AMBC members*
- Any recommendation (change or addition to processes) approved by the majority of AMBC Steering Committee is announced to all AMBC members on the listserv and/or during the annual meeting by AMBC Coordinator

Primary changes in v.2: New AMBC decision-making process (Process IV) added; AMBC roles defined and better clarified throughout document; mechanism provided for Steering Committee members to abstain from votes

- *i) If no objection to the recommended process amendment or addition is submitted by an AMBC member to the AMBC Coordinator (e-mail or phone) within 21 calendar days of the announcement, it is accepted as an official AMBC process*
  - *ii) If a “**formal objection**” to the recommendation is submitted by any AMBC member to the AMBC Coordinator within 21 days of announcement, the following actions will be triggered:*
    - *a) The AMBC Coordinator will discuss the objection with the member and try to come to resolution enabling the recommendation to proceed.*
    - *b) If no resolution comes out of this discussion, the AMBC Coordinator will post a poll to the listserv for AMBC members with a simple majority of respondents voting to either:*
      - *i) uphold the objection and reject the recommendation, whereby it will not be accepted as an official AMBC process*
- OR*
- *ii) overrule the objection and advance the recommendation, whereby it is accepted as an official AMBC process within 21 calendar days of the original announcement.*

<sup>1</sup>**See ‘Definitions of AMBC Roles’ section below**

<sup>2</sup>**Abstaining from a Steering Committee Vote:** A Steering Committee member can abstain from this vote by informing the AMBC Coordinator or by not responding to the vote request within 7 calendar days. In the case of a Steering Committee vote, an “abstain” neither counts as supporting or opposing the changes to the suggested process amendment or addition *OR* the decision to advance the suggested process amendment or addition to AMBC members as a recommendation. If more than 1/2 of Steering Committee members abstain, the proposed changes are not made and the suggested process amendment or addition will be considered for approval by the Steering Committee in its original form *OR* the suggested process amendment or addition will not be recommended to the AMBC members, but can be resubmitted at any time.

## IV. Issuing a science-based recommendation letter, providing invited comments on an existing letter or effort, and/or signing on to a science-based letter about marine bird conservation & management on behalf of the AMBC

### 1a) Initiation of Recommendation Letter and/or Invited Comments:

- Any AMBC member<sup>1</sup> can draft a science-based letter or propose that the AMBC provide invited comments on conservation and management initiatives relevant to marine birds within the AMBC focal area. Letters or invited comments can either be initiated on behalf of an active working group (i.e., one with a coordinator), or the AMBC at large.
  - Letters and invited comments shall include a general description of the AMBC partnership as follows:  
*“Founded in 2005, the AMBC is an international group of resource managers, scientists, and other professionals, with specific interests and expertise in marine birds. Members represent a diverse set of agencies, non-governmental organizations, industry, and universities. Given that our diverse membership collectively encompasses a vast understanding of Atlantic marine birds, their habitats, behavior, and conservation, we aim to “educate not advocate”.*
  - Letters shall also include the following general disclaimer:  
*“The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect official views, opinions, or policies of the United States or Canadian governments or agencies, any state or provincial governments or agencies, or any commercial entities thereof. Mention of any trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by federal, state, or provincial governments, or commercial entities.”*

### 1b) Initiation of Recommendation to Sign on to a Science-based Letter

- Any AMBC member can also propose that the AMBC sign on to a science-based letter drafted by another science-based group or organization on a conservation and/or management issue relevant to marine birds in the AMBC focal area.

## 2) Submission to Steering Committee

- All letters, invited comments, or proposals to sign on to an existing letter will be submitted by the recommending AMBC member to the [AMBC Coordinator](#)<sup>1</sup> or another [AMBC Steering Committee member](#)<sup>1</sup> for Steering Committee review.

## 3) Steering Committee Review & Approval/Rejection:

- Following the receipt of a letter, invited comments, or recommendation to sign on to an existing letter from an AMBC member, the Steering Committee will review the request within 7 calendar days. Steering Committee members that do not accept or reject the proposed letter, invited comments, or recommendation to sign on to an existing letter within 7 calendar days will by default “abstain”<sup>2</sup>.

*a) For letters of recommendation or invited comments the Steering Committee will either:*

i) Accept it w/o revisions: Steering Committee members approve the letter or invited comments without revisions through informal discussion and unanimous consensus. If unanimous consensus cannot be reached, a Steering Committee vote<sup>2</sup> is triggered with a majority vote advancing. The original letter or invited comments are sent to the appropriate [Signing Authority](#)<sup>1</sup> and then circulated to all AMBC members via the listserv by the AMBC Coordinator (see steps 4 & 5 below).

ii) Suggest revisions and accept: Steering Committee members review and propose revisions to the letter or invited comments. The revised letter is approved through informal discussion and unanimous consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, a Steering Committee vote<sup>2</sup> is triggered with a majority vote advancing. The revised letter or invited comments and decision to sign is shared with the submitter. If the submitter supports the Steering Committee’s revisions, the letter or invited comments are sent to the appropriate [Signing Authority](#)<sup>1</sup> (see definition below) and circulated to all AMBC members via the listserv by the AMBC Coordinator (see steps 4 & 5 below). If the submitter does not support the revisions, they may contact the AMBC Coordinator and discuss options.

OR

iii) Reject the letter or invited comments (with or without revisions): If Steering Committee members, though informal discussion, unanimously reject the letter or invited comments outright it is returned to the submitter by the AMBC Coordinator without signature, along with an explanation of why it will not be sent on behalf of the AMBC. If Steering Committee consensus on either an original or amended draft letter or invited comments cannot be reached informally, a Steering Committee vote<sup>2</sup> is triggered with a majority vote rejecting advancement, and it is returned to the submitter without signature, along with an explanation from the AMBC Coordinator on why it will not be sent on behalf of the AMBC.

b) *For a suggestion to sign on to an existing letter on behalf of the AMBC the Steering Committee will either:*

i) Accept the suggested sign-on through discussion and unanimous consensus and advance to the appropriate Signing Authority

OR

ii) Reject the suggested sign-on through discussion and unanimous consensus and respond to the submitting member with an explanation.

*NOTE:* While the Steering Committee will work to come to a consensus through informal discussion, if consensus cannot be reached, Steering Committee members will vote<sup>2</sup> with the majority to accept or reject prevailing

4) Signature of a Recommendation Letter, Invited Comments or for Signing-On to an Existing Letter, Circulation to AMBC Members, and Final Submission

Recommendation letters, invited comments, and suggested sign-ons advancing the Steering Committee after steps 1-3 above will generally be signed by the AMBC Signing Authority on behalf of the AMBC *as a whole*, (excepting any agency, entity or organization covered by the general disclaimer above, or specifically requesting to be exempted by name upon written request to the AMBC Coordinator) and circulated to the AMBC listserv for 7 calendar days. If there are no formal objections from AMBC members (see 5 below) within those 7 days, the signed letter or

comments will be sent to the relevant recipient by the Signing Authority, or the Signing Authority will sign on to the existing letter for the AMBC.

#### 5) Circulation to AMBC Members and Formal Objection Process

- Following circulation (via the listserv) of a signed letter or invited comments, or a decision to sign onto an existing letter, the signed letter or invited comments will be sent out to the relevant recipient, or the existing letter will be signed onto after *7 calendar days unless*:
  - Any AMBC member submits a **Formal Objection** to the AMBC Coordinator (via phone or e-mail) opposing the decision. This will then trigger the following actions:
    - a) The AMBC Coordinator will discuss the objection with the member and try to come to resolution enabling the letter, invited comments, or sign-on to an existing letter to proceed.
    - b) If no resolution comes out of this discussion, the AMBC Steering Committee will vote<sup>2</sup> with a simple majority prevailing to either:
      - i) uphold the objection and send the letter, invited comments, or sign-on back to the submitter and facilitate a discussion between the submitter and objector to put forward an alternative,
  - OR*
  - ii) overrule the objection and advance the signed letter, invited comments, or sign-on, with an explanation to the objector

<sup>1</sup>See **‘Definitions of AMBC Roles’** section below

<sup>2</sup>**Abstaining from a Steering Committee Decision or Vote:** A Steering Committee member may ‘abstain’ from an informal decision or formal vote to accept or reject a letter or invited comments (Section 3.a above) *OR* to sign on to an existing letter (Section 3.b above) either by letting the AMBC Coordinator know verbally or in writing, or by not submitting their decision of acceptance or rejection within 7 calendar days. In the case of a Steering Committee vote, an “abstain” neither counts as an acceptance or rejection vote. If more than 1/2 of Steering Committee members abstain, a vote will not move forward, but the letter of recommendation or invited comments, or decision to sign on to an existing letter can be reintroduced by any AMBC member at any time in the future.



## **Definitions of AMBC Roles ([atlanticmarinebirds.org/about/](http://atlanticmarinebirds.org/about/)):**

### **AMBC Members**

Since its inception, the AMBC has maintained an informal membership process that has not required a specific time commitment, paying of dues, formal status (with the exception of Steering Committee members), etc. Individuals are considered members if they have either attended at least one AMBC annual meeting and/or Working Group meeting, and/ or requested to be added to the AMBC membership e-mail list.

### **AMBC Steering Committee Members**

Includes the AMBC Coordinator, the Coordinator of each active Working Group, and up to four nominated/elected *At-large* members.

### **AMBC Coordinator**

Responsible for overseeing AMBC organization and development including annual meetings, steering committee, website, processes, and decision-making. Supports working group coordinators in meeting working group objectives and development of new working groups. Ensures that members have a say in AMBC actions.

### **AMBC Signing Authorities**

- Letters, invited comments, and sign-ons will be signed by the AMBC Coordinator *unless*:

a) the AMBC Coordinator deems it to be a conflict of interest (e.g.s., a letter to the USFWS, or about a project the coordinator's program is responsible for regulating), or upon specific prohibition/advisement by the Ethics Officer of the AMBC Coordinator's agency or organization (e.g., USFWS Ethics Officer)

*OR*

b) the AMBC Coordinator deems the letter is more appropriately signed by a specific Working Group Coordinator (depending on topic)

- If the AMBC Coordinator is unable to sign due to conflict of interest or ethics concerns, an appropriate Working Group Coordinator will be asked to sign

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- If no appropriate AMBC Working Group Coordinator is able to sign due to conflict of interest or ethics concerns, another *At-large* member of the Steering Committee will be asked to sign
- In the unlikely event that no Steering Committee member is able to sign due to conflict of interest, ethics concerns or policies of their employer, the Steering Committee will be charged with forming a new Working Group of AMBC members, “*AMBC Conservation Committee*” (e.g., a Conservation Committee) with a non-governmental Coordinator to lead the development of letters/comments which, after Steering Committee approval, would be signed by them on behalf of the AMBC, as a whole.