



Cooperation in Conservation: Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI)

Wildlife directors responsible for the management of flora and fauna and other senior officials have developed the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI). WHMSI is hemispheric project encompassing 35 nations that addresses the 1940 Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere (Western Hemisphere Convention, also known as the Washington Convention) which calls on governments of the Americas "to protect and preserve in their natural habitat representatives of all species and genera of their native flora and fauna, including migratory birds, in sufficient numbers and over areas extensive enough to assure them from becoming extinct through any agency within man's control."

At the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Western Hemisphere heads of state and government committed to "advance hemispheric conservation of plants, animals and ecosystems through...the development of a hemispheric strategy to support the conservation of migratory wildlife throughout the Americas."

The representatives included; Government representatives from the following countries: United States (Chair), Colombia, Costa Rica, Saint Lucia, and Uruguay; International Conventions: Wetlands (Ramsar), Migratory Species (CMS), Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, and the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife of the Wider Caribbean (SPAW); and International NGOs: Birdlife International, American Bird Conservancy, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, and World Wildlife Fund. In addition, the proposal has been shared with and received support from contributor countries such as Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago. Ecuador, Haiti and Panama have sent additional letters of support for WHMSI. The Environment Minister of Costa Rica is one of the leading advocates of this initiative and has reached out to other countries to solicit their support of WHMSI.

The Organization of American States (OAS), in its coordinating role for Summit follow-up, is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and each of the member States of the OAS through WHMSI Focal Points. WHMSI is also working with the OAS Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development (CIDS), and a resolution supporting WHMSI is slotted to be passed in 2006 at the CIDS Ministerial meeting in Bolivia.

The WHMSI Committee has requested that UNEP be the Implementing Agency and GS/OAS be the executing agency for this project. The GS/OAS has provided support for WHMSI and will house the political focal points who will be communicated with through the Ministry of External Affairs guaranteeing that activities of WHMSI have approval at the highest levels of Government. Government officials will be also kept abreast of performance of the project. This is a good fit with OAS' mandate to respond to member states in matters of environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation and job creation.