



January 15, 2022

RE: Accession of the United States of America to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

To the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Natural Resources Committee:

With this letter, the Pacific Seabird Group communicates its strong support for United States accession to the multilateral Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). ACAP is a well-established and highly effective treaty that facilitates international coordination on the conservation of albatrosses, petrels, and shearwaters, which comprise two of the most endangered families of seabirds globally. Of the 31 species currently included within the agreement, 21 are listed as globally threatened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), including three Critically Endangered and eight Endangered species.

The Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) is an international, non-profit, scientific organization that was founded in 1972 to promote the knowledge, study, and conservation of Pacific seabirds. It has a membership drawn from the entire Pacific basin. Among PSG's members are biologists and scientists who have research interests in Pacific seabirds and their conservation, government officials who manage seabird refuges and populations, and individuals who are interested in marine conservation. PSG members serve as scientific experts and conservation leaders within their local communities, nationally and around the world.

Seabirds are one of the most threatened groups of birds globally, and their widespread declines across the group and throughout the world's oceans have accelerated in recent decades. Among seabirds, albatrosses, petrels, and shearwaters have been disproportionately impacted by human activities and are two of the most highly threatened families of birds. As upper-trophic level predators, albatrosses and petrels play important ecological roles in marine food webs in addition to their roles in the island ecosystems in which they breed. The decline of seabirds is highly problematic for marine systems worldwide, ranging from inshore to pelagic ecosystems.

Given the work of dedicated scientists, conservation practitioners and policy makers, a suite of well-established, proven solutions has been developed and applied to address and mitigate impacts to seabirds. Effective tools already exist to advance the conservation of seabirds. These solutions include a variety of methods to reduce seabird bycatch in

artisanal and industrial fisheries, habitat restoration techniques for islands on which seabirds breed, the control and eradication of invasive species that impact seabirds on their breeding colonies, and the use of social attraction techniques to reestablish breeding colonies on restored islands.

Since ACAP came into force in 2004, it has proven to be a highly effective multilateral agreement that has contributed significantly to advancing the conservation of these highly migratory and wide-ranging species. Albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters cover vast spatial scales during their annual cycle, moving between hemispheres and frequently between ocean basins. As such, effective conservation measures for such wide-ranging species must transcend national boundaries and take a holistic approach of addressing threats throughout their ranges.

In that context, unilateral actions taken by individual nations are likely to be ineffective and insufficient. Affording seabirds protection in one country does not reduce the impacts and risks incurred in the territorial waters and breeding islands of other countries. A coordinated effort to address threats systematically across national borders is essential. This collaborative and systematic approach is precisely the strength of ACAP.

The United States has been a global leader in developing and implementing a wide range of seabird conservation strategies across multiple groups of seabirds. However, our capacity to address the conservation of albatrosses, petrels, and shearwaters meaningfully and substantively has been constrained by our inability to influence conservation priority-setting and actions outside of our borders. As a signatory to ACAP, the United States would position itself to be a leader and impactful collaborator in the conservation of these species.

Please let us know if we can provide additional information that would be helpful to the committee as it considers this important and timely opportunity.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this statement of support in advance of the committee hearing on Thursday 20 January 2022 and request that this letter be entered into the record.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter J. Hodum".

Peter Hodum, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair for Conservation