

Executive Summary

When completed, the Hanford Reach National Monument Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) will provide direction to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the United States Department of Energy (DOE) on management of the Hanford Reach National Monument (Monument) for the next 15 years and likely beyond that. The approved plan will provide the framework for making decisions on protection of natural, cultural and recreational resources; management of visitor use; development of facilities; and day-to-day operations of the Monument. The CCP will ensure that future opportunities are realized and problems addressed effectively.

The Monument was created from buffer lands that were no longer necessary for the mission of the DOE's Hanford Site in eastern Washington. These buffer lands form a horseshoe around lands still needed by the DOE for its current missions. Being a buffer for the Hanford Site, the lands within the Monument have remained largely untouched, or at least undeveloped, for over six decades. It was this remnant of the vast shrub-steppe that once covered the interior Columbia Basin that led to Presidential Proclamation 7319 on June 9, 2000, establishing a 195,000-acre national monument, managed by the FWS and DOE, superimposed over the outskirts of the 375,040-acre Hanford Site. The FWS administers the Monument as an overlay national wildlife refuge.¹

The Monument encompasses a biologically diverse landscape containing an irreplaceable natural and historic legacy. The limited development over the years has allowed for the Monument to become a haven for important and increasingly scarce objects of scientific, historic and cultural interest. It supports a broad array of newly discovered or increasingly uncommon native plants and animals. Migrating salmon, birds and hundreds of other native plant and animal species, some found nowhere else in the world, rely on its natural ecosystems. The Monument also includes 46.5 miles of the last free-flowing, non-tidal stretch of the Columbia River, the 51-mile "Hanford Reach."

The Monument is managed by the FWS and the DOE, with some lands under the primary jurisdiction of the FWS and others under that of the DOE. Each agency has several missions they fulfill at the Hanford Site. The FWS, under existing permits from the DOE, is responsible for the protection and management of Monument resources and the management of people and

¹ The Secretary of the Interior has authority pursuant to the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 661-666c), and the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 742a-j; 70 Statute 1119), to enter into cooperative agreements to manage fish and wildlife resources on lands owned by, or under the jurisdiction of, another entity. The National Wildlife Refuge System Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 668dd), consolidates all areas administered by the FWS for the management, conservation and protection of fish and wildlife (including those areas managed by the FWS under cooperative agreement with other federal departments or agencies) into the National Wildlife Refuge System.

their access to Monument lands under FWS control. The FWS also has the responsibility to protect and recover threatened and endangered species; administer the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; and protect fish, wildlife and Native American and other trust resources within and beyond the boundaries of the Monument. The DOE is responsible for protecting the resources of the Monument, managing energy research, and remediating wastes remaining from weapons material production. The DOE also administers land use agreements and permits with the Washington Department of Transportation, United States Bureau of Reclamation, South Columbia Basin Irrigation District, Bonneville Power Administration, Energy Northwest, adjacent counties, and others to enable these entities to fulfill their missions in energy production, energy distribution, communications, transportation and irrigation. Because the DOE is currently the underlying land holder, it retains approval authority over certain management aspects of the Monument. This includes approval of the draft and final CCP/EIS and approval of access granted to tribes.

A Notice of Intent to begin development of this CCP and environmental impact statement (EIS) was published in the *Federal Register* on June 12, 2002. This began a multi-year process to identify issues that needed to be addressed and the management alternatives that would best address those issues. Along the way, the FWS received assistance and input from the Hanford Reach National Monument Federal Advisory Committee (FAC); 15 cooperating agencies and/or governments (city of Richland; Adams, Benton and Grant Counties; Washington State Departments of Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources; Army Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Administration, Bureau of Reclamation, DOE, and Federal Highway Administration; Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and Nez Perce Tribe); internal resource reviews; and the public through formal scoping, a series of three public workshops, and other means. Through these processes, the following key issues were identified (defined as matters of controversy, dispute, or general concern over resource management activities, the environment, or land uses):

- 1) How will the biological resources be managed, protected, enhanced and/or restored?
- 2) What actions can be taken to protect fisheries?
- 3) How will cultural resources be protected?
- 4) How will geological and paleontological resources be protected?
- 5) How will contamination issues be addressed?
- 6) How will the elk population be managed on the Monument?
- 7) What recreation activities and interpretation and education programs are appropriate and where will they occur?

- 8) How will transportation be managed to provide access for public uses, management needs, and valid existing rights?
- 9) What facilities and infrastructure are needed and where?
- 10) Which additional Monument lands are suitable and appropriate for FWS management as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System?

This CCP either directly addresses these issues, or it lays the foundation to address them in subsequent, more detailed “step-down plans.” This framework will be established through the selection of a Preferred Alternative in the final CCP/EIS. That alternative will come either from one of the six alternatives described below, or from a new alternative identified through the tribal, agency and public review of this draft.

The six alternatives each vary by emphasis theme and degree of public access. Under each alternative (likely including Alternative A), historic administrative units would be reorganized into new management units for administrative purposes. The proposed new units are based primarily on ecological values rather than geographical, historical, or political boundaries; however, easily identifiable features were used to the extent possible to define boundaries, both to aid the public and the FWS in its management. The proposed new units reflect a culmination of ideas and input received from the FAC, cooperating agencies, tribal governments, and the public, as well as the combined expertise of Monument staff.

Alternative A: No Action

Alternative A assumes no change from existing management and thus provides a baseline for evaluating impacts of the other alternatives. Current management practices would be continued in accordance with Monument Proclamation mandates and agreements to conserve and protect biological, geological, paleontological and cultural resources. Conservation activities would involve inventory and monitoring, habitat restoration, invasive species control, fire protection, fire rehabilitation, and maintenance of existing facilities. Land use designations that were in place at the time of Monument establishment would be maintained.

Public access for recreational, interpretive and educational purposes would continue to be allowed year-round in designated areas and restricted from sensitive resource areas. Limited interpretive and educational programs would be presented on request, dependent upon the availability of staff.

Alternative B

Alternative B emphasizes the restoration of native plants and animals in upland, riparian and aquatic habitats. Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative B would provide the greatest emphasis on the conservation, protection and monitoring of the biological, geological, paleontological and cultural resources described in the Monument Proclamation. Increased opportunities for restoration-based research of the native landscape and habitat for species of concern would be promoted, and information sharing between partners and researchers would be encouraged.

Public access for day-use recreation, interpretation, and education would continue to be allowed year-round in designated areas, with a greater degree of management controls and use restrictions in place to ensure resource protection as compared to the other alternatives.

Visitor facilities would be developed only in the least sensitive areas of the Monument and only after a comprehensive inventory of Monument resources is conducted and sensitive areas are identified in the area under consideration.

Interpretation and education programs would be provided; however, fewer people would be served than in Alternatives C, D, E and F.

Alternative C

Alternative C concentrates on protecting and conserving the biological, geological, paleontological and cultural resources described in the Proclamation by creating and maintaining extensive areas within the Monument that are free of facility development. This would serve conservation, restoration, protection and recreation purposes by maintaining large natural landscapes, protecting sensitive resources, and providing opportunities for solitude.

The facilities and access points that would be provided would be concentrated together to minimize overall impacts to the Monument and to provide economies of scale in management and maintenance. Public access points and recreational facilities would be planned and developed along highways and in perimeter areas of the Monument. Certain existing facilities and infrastructure currently present within the Monument would be relocated. Vehicle access into the interior of the Monument would be limited; however, much of the Monument would be open to foot and other non-motorized access.

Facilities, such as the boat-in campsites along the Hanford Reach provided for in this alternative, would be developed after inventories of resources are conducted and sensitive areas are identified in the area under consideration.

Interpretation and education programs would serve greater numbers of people than Alternatives A, B and F, but fewer than Alternatives D and E.

Alternative D

Alternative D provides the greatest degree of public access, recreational opportunities, and facilities development. The conservation, protection and monitoring of the biological, geological, paleontological and cultural resources described in the Monument Proclamation would still be the primary priority; however, more time, effort and resources would be devoted to public use than in the other alternatives, likely decreasing the resources and attention available to restoration activities. Resource inventories, identification of sensitive areas, and restoration activities would be concentrated in the areas of highest public use. Resource protection, restoration research, and monitoring would focus on the impacts created from recreational activities.

Public access sites and facilities would be developed throughout the Monument and to a greater extent than Alternatives A, B, C and F; access would be restricted from the most sensitive areas. Visitor facilities would include improved boat launches, auto tour routes, and campgrounds.

Interpretation and education programs would serve the highest number of people of all the alternatives.

Alternative E

Alternative E was formulated by the FAC during a June 16-17, 2004 workshop and provides an alternate public use emphasis to that of Alternative D.

Alternative E also provides a high degree of public access and facilities development. It does this through the combination of elements from Alternatives C and D. The underlying openspace concept of Alternative C is maintained through the concentration of facilities in perimeter areas of the Monument; however, access and areas open to the public more closely resemble Alternative D. Again, the conservation, protection and monitoring of the biological, geological, paleontological, and cultural resources described in the Monument Proclamation is the top priority, but as in Alternative D, substantial effort and resources would be devoted to public use, likely decreasing the resources and attention available to restoration activities.

Resource inventories, identification of sensitive areas and restoration activities would be concentrated in the areas of highest public use. Resource protection, restoration research, and monitoring would focus on the impacts created from recreational activities.

Public access points and facilities would be developed in perimeter areas of the Monument and to a greater extent than Alternatives A, B and F; access would be restricted from the most sensitive areas. Visitor facilities would include improved boat launches and campgrounds.

Interpretation and education programs would serve a high number of people, although not as many as Alternative D.

Alternative F

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) developed this alternative using Alternative B as its basis for management emphasis and public access. Public use would be controlled through a permit system, with some areas requiring use fees to help fund Monument programs.

While similar to Alternative B, Alternative F provides for slightly more areas open to public access. The one significant difference is the addition of a public access permit system, with the possible establishment of fee areas.

Interpretation and education programs would be provided; however, fewer people would be served than in Alternatives C, D and E.

Preferred Alternative

The FWS has initially chosen Alternative E as its draft preferred alternative. All alternatives, in some form, meet the primary purposes of the Monument Proclamation and the mission of the NWRS and therefore have the potential to be selected as a final management plan. Alternative E attempts to strike a balance between resource protection and the level of public use and access the FWS anticipates the public will expect.

Possible Consequences/Impacts

The alternatives are assessed for their potential consequences to biological, geological, paleontological, recreational, aesthetic and economic resources and systems. Chapter 4 provides a detailed analyses of these impacts, although a summary is provided in the table following the Reader's Guide.