



# Humboldt Bay NWR Complex

Planning Update #3—Summer 2007

## Greetings from the Refuge Manager

This is the third planning update for the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process. In our last two updates we asked for your input on the future management of Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge (Humboldt Bay NWR) and Castle Rock National Wildlife Refuge (Castle Rock NWR).

Since the last update we have continued to work on the CCP. Written comments on Humboldt Bay NWR were received through February and comments on Castle Rock NWR through mid-May. We held public meetings in Crescent City, Eureka, and Bayside in February.

We have carefully considered all the comments received from the public, organizations, tribal representatives, and political representatives. We have also developed vision statements and goals for Humboldt Bay and Castle Rock NWRs.

There will be another public comment period for the draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (EA) once those documents have been completed. We anticipate that these will be available in May of 2008. As always we welcome your suggestions, comments, and questions. We will send out another update when the draft CCP is available, but please check our website for updates and previous documents: <http://www.fws.gov/humboldt/bay/>

Contacts for CCP questions are located on the last page of this update. I greatly appreciate all of the suggestions we received in public meetings, letters, and e-mails. Thank you very much for your continued interest and support in this important planning process.

Eric Nelson  
Project Leader/Refuge Manager

## An update on CCP progress

Since the last planning update earlier this year, the CCP planning team has drafted vision statements and CCP goals for Humboldt Bay NWR and Castle Rock NWR. We are also in the process of inventorying and analyzing biological data and developing alternative objectives (alternatives) and strategies for the CCP. Our next steps are to refine the goals, objectives, and strategies for the CCP with consideration of the issues identified during the public and internal scoping process. Once alternatives have been drafted, we will evaluate the environmental consequences of these alternatives. We anticipate sending out

- Pre-planning
- Public Scoping & Identify Issues
- Develop Vision Statement & Goals
- Develop Alternative Objectives & Strategies
- Prepare Draft CCP/EA
- Public Review of Draft CCP/EA
- Prepare Final CCP
- Public Notice of Decision

an additional planning update that will highlight the alternatives, once they have been developed.

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# Draft CCP Goals for Humboldt Bay NWR

**Goal 1.** Conserve, manage, restore, and enhance estuarine and palustrine wetland habitats representative of the Humboldt Bay area to benefit their associated native fish, wildlife, plants, and special status species.

**Goal 2.** Conserve and restore globally rare dune and dune forest habitats, associated native plant and animal species and support recovery of threatened, endangered, and endemic species dependent upon these rare habitats.

**Goal 3:** Promote long term viability of the Humboldt Bay estuarine and dune ecosystems through ecosystem based management coordinated with both public and private partners around the bay.

**Goal 4.** Provide public with wildlife dependent recreation opportunities to enhance public appreciation and understanding of fish, wildlife, plants, habitats of Humboldt Bay and associated watersheds.

**Goal 5.** In cooperation with tribal representatives identify and protect cultural resources on the Humboldt Bay NWR.



*The Humboldt Bay wallflower (Erysimum menziesii ssp. eurekaense), an endangered species native to the dune units of the Humboldt Bay NWR. Illustration by A. Pickart*

# Draft Vision Statement for Humboldt Bay NWR

The Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge (Humboldt Bay NWR) conserves and manages some of the most significant historic and restored natural areas in the Humboldt Bay area. Humboldt Bay NWR sustains varied and important habitats, ranging from estuarine and freshwater wetlands to open grasslands and dynamic dune ecosystems. Humboldt Bay NWR also conserves important plant and animal populations and plays a critical role in preserving biodiversity locally, regionally, and within the Refuge System. Humboldt Bay NWR staff apply sound, scientific principles and adaptive management strategies to sustain the long-term health and ecological integrity of the Humboldt Bay NWR area.

Refuge habitats link with other public and private lands to support threatened and endangered species in addition to hundreds of species of migratory wildlife within the Pacific Flyway. Humboldt Bay NWR provides stop-over and wintering habitats of sufficient size and quality to assist in maintaining migrating birds on

the Pacific Flyway, especially Pacific brant, Aleutian cackling geese, and shorebirds.

The staff at the Humboldt Bay NWR have built alliances with a broad cross section of tribal, governmental, community, and private partners to promote the ecological integrity of the landscape, ecotourism, and the historic and cultural attractions of the region. The Humboldt Bay NWR staff, assisted by Friends Groups and volunteers, seek to provide compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for: wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation, hunting, and fishing on refuge lands; expanded community outreach; and to stimulate area residents and visitors to embrace sustainable stewardship of natural resources.

By accomplishing this vision, the Humboldt Bay NWR ensures healthy fish, wildlife, and plant resources for people to enjoy today and an enduring legacy for generations to come.



*Sloughs on Humboldt Bay NWR provide important habitat for threatened salmonids and the endangered tidewater goby. Photo by USFWS*



*How much of each refuge in the Complex should be managed for Aleutian cackling goose habitat, in part to reduce goose grazing pressure on private ranch lands?*

*Photo by USFWS*

## Major issues identified by the public and Refuge partners

Hundreds of public comments were documented by refuge staff during the three public meetings held in February of this year. In total 13 letters or e-mails and 14 completed issue workbooks were received during the open comment period. The following issues are considered, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), to be major issues to be dealt with in the CCP process. These issues will receive in-depth analysis and will help to define the range of alternatives for the CCP and EA.

### Humboldt Bay NWR Issues Identified by the Public:

- How much of each refuge in the Complex should be managed for Aleutian cackling goose habitat, in part to reduce goose grazing pressure on private ranch lands?
- How much estuarine fish habitat should be restored, on Humboldt Bay NWR, primarily for threatened salmonids and the endangered tidewater goby?
- Should the large Barn, located near the Complex headquarters be preserved, and if so how, and at what cost?

- How can Humboldt Bay NWR be managed to minimize flooding of Highway 101?
- Will there be additional law enforcement presence on Humboldt Bay NWR?
- Will the signage be improved for noncontiguous units of Humboldt Bay NWR?
- Will changes be made in sport fishing regulations for the Humboldt Bay NWR?
- Should hunting be expanded on Humboldt Bay NWR to meet local demand for hunting?
- Should hunting be reduced on Humboldt Bay NWR to allow for increases in other visitor services such as wildlife observation and photography?
- Should hunting be allowed on the saltmarsh portions of the newly acquired Ma-le'l Dune Unit (adjacent to the Mad River Slough) of the Humboldt Bay NWR?
- What other changes in the hunting regulations for the Humboldt Bay NWR should be implemented?

*(continued next page)*

## Draft Vision Statement for Castle Rock NWR

Castle Rock National Wildlife Refuge preserves in perpetuity one of the most important seabird nesting colonies on the Pacific coastline. This 14 acre island continues to be preserved in a natural condition with minimal human intrusion.

Management activities focus on research and monitoring of refuge wildlife and on protection and maintenance of a natural functioning ecosystem. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service coordinates with tribes, other agencies and the public to ensure the long-term health and viability of native seabird and marine mammal populations.

We work with others to provide wildlife viewing and interpretation at selected locations on the adjacent coastline. Fostering an appreciation for Pacific coast wildlife enriches people in a variety of ways and ensures that this outstanding legacy of wildlife is passed on to future generations.

## Draft CCP Goals for Castle Rock NWR

**Goal 1.** Protect, restore and maintain habitats for migratory birds and marine mammals, with an emphasis on seabirds, and Aleutian cackling geese.

**Goal 2.** Provide high quality environmental education and information to the public regarding the ecology and sensitivity of the wildlife of Castle Rock National Wildlife Refuge.

## Please Feel Free to Contact Us!

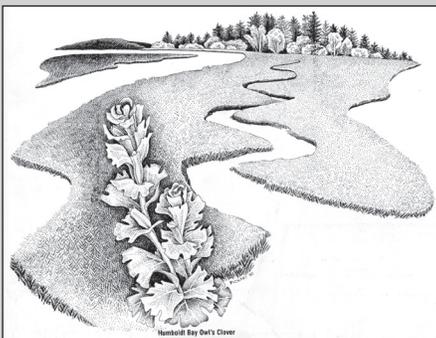
We are available to provide additional information about CCP accomplishments to date, and to answer any questions about the planning process. Feel free to call, write, e-mail, or come to see us. If you did not receive this newsletter through the mail and would like to be on our mailing list, please contact us. You can also obtain information from our website at: <http://www.fws.gov/humboldtбай/>

If you would like to be removed from the mailing list or are receiving multiple copies of these notices, please let us know.

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*How much of the Refuge can or should be restored to native saltmarsh?* Illustration by A. Pickart

## Major issues (continued from page 3)

- Should additional visitor services and environmental education opportunities, including walking trails and outdoor youth adventure camps, be offered on the Humboldt Bay NWR?
- Are dog walking and field training, horse riding, recreational boating (south units), camping, and bicycle riding compatible with the purposes of Humboldt Bay NWR?
- How will the Service protect tribal and other cultural resources on Humboldt Bay NWR?

### Castle Rock NWR Issues Identified by the Public:

- How can global warming related issues be incorporated into Complex management?
- How can Castle Rock NWR be best protected from sources of disturbance including airplanes, kayaking, boat fishing, and other potential sources?
- Should there be more educational outreach on the resources and value of Castle Rock NWR?

### Many Major Issues Were also Identified by Internal Scoping

In addition to public comments, the Service identified additional issues that need to be resolved in the CCP process. Internally identified issues that duplicate those listed above, from the public scoping process, are not repeated.

### Humboldt Bay NWR Internally Identified Issues:

- Given current constraints (adjacent lands and infrastructure, refuge facilities, topographic and hydrologic changes, etc.) and future calculations of sea level rise, how much of the Refuge can or should be restored to native saltmarsh ?
- What actions should be taken to conserve or enhance habitat for the Pacific brant on Humboldt Bay NWR and in coordination with the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District and CA Dept. of Fish and Game?
- What actions should be taken to conserve or enhance habitat for the

Aleutian cackling goose on Humboldt Bay NWR and around the bay in coordination with CA Dept. of Fish and Game, other landowners and the Aleutian Goose Working Group ?

- What mosquito control techniques should be used on the Humboldt Bay NWR?
- What actions should be taken to conserve or enhance habitat for the endangered tidewater goby on Humboldt Bay NWR?
- How can invasive plants best be controlled or eradicated on the Humboldt Bay NWR?
- What is the best method to address law enforcement concerns on the Complex?
- What suggested public uses are found to be appropriate and will be analyzed through compatibility determinations?
- How much environmental education should be offered on the Humboldt Bay NWR?
- Is current staffing sufficient to achieve the Complex's establishment purposes?
- How should older buildings (large barn and old residence) on the Humboldt Bay NWR be dealt with?
- What is the best way to improve refuge partnerships and community relations and outreach?
- When *Eucalyptus sp.* trees are removed from the Humboldt Bay NWR, what is the best method to remove them, and restore native riparian habitat?
- How can important riparian forest habitat best be conserved or enhanced?
- What are the best methods to manage invasive plant species adjacent to the Humboldt Bay NWR?
- How should non-native western Canada geese be managed on the Humboldt Bay NWR?

### Castle Rock NWR Internally Identified Issues:

- What is the best way to accomplish necessary research on the seabirds and marine mammals of Castle Rock NWR without causing excessive disturbance or disruption; and how is that measured?