



Humboldt Bay NWR Complex

Planning Update #4—Spring 2008

Greetings from the Refuge Manager

This is the fourth planning update for the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex) Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (CCP/EA) process. In our last three planning updates we asked for your input on the future management of the Complex and then summarized the comments received during the initial scoping.

After careful consideration of public comments as well as an internal scoping process, the CCP planning team has developed preliminary management alternatives for the Complex. Management activities will focus on accomplishing the purposes for which the individual refuges were established, fulfilling the mission of the Refuge System, as well as providing compatible wildlife dependent educational and recreational opportunities to the public.

You can see on the CCP Planning Process diagram (*page 2*), that we have made progress on the CCP, with your help. However, we still have much work to do and your input throughout the remainder of the CCP process will be equally valuable.

We will send out another planning update when the Draft CCP is available for review, but please check our website for updates prior to that time or to view previous planning updates at: www.fws.gov/humboldtby/.

Ongoing contacts for CCP/EA questions and comments are located on the last page of this planning update. Thank you very much for your continued interest and support in this important planning process.

Eric Nelson
Project Leader/Refuge Manager

An Update on the Complex's CCP Development

Since we distributed Planning Update #3, the CCP planning team has continued to inventory and analyze biological data and we have developed preliminary alternatives for the Draft CCP. Now that preliminary alternatives have been developed, we will analyze and evaluate the environmental consequences of these alternatives. Your input throughout the remainder of the CCP process will continue to be valuable.

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

Sandy Osborn, Refuge Planner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
California and Nevada Region
Refuge Planning
2800 Cottage Way, W-1832
Sacramento, CA 95825

Focus on Key Planning Terms

Terms we use in the CCP/EA planning process have specific policy definitions that may be somewhat different than the meaning those same terms have in normal usage. Some key planning terms are defined below. These terms are used in this planning update and will also appear in the Draft CCP/EA.

■ **Alternatives**—Different sets of management actions for achieving refuge purposes and goals, helping fulfill the Refuge System mission, and resolving issues.

■ **Environmental Assessment (EA)**—A concise public document, prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, that briefly discusses the purpose and need for an action, alternatives to such action, and provides sufficient evidence and analysis of impacts to determine whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or finding of no significant impact.

■ **Goal**—A descriptive, open-ended, and often broad statement of desired future conditions that conveys a purpose but does not define measurable units.

■ **Issue**—Any unsettled matter that requires a management decision, e.g., an initiative, opportunity, resource management problem, threat to the resources of the unit, conflict in uses, public concern, or the presence of an undesirable resource condition.

■ **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969**—The Act which requires all Federal agencies, including the Service, to examine the environmental impacts of their actions, incorporate environmental information, and use public participation in the planning and implementation of all actions.

■ **No Action Alternative**—An alternative under which existing management would be continued.

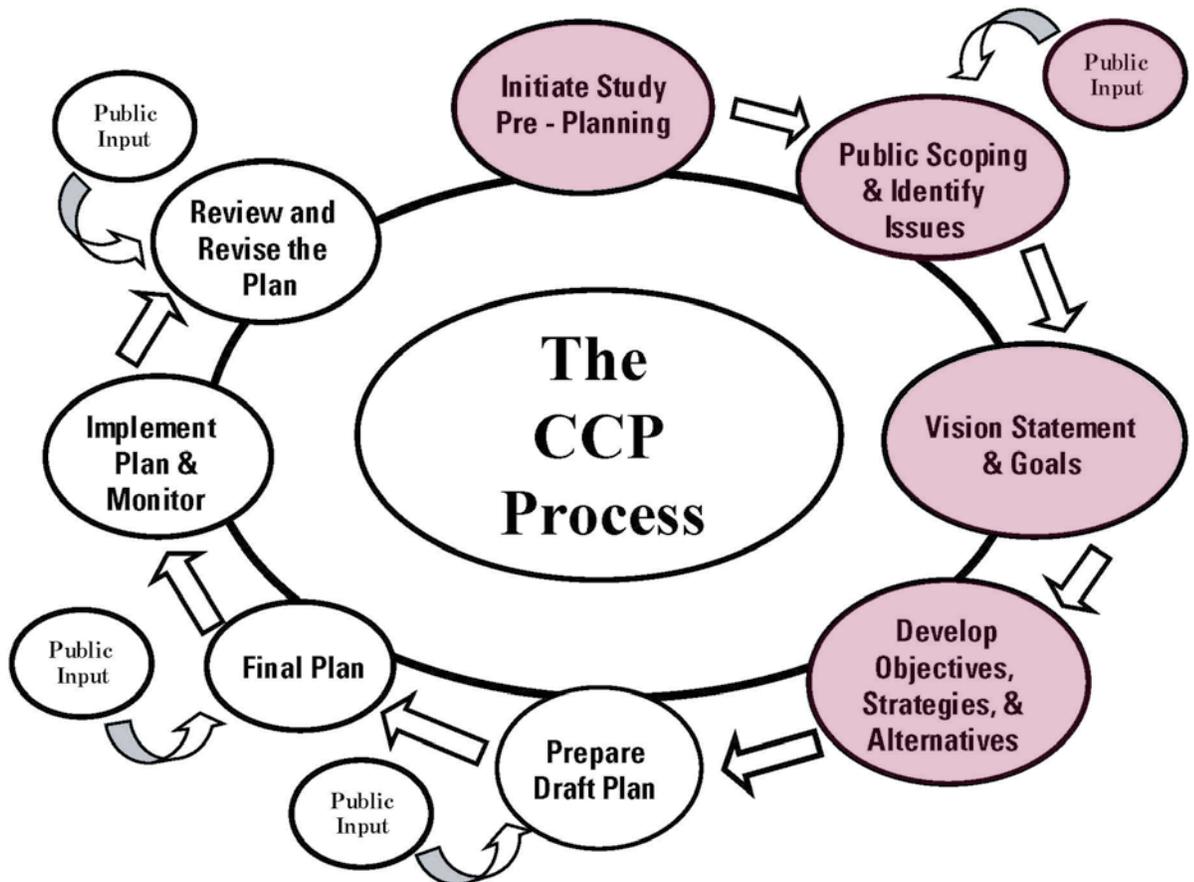
■ **Objective**—A concise statement of what we want to achieve, how much we want to achieve, when and where we want to achieve it, and who is responsible for the work. Objectives derive from goals and provide the basis for determining strategies.

■ **Public Scoping**—A process that offers interested individuals and organizations an opportunity to become informed about, and to express their opinions on Service actions and policies.

■ **Purposes of the Refuge**—The purposes specified in or derived from the law, proclamation, executive order, agreement, public land order, donation document, or administrative memorandum establishing, authorizing, or expanding a refuge, refuge unit, or refuge subunit.

■ **Strategy**—A specific action, tool, or technique or combination of actions, tools, and techniques used to meet unit objectives.

We have developed preliminary alternatives, but your input throughout the remainder of the CCP process will be equally valuable.



Management Alternatives Proposed for Evaluation in the Draft CCP/EA

Preliminary Management Alternatives for Humboldt Bay NWR:

The Environmental Assessment will analyze three alternatives for managing Humboldt Bay NWR. The preliminary alternatives are briefly described here and represent only the “highlights” of each.

Under **Alternative A** (the “No Action” Alternative), management of Humboldt Bay NWR would continue at approximately the same level it has in the recent past. There would be continued work on the most substantive refuge issues including: maintenance of facilities and existing programs, the restoration of Salmon Creek, control of invasives (especially *Spartina*, or non-native cordgrass), habitat management relative to salmonids, Aleutian cackling geese, restoration, and public use initiatives.

Alternative B would entail substantial native habitat restoration, moderate enhancement of Aleutian cackling goose habitat, substantial restoration of Salmon Creek, substantial enhancements of other wetland and dune habitats, an increase in visitor services, a slight reduction in hunt opportunities, and proactive cultural resource management.

Alternative C would include all of the features of Alternative B plus more native habitat restoration, more restoration of Salmon Creek, more enhancements of other wetland and dune habitats; and a slight increase in hunt opportunities compared to Alternative A.

The Complex plans to prepare a Visitor Services Plan, a Sport Hunting Plan, and a Sport Fishing Plan for Humboldt Bay NWR concurrent with development of the CCP.

Preliminary Management Alternatives for Castle Rock NWR:

The Environmental Assessment will also analyze three alternatives for managing Castle Rock NWR.

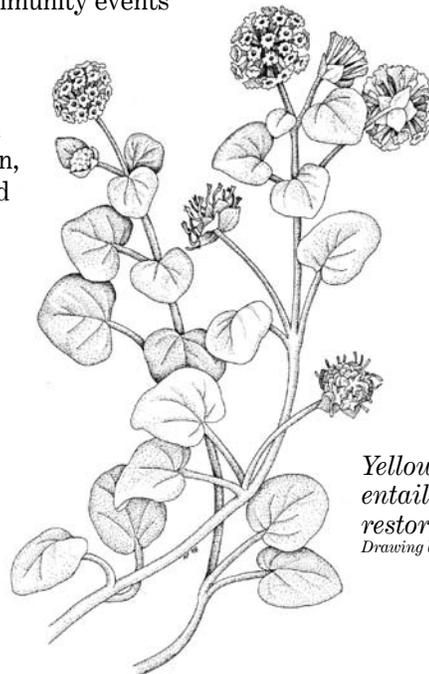
Under **Alternative A** (the “No Action” Alternative), management of Castle Rock NWR would continue unchanged.

Alternative B would entail restricting any monitoring and research to off-island, recommending Castle Rock NWR for wilderness designation and completing the associated legislative environmental impact statement, participating in at least three community events annually, increased educational outreach and interpretation, and increased coordination with tribal entities.

Alternative C would entail surveys for flora and fauna, continued efforts to improve research with remote controlled recording devices, participating in at least two community events annually, increased educational outreach and interpretation, and increased coordination with tribal entities.



Alternative C, for Castle Rock NWR, would entail surveys for flora and fauna
Photo by D. Jaques



Yellow Sand Verbena. Alternative B entails substantial native habitat restoration on Humboldt Bay NWR
Drawing by A. Pickart

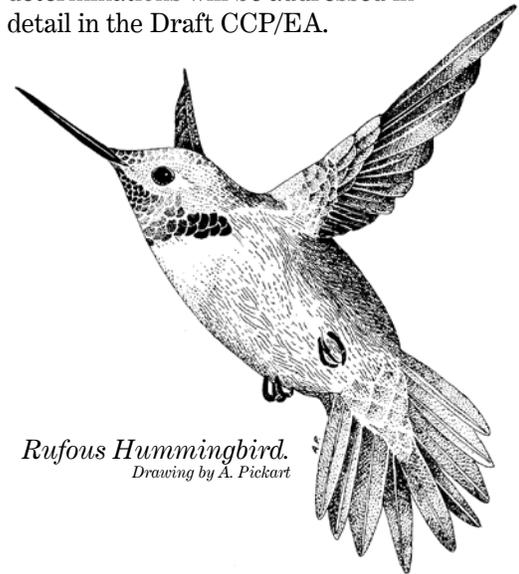


Alternative C entails an increase in visitor services, such as wildlife observation.

Appropriate Use Determinations for Proposed Uses

The Service's appropriate use policy describes the initial decision process the refuge manager follows when first considering whether or not to allow a proposed use on a refuge. Uses may be determined to be appropriate on certain refuge units and inappropriate on others (for example haying/ grazing). As mandated in the 1997 Refuge Improvement Act, six uses are always considered to be appropriate on refuges including: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. If a use is found to be appropriate, the refuge manager must undertake a compatibility review of the use. After the scoping process earlier this year, appropriate use determinations

were conducted for existing and proposed uses on the Complex. Appropriate use determinations will be addressed in detail in the Draft CCP/EA.



Draft CCP/EA Coming Fall 2008

One of the next steps in the CCP process will be your review of the Draft CCP/EA. You will receive a notice announcing the availability of the Draft CCP/EA. We will encourage you to share your comments on the document.

Please Feel Free to Contact Us!

We strive to ensure public involvement in Refuge Complex management decisions during the CCP process. Over the past year many of you have been active participants in this process and we encourage your continued involvement. Any comments that you might have regarding information provided in this planning update or any issues relevant to the Complex should be sent to the contacts below. 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.

You can also obtain information from our website at: <http://www.fws.gov/humboldt/bay/>

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Eric Nelson, Project Leader
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Humboldt Bay NWRC
P.O. Box 576
1020 Ranch Rd.
Loleta, CA 95551-9633
(707)733-5406
Eric_T_Nelson@fws.gov

HBNWR Complex Office hours:
Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Sandy Osborn, Refuge Planner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
California and Nevada Region
Refuge Planning
2800 Cottage Way, W-1832
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 414-6503 phone
(916) 414-6497 fax
Sandy_Osborn@fws.gov

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If you did not receive this newsletter through the mail and would like to be on our mailing list, please contact us.



Drawing by Tom Kelley