SCOPING REPORT SUMMARY:
MALHEUR COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN
May 14, 2010

SCOPING EFFORT

Public involvement was sought in the early stages of development of the CCP. Public involvement strategies included face-to-face meetings with community organizations, local, state and federal agencies, elected officials (or their aides), tribal governments, and Refuge users. For the broader public, the planning team also held open houses, conducted listening posts, provided newsletters, and gave presentations, to inform the public, invite discussion and solicit feedback. The Refuge also maintained a website where CCP information could be found and where the public could print out comment forms or submit emails during the scoping phase. Below is a brief summary of the events, meetings, and outreach tools that were used in our scoping public involvement efforts.

Meetings with Tribes

- November 19, 2009. Open house at Burns Paiute Tribe Gathering Center, Burns, OR.

Meetings with Federal, State, or Local Elected Officials

- April 21, 2009. Met with Harney County Court (County Commissioners)

Meetings with Community/Business Organizations

- April 21, 2009. Met with the board of the High Desert Partnership, Burns, OR.
- August 31, 2009. Met with Lions Club, Burns OR.
- Oct. 1, 2009. Met with Burns/Hines Kiwanis club, Burns, OR.
- Oct. 8, 2009. Met with various merchants, Burns, OR.
- Oct. 13, 2009. Met with the board of Portland Audubon Society, Portland, OR.
- Oct. 14, 2009. Met with Harney County Chamber of Commerce.
- October 15, 2009. Met with Harney County Historical Society, Burns OR.

Meetings with Agencies & Academia

- April 21, 2009. Met with Agricultural Research Service, Burns OR.
- Oct. 15, 2009. Met with various OSU professors and students from wildlife department (34), Corvallis, OR

Public Open Houses/Scoping Sessions

- February 7, 2008. Presentation and public open houses for CCP scoping afternoon and evening sessions. Salem, OR.
- February 13, 2008. Presentation and public open houses for CCP scoping afternoon and evening sessions. Corvallis, OR.
- September 23, 2009. Presentation and public open house, Harney County Chamber of Commerce, Burns, OR.
- October 6, 2009. Presentation and public open house, Central Oregon Environmental Center, Bend, OR
- October 14, 2009. Presentation and public open house, Doubletree Hotel-Lloyd Center, Portland, OR
- October 28, 2009. Presentation and public open house, Golden Eagle Audubon Society, Boise, ID

Listening Posts/ Displays

- Sep. 11-13 Harney County Fair
- Sep. 14-15 Harney County Library
- Sep. 16 Harney County Senior Citizens Center
- Sep. 16 Harney County Chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association
- Sep. 17-18 The Narrows Restaurant, Princeton, OR
- Sep. 19 Round Barn Visitor Center, Lava Bed Road
- Sep. 22 Lane County Audubon, Eugene, OR
- Sep. 23-25 Harney County Chamber of Commerce
- Sep. 26 Frenchglen Hotel
- Sep 28-Oct 1 Harney County Courthouse
- Oct. 1 Thriftway
- Oct 6 Central Oregon Environmental Center, Bend OR
- Oct 12 Portland Audubon Society, Portland, OR
- Oct. 15 Corvallis Audubon Society, Corvallis, OR

Meetings with Individuals

- John and Laurie O'Connor, former residents of Double O Ranch on Refuge, John former employee of the Refuge, July 27, 2009
- Dick Jenkins, owner of Round Barn Interpretive Center, long time resident of Diamond, current permit holder, July 27, 2009
- John and Cindy Witzel, lifelong residents of French Glen, descendents of former Refuge homesteaders whose lease was revoked, July 27, 2009
- Malena Koenik, Proprietor, French Glen General Store, resident for 33 years, July 28, 2009
- Steve, Dwight and Susie Hammond, longtime neighbors of Refuge, former permit holders, participants in Blitzen Valley Plan, July 28, 2009
- Guy Sheeter, retired school teacher from Burns, hunter, July 28, 2009
- Joe Hendry, retired BLM biologist from Burns, formerly involved with Refuge Friends Group, hunter, July 28, 2009
- October and November 2009, Met with several Refuge permittees (G. Marshall, G. Miller, Tyler family, Dunbar?, Mark and Susan Doverspike, Buck Taylor, and Don Opie).

Workshops / Field Reviews

- June 1-5, 2009. Wildlife and Habitat Management Field Review on Refuge. Approx. 40 participants; see http://www.fws.gov/malheur/pdf/bio_review.pdf.
- July 27-30, 2009. Public Uses Field Review on Refuge. Approx. 40 participants, see http://www.fws.gov/malheur/pdf/visitor_services_review_notes.pdf.
- October 20, 2009. Workshop to identify priority species and habitats. Approx. 40 participants.

Press Coverage:

- Fall, 2009. Various notices of CCP open houses and listening posts in the *Burns Hines Herald*, the *Oregonian*, and online (Oregon Birders' Online network, National Rife Association online notice, online Notice of CCP public open house in Salem *Statesman-Journal*.

Planning Updates

- September 2009. Planning Update 1 mailed to approximately 400 persons, organizations, and officials. Copies of the planning update were also placed at key Refuge points, including the Visitor Center and brochure boxes. Copies of the planning update were also placed at various

locations in Burns, Oregon, and surrounding locations, including: Chamber of Commerce, BLM office, ODFW office, USFS office, SWCD office, NRCS office, Big R store, Rite Aid store, King's store, B&B Sporting Goods store, District Hospital, High Desert Medical Center, Library, Burns Post Office, Hines Post Office, Narrows Restaurant, Round Barn Visitor Center, Malheur Field Station, Diamond Hotel, Steens Mountain Resort, Fields store, Frenchglen Hotel, and Crane store, and made available at any outreach event.

Other Tools

- June 2009. Website at www.fws.gov/malheur/ccp_overview.html featuring CCP information and scoping forms.

Federal Register Notices:

- June 29, 2009. Federal Register published Notice of intent to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan and environmental impact statement; request for comments.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Comments were received via email, letters, planning update forms, comment cards, and as summaries compiled from oral or flip-chart comments collected during meetings. Approximately 200 contacts provided comments and additional planning form updates and comment cards were received from approximately 45 anonymous commenters. These are summarized by type, below.

- Planning Update Forms or Comment Cards 159
- Meeting Comments (Oral or Flip-Chart) 21
- Emails 51
- Letters 12

The majority of comments were received from Oregon; however comments were received from states as far away as Georgia, Virginia, and Alaska. Comments fell into 29 themes and 68 subthemes; the number of comments received within each theme/subtheme combination is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of comments received within each theme/subtheme combination.

Theme	Subtheme	# of Comments Received
PLANNING PROCESS		
Collaboration	Community Relationships	16
	General Collaboration and Outreach	17
	Malheur Field Station Collaboration	9
	Tribal	3
Planning Process	Development of Alternatives	16
	General Planning Process	18
	Impact Analyses/NEPA Document	18
HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES		
Cultural Resources	General Cultural Resources	3
	Interpretation	13

Theme	Subtheme	# of Comments Received
	Preserve Historic Structures	3
WILDLIFE DEPENDENT RECREATION		
Environmental Education	General Environmental Education	21
Fishing	General Fishing	23
	Krumbo Management	6
Hunting	General Hunting	3
	Hunting - Specific Reforms Suggested	14
	Maintain or Expand Hunting	31
	Reduce Hunting	3
Interpretation	General Interpretation Suggestions	2
	Special Events and Tours	7
	Visitor Information and Maps	12
Wildlife Observation	General Birding	19
	Wildlife Observation Blinds	14
Wildlife Photography	General Wildlife Photography	11
OTHER RECREATIONAL TOPICS		
Boating	General Boating	2
Camping	General Camping	2
Other Uses	General Other Uses	4
Law Enforcement	General Law Enforcement	5
Public Access, Roads, and Transportation	Disabled Access	4
	General Access	21
	Roads and Transportation	9
Trails	General Trails	13
Visitor Experience	Aesthetic/Spiritual Value of Nature	7
Visitor Facilities	General Visitor Facilities	13
	Headquarters	36
	Signage	9
	Visitor Center	3
Visitor Services	General Visitor Services	4
Wilderness	Wilderness Designation	3
HABITAT MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC USES		
Grain Farming	General Grain Farming	6
Haying	General Haying	19
	Haying - Birds	2
	Haying - Specific Reforms Suggested	11
	Haying - Weeds	1
Livestock Grazing	General Livestock Grazing	28
	Grazing - Birds	5

Theme	Subtheme	# of Comments Received
	Grazing - Economic	3
	Grazing - Specific Reforms Suggested	12
	Grazing - Weeds	6
Water Management	General Water Management	35
Wildlife/Habitat Management	Blitzen River - Fisheries	7
	Blitzen River - Restoration	27
	Carp Specific Issues	32
	Fencing	7
	Fire Ecology and Management	7
	General Wildlife/Habitat Mgmt	52
	Invasive/Non-native Species	54
	Irrigation System	5
	Research	5
	Sagebrush Communities	7
OTHER		
Miscellaneous	General Miscellaneous	7
Off-refuge Issues	General Off-refuge Issues	11
Predator Management	General Predator Management	8
Refuge Administration	General Refuge Administration	21
	Greening Operations	5
	Permittee Administration	2
	Volunteers	19
Threats to Refuge Resources	Climate Change	12
	Transmission Lines	6

COMMENT CONTENT SUMMARIES

There were several themes in which only a few comments were received: **boating**, **camping**, **law enforcement**, **other uses**, **wilderness**, and **visitor services**. Relatively few **miscellaneous** comments were received; these did not fit into any broad themes or subthemes. Themes that received more comments are summarized below, with subthemes included in the applicable theme.

Planning Process

Collaboration (45 comments)

Seventeen (17) comments were about collaboration and **outreach**, with several suggestions indicating specific organizations that could be contacted. There were 16 comments pertaining to **relationships between neighboring communities and the Refuge**. A recurring subject was concern over the lack of communication between Refuge staff and local community members and frustration felt by residents due to lack of understanding why certain decisions were made by Refuge management. Some suggestions for bridging this gap between local residents and Refuge staff were provided.

Fewer comments were received regarding **collaboration with Malheur Field Station**. The majority of these comments expressed support for the Field Station and viewed it as an asset to the Refuge. The general sentiment was in favor of the Refuge and Field Station staff working together for the benefit of the Refuge. Specific suggestions included developing educational programs that incorporate public outreach and research, and utilizing the research facilities available at the Field Station for the betterment of the Refuge. A few comments were also received regarding the need for **tribal** participation.

Planning Process (52 comments)
Several comments expressed concerned over successful implementation of the plan, and a few suggested developing an adaptive management plan with associated monitoring to gauge the effectiveness of implementation. There were 16 comments received regarding the **development of alternatives**, and multiple comments stressed the importance of wildlife welfare as a primary consideration in alternative development. Eighteen (18) comments were received regarding **impact analysis and the NEPA document**. The most frequent topics mentioned in these comments concerned the management of water, grazing activities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Some comments stressed the importance of Compatibility Determinations for the various Refuge uses.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Cultural Resources (19 comments)
Nine (9) of the comments were related to **interpretation**. Several commenters expressed a desire to see more interpretive signs at historic locations, while others suggested providing new exhibits and/or kiosks highlighting historical occupation and cultural resources. Suggested exhibits included old farming equipment, petroglyphs, and cultural artifacts, as well as descriptive examples of how area resources were historically used by residents. Self-guided or guided interpretive tours were recommended. A few comments were received acknowledging the need for continued **preservation of historic structures**, including remaining historic homesteader sites. Suggestions for Sod House Ranch and P Ranch were made.

Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Environmental Education (21 comments)
Frequent comments included the following; providing educational programs at the Refuge, such as indoor and outdoor classrooms; increasing research opportunities for high school, undergraduate, and graduate students; partnering with the Malheur Field Station in providing educational opportunities; and classroom education, with Refuge staff visiting area schools.

Fishing (29 comments)
In general, the comments expressed support for maintaining fishing opportunities on the Refuge. Common suggestions included instituting gear restrictions and bag limits, and increasing general and disabled access. Other diverse suggestions were also provided, including increasing enforcement of fishing regulations, instituting a catch-and-kill carp fishery, and allowing catch-and-release angler guide services. One commenter was opposed to fishing on the Refuge. A few comments were specifically related to fishing **management of the Krumbo reservoir**, with several comments providing management suggestions, such as eradicating bass.

Hunting (51 comments)

Although there were three comments opposed to hunting on the Refuge, 31 comments were in favor of **maintaining or expanding hunting**. There were several comments **suggesting specific hunting reforms**. These comments were variable in nature and ranged from suggesting a bow hunting opportunity for bucks, to suggesting that hunting be allowed only if it improves conditions for wildlife or sustains native populations.

Interpretation (21 comments)
Over half of the comments requested additional **visitor information**, such as signs, kiosks, leaflets, and maps. Fewer comments were received suggesting **interpretive tours** throughout the Refuge or **special events**, such as bird workshops.

Wildlife Observation (33 comments)
The majority of these was suggestions regarding **birding** and varied in content, such as installing video cameras in locations throughout the Refuge where access is either difficult of bothersome to wildlife, and increasing outreach to out of state birders. Fourteen (14) comments were received in favor of **wildlife observation blinds**, including suggestions indicating desired blind locations.

Wildlife Photography (11 comments)
Although they were varied in nature, most commenters included sentiments in favor of increased photography opportunities. Suggestions included photo blinds, access to pheasant hunt areas prior to hunting season, licenses to access currently inaccessible areas, and opportunities focused on photography of bucks.

Other Recreational Topics

Public Access, Roads, and Transportation (34 comments)
Four comments stressed the need for improvements to **disabled access**. Several comments indicated support for increased access, primarily at Double O, and one comment was opposed to additional access. Other comments were in favor of **increased accessibility** to various locations by adding parking areas or providing drive-in access at locations that are currently walk-in only. A few comments included diverse suggestions, such as allowing volunteers access to closed areas as a perk. A number of comments were related to **roads and transportation**, with concerns ranging from the need for pullouts to view wildlife, to road maintenance, and requests that the Center Patrol Road remain open.

Trails (13 comments)
The primary sentiment expressed in these comments involved creating additional trails. Several comments specifically requested hiking trails, while fewer were in favor of birding trails. One commenter requested disabled access trails through a variety of habitats.

Visitor Experience (7 comments)
These comments placed value on the **spiritual or aesthetic visitor experience** at the Refuge. Commenters indicated a particular appreciation for the beautiful scenery, birds and wildlife, and a number of other attributes.

Visitor Facilities (61 comments)
The majority of comments (36) were in regards to **Headquarters**. Many comments indicated frustration with landscaping management of the Headquarters area. In particular, commenters stated that the vegetation is reminiscent of a park and not a refuge, with a great deal of lawn, non-native vegetation, and heavily pruned trees and shrubs that do not attract birds. Lesser numbers of

comments suggested the addition of a water feature that would attract birds, and also requests for increased access to various areas in the vicinity of Headquarters. Several comments were received regarding **signs**, with the predominant topic including requests for both directional and informational signs. Several commenters requested additional restroom facilities and a couple suggested a new **visitor center**.

Habitat Management and Economic Uses

Grain Farming (6 comments)
These comments varied in nature, with some providing specific management suggestions and others expressing either support or opposition for grain farming.

Haying (33 comments)
Eleven (11) of these included **suggestions for specific haying reforms.** The majority of these suggestions stressed the importance of flexible haying management, especially regarding allowable haying dates or agreements with permittees. Other suggestions were unique, such as instituting a requirement that hay farmers plant a certain percentage of grain for wildlife, or only allowing hay farming on pre-determined Refuge fields and making permittees responsible for irrigation and infrastructure in those areas.

In addition to suggested reforms, comments were received with sentiments ranging from support or opposition to haying practices (including rake-bunch haying), and others suggesting that haying operations should be aligned with the Refuge's objective of wildlife conservation. There were limited comments pertaining to haying and **weeds,** with concern over the potential dispersal of weeds as a consequence of haying operations, and a few comments specific to concerns over the effects that haying might have on **birds**.

Livestock Grazing (54 comments)
There were several comments in favor of the reduction or elimination of grazing with fewer comments in support of continued or increased grazing. **Specific reforms were suggested** in several instances, these included recommendations to increase the flexibility of grazing operations, reintroduce bison as a replacement for cattle, and prohibit grazing in wetland and riparian areas. There were several comments pertaining to livestock grazing as it relates to **weed and bird management**, with relatively balanced support and opposition of this management tool. A few comments were received regarding the **economic benefits** of cattle grazing, with one comment suggesting that cattle ranchers would have a financial incentive to protect and preserve the Refuge if a visitor fee is charged.

Water Management (35 comments)
These were diverse in scope; however several expressed concern about the water situation on the Refuge and indicated this is a critical issue. A number of comments acknowledged the importance of water as wildlife habitat. Management suggestions ranged from allowing beavers to naturally dam rivers and creeks, to installing gauging stations to monitor water quality and quantity.

Wildlife/Habitat Management (203 comments)
Comments were diverse, with many suggesting management strategies and others stating support or opposition for particular management approaches. Fifty-four (54) comments were received regarding invasive/non-native species. The preponderance of these comments stated the need to control invasive vegetation, such as pepperweed, reed canarygrass, and Russian olive; others

provided a multitude of suggestions on how to tackle this task. Thirty-two (32) additional comments were specifically related to carp. These primarily acknowledged the need to eradicate carp from Refuge waters, with a few comments offering suggestions such as using rotenone or catch-and-kill fishing. Twenty-seven (27) commenters voiced support for restoration of the Blitzen River. There was also support for Blitzen River fisheries, with a few comments in favor of protecting and monitoring native redband trout populations. Comments regarding sagebrush communities, fencing, and irrigation were predominantly critical of current management. Commenters were opposed to the cutting of juniper; indicated a need for maintenance of canals; and expressed displeasure about fences on the Refuge, citing that they are harmful to wildlife, are frequently in a state of disrepair, and are often replaced rather than maintained. Comments regarding fire ecology and management were relatively balanced, with some supporting the use of fire and others opposed. A few comments were received indicating support for expanding research programs.

Other

Off-Refuge Issues (11 comments)
These ranged from a few comments suggesting that Refuge staff participate in the local watershed council, to others expressing concern over the unsightly appearance of the town of Frenchglen, especially following the recent juniper cut.

Predator Management (8 comments)
The majority of respondents voiced opposition to predator control and stressed that predators are essential to a balanced and healthy ecosystem. A few comments indicated support for predator controls.

Refuge Administration (47 comments)
There were a number of comments expressing criticism of the current management and a few suggesting the Refuge charge an entrance fee. A few comments were focused on improving **'green' practices** at the Refuge. These suggestions included water conservation, solar energy, electric vehicles, and conducting an efficiency assessment. Several comments were related to **volunteers**, with various suggestions for utilizing volunteer help for tasks including invasive vegetation removal, trail maintenance, ranger/patrol duties, and planting native vegetation. Others suggested that better birding opportunities would equate to an increased volunteer base, and that birders could be called upon to volunteer, perhaps conducting bird surveys. A few comments were received about the **administration of permittees**.

Threats to Refuge Resources (18 comments)
The majority of these comments were related to **climate change**. Some commenters simply stated that climate change will affect the Refuge, while others suggested identifying potential impacts and developing measures to mitigate ecosystem impacts that may result. Fewer comments were related to **transmission lines**, and each instance voiced opposition to transmission lines with several stressing the risk of bird mortality due to strikes.

COMMENT CARDS AND PLANNING UPDATE FORMS

In addition to comments that were received in the form of letters, emails, and meeting notes (summarized in the previous section), comment cards and planning update inserts containing discrete, pre-printed questions were also received. Responses to several key questions on those forms are summarized below. One question, "What suggestions do you have to address your issues or concerns?" elicited a broad range of responses. These have already been captured in the

previous section summarizing comments by theme/subtheme and are not included in the following summary.

Why is the Refuge special to you?
The majority of commenters indicated that the Refuge is special to them because of the diverse, abundant wildlife and the unique, natural setting. Commenters' interest in wildlife focused on wildlife observation (primarily birds), hunting, fishing, and general habitat preservation. Comments also indicated a high value is placed on the undeveloped setting of the Refuge because it provides: solitude, quiet, beauty, dark skies for astronomy, natural connection, inspiration, isolation, and regional history. Other values included educational opportunities (including geology), jobs, visitor facilities and staff, livestock pasture, personal memories, watershed protection, and proximity to other places of interest.

What activities do you engage in when you visit the Refuge?
The most commonly cited activity that visitors engage in at the Refuge is wildlife and general observation. Comments expressed enjoyment of driving, biking, hiking, and walking around the Refuge to primarily see birds but also other wildlife, plants, geologic features, historical resources, stars, and the high desert landscape. In the process, visitors described taking photographs, painting, writing, studying, praying, and relaxing. Visitors also responded that they picnic, shop at the visitor center, fish, hunt, rockhound, volunteer, and work at the Refuge.

Which issues are most important to you?
Comments indicated a primary concern for wildlife and aquatic habitat improvement, including activities such as invasive species removal, removing old barbed wire, avoiding new transmission lines, water and fire management, addressing grazing concerns, and restoring specific areas (e.g., Blitzen River). Most comments also highlighted the need for better visitor facilities, staffing, and services. For example, suggestions included improvements to Refuge Headquarters, roads and trails, wildlife viewing facilities, cultural resources, on-Refuge accommodations, recreation, expanded hunting opportunities, and educational and interpretive resources. Some comments requested fewer visitor improvements and more livestock grazing.

What is your vision for the future of the Refuge?
Wildlife protection and a healthy ecosystem was the dominant vision for the future of the Refuge noted in most comments. While some thought the Refuge of the future should look more like it did in the mid-20th century, others sought a variety of increased visitor facilities and services. Commenters placed a high value on the Refuge and would like it to be well-maintained, with important resources protected, and an active contributor to the local economy.