



# Swan Lake

## National Wildlife Refuge

### Project Update

### Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan

September 2007

#### Where in the Plan Are We?

These are the steps that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service follows in comprehensive conservation planning; the step that Swan Lake NWR has reached is highlighted:

1. Preplanning: Plan the Plan
2. Initiate Public Involvement and Scoping
3. Review Vision Statement and Goals and Determine Significant Issues
- 4. Develop and Analyze Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action**
5. Prepare a Draft CCP and NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Document
6. Prepare and Adopt Final CCP
7. Implement Plan, Monitor and Evaluate
8. Review and Revise the Plan



Swan Lake NWR

## State of the Plan

In January we launched the planning process for Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge. We heard from dozens of you on a wide range of topics. Our thanks go to everyone who attended the open house meeting, voiced a concern, or penned a comment. Your involvement is helping to shape the future of the Refuge, and we appreciate it. You gave us much to think about. Your comments strengthened our belief that Refuges are important places where people and wildlife come together.

We expected to be further along by now, but the departure of two staff members including the Refuge Manager slowed progress for a time. A new Refuge Manager is expected to report for duty in mid-October and we look forward to his involvement in the planning process.

Presently, we are working on the details of three alternatives. Each of the three alternatives considers Refuge staffing and how we might manage Refuge habitats, visitor services, and facilities. Once complete the alternatives will be distributed for public review.

Meanwhile, the following pages preview our work summarizing how we are using your comments to help in developing alternatives.

Thanks for your interest in Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

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## A sampling of what you told us

## Some of the issues we identified

"The Refuge staff needs to work with NGOs such as Ducks Unlimited and Delta Waterfowl to improve Refuge hunting quality"

"The levees need to be mowed more often and especially just prior to hunting season"

"The Refuge needs more staff and money, add a biologist and man the office all day and weekends"

"The refuge needs to get more involved in the community and develop a volunteers program"

"The Refuge Manager needs to live on the Refuge"

Maintenance, management, and visitor services needs exceed the existing capacity to fulfill these needs.

The decline of Canada Goose numbers on the refuge in recent decades has decreased the quality of goose hunting, drawn fewer hunters and wildlife watchers, and changed the cultural identity of the local communities.

"Silver Lake needs to be deeper to improve fishing"

"Water quality in Silver Lake is declining"

"Silver Lake needs to be drained temporarily and a large number of islands created"

"Silver Lake has lost 3 feet of depth over the last 20 years due to sedimentation (serves as a holding basin protecting the rest of the refuge)"

"Sedimentation of Silver Lake (acts like holding basin for agriculture sediment runoff)"

Accumulation of sediment over several decades has decreased the depth and water holding capacity of Silver Lake.

The Refuge attracts high numbers of waterfowl and other wildlife, making it appealing as a sanctuary as well as for those interested in hunting and other wildlife dependent recreation.

"Wildlife management on the Refuge should be broader than just ducks"

"We need more pheasants and quail and fewer predators, especially hawks"

"The Refuge needs to do a better job of controlling the deer population"

"Swan Lake needs to be drained in the spring and summer and burned in order to improve waterfowl habitat"

"Summer drawdown on the lakes are too early, it hurts shorebird habitat"

"There should be more of an effort to restore native prairie"

"There should be more of an effort to remove invasive plant species"

There are a range of options for the structure, function, and composition as well as amount, distribution, and seasonal availability of Refuge habitats. This affects wildlife use and abundance.

"The lakes should be seined to remove rough fish and then restocked with game fish"

"Log jams should be removed from Yellow Creek"

"Silver Lake needs to be deeper to improve fishing"

Refuge waters could be managed to create more favorable fishing opportunities.

## A sampling of what you told us

"We need to manage the refuge like the 'old times' and bring back good goose hunting"

"We need to manage the refuge to get a resident pop. of Canada Geese"

"Not enough standing grain is left in the field by Coop farmers"

"There needs to be more Coop farming and crop flooding to attract more geese"

"Duck hunting should be allowed on the refuge"

"There should be no duck hunting on the refuge"

"The Refuge should be closed to all hunting"

"There should be no deer hunting in the central part of the refuge"

"We should set aside a part of the refuge as a butterfly sanctuary"

"There should be no Refuge access from December through March, make the Refuge a sanctuary"

"Bring back the sandbar area on the north side of Silver Lake for recreation"

"There needs to be improved access into and throughout the refuge year round"

"There needs to be year-round access to the Refuge/Visitor Center"

"The Refuge needs a bow hunt only season for deer"

"The Refuge should provide more variety in hunting opportunities, ducks, rabbits, upland game, deer, etc"

"The Refuge needs to provide and promote better opportunities and places for wildlife observation and photography"

"There needs to be an observation tower at the end of the nature trail and signs saying that this was where cannon-netting was started"

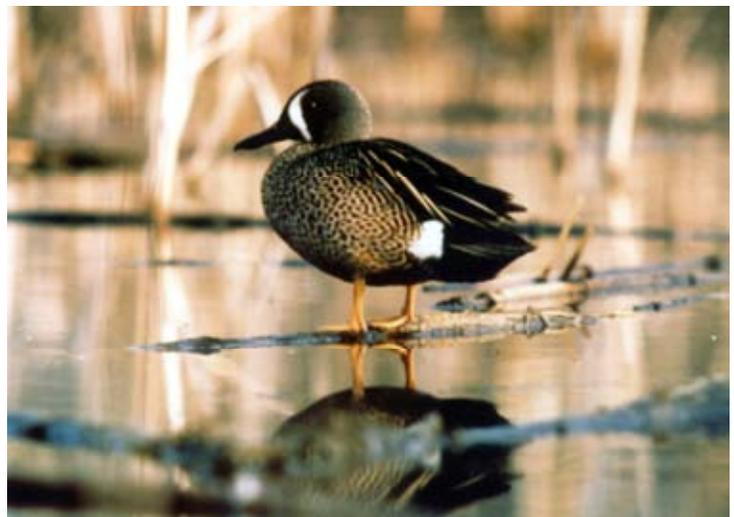
"There needs to be better opportunities for environmental education"

## Issues and You

At the outset of the planning process we invited public input regarding the present and future condition of the Refuge. We call this step "scoping" and we got dozens of oral and written responses that contained scores of individual comments. You may wonder how we use such comments in the planning process.

Scoping is not a voting process, each comment receives equal weight, but it is a way for us to discover public opinion on subjects related to the Refuge. We value public input, but addressing each comment individually is not possible so we sift and sort them looking for common themes. In the graphic to the left, take note that the individual comments are often phrased as a response or solution to a particular problem. Because planning is about developing and evaluating a *range of alternative solutions* we are most interested in identifying the condition or problem that prompted the comment. This is how we develop issue statements. A well-crafted issue statement distinguishes a concern without promoting a particular solution. Eventually, each issue statement is accompanied by a fuller explanation that summarizes the content of the original comments.

We use the issues derived from your comments along with Service policy and our own concerns to guide us in developing alternatives.



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## What's Next?

The next step in the planning process is to develop a draft version of the comprehensive conservation plan along with an environmental assessment that includes an analysis of the alternatives. Once our work is complete we will distribute it for public review and comment. We look forward to hearing from you at that time.

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## For More Information

Information on comprehensive conservation planning and the Swan Lake NWR planning project is available on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's website for the Division of Conservation planning:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/SwanLake>

Please contact us if you have any questions or need additional information. Direct inquiries to:

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