
Reader's Guide

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is required to prepare and then manage Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) consistent with a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). The CCP provides 15 years of guidance for Refuge management and boundary modification. The CCP also provides a framework for adaptive management through the steps of implement, monitor, evaluate, and revise. Step-down plans will be required to provide additional details as certain programs outlined in the CCP are implemented.

This document combines both a Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (CCP/EIS). The next step in the planning process is a decision by the Regional Director, Midwest Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fort Snelling, Minnesota, on which alternative in the Final EIS will become the final management plan for the Refuge. This decision is made after a required 30-day minimum waiting period and recorded in a formal Record of Decision. A decision is expected in late September.

We will then publish a stand-alone CCP made up of Chapter 1, the selected alternative from Chapter 2, Chapters 3, 5, 6 and the appendices. The three most important Appendices to review in this draft include Appendix A: Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Implementation, Appendix J: Compatibility Determinations, and Appendix L: Land Protection Plan. Another key section to review is Section 2.5.1.8 Operational Policies, which presents proposed changes in Refuge operations. We have provided the following chapter and appendix descriptions to assist you in locating and understanding the various components of this combined document.

Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for Action, includes legal and policy guidelines, the regional and ecosystem context of the Refuge, a brief history of the Refuge, Refuge Goals, and a discussion of the issues identified early in the planning process.

Chapter 2, Alternatives, Objectives, and Strategies, describes five possible management alternatives. Each alternative represents a potential comprehensive conservation plan for Crab Orchard NWR. Alternative A describes the current management direction on the Refuge. Alternative E, the Preferred Alternative, presents the objectives and strategies of the proposed Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Some features are common to all alternatives. The common features are described before the detailed alternative descriptions.

Chapter 3, Affected Environment, describes the existing physical and biological environment, public use, special management areas, industrial and agricultural use, cultural resources, and socioeconomic conditions.

Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, describes the potential impacts of each of the five alternatives on the resources and conditions outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5, List of Preparers, lists the persons involved in writing this document.

Chapter 6, Consultation and Coordination, presents a summary of public involvement and who is receiving this Draft CCP/EIS.

Chapter 7, Response to Comments Received on the Draft EIS/CCP. The Refuge received nearly 2,000 comments on the Draft EIS/CCP. In this chapter, we note all of the topics raised in these comments and respond to them, including noting how we changed the EIS in response to a comment.

Appendix A, Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Implementation, pulls together in one place the objectives and strategies of the preferred alternative – the heart of the CCP. Also included are discussions of projects and personnel needed to implement the CCP.

Appendix B, Glossary, contains acronyms, abbreviations, and definitions of terms used in this document.

Appendix C, Laws and Orders, contains brief descriptions of the more pertinent laws and executive orders applicable to management of the Refuge.

Appendix D, Species Lists, contains lists of birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, mammals, and vascular plants of Crab Orchard NWR.

Appendix E, State-listed Species Potentially Found at Crab Orchard NWR, contains species listed by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board as endangered or threatened.

Appendix F, Bibliography, contains the bibliographic references cited or consulted while preparing this document.

Appendix G, Public Law 80-361, contains a copy of the law that established Crab Orchard NWR.

Appendix H, Summary of Public Comment, summarizes public reaction to four concepts that we were considering as preliminary management alternatives in September 2001. We presented the concepts in a project update mailed to over 1,400 persons.

Appendix I, Letter Outlining the Exchange Proposal, contains a copy of a letter from Southern Illinois University that outlines the use the University would make of Fish and Wildlife Service property if a proposed land exchange were to take place. The proposed land exchange would be a major component of Alternative B.

Appendix J, A list of Compatibility Determinations that were reviewed as part of the Draft EIS.

Appendix K, Refuge Operating Needs System (RONS) and Maintenance Management System (MMS) lists, describes the larger projects that would be pursued if the preferred alternative is developed into a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. RONS refers to new initiatives and MMS describes maintenance of existing facilities.

Appendix L, Land Protection Plan, describes a proposal to adjust the authorized boundaries of the Refuge, which would permit acquisition of land from

willing sellers and improve the efficiency of management in the long-term. The intent of the detailed plan is to inform neighbors, landowners, and the interested public of the Service's proposal and protection priorities.

Appendix M, Objectives and Strategies by Alternative, is a large table that displays the differences and similarities of each alternative in the details provided by objectives and strategies. We constructed this appendix so the reader could more easily compare the alternatives presented in Chapter 2 in detail.

Appendix N, Wildlife-Habitat Matrix, displays the table of values that was used in estimating the effects of habitat change on species that occur at Crab Orchard NWR and are of particular management concern to the Service's region. The values in the table reflect how important a particular habitat is to a species.