

## Chapter 2: The Planning Process

The Seney NWR CCP has been written with input and assistance from citizens, universities, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and staff from other federal, state, and local agencies. The participation of these stakeholders is vital, and all of their ideas have been valuable in determining the future direction of the Refuge. Refuge and Service planning staff are grateful to all of those who have contributed time, expertise, and ideas throughout the CCP process. We appreciated the enthusiasm and commitment expressed by many for the lands and living resources administered by Seney NWR.

### Internal Agency Scoping

The CCP process began in March 2006 with a meeting between Refuge staff and regional planners from the Service's office in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. The participants in this "internal scoping" exercise reviewed the Refuge's Vision Statement, goals, existing baseline resource data, planning documents, and other pertinent information. In addition, the group identified a preliminary list of issues, concerns, and opportunities facing the Refuge that would need to be addressed in the CCP.

A list of required CCP elements (e.g., maps, photos, and GIS data layers) was also developed at this meeting and during subsequent e-mail and telephone communications between Refuge staff and the Service's office in the Twin Cities. Concurrently, the group studied federal and state mandates plus applicable local ordinances, regulations, and plans for their relevance to this planning effort. Finally, the group agreed to a process and sequence for obtaining public input and a tentative schedule for completion of the CCP. A Public Involvement Plan was drafted and distributed to participants immediately after the meeting.



*Refuge pool, Seney NWR. USFWS photo.*

### Open Houses

Public input was encouraged and obtained using several methods, including an open house, written comments during a public scoping period, and personal contacts.

Initial public scoping for the Seney NWR CCP began in August 2006 with an open house event held at the Refuge Visitor Center. Despite widespread notification in area newspapers, radio and television, the event drew only about 15 people. Comment forms were available at the event and made available at the Refuge Headquarters and Visitor Center during the following weeks.

Those interested in making written comments had until October 2006 to submit them. Comments could be sent by U.S. mail, e-mail, or via the Seney

planning website on the Internet. Approximately 30 comment forms and other written comments were submitted to the Refuge during the scoping process.

## Refuge Program Reviews

On August 28-30, 2006, a Biology Program Review was held to obtain detailed input on the issues and opportunities concerning the habitat and biological monitoring program at the Refuge. Thirty people, representing Michigan DNR, U.S. Geological Survey – Biological Resource Division, universities, NGOs, Refuge staff, conservation organizations, and others attended these discussions.

During July 2006, two agency Visitor Service Specialists met with Refuge staff to review the Visitor Service program. The review team toured the refuge facilities and made a number of recommendations for improving the quality of visitor experiences, environmental education and outreach.

Both of these program reviews were scheduled to coincide with the CCP scoping process and to help formulate objectives and strategies in the plan.

## Summary of Issues, Concerns and Opportunities

The following list of issue topics was generated by internal Refuge scoping, the public open house sessions, and program reviews. Each topic will be described in more detail in the following chapters of this plan.

### *Habitat Management:*

- Wetland and upland habitat preservation, conservation, and restoration
- Invasive plant species impacts and management
- Prescribed burning and the Refuge's Fire Use Program
- Stream restoration
- Wilderness management
- Role of the Refuge in the landscape



*Seney NWR. USFWS photo.*

### *Aquatic Resources:*

- Protection of waterbodies from human disturbances and invasive species
- Predator and native fish populations

### *Wildlife Management:*

- Wildlife research
- Carrying capacity for Trust species

### *Visitor Services:*

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Visitor capacity
- Outreach
- Access
- A developed picnic area
- Horseback riding and a snowmobile route

## **Preparation, Publishing, Finalization and Implementation of the CCP**

The Seney NWR CCP and Environmental Assessment (EA) were prepared by the staff of Seney NWR, the USFWS Regional Office, and a representative of the Michigan DNR. The CCP/EA will be published in two phases and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The EA (Appendix A) presents a range of alternatives for future management and identifies the preferred alternative, which is also the Draft CCP. A public review period of at least 30 days, which will include a public meeting, will follow release of the draft plan.

Verbal and written comments received by the Service will be incorporated (where appropriate) and perhaps result in modifications to the preferred alternative or in the selection of one of the other alternatives. The alternative that is ultimately selected will become the basis of the ensuing Final CCP. This document then becomes the basis for guiding management on the Refuge over the coming 15-year period. It will guide the development of more detailed step-down management plans for specific resource areas, and it will underpin the annual budgeting process through Service-wide allocation databases. Most importantly, it lays out the general approach to managing habitat, wildlife, and people at the Seney NWR that will direct day-to-day decision-making and actions.