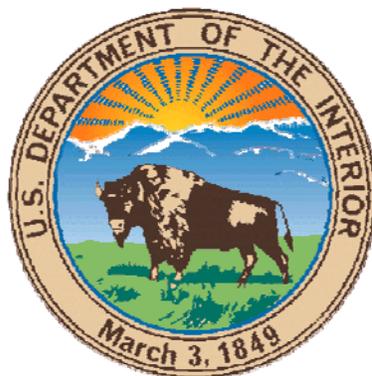




WHITTLESEY CREEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR PUBLIC USE

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
REGION 3
BISHOP HENRY WHIPPLE FEDERAL BUILDING
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FORT SNELLING, MINNESOTA 55111**



**FINAL
APRIL 6, 2001**

Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge, c/o NGLVC, 29270 County Highway G,
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Executive Summary

This document describes the wildlife-dependent recreational uses that will be provided at the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in Northern Wisconsin. The purpose of the Refuge is for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources. The Service is working with individuals, groups, and governmental entities to protect and restore coastal wetland and stream habitats that are utilized by migratory trout and salmon from Lake Superior and by migratory birds. The Refuge will protect, restore, and manage coastal wetland and spring-fed stream habitat. Up to 540 acres of coastal wetland and upland will be acquired in fee title and up to 1240 acres will be protected through conservation easements in the Whittlesey watershed.

The general philosophy for public use on the refuge will be: "Everything the Service does in relation to the Refuge (management, restoration, public use, monitoring, research) will be viewed as an opportunity to provide public participation and teach/encourage environmental stewardship. Programs and activities will be developed to create in our visitors:

- Awareness and ecological understanding of the Refuge and adjacent landscape
- Knowledge of how humans affect the natural system
- Understanding of the value of habitat for fish and wildlife
- Recognition of fish and wildlife values in general."

Six wildlife-dependent uses are considered priority recreational uses for all refuges, and implementation of these uses will help meet the purpose and goals of this Refuge. They are wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, interpretation, hunting, and fishing. Guidelines presented in this plan for each of these uses are summarized below.

Wildlife Observation and Photography

Wildlife observation generally needs few facilities. All Refuge lands will be open to wildlife observation, unless closed for public safety or wildlife conservation reasons. For example, a buffer area around a nesting osprey might be established to minimize disturbance to the birds. If any parcels of Refuge land are closed, the Service will notify the public and clearly mark where the closed areas are.

Interpretive programming and special event planning will be designed to help visitors develop their observation skills.

Wildlife photography will be allowed along trails and observation points with no special guidelines. The Service may issue special use permits to individuals who wish to set up temporary blinds for wildlife photography.

Hunting

Guidelines for hunting on refuge lands will be limited to waterfowl hunting for this plan version. The Service intends to provide hunting opportunities for upland birds, deer and other species on

Refuge lands once additional properties are acquired and the Service understands public needs and evaluates safety issues.

An Interim Waterfowl Hunting Plan will be developed for the Refuge. In general, the Service will follow all regulations of the State of Wisconsin on lands it owns. The following interim guidelines will be followed.

General

Hunters will be required to follow all State laws and regulations. This includes no shooting within 100 yards of a residence without permission of the resident. The Service does not allow baiting on any refuge system lands, so baiting will not be allowed on the Refuge.

Ground or elevated blinds may be used if they do not damage live vegetation and are completely removed from the property each day at the close of the hunting hours. Ground blinds may be constructed entirely of dead vegetation from on the property.

Non-toxic shot is required for all shotgun use on the refuge. A no-hunting buffer on lands the Service owns adjacent to the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center will be established for visitor safety needs.

Waterfowl Hunting

Waterfowl hunting will be allowed on Refuge lands as provided in the Interim Hunting Plan. The Service does not plan to limit use unless high demand creates safety concerns. We anticipate that most waterfowl hunters respect spacing needs between hunters and blinds and will essentially self-regulate themselves. Most waterfowl hunting in the proposed Refuge currently takes place along and near the Lake Superior shore.

Fishing

Fishing is currently allowed in public waters, under state regulations, and this will not change. Access might be provided through the refuge for the public in general. For example, the proposed parking area next to Whittlesey Creek could provide access for stream anglers.

Environmental Education and Interpretation

The Service will cooperate with the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center and other organizations to plan and offer interpretive and environmental education programs. The Service plans to continue its partnership with the Center. **The Service's focus in working with the Center will be fish and wildlife conservation, management, and restoration.** The Service can play a leadership role in showing how the best science and technology is used for wildlife conservation and restoration efforts. Service lands can serve as a demonstration area for habitat management which fosters broad participation in natural resources stewardship.

The educational theme for the Refuge's environmental education and interpretive activities is "**habitat restoration - recreating ecosystems piece by piece.**" The

Service, on Refuge lands and those of willing private landowners, will be restoring fish habitat for salmonids in Whittlesey Creek, recreating wetlands on the landscape, and improving degraded habitats. The Service will work cooperatively with interested individuals and organizations to assist with this work.

Orientation and Access to the Refuge

A clear system of welcome and orientation signs will allow visitors to know where to go, what recreation, interpretation and education opportunities are available, any limits on uses, and how to make the best use of their time while visiting the Refuge. Physical developments to accommodate public use and enjoyment of the Refuge will initially be limited to small parking areas and informational and educational signs. The Service plans to develop short hiking trails and wildlife observation areas in the future. All facilities developed will be accessible to people with disabilities. Generally, lands will be open during daylight hours. All use on the Refuge will be non-motorized, except on the permanent snowmobile trail.

Non-priority Public Uses

Trapping

Trapping is allowed in state-controlled public waters adjacent to the Refuge. Trapping will not be allowed for recreational purposes on lands owned by the Service until a compatibility determination is made about trapping. A separate trapping plan would be developed before the Service would allow trapping on the Refuge. Until then, trapping would be allowed as a management tool only if needed to protect refuge facilities.

Wild Food Gathering

Wild food gathering includes berry picking, mushroom harvest, and harvest of other natural foods that are used by humans for sustenance, medicinal or ceremonial purposes. Opportunities are limited on the Refuge and we are not aware of traditional harvest within the Refuge. Because the Service considers the needs of wildlife first, we must monitor harvest of a resource that is utilized by wildlife. Non-commercial harvest of wild food will be allowed under special use permit.

Background

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) established the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) as a means of working with individuals, groups, and government entities to protect and restore coastal wetlands and spring-fed streams tributary to Lake Superior. The Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge was established under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 USC 742(a)-754) for the purpose of:

“... the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources.”

Our management objectives at Whittlesey Creek are to protect, restore, and manage a portion of the remaining coastal wetland and stream habitat within the largest and one of the most important coastal wetland complexes on Lake Superior. The refuge is located in Bayfield County of northern Wisconsin in the Town of Barksdale (Figure 1).

This document describes how we will develop and manage public use on the Refuge. Lands purchased by the Service will be open to limited wildlife-dependent recreational uses that are compatible with the Refuge’s purpose and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Service will also develop a habitat conservation plan for restoration and management of the Refuge’s fish and wildlife habitats. These public use guidelines are written broadly, to avoid future conflicts with habitat restoration and management. The Service, however, will continue to refine management of public use as lands are purchased and as the public begins to enjoy Refuge lands, and its fish and wildlife.

Background of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System

The Service is the primary Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the Nation’s fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. The Service shares this responsibility with other Federal, State, tribal, local, and private entities; however, the Service has specific responsibilities for trust resources: migratory birds, endangered species, interjurisdictional fish, certain marine mammals, and lands and waters administered by the Service for the management and protection of these resources. The mission of the Service is “to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.”

The Service operates over 500 national wildlife refuges nationwide, waterfowl production areas in 10 states, and 51 coordination areas in 19 states, covering a total of more than 92 million acres. These areas comprise the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world’s largest collection of lands specifically managed for fish and wildlife. About 76 million acres of these lands are in Alaska, with the remaining 17 million acres spread across the other 49 states and several Territories. There are now eight national wildlife refuges and two wetland management districts in Wisconsin.

The national wildlife refuge system received strong support from Congress, the President and many constituents in 1997 when the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (16 USC 668dd) became law. Building upon a 1996 Executive Order, the Act provided a mission

Figure 1. Location of Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge and Lands Acquired as of March 31, 2001. **NOT SHOWN**

for the refuge system, and clear standards for its management, use, planning, and growth. The Act also calls for continued but expanded involvement from the public, states, tribes and others who have a stake in how the refuge system is administered. The mission of the national wildlife refuge system, as stated in the act, is “to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

The refuge system’s foundation rests on the philosophy of an ecosystem approach to land management and to the stewardship of its fish, wildlife, and plants. In simple terms, this philosophy looks at the health and biological integrity of the land (ecology), takes a view beyond boundaries (landscapes), works within the Service’s many programs (cross-program), views people and society as part of the landscape and the mission (communities and economies), and leverages ideas and resources by working with and through others (partnerships).

In implementing the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, the Service developed a report called “Fulfilling the Promise” (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999), which provided recommendations for improving the refuge system nationwide. The report places wildlife and habitat “first and foremost.” It notes that “Without healthy and diverse habitat, there is no wildlife—without wildlife, the mission set forth in law is not achieved and the trust with the American people is broken.”

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act specifically provided people the opportunity to enjoy, understand and be part of wildlife conservation on refuges. To fulfill this promise, the Service will provide the American people a Legacy of Wildlife, a Place Where Visitors are Welcome, Opportunities for Stewardship, and a System to Appreciate (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999).

A Legacy of Wildlife: A strong and vibrant system provides an enduring legacy of healthy fish, wildlife, and plant resources for people to enjoy today and for generations to come.

A Place Where Visitors Feel Welcome: Visitors find national wildlife refuges welcoming, safe, and accessible, with a variety of opportunities to enjoy and appreciate American’s fish, wildlife, and plants.

Opportunities for Public Stewardship: Visitors and local communities recognize refuges as national treasures, actively participating in their stewardship and standing firm in their defense.

A System to Americans know that each wildlife refuge is a part of an enduring

Appreciate: national system. They understand and support the System's tremendous contribution toward wildlife conservation.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act states that compatible, wildlife-dependent recreational uses involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation are the priority public uses of the refuge system. The Service determines whether these uses are compatible for each individual refuge. A use is determined to be compatible if it does not interfere with the fulfillment of the mission of the refuge system or the purpose of the refuge.

By enjoying wildlife-dependent activities, the American public further develops its appreciation for fish and wildlife. The Act also calls for the refuge system to provide increased opportunities for families to experience compatible wildlife-dependent recreation, especially opportunities for parents and their children to safely engage in traditional outdoor activities such as fishing and hunting.

It is upon this framework that Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge was established, will be protected and managed, and public use provided.

Purposes for and Goals of Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge

The purpose of Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge is for "... the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources." The Service is working with individuals, groups, and governmental entities to protect and restore coastal wetland and stream habitats that are utilized by migratory trout and salmon from Lake Superior and by migratory birds. The Refuge will protect, restore, and manage coastal wetland and spring-fed stream habitat. Up to 540 acres of coastal wetland and upland will be acquired in fee title, and up to 1240 acres will be protected through conservation easements in the Whittlesey watershed.

Goals for the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge include working with individuals, groups, and government entities to achieve the following:

- Protect and restore habitat in Whittlesey Creek, Little Whittlesey Creek, and Terwilliger Creek for migration, spawning, and rearing of anadromous trout and salmon from Lake Superior.
- Plan and implement a project to reintroduce coaster brook trout, under the guidance of the Lake Superior Brook Trout Rehabilitation Plan (Newman et al. 1999).
- Restore and manage habitat for waterfowl, neotropical migrants, and other migratory birds.
- Restore to the extent possible historical hydrologic conditions in the coastal wetlands and streams, including restoring Whittlesey Creek to its historic channel.
- Restore topography where altered by development, and enhance existing constructed ponds for wildlife values.
- Manage for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses, including environmental education, hunting, fishing, wildlife-viewing, and demonstrating restoration and management

techniques.

- Conduct all management activities with an ecosystem approach in cooperation with agencies that manage adjacent and nearby lands and facilities.

All public use programs and facilities developed on the Refuge will help us achieve these goals.

Connection with Adjacent Lands and Education Programs of the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center

Management goals and public use programs and facilities will be coordinated with adjacent property managers, especially management of adjacent public lands. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Wisconsin DNR) owns land around and in the Fish Creek sloughs; the U.S. Forest Service owns the land that houses the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center (Center); the Center provides environmental education programs and interpretation; and the Department of Transportation owns a parcel of land adjacent to Highway 13 (Figure 2). Each agency has their own mission and goals for the public property they manage; however, these missions and goals overlap in certain areas. Where agencies' goals overlap with the Service, we will work with those agencies to provide compatible public use. Where there are conflicts, the Service will provide a sound justification for restricting certain public use.

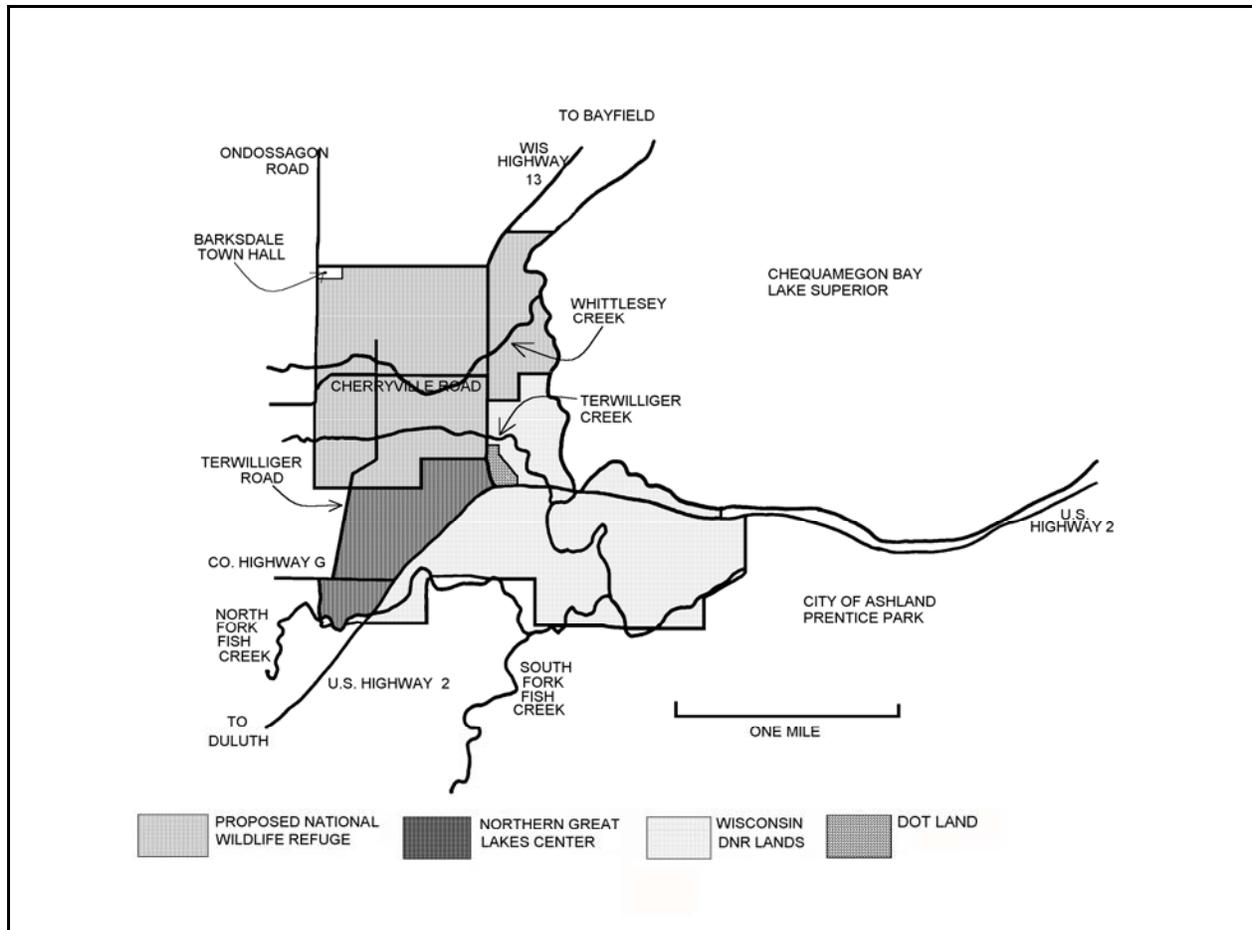


Figure 2. Public Lands near Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge

The Service intends to continue its partnership with the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, which includes housing one or more Service staff at the Center and contributing to the Center’s mission. This staff will oversee Refuge operations and help develop and coordinate education and interpretive programs at the Center and Refuge.

The Service also recognizes that numerous private landowners own property adjacent to or within the proposed Refuge. The Service must ensure that their rights are respected and that safety issues are dealt with. The Service will keep landowners who are interested informed of Refuge activities and plans. This will allow landowners opportunities to communicate any ideas or concerns they have, and provide the Service opportunities to address concerns.

Communication with Interested and Affected Parties about the Public Use Plan

The development of this plan included communication with affected and interested parties. Several avenues were used to send and receive information about the draft public use plan.

Questionnaire

The Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute developed and distributed a public use questionnaire that specifically asked respondents if they would use the Refuge and what kind of uses they would participate in. The Institute mailed over 550 questionnaires to people in the local area who had previously expressed interest in the Refuge and to all landowners in the Whittlesey watershed. 171 questionnaires were completed and returned to the Institute. A summary of the results are provided as Appendix A.

Meetings with partners

Service personnel met with managers of the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center and the Wisconsin DNR to hear their suggestions and concerns.

Agency letters

Letters were sent to tribal, state and federal agencies in the region (Appendix B) requesting input. One letter was received from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and one from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (Appendix C).

Contacts with landowners

Service personnel contacted most landowners who own land within the proposed Refuge boundary via phone and letter. Some landowners were difficult to contact or their addresses and phone number were unknown. The intent of these contacts was to provide a Service contact for questions and concerns and to inform landowners of our plans.

Plan review

The Whittlesey Habitat Coalition (Appendix D) received two working drafts of this plan and provided comments via letter and during Whittlesey Habitat Coalition meetings on April 25 and July 25, 2000.

The draft plan was made available for public review on January 2, 2001. Over 100 copies were sent to interested parties. Legal notices ran twice in the both the Ashland Daily Press and the Bayfield County Journal. A front-page article about the draft plan ran in the Ashland Daily Press. The draft plan and environmental assessment were posted on the Service's web site. Comments were accepted for 45 days. We received comments from nine individuals. There suggestions did not change the plan, environmental assessment or compatibility determinations substantially. Summaries of comments and Service responses can be found in Appendix F. The comments are on file at the Refuge headquarters and can be viewed by the public.

Open house

The Service, in cooperation with the Whittlesey Habitat Coalition, conducted a public open house for the proposed public use plan. The open house took place at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center on Wednesday, May 17, 2000 from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m. The purpose of the open house was to provide an opportunity for the Service to communicate plans for public use on the Refuge and to listen to suggestions from citizens who attended. Those who attended had the opportunity to provide comments. The meeting was informal, allowing

people to attend when they had time and stay as long as they desired. The Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute helped host the event.

Twenty-four local residents attended with various questions and concerns. Several citizens were interested in coaster brook trout plans. One adjacent landowner was concerned about the possibility of public trespassing on his property. Several citizens who trap furbearers attended to express their concern that trapping would not be allowed. A few just wanted to talk about the area and their experiences with Whittlesey Creek. Two members of the Bayfield County Board also attended. Those who attended stayed for at least a half hour each; some stayed over an hour to visit. All who attended asked to receive a copy of the draft public use plan. A few people sent written comments based on our discussion with them (Appendix E).

Issues and Opportunities Identified

Several key issues were noted by the Service during our meetings with partners and in reviewing results of the questionnaire. Below is a description of these key issues as perceived by us. These issues are addressed in the “Compatible Public Uses” section of the plan.

Leadership

The Service can provide professional expertise, as well as funding, for wetland and stream restoration projects, and can demonstrate how restoration can improve the Whittlesey watershed and Lake Superior tributaries in general. The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center can provide professional expertise for environmental education programs and interpretation. The Service and the Center will coordinate their programs and projects as much as possible. It is the Service’s intent to continue its partnership with the Center.

User Conflicts

Because of the small land base proposed for the Refuge (540 acres), the Service needs to analyze and then, if necessary, design facilities and implement rules to minimize conflicts between users. For example, conflicts could occur between hikers and hunters, or snowmobilers and snowshoers.

Regional Coordination

Several regional trail facilities might be interested in accessing the Refuge. The Tri-County Corridor Trail is within one mile of the Refuge. The Wisconsin DNR’s boat access and parking lot is within one-half mile of the proposed Refuge. The snowmobile trail traverses the proposed Refuge on rights-of-way owned by Bayfield County. The Service will coordinate our plan with these existing, and possible future, facilities as much as possible. Where compatible, the Service will provide access.

The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center will be expanding some of its environmental education and interpretation activities and facilities. Coordination will take place as noted in the leadership issue.

In addition to coordination for public use, there is a need to coordinate restoration and

management programs among the agencies that own and manage land at the head of the Chequamegon Bay. Bayfield County is initiating a land use plan and will be informed of Service plans. Management and restoration needs identified by natural resource agencies in and near the Whittlesey watershed, as well as land-use plans developed by the County or Town of Barksdale, could have some effect on public use in the long-term.

Trapping

Most trapping in the region occurs in public waters. Local trappers have requested that trappers have access to trapping on and through the Refuge, which is a traditional use area. The Refuge is a small land base and trapping could create conflicts with other users. Trapping is not one of the priority public uses listed in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, so trapping is permitted if it is needed to protect refuge facilities or manage furbearer populations.

The Service has little information on furbearer populations or harvest in the Refuge or surrounding area. Trapping could be exercised by tribal members through tribal treaty rights. The trapping issue needs further investigation by the Service before a final decision and compatibility determination is made. The Service will collect information from the Wisconsin DNR, trappers, and tribes, and analyze the best alternative. A Trapping Plan, which would include public input and comment, would be prepared by refuge staff if a decision is made to allow limited recreational trapping.

Hunting

Several issues relate to hunting on or near the Refuge. Because the Refuge will be relatively small in size, the Refuge will provide limited public hunting opportunities.

- Because of the small size of the Refuge, the few lands that have been acquired, and the close proximity of residences, the Service will initially open lands to waterfowl hunting. Other hunting will be evaluated as additional lands are acquired.
- Waterfowl hunters often access Whittlesey Creek sloughs from Lake Superior. They most often leave enough space between hunting parties for courtesy and safety, but once the Refuge becomes public land, hunting demands might increase, creating crowding problems and safety issues. Monitoring use will be critical.
- Permissible use of blinds or stands will be clearly communicated to the public.
- Several private residences are located within and adjacent to the proposed refuge and state law prohibits shooting within 100 yards of an occupied building, unless permitted with the owner of the residence. Safety of residents is an important consideration.
- Users of the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center must feel safe all times of the year, and the Refuge will work with the Center to ensure public safety.
- Some refuges across the country provide special access to hunting opportunities for people with disabilities. The Service will evaluate the potential to accommodate this at the Whittlesey Creek Refuge.

Trespass

Private landowners adjacent to Service lands have the right to control access to their land.

The Service will clearly post Refuge boundaries and provide information about respecting property rights. The County Sheriff enforces trespass laws, so the Service will inform the Sheriff of refuge acquisitions and plans. Private landowners adjacent to Service lands will also to be kept informed.

Outdoor Recreation Trends

The Wisconsin DNR updated its State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan in 2000 (Wisconsin DNR 2000). The DNR conducted a survey of Wisconsin residents in 1999 to determine resident outdoor recreation activity use and trends. The leading outdoor recreation activity was walking for pleasure, followed by driving for pleasure, swimming, wildlife viewing and picnicking. Between 50 and 90 percent of survey respondents participated in these activities. Most of these activities require no special equipment or training, can be done near home or a park, and can be done by all age groups, either alone or with friends or family. Activities with participation rates from 30 to 50 percent are bicycling, hiking, fishing, nature study or bird watching, motor boating, and nature photography. These activities require at least some equipment, and in some cases, training. Approximately 23 percent of state residents participate in hunting.

The priority public uses of the refuge system include hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation. These activities overlap considerably with many activities identified above that have high participation rates. Based the State's participation information, the interest expressed in the Refuge by the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute's questionnaire, the close proximity of the Refuge to the City of Ashland, and visitor use at the adjacent Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, the Service should anticipate high demand for wildlife-dependent public use on the Refuge.

The Wisconsin DNR's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan also provides trends for outdoor recreation in the state. They predict that little change in participation rates will occur in the short-term for activities of walking and driving for pleasure, swimming, wildlife viewing, and picnicking. Over the long-term, however, they note that these activities will benefit from broad programs aimed at maintaining and improving Wisconsin's environment. Conversely, these same activities could suffer wherever the natural environment is threatened. This issue is reflected in the Service's vision for its refuges that fish and wildlife habitat conservation must come first and foremost.

Community Involvement

The success of the Refuge will not only be measured by the ecological restoration of the site, but also by our effectiveness in working with other agencies and individuals to preserve and enhance the biodiversity in Wisconsin, the Lake Superior basin, and the nation.

The Whittlesey Habitat Coalition has been and will continue to provide advice and assistance in planning and protecting the Refuge. Their advice and assistance will continue to be sought for public use, as well as refuge management.

Many public use activities will be done cooperatively with partners and with the use of

volunteers. Activities such as Little Whittlesey clean-up, outdoor skills education programs, and bird watching clinics and events are examples of public use activities that can be run cooperatively with the help of others.

Many refuges across the country have the privilege of working cooperatively with a non-profit community support group, which can support the refuge through volunteer hours, outreach, advocacy, and funding. The Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge already has a very strong base of support from informal partnerships, including the Whittlesey Habitat Coalition (Appendix D). The Service welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with current partners and other groups. Whether or not partnerships are formalized, the Service and its partners will continue to work under the principles of trust, respect, and open communications.

The Service will also work with corporate/business partners as we plan and conduct special public activities. Such partnerships might provide better flexibility in meeting the needs of the public and volunteers.

Treaty of Lake Superior Chippewa in Ceded Territory

The Lake Superior basin of the current State of Wisconsin was included in lands ceded by the Ojibwa to the United States in a treaty in 1842, under which the Ojibwa bands retained rights to use the ceded territory for hunting, fishing, and gathering. These rights are exercised on public lands. The Service will seek to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with tribes for meeting treaty rights on Service-owned lands in the Refuge.

Natural Resources

Landscape of Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge

The Refuge is located in the coastal area at the mouth of Whittlesey Creek, which is a part of a large wetland complex which extends from just north of the mouth of Whittlesey Creek to the west edge of the City of Ashland. This coastal wetland complex is a significant part of the wildlife habitat and aquatic resources of Chequamegon Bay. The area is used by many wildlife species and is an important area for migrating birds.

The Refuge also encompasses the mouth of Whittlesey Creek, so it is located at the downstream end of the Whittlesey Creek watershed. The Whittlesey Creek Priority Watershed Project plan provided a description of the watershed (Gardner and Malischke 1996). The Whittlesey watershed covers 18 square miles. Characteristics include:

- Land uses in the watershed are agriculture and forest related. The area is dotted with farms and rural dwellings.
- Public lands within the watershed include about 7,600 acres within the Chequamegon National Forest boundary.
- Agricultural lands account for 14% of the total drainage area, and 50% of the total are National Forest lands. The remaining 36% of the area includes natural areas such as wetlands, woodlots, and small rural plots.
- Although there has been a decline in the number of operations, agriculture is still an

- important land use in the watershed.
- Whittlesey Creek currently has good water quality and is classified as an outstanding resource water.
- The stream is a class I trout water supporting both salmonid and non-salmonid fish species. It is also a regionally important spawning area for anadromous trout and salmon from Lake Superior.

Habitat in Whittlesey Creek is threatened due to rapid overland runoff which results in high instream flow, eroding banks and stream bed, and sedimentation. At times the stream carries a heavy load of sand and silt. While the silt is typically carried out to the lake, sand deposits remain in the stream and have a negative impact on in-stream habitat. There is also concern about sand deposition in the lower mile of the stream. Past and present activities such as logging, agriculture, transportation, residential and commercial development have had cumulative impacts on the natural stream functions and in-stream habitat of Whittlesey Creek.

Refuge Lands

The existing Refuge and land proposed to be acquired consists of Lake Superior coastal wetlands, sedge meadow, lowland hardwood swamp, black spruce swamp, other palustrine emergent wetland types, created palustrine non-vegetated ponds, and agriculture fields. Whittlesey, Little Whittlesey, and Terwilliger creeks flow through the Refuge, collecting water from the many cold-water spring upwellings in the streams and bordering wetlands.

Fish and wildlife habitats in the Refuge has been altered substantially by human use. One hundred ten acres of sedge meadow was converted for agricultural use earlier this century and altered further for construction of a golf course. Four non-vegetated ponds were created during construction of the golf course and non-native grasses and conifers were introduced. Changes in water regime as well as past land use has changed wetland vegetation; most of the wet meadow acres are dominated by reed canary grass, an invasive wetland plant. Some wet meadows are becoming dominated by shrubs and might regrow to lowland swamp with black ash and cedar.

In 1949, the Army Corps of Engineers dredged 4,500 feet of the Whittlesey Creek stream channel in an effort to dewater and stabilize the floodplain. Meanders were removed and a straight channel was constructed from Highway 13 to Lake Superior. In 1958, the channel was redirected towards its natural mouth because sand deposits had filled the dredged channel. All of the activities in the watershed, particularly stream channel alterations, have altered the hydrology and resulted in a straight, shallow stretch of stream lacking significant habitat diversity (Gardner and Malischke 1996).

The wetland portion of the mouth constitutes a rare coastal wetland. Measures are being taken to control purple loosestrife in this area. The sand bedload resulting from streambank erosion in the watershed is severely impacting the diversity of vegetation and water depths in both the Whittlesey Creek estuary and the Chequamegon Bay.

Fish and Wildlife of the Refuge

Whittlesey Creek is an important component of the Wisconsin's Lake Superior fishery, producing six percent of all Wisconsin coho salmon in Lake Superior, which is outstanding considering the size of Whittlesey Creek (Steve Schram, Wisconsin DNR, personal communication). A species list compiled from information gathered by the Wisconsin DNR and Service's Sea Lamprey Management identifies 21 species of fish, including seven salmonid species found in Whittlesey Creek. Whittlesey Creek supports a recreational fishery, primarily for brook trout and rainbow trout.

Brook trout are the only salmonid species native to tributaries within the Refuge. Stream resident brook trout and anadromous brook trout, termed coasters, were both present at one time. Currently, stream resident brook trout are present in Whittlesey Creek while coasters are believed to be extirpated. Overfishing and habitat alteration are identified as the primary causes for extirpation of coasters. Restoration of coasters is a Refuge goal.

Habitat degradation within Whittlesey Creek has lowered the productive capacity of this stream, particularly for brook trout. Substrate suitable for spawning and woody debris important as rearing habitat and for aquatic insect production have been degraded by high flows which erode stream banks, remove woody debris, and redeposit coarse materials in unsuitable areas. As the water level recedes sedimentation results. Groundwater discharge to the stream, an important component of brook trout habitat, is impacted by increased surface runoff and groundwater use within the watershed. Restoration of habitat in tributaries and on Refuge lands is anticipated to benefit native and non-native salmonids.

Waterfowl, neotropical migrants, raptors, grassland, and shore birds, as well as several amphibian and state listed plant species of concern, will benefit from restoration and management of the converted wetlands. The 540 acres within the proposed Refuge boundary will complement the 2,000 acres of coastal wetlands owned and managed by the Wisconsin DNR and City of Ashland. These wetlands will provide resting and breeding habitat for waterfowl and neotropical migrant birds. Four federally listed threatened and endangered species have been identified in the area, the bald eagle, Canada lynx, gray wolf, and the piping plover as recently as 1999. Area biologists have identified 226 species of birds in the area.

Compatible Public Uses

The Service has responsibility for the protection and management of fish, wildlife and the habitats upon which they depend. The Whittlesey Creek Refuge is a special place where the Service will restore and manage habitat for fish and wildlife. In fulfilling our resource responsibilities, however, we also have a responsibility to provide the public with opportunities to enjoy and learn about fish and wildlife. We will allow opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation so long as they do not materially interfere with our fish and wildlife conservation activities. Management of refuges by the Service, therefore, must balance habitat protection and

public use and ideally, use public participation to help us restore and manage fish and wildlife habitat.

This section describes uses that we determined to be compatible with the goals of the Refuge and provides guidelines and plans for facilities and activities (see also attached Compatibility Determinations). Specific locations of facilities, except in a few instances, are not yet known. As the Service acquires additional land within the proposed Refuge, location of facilities will be determined.

General Philosophy of Public Use at the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Everything the Service does in relation to the Refuge (management, restoration, public use, monitoring, research) will provide an opportunity for public participation and to teach/encourage environmental stewardship. Programs and activities will be developed to create in our visitors:

- Awareness and ecological understanding of the Refuge and adjacent landscape
- Knowledge of how humans affect the natural system
- Understanding of the value of habitat for fish and wildlife
- Recognition of fish and wildlife values in general.

General Orientation

People visiting the Refuge will expect:

- Easily understood signs, directions, and rules
- A range of activities for all ages, education levels, and physical abilities
- Wildlife in natural settings
- Safety and good access
- High-quality facilities (provided at the adjacent Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center)
- Education (cooperatively with the Center).

A clear system of welcome and orientation signs will allow visitors to know where to go, what recreation, interpretation and education opportunities are available, any limits on uses, and how to make the best use of their time while visiting the Refuge.

Some visitor orientation will be done cooperatively with the Center, and some will be provided directly on the Refuge and through other mediums. The Service will use signs, brochures, flyers, maps, and trail guides to direct visitors. Outlets will include the Center, leaflet boxes, kiosks, local media, sporting goods stores, chamber of commerce offices, tourism offices, local Service offices, and the Internet.

The boundary of all lands owned by the Service will be marked with refuge boundary signs.

Access and Facilities

Physical developments to accommodate public use and enjoyment of the Refuge will initially be limited to small parking areas and informational and educational signs. The Service plans to develop short hiking trails and wildlife observation areas in the future. All facilities developed will be accessible to people with disabilities.

Generally, lands will be open during daylight hours. Parking will be allowed only in designated parking areas or on public roads. State, county, and township roads that traverse the Refuge would remain open to public traffic. Driveways, and private roads will be closed after a tract is acquired, unless they provide planned access.

All use on Refuge land will be non-motorized, except on existing public rights-of-way, which includes a permanent snowmobile trail (see trail section below). The Service will also accommodate use by people with disabilities who use motorized craft, such as motorized wheelchairs, for mobility.

The presence of the Refuge does not create a legal right to cross private lands to access Refuge lands. Lands remaining in private ownership within the Refuge boundary will retain all rights of private ownership that existed before Refuge establishment.

Access - Parking

The Service plans to provide small parking areas at the north end of the Refuge and at the middle of the Refuge. One parking area should provide access to Whittlesey Creek (Figure 3). Orientation signs will also be located at parking areas. The Refuge will also be accessible in the future from trails that connect with the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center.

Access - Lake Shore

The Service plans to use one of the existing grades that lead to the Lake Superior shore, if and when it acquires land that includes those grades, to provide a short walking trail and access to the lake. The shore is also accessible by boat. This access will provide an observation point for users and access for hunting or fishing along the lake shore.

Access - Trails

The Service plans to have access via a walking trail to the Lake Superior shore, as noted above. Other proposed trails include:

- Tying the existing boardwalk and interpretive trail at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center to the Refuge (Figure 3). The exact location and length is to be determined once additional land is acquired. The main purpose of this trail would be to provide wildlife viewing and interpretive opportunities. Access for observation will attempt to be provided to all major habitats, landforms, water bodies, and plant communities on the refuge.
- Connecting with existing regional trails, to the extent that is practical and within compatibility guidelines. Possible connections include the Tri-County Corridor trail and the Ashland lakeshore trail.

The proposed Refuge also includes an existing snowmobile trail that is managed by the Bayfield County Snowmobile Alliance (Figure 4). Permanent trail easements for this trail have been acquired on lands within the proposed Refuge. The easements provide use during winter months only. The existing, permanent snowmobile trail will remain according to existing easements. As lands containing other existing snowmobile trails are acquired for the Refuge, notification will be made to the general public and the Bayfield County Snowmobile Alliance that the use of snowmobiles on the tracts acquired will be phased out. The phase out period will be at the discretion of the Refuge Manager, but not to exceed 3 years. This period should provide ample time for persons or groups to find alternative routes off Refuge lands while minimizing disruption to a locally and regionally important form of winter recreation.

Figure 3. Potential location of Refuge access and wildlife viewing trail **NOT SHOWN**

Figure 4. Location of permanent snowmobile trail within Refuge boundaries **NOT SHOWN**

Priority Wildlife-Dependent Public Uses

Wildlife Observation and Photography

Wildlife observation generally needs few facilities. Access, observation points, and a minimum number of directional signs will be sufficient. There is an element of pleasure in discovering the environment on one's own; too many signs and labels can detract. All Refuge lands will be open to wildlife observation, unless closed for public safety or wildlife conservation reasons. For example, a buffer area around a nesting osprey might be established to minimize disturbance to the birds. If any parcels of Refuge land are closed, the Service will notify the public and clearly mark where the closed areas are.

Interpretive programming and special event planning will be designed to help visitors develop their observation skills. This could include bird watching classes, waterfowl identification, and common native plant identification. These programs will be designed to also demonstrate responsible actions toward our natural resources and other users.

The Service does not anticipate establishing special blinds for wildlife viewing, but if a need is identified and is compatible, blinds will be considered.

Wildlife photography will be allowed along trails and observation points with no special guidelines. The Service may issue special use permits to individuals who wish to set up temporary blinds for wildlife photography. Permit conditions will minimize wildlife and habitat disturbance that might result from this activity.

Hunting

Hunting provides the public with wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities. Refuge policies and programs will be developed to provide visitors with a high-quality hunting experience. Recreation and environmental education will be joined with hunter skills education programs designed to assist the hunting public in the development of safe and effective hunting skills and environmental stewardship values.

Guidelines for hunting on refuge lands will be limited to waterfowl hunting for this plan version. The Service intends to provide hunting opportunities for upland birds, deer and other species on Refuge lands once additional properties are acquired and the Service understands public needs and evaluates safety issues.

An Interim Waterfowl Hunting Plan will be developed for the Refuge. In general, the Service will follow all regulations of the State of Wisconsin on lands it owns. The following interim guidelines will be followed.

General

Hunters will be required to follow all State laws and regulations. This includes no shooting within 100 yards of a residence without permission of the resident. The Service does not allow baiting on any refuge system lands, so baiting will not be allowed on the Refuge.

Ground or elevated blinds may be used if they do not damage live vegetation and are completely removed from the property each day at the close of the hunting hours. Ground blinds may be constructed entirely of dead vegetation from on the property.

Non-toxic shot is required for all shotgun use on the refuge.

A no-hunting buffer on lands the Service owns adjacent to the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center will be established for visitor safety needs.

Waterfowl Hunting

Waterfowl hunting will be allowed on Refuge lands as provided in the Interim Hunting Plan. The Service does not plan to limit use unless high demand creates safety concerns.

We anticipate that most waterfowl hunters respect spacing needs between hunters and blinds and will essentially self-regulate themselves. Most waterfowl hunting in the proposed Refuge currently takes place along and near the Lake Superior shore.

Other Hunting

As additional lands are acquired for the Refuge, the Service intends to provide hunting opportunities for upland game, deer and other wildlife that are compatible with the purposes of the Refuge. A hunting plan for these species will be completed, which evaluates safety issues, wildlife concerns, and public needs.

Fishing

Fishing is currently allowed in public waters, under state regulations, and this will not change. Access might be provided through the refuge for the public in general. For example, the proposed parking area next to Whittlesey Creek could provide access for stream anglers.

If the Service determines there is a biological need to close waters in the refuge to fishing because of fishery rehabilitation work, they will request a special exemption from the Wisconsin DNR to allow this.

Environmental Education and Interpretation¹

As stated in the general philosophy section: "Everything the Service does in relation to the Refuge (management, restoration, public use, monitoring, research) will be viewed as an opportunity to provide public participation and teach/encourage environmental stewardship. Programs and activities will be developed to create in our visitors:

- Awareness and ecological understanding of the Refuge and adjacent landscape
- Knowledge of how humans affect the natural system
- Understanding of the value of habitat for fish and wildlife
- Recognition of fish and wildlife values in general."

Environmental education and interpretation play a critical role in encouraging environmental stewardship. The future of fish and wildlife is best assured by raising the public's awareness and understanding of wildlife conservation. The Refuge can be a place where visitors can see for themselves the connections between people and wildlife, habitat, and land management. The Refuge can be a place where people learn basic outdoor skills or see first-hand how they can restore and sustain fish and wildlife habitat on their own land. Education and interpretation programs on the Refuge, therefore, must encompass a broad range of needs and outcomes.

To move toward fulfilling this broad range of needs, the Service will cooperate with the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center and other organizations to plan and offer interpretive and environmental education programs.

The Service's work will be consistent with the educational mission of the Center, which is: *Our mission is to increase the public's awareness of the issues facing the Northern Great Lakes Region, take leadership in providing educational resources and programs to promote natural and cultural resource stewardship, partnership among agencies and people, to encourage active citizenship to sustain these resources for future generations.* **The Service's focus in working with the Center will be fish and wildlife conservation, management and restoration.** The Service can play a leadership role in showing how the best science and technology is used for wildlife conservation and restoration efforts. Service lands can be a model and demonstration area for habitat management which foster broad

¹**Environmental education programs tend to be structured and formulated to meet environmental education goals. Interpretive programs are more informal and recreational in nature.**

participation in natural resources stewardship.

The Center's educational programs are issue oriented, meaning that the key educational objective must be to increase the learner's knowledge about an issue facing the Lake Superior region, and/or use such an issue to understand a broader natural, historic, or cultural resource concept. The Service will follow the Center's lead in this aspect of environmental education.

The educational theme for the Refuge's environmental education and interpretive activities is "**habitat restoration - recreating ecosystems piece by piece.**" The Service, on Refuge lands and those of willing private landowners, will be restoring fish habitat for salmonids in Whittlesey Creek, recreating wetlands on the landscape, and improving degraded habitats. The Service will work cooperatively with interested individuals and organizations to assist with this work.

The public has skills and interests that complement those within the Service. By assisting Refuge staff restore and reconstruct natural communities, people can develop new skills and stewardship ethics through positive environmental action. By participating, the public can enjoy the overall success of the project and feel that they are contributing to the larger good.

The growing interest in ecological restoration and reconstruction within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service represents a significant paradigm shift for the agency. The emphasis on public involvement in the process of ecological restoration also represents a paradigm shift for land management agencies, especially the Service. The public can be involved in restoration activities on the Refuge and the Service will look for opportunities to fulfill this promise.

Research

Research is considered a priority use of Refuges, although not a priority public use. It will be an important part of the Service's restoration and management efforts. It is likely that many research needs will be met by other organizations, such as the U.S. Geological Survey, colleges, and universities. All research will be coordinated with the Service and permits will be required. For ongoing research efforts, the Service will consider establishing memorandums of understanding with universities.

Research that takes place on the Refuge must be applicable to the Service's goals for the Refuge.

Other Non-priority Uses

Wild Food Gathering

Wild food gathering includes berry picking, mushroom harvest, and harvest of other natural foods that are used by humans for sustenance, medicinal or ceremonial purposes. Opportunities are limited on the Refuge and we are not aware of traditional harvest within the Refuge. Because the Service considers

the needs of wildlife first, we must monitor harvest of a resource that is utilized by wildlife. Non-commercial harvest of wild food will be allowed under special use permit.

Trapping

Trapping is allowed in state-controlled public waters adjacent to the Refuge. Trapping will not be allowed for recreational purposes on lands owned by the Service until a compatibility determination is made about trapping. A separate trapping plan would be developed before the Service would allow recreational trapping on the Refuge. Until then, trapping would be allowed as a management tool only if needed to protect refuge facilities.

Pets

Dogs are allowed on the Refuge, but must be kept on a leash, except when used to retrieve waterfowl during waterfowl hunting season. No other pets are allowed on the Refuge at any time.

Implementation

Facilities

The Service plans to build no buildings for public use on the Refuge, but facilities for access (parking areas, trails) and orientation will be built as adequate land is acquired and financial resources are available.

Boundary signs will be posted as land is acquired by the Service.

Programming

Environmental education programming will be done in partnership with others, especially the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, as opportunities arise and resources are available. As resources are allocated to the Whittlesey Refuge, detailed planning and implementation of programs can be done, most cooperatively with the Center.

Public Information

The Service is responsible for keeping the public involved and informed of Refuge programs, planning and public use opportunities. Newsletters will be sent to interested people, either via postal mail or electronic mail. Information will be available at the Center and press releases will be sent to media. Information will also be available on the Service's world-wide-web site. The current addresses are:

Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge
c/o Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center

29270 County Highway G
Ashland, WI 54806
715-685-2678
www.fws.gov/r3pao/ashland/

References

- Gardner, M. and J. Malischke. 1996. Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Plan for the Whittlesey Creek Priority Watershed Project. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Bayfield County Land Conservation Department; and Whittlesey Steering Committee. Madison, WI.
- Newman, L.E., R.B. Dubois, and T.N. Halpern (Eds.). 1999. A brook trout rehabilitation plan for Lake Superior. Great Lakes Fish. Comm. 28 p.
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. 2000. Wisconsin State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2000-2005. Madison, WI.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1999. Fulfilling the Promise. The National Wildlife Refuge System. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

Appendix A. Results of Questionnaire Sent by Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute

Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge Public Use Interest Questionnaire Response *Please return by March 31, 2000*

1. Do you think you will use the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge when it is open to the public?

No 21 (please skip to question 4)

Yes 150

2. Which of the following activities might you participate in? (Check all that apply)

96 Wildlife watching

91 Bird watching (12) (7)

 Hunting (Circle one: Ducks/Upland Game/
Both (35))

54 Nature photography

89 Fishing on Whittlesey Creek

113 Walking or hiking

46 Nature walks with a naturalist

73 Self-guided nature tours

27 Environ. education for school or youth
groups

57 Cross-country skiing

45 Snowshoeing

21 Research or study

16 Other: *see below

 Other: _____

3. What seasons of the year would you use the Refuge? (Check all that apply)

123 Summer 132 Fall 101 Winter 122 Spring

4. Do you have any suggestions or concerns about public use of the Refuge you would like to share?

Listed Below.

5. Would you be interested in receiving additional information about the refuge, including a copy of the public use plan? Yes 117 No 35

If **yes**, please provide your name and address and tell us how you would prefer to receive information.

Name:

Address:

City/State/ZIP:

I would prefer to receive information about the refuge by: (Check one only)

89 Newsletter via postal mail

29 Newsletter via e-mail. My e-mail address is:

6 Internet web site

22 Newspaper

1 Other: **see below

*Other Comments

- Painting scenery
- Driving through the refuge and seeing the refuge
- Audubon has committed 200 hours of service (2)
- Horseback riding
- Hiking with dog (if permitted)
- Botanizing & mushrooms; observing reptiles, amphibians, and insects
- Snowmobiling (2)
- Just enjoying it like it was when I was growing up in the area
- I think it would be great for kids to learn
- Family background
- Trapping
- I wish it was golf
- ATV Trails
- Picnics & canoeing
- Dog training
- Restoration of native coaster brook trout
- Changing fishing regulations to protect native species (ie: single baubles artificial lares or flies)

**Other Contacts

- Visits by FWS people
- By mail
- At public meetings

Whittlesey Creek Refuge Survey Comments

- I have concerns that plans to reintroduce “Coaster” brook trout would have a negative impact on both native and naturalized fish within the watershed.
- The currently identified fee title acquisition area will not protect trout and salmon spawning habitat. It should be expanded upstream. I think the easement program will provide minimal habitat protection.
- No motorized vehicles, no blinds installed.
- Pollution – trash – litter; overuse by humans impacting wildlife.
- Include more acreage; lots of acreage
- Get rid of buildings along Hwy 13
- Get rid of building along Hwy 2 shoreline, west of NSP plant
- Are the Nat’l Park Service and USGS your partners also?
- Work with surrounding property owners outside of the refuge to promote and enhance their property for fish and wildlife habitat.
- There are houses in this area, how will their ownership be protected from public use? I would suggest this be a no firearms area.
- Walking trails.
- Restrict motorized vehicles.
- Protect water quality in adjacent areas.
- If you want public use, it should have been a golf course.
- I am totally against removing any more land from the tax base.
- No one has ever used that land for the above activities. Why do you think they will now?
- I oppose the use of motorized vehicles in the refuge, it is especially important to keep ATVs out. They are loud, polluting, and will rut out the clayey wet soils, they also encourage invasion by harmful exotic plant species.
- It should be a golf course not a man made swamp for bug breeding.
- No vehicles of any kind.
- Proper signage.
- Preserve fishing on Whittlesey Creek.
- The budget will get too high & public funds to keep it going. Up keep on the building alone will be very high much less paying staff. Many volunteers will be needed for programs and teaching.
- If you use the word refuge don’t let anyone hunt on the land.
- Started fishing on creek 65 years ago and would like to see it kept natural and like it was at that time.
- I think its wrong for the state to own land, and compete with private people for ownership of land. I would rather see a beautiful golf course in that area.
- Habitat protection and wildlife first priority, human use a secondary priority. The above priorities stated, don’t alienate local users or constituencies. Build/show value of the refuge to the local community.
- Wildlife Refuge to me would be keep the people out, as it is now. Making it public is interesting to me. Will attend your meetings. Hope you have a great plan. Lived and enjoyed this area all my life, outdoors fish & wildlife, with so many people we need

- controls that are understandable and workable.
- The public needs to be informed. I am a member of Trout Unlimited. Our chapter could help inform the public about Whittlesey Creek habitat, trout fishing, etc.
 - Should be open to Public Use.
 - Keep it from too much people pressure.
 - I am not crazy about hunters in a walking corridor.
 - Just keep it as it is: no trails, no parking areas, no buildings by the gov't. Leave as is!
 - A designated no hunting zone at the mouth of Whittlesey (or somewhere) for those who enjoy watching migratory water fowl without the noise of Hwy 2 and without the risk and interference from hunters.
 - Are the lands in this area being misused now? Of all these so called "benefits" which are presently not available. Why do we need you to do what is already being done. What will happen to adjoining land values, what will become of the tax revenue for out town and school?
 - The primary use of the refuge should be just that – a refuge for wildlife, even if that means restricting use by humans.
 - Parking along Hwy 13
 - There should be "quiet" activities in consideration of wildlife – no ATVs or snowmobiles.
 - It would be nice to have a parking lot and walking trail access to the creek mouth for ice fishing access. Keep snowmobile usage to a minimum or eliminate it.
 - Excellently produced maps of the area and well developed trails should be provided to reduce impacts of use.
 - NO motorized anything.
 - This refuge should be about the natural goings on of nature it-self. Any encroachment by humans must be minimized and in a quiet and peaceful manner. I am not in favor of hunting or trapping in this refuge. However, if raccoons or some other predator got out of control, I would relent. This refuge must also be restored to its original ecosystem in every way. Flora and Fauna must be indigenous to the site and all exotics must be carefully removed. I am not in favor of using man made toxic chemicals – there has to be a better way which is safe to the environment. I have personally fought hard for this refuge and will continue. I greatly appreciate being included. P.S. I see no reason to allow motorized ATVs or snowmobiles, etc. They are disruptors and polluters – even motor boats pollute terribly. Lets make it a place where man's footprint has little or no impact. Nature is in great need of such places.
 - I think it is important to save or improve the spawning grounds for the coho salmon & other fish.
 - Will privately owned parcels be clearly marked so that trespassers will not be a problem? Are there any areas of quicksand at the refuge?
 - Please restrict hunting.
 - "Visitors" not disturb wildlife or litter. That some areas (maybe breeding or birthing) be closed.
 - If it is a refuge, why hunting?
 - Don't make it so accessible that it suffers from overuse.

- Maintain the services promised to maintain hunting, fishing and gathering on refuge land.
- I just want to see it used by the public. I think its important for people to know its available.
- The more critical habitat for wildlife should be left undisturbed.
- Private adjacent property must be clearly marked & refuge visitors must respect the landowners rights.
- Tribal subsistence hunting opportunities need to be incorporated where possible.
- Snowmobile & ATV use – any other motorized use – Jetski problems? – should be a non-motorized area. Allowing hunting? We need lower deer #s anyway!
- We don't need a Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge.
- Make sure the boundaries of the refuge are clearly marked and signed, so the public does not use private land, as if it were public land.
- Perhaps public & handicap blinds with limited access only – catch & release only
- Please avoid providing access via any motorized vehicle if possible.
- Protection of water, banks.
- I'm concerned that the refuge will be closed to the public; if so why? And what would the reason be?
- Concerns on the stream beds tilling in with the sand – a chronic problem – Fish creek & Whittlesey. Fish creek area very wild – can we keep it that way & still enjoy it... by more than a few...i.e. canoe access from Hwy 2 – to Long Bridge?
- Keep it open for hunting, fishing & trapping. Link trails with the Visitor Center & coordinate programs. Establish a self guided tour. Acquire lands as rapidly as reasonable. Quickly establish Conservation Easements w/ Phillips if possible.
- Leave the refuge in a wild and natural state. Don't make a lot of trails in it so people can dump all their garbage and make a mess of it.
- My largest concern would be that people would leave trash in the woods or streams.
- Would like to see catch & release only – artificials only or other strict fishing regs.
- Leave it in private ownership
- What is going to be the impact on the town of Barksdale's valuation and their budget if they lose 540 acres off the tax role?
- I am concerned about clear postings of legal access points for fishing.
- I would prefer it to be a non-motorized use area and no hunting.
- With the increased public use of the land in the refuge are you not concerned about traffic – liability – maintenance not only of the refuge but of public roads, etc.?
- Approx 50% of Bayfield Co is now owned by the Federal, State, or Local Government. I think that's enough.
- Just that it is free to use for all tax payers.
- I see it as eroding our tax base – putting more cost on the middle class tax payers. If you have so many rules & regulations on public property – it excludes those who prefer motorized recreation.
- No motorized noisy transportation
- Make meeting area more available.
- It's really funny, but everytime a refuge is established to protect and restore some land, the agencies behind the projects try to find ways to use the properties to draw more people to that area and then there would be if the properties were just left

alone. I suggest to forget about trying to draw tours, and nature walks to the area and let the animals really be in a refuge in peace without any human interference whatsoever. Then it would be a true refuge.

- Don't need strangers in Barksdale.
- Hunting & Fishing seem inconsistent with my concept of a Refuge. Motorized us as well. Over-use in general could pose a problem, although development, housing, golf course, or casino are far more deleterious, and a public refuge has potential to provide understanding of & experience in the natural communities.
- Try to develop a fair method of keeping the refuge from getting too crowded.
- Walking trails should not be for walking dogs or bicycle riding.
- Open to the public means open to fishing and hunting on the property.
- Keep electric and phone company out of there digging up putting in cables and no spraying to kill vegetation.
- My property borders the western line of this refuge and I believe a fence should be constructed to keep public from trespassing onto my property. Which is all wooded.
- Costs – expenses – tax dollars
- Although hunting is compatible and should be allowed, a public use plan should focus on improving opportunities for environmental education and awareness, especially because of its proximity to the NGL visitor center.
- The refuge is representing only the environment, what possible suggestions or concerns by the citizenry would be redressed by a group of FASCISTS?!!!!!!
- Should have been made into a golf course.
- You bug pickers have taken enough land from the tax rolls. It would have made a nice golf course.
- Leave it wild; no trails & access points
- I think this refuge should be closed to the public to protect this sensitive area.
- Maintain open to hunting & fishing east of Hwy 13. Use refuge area adjacent to Visitor Center west of Hwy 13 for environmental education. Could close this area to firearms hunting. Restore wetlands.
- Would prefer not to see any additional consumption of private property by liberal representatives of our government, operating under the pretence of environmental protection. The Refuge is nothing more than a land grab!!
- First off, tear down the Tower of Babel & return the land to grazing animals. You built it in a swamp that I thought you were protecting. Then return the rest of your Refuge land to private owner & let them make something useful out of it. Then load your socialist ass up & leave this country. You people are wasting our tax dollars. We don't need or want a wildlife refuge. Or any more government boondoggles.
- Minimum impact activities only.
- We do hope that there is no plan to push landowners into giving up what is theirs. We do not plan on anyone owning this land other than family members. Please do not allow under handed tactics or practices to happen.
- Communicate openly.

Appendix B. Letters Sent to Whittlesey Habitat Coalition and Agencies



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Fishery Resources Office
2800 Lake Shore Drive East
Ashland, Wisconsin 54806-2427
715-682-6185
FAX 715-682-8899



March 6, 2000

Sent to: Whittlesey Habitat Coalition Members

Dear Whittlesey Habitat Coalition Member,

We are moving forward with planning for public use of the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge. I am requesting your suggestions and comments regarding public use of the refuge.

Attached is the timeline for developing the public use and hunting plans. Our goal is to have Service lands available for public use by the Fourth of July weekend and to have the option to be open for hunting by this waterfowl season. We have set an aggressive schedule, but we think it can be done, unless we encounter major issues or concerns. Plans will be developed for the entire proposed refuge, but will be implemented in phases as we acquire additional lands.

The Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute is assisting the Whittlesey Habitat Coalition by sending out a public use questionnaire. You will be receiving the questionnaire, which I hope you complete as a member of the community. If you have any agency/organization suggestions or comments relative to public use, please provide those in a separate, official letter by March 27, 2000. We will look forward to hearing from you.

I also wanted to let you know that I will be leaving the Ashland area soon. I have accepted a position with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Columbia, Missouri as refuge biologist for the Big Muddy National Wildlife Refuge. Pam Dryer will be coordinating the public use planning effort and facilitating the work of the Habitat Coalition in the near future, so please contact her with questions you might have (715-682-6185, ext. 215; pam_dryer@fws.gov).

Thank you so much for your dedication and enthusiasm in making this Refuge a reality. I am very excited about my new position and will take the lessons you have all taught me to make good things happen on the Missouri River. It has been a privilege working with you.

Sincerely,

Maureen Gallagher
Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Enclosure

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Fishery Resources Office
2800 Lake Shore Drive East
Ashland, Wisconsin 54806-2427
715-682-6185
FAX 715-682-8899

March 6, 2000

Chairman Eugene Bigboy
Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewas
PO Box 39
Odanah, WI 54861

Dear Chairman Bigboy,

We are moving forward with planning for public use of the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge. I am requesting your suggestions and comments regarding public use of the refuge.

Attached is the timeline for developing the public use and hunting plans. Our goal is to have Service lands available for public use by the Fourth of July weekend and to have the option to be open for hunting by this waterfowl season. We have set an aggressive schedule, but we think it can be done, unless we encounter major issues or concerns. Plans will be developed for the entire proposed refuge, but will be implemented in phases as we acquire additional lands.

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Pam Dryer will be coordinating the public use planning effort and facilitating the work of the Habitat Coalition in the near future, so please contact her with questions you might have (715-682-6185, ext. 215; pam_dryer@fws.gov).

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Maureen Gallagher
Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Enclosure

Letter sent to:

Chairman Eugene Bigboy
Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewas
PO Box 39
Odanah, WI 54861

Robin Jaeger
Bureau of Indian Affairs
615 Main Ave. W
Ashland, WI 54806

Julie Van Stappen
Apostle Islands National Lakeshore
415 Washington Ave.
Bayfield, WI 54814

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
P.O. Box 180496
Delafield, WI 53018-0496

Bing Tage
Ducks Unlimited
4381 Cedar Ln
Rhineland, WI 54501



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Fishery Resources Office
2800 Lake Shore Drive East
Ashland, Wisconsin 54806-2427
715-682-6185
FAX 715-682-8899



March 31, 2000

Mr. James Schlender, Director
Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 9
Odanah, WI 54891

Dear Jim,

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is moving forward with planning for public use of the newly established Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge. At this time, no plans have been completed, but the Service is starting to gather input on issues and preferences for use of the Refuge.

We understand that any portion of the Refuge that is opened to hunting and fishing by the general public will also likely be open to use by members of Lake Superior Chippewa bands under treaty rights. We hope to work with the Commission and tribal governments proactively to include treaty activities in the public use plan for the Refuge.

We are interested in meeting with you and appropriate staff to discuss the issue, and determine what next steps would be appropriate.

Attached is the timeline for developing the public use and hunting plans. Our goal is to have Service lands available for public use by the Fourth of July weekend and to have the option to be open for hunting by the fall waterfowl season. Plans will be developed for the entire proposed refuge, but will be implemented in phases as we acquire additional lands.

I will call you next week to arrange a meeting. If you have any immediate questions, please call me. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Busiahn
Supervisory Fishery biologist

c: Larry Wargowsky, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge
Rollin Siegfried, Refuge Program Manager, Great Lakes & Ohio River Ecosystems

Enclosure



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Fishery Resources Office
2800 Lake Shore Drive East
Ashland, Wisconsin 54806-2427
715-682-6185
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April 11, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Whittlesey Habitat Coalition
FROM: Pam Dryer
RE: Whittlesey Creek NWR Public Use Plan - Working Draft

Dear Coalition Members,

Enclosed is a copy of the working draft of the public use plan, for your review. Please bring comments, suggestions, concerns that you have to the Coalition meeting on April 25. If you cannot attend the meeting, please call me with your comments, or send them via e-mail or letter. We will discuss the plan and your suggestions during the Coalition meeting.

This is a working draft, which means you'll notice there are still some questions that I have and some sections that need additional information. Our interest in getting this plan to you in this form is to get your feedback before we send it out for public review. I appreciate your patience and understanding in reviewing a draft that needs work!

Thank you so much for your help and interest. Please call me if you have any questions.

Enclosure

**Appendix C. Letter Received from Wisconsin DNR and Great Lakes Indian
Fish and Wildlife Commission**

Appendix D. Whittlesey Habitat Coalition Members

Al Bochler
P.O. Box 106
Ashland, WI 54806

Darryl Fenner
Wisconsin DNR
P.O. Box 545
Washburn, WI 54891
715-373-6165

Jeff Carlson
Trout Unlimited
Rt 1, Box 268
Mason, WI 54856
715-765-4828

Larry Wargowsky
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
W7996 20th St. W
Necedah, WI 54646-7531
608-565-2551

Martin Hanson
Mellen, WI, 54546
715-274-2344

Judy Henry
Chequamegon - Nicolet National Forest
113 Bayfield
Washburn, WI 54891
715-373-2667

Judy Pratt-Shelly
Red Cliff Dept. of Environ. Protection
P.O. Box 529
Bayfield, WI 54814
715-779-3700

Matt Dallman and Becky Sapper
The Nature Conservancy
618 Main Street West
Ashland, WI 54806

715-682-5789

Peter David
GLIFWC
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Odanah, WI 54861
715-682-6619

Sandy Schultz
ABDI- Land Conservation Committee
P.O. Box 267
Ashland, WI 54806
715-682-7187

Steve Hoecker
Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center
29270 County Highway G
Ashland, WI 54806
715-685-9983

Pam Dryer
Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge
29270 County Highway G
Ashland, WI 54806
715-685-2678

Mike Gardner or Ted Gostomski
Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute
1411 Ellis Ave.
Ashland, WI 54806
715-682-1481

Gary Haughn
Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 267
Ashland, WI 54806
715-682-7187

Neil Paulson
P.O. Box 36
Drummond, WI 54832
715-739-6745

Tom Cogger, Tribal Liason
Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 267
Ashland, WI 54806
888-361-2000, mail box 301

Appendix E. Written Comments Received from May 17, 2000 Open House

As a long time resident of the Chequamegon Bay Area, I am please to see the development of the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge. I am also pleased that traditional uses of the area for hunting and fishing will be continued. By conserving habitat for wildlife such as ducks, geese, swans, deer and grouse, you also improve the habitat for predatory animals such as racoons, fox and coyotes. To maintain a balance in the ecosystem, it would seem that the harvest of some of these animals would be important. For this reason, I would recommend that trapping, the most efficient way of harvesting predators, be an available activity within the refuge. (Signed by Thomas D. Frizzell, Bayfield, WI)

In conversation with Pam Dryer and Tom Busiahn on 5/17/00, it came across to me that trapping on the Refuge is an issue only because of concerns for user conflicts. It became apparent that either the USFWS has a political agenda against trapping or they need to be educated on the biological benefits of trapping. Education & ethics are the main focus of the Trappers Association on both the state and national levels. Trapping has an important part in the management of furbearing animals as well as nesting and migrating birds as well as being the first door opened in the history of northern Wisconsin and the Chequamegon bay area. By eliminating trapping in the National Wildlife refuge System Improvement Act, you are closing the door on an important piece of use, education, & management tool. Work with us – all will be good. Feel free to cal upon myself or any of the organizations dedicated to wildlife management. (Michael Gustafson, member of National Trappers Association, Wisconsin Trappers Association)

Items that are important to me:

- ✓ The close cooperation you describe of the “Visitor Center.” They need to be closely linked together.
- ✓ A reasonable trapping program should be allowed.
- ✓ The refuge needs to pursue purchase of additional lands with additional energy. A part of this seems to be a need to look at your appraisals. They seem low – too low to successfully acquire important parcels.
- ✓ Someone needs to lead the coordination of all of the Fish Creek/Whittlesey Coastal Wetland Management, i.e. City, DNR, FS, F&WS together in a plan for the total good of the wetland. The agencies need equality in the planning/management processes, but the leadership to get it moving/keep it moving could well be the F&WS because they have the types of expertise needed. To do it they need a refuge manager who is on site.

Appendix F. Comments Received from Public on Draft Plan and Service Response to them

Red Cliff Natural Resources Program, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewas

- Requests clarification on development of MOU for tribal treaty rights.
Response: The details of, and process we use for the MOU will be worked out as we begin to develop the MOU. We plan to use existing examples to guide us, such as the MOU developed between tribes and the U.S. Forest Service for plant harvest on National Forest lands in Ceded Territory.
- Suggests that wild food gathering including collection of plants for medicinal or ceremonial purposes.
Response: We have revised the definition of wild food gathering to include plants used for medicinal or ceremonial purposes.
- Trapping should be utilized as a management tool when necessary and tribal members can provide assistance with this.
Response: Trapping for management purposes will be allowed as needed. We will need to work out tribal treaty rights related to trapping as we develop the MOU.
- The Tribe does not support work that supplements or support non-native fish species restoration or management.
Response: The work of the Refuge and the Fish and Wildlife Service is also associated with restoration of native fish species. Our goals, no doubt, overlap.
- Consider impacts that increased public use will have on fish populations and habitats.
Response: Please be aware that public use will be adjusted if we need to protect fish and wildlife resources. The primary focus of all refuges within the national wildlife refuge system is wildlife first.

Bayfield County Tourism & Recreation

Compatible public uses are fair and just. Grateful for the permanent snowmobile trail easement across the property.

Response: Thank you.

Dennis Pratt, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

- Beaver control should be considered so fish migration is not blocked.
Response: Stream restoration efforts will incorporate the Service's ecosystem approach to conservation. If beaver management is identified as one of our management/restoration needs, we will plan to implement it.
- See if we can compile outdoor recreation information by region, not just by state.
Response: We also would like to have outdoor recreation information available by region. The best source of this information is the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; we used the statewide information available from the 2000 SCORP for this document.

Unfortunately, the DNR did not compile trend or use information on a regional basis, but might at a later date. I have asked to get the information when/if it becomes available. To compensate for the lack of regional information, I was able to gather facility and tourism expenditures for Ashland and Bayfield County, which at least gives us some sense of the importance of outdoor recreation for this region.

- Hard to compare the three alternatives.

Response: I agree. We follow standard formats. Please note the tables that summarize the alternatives and impacts to resources. I hope these help clarify the alternatives.

- Alternative 3 should still allow catch and release angling.

Response: Good point. Under Alternative 3, we could consider catch and release for special events when outdoor skills are being taught. However, for public use purposes, catch and release is still considered angling, which would be closed under Alternative 3. Under Alternative 2, our preferred alternative, we would consider catch and release if there is a biological/management reason to do so, and we would work in concert with the DNR before we agreed to such regulations.

- Background information needs work and Dennis has some good historical information he can offer.

Response: We will work with you to update the background information for use in our future documents. Thank you for offering to help.

David A. Bratley, Washburn, WI

Suggests setting aside a waterfowl rest area in the Chequamegon Bay wetlands, either in the Refuge or Fish Creek Sloughs, where hunting is not allowed. Would enhance birdwatching opportunities.

Also concerned that hunters are leaving trash along the shoreline and paths, which should be cleaned up.

Response: The waterfowl use around the Bay near shore is definitely different between spring and fall, possibly for two reasons: 1) food sources are nearer shore in the spring, and 2) hunting pressure and search for food moves divers to the open water in the Bay. Large rafts are formed by diving ducks at this time of year. Bluebills are comfortable on open waters searching for mollusks, fairy shrimp and other aquatic animals. Redheads and canvasback also prefer open water, but will search for aquatic vegetation, which may be found in Kakagon sloughs.

Dabblers, as you noted, find areas like Prentice Park. The new wetland restorations inland on the Refuge will also provide refuge for dabblers. We are also planning a wetland restoration project on the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center's land, which will be closed to hunting. We suspect that the divers, because of hunting pressure anywhere on the bay, will still move out to open water in the fall, creating a de facto refuge.

Trash left by users will be picked up by refuge staff or volunteers. Littering is prohibited and violators can be fined.

Terri Bahe, Washburn, WI

Suggests a long-term goal of moving the snowmobile trail off of the refuge. In the meantime, suggests a reduced speed zone.

Response: Good idea. We will ask the Bayfield County Snowmobile Alliance to consider a reduced speed zone. Regarding moving the trail off the Refuge, see response to Richard Spotts comments.

Gary Haughn, Ashland Field Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA

Recommends including the entire watershed in habitat and restoration planning.

Response: This will be done when we begin to develop our restoration and habitat management plan. For the public use plan, we consider use on and adjacent to the Refuge.

Elisabeth Quast, Benoit, WI

Supports eliminating motorized trails and not allowing any additional ones. Also suggests that we delay a parking lot decision and utilizing the Visitor Center's facilities.

Response: The existing snowmobile trail follows a permanent right-of-way easement for snowmobile use. The Refuge founders evaluated the possibility of moving the snowmobile trail outside the refuge boundaries, but were not able to find a good alternative route. We must honor existing easements. We will keep communicating with the Bayfield County Snowmobile Alliance about minimizing impacts to the Refuge (see comment from Terri Bahe), but it will be up to Bayfield County to move the trail.

Regarding the parking lot decision, we will wait to make a decision. The location identified on the map in the plan is a potential site, but not the only option.

Richard Spotts, Ashland, WI

- Supports no more motorized use beyond the existing snowmobile trail. Motorized vehicles could significantly impact wetlands and saturated soils.

Response: This will happen. No motorized use of additional motorized trail, other than existing travel rights-of-way, will be allowed on refuge lands.

- Suggests avoiding wetlands as much as possible for hiking trails.

Response: We will avoid them as much as possible, but we will also want the public to have access to select wetland areas for education and wildlife observation.

- Concerned with proposed parking area off Cherryville Road, since it is adjacent to Whittlesey Creek. That site might be better served if restored to natural conditions. Suggests waiting until we acquire additional tracts that could provide other options for parking, especially something off State Highway 13. In the meantime, utilize the Visitor Center facilities.

Response: We will wait to make a decision on the parking area. See response above to

Elisabeth Quast's comments.

- Discourage off-trail or cross country hiking, because of sensitive wetlands within refuge.
Response: We will make users aware of sensitive nature of wetlands. We expect that the vast majority of people will stay on trails or high ground, for their own convenience and safety. If we discover that damage is occurring from off-trail use, we will close those areas.

Phyllis Johnson, Cornucopia, WI

Concerned with hunting and conflict with other users.

Response: You are right. We might have to close trails to the Lake during waterfowl season. All other users, however, will be given consideration during the waterfowl season and we will manage use to avoid conflicts.