

# News Release

## *DeSoto & Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges*

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### **Comprehensive Conservation Planning Open Houses Scheduled on February 15 & 16 at DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges**

**MISSOURI VALLEY, IOWA** – Refuge staff at DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) in Missouri Valley, Iowa and Fort Calhoun, Nebraska are beginning work on a shared Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). This plan will direct management of the Refuges over the next 15 years, and public involvement is an essential part of the planning process.

A CCP for Boyer Chute NWR was originally begun in February of 2010, but progress was delayed by major flooding events in the summers of 2010 and 2011. Because of drastic changes in the landscape that resulted from these floods, Boyer Chute NWR's planning effort will resume in coordination with a new, revised CCP for DeSoto NWR.

The first step in the two-year planning process is to ask groups and individuals interested in the Refuges' future for comments on issues and opportunities the Refuges will encounter over the next 15 years. This initial public scoping period is a time in which Refuges actively solicit comments from partners, stakeholders, local communities, neighbors, visitors, and the public. Comments can be submitted to the Refuges at any time, but they are most useful for planning if submitted early during the official public scoping period.

#### **Public Input is Encouraged**

The official public scoping period will run from **January 23 through February 24**. During this time Refuge staff will host two open houses to provide information about the CCP process, and to provide the public with opportunities to share information and thoughts about the Refuges. Everyone is invited to attend the open houses. The first will be held at the DeSoto Visitor Center (follow signs from the refuge's north entrance on U.S HWY 30) on Wednesday, February 15, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. The second open house will be held at the Fort Calhoun Library (110 South 14th Street, Fort Calhoun, NE 68023) on Thursday, February 16, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Refuge staff anticipates a wide range of ideas, opinions, and interests being expressed during the public comment period.

Comments and other information received by the Refuges will be used to develop potential future management scenarios. The final CCP will assure the fulfillment of the Refuges' established purposes, guide long-term management decisions, and ensure that the Refuges contribute to the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). In addition to their management application, CCPs provide other agencies and the public with a clear understanding of the desired conditions of the Refuges and how the Service will implement management strategies.

Anyone interested in the Refuges' future is encouraged to submit comments on issues they feel should be considered in planning. Comments can be submitted in person to the Refuges, through the U.S. mail, or via e-mail. Address submissions to: DeSoto and Boyer Chute NWRs, Attn: CCP Comment, 1434 316<sup>th</sup> Lane, Missouri Valley, Iowa 51555; or e-mail submissions to [r3planning@fws.gov](mailto:r3planning@fws.gov).

## Refuge Background

DeSoto NWR was established in 1958 and encompasses 8,365 acres of floodplain habitat on a former oxbow of the Missouri River. The Refuge serves as an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds by preserving and restoring native habitats, with emphasis on wetland and riverine flora and fauna, and to provide both cultural and natural history interpretations for environmental education; and wildlife-dependent recreation, where and when such uses are compatible with the primary purposes of the refuge. Located twenty-five miles north of Omaha, Nebraska, DeSoto also provides recreational use for up to 250,000 visitors annually. The Refuge is renowned for housing the Steamboat Bertrand artifact collection, the largest assemblage of Civil War-era artifacts in the United States. More information can be found on the Refuge website: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/desoto/> .

Boyer Chute NWR was authorized in 1992 in an ongoing effort to recover, restore, and safeguard fish and wildlife habitat along the Missouri River corridor. The Refuge has an approved acquisition boundary of 9,912 acres. Of that, the Service currently owns and manages approximately 4,040 acres. These lands conserve landscape features found only along major rivers systems including backwaters, side channels, and islands; as well as a diversity of associated floodplain habitats ranging from wetlands and tallgrass prairies to riparian woodlands. More information can be found on the Refuge website: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/boyerchute/> .

## Mission of the Service

The mission of the Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

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