

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Situated on the bed of former Glacial Lake Wisconsin and the Great Central Wisconsin Swamp, the land in and around Necedah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was once a vast peat bog with low, wooded islands and savannas. Higher sand ridges were filled with mature stands of pine and other species.

In 1939, the Refuge was established as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and for use as an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds. It is located in central Wisconsin, about 180 miles east of Minneapolis, Minnesota, 150 miles northwest of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and about 4 miles west of Necedah, Wisconsin.

Today, the 43,696-acre Necedah NWR is a mix of pine, oak and aspen forests, wetlands and open water areas, grasslands, and rare savannas. This mixture of habitats supports a rich diversity of fish, wildlife and plant populations. More than 230 species of birds have been identified on the Refuge. More than 100,000 migratory waterfowl and shorebirds use the Refuge annually, and it is the largest stopover in the state for migrating Sandhill Cranes. With the surrounding Necedah Wildlife Management Area, it has the Wisconsin's second largest colony of Black Terns (a state-listed endangered species).

A number of endangered species make their home on Refuge land. Necedah NWR has the southernmost timber wolf habitat in the state, and it is also home to the Blanding's turtle, the Eastern massasauga rattlesnake and the phlox moth. The largest population of Karner blue butterflies in the world uses the Refuge, and it was recently selected as the reintroduction site for a new population of federally-listed endangered Whooping Crane.

The Refuge attracts people as well as wildlife. An estimated 150,000 people visit the Refuge every year to hunt, fish, hike, observe and photograph wildlife, and pick berries.

Managing a refuge demands long-range planning that reflects vision, science and people. The Necedah NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan, or CCP, describes how we will provide for migratory species within our boundaries, support endangered species on the Refuge, work with partners to improve habitats beyond our boundaries, expand opportunities for wildlife viewing and fishing, and develop environmental education and outreach programs to increase appreciation of fish and wildlife.

Figure 1: Location of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge



1.2 Refuge Purpose

The purpose for which the Refuge was established provides the basic framework for developing management direction for the Refuge. It is within the Refuge purpose that management functions are developed and what uses and facilities can be provided.

Pursuant to the Refuge’s enabling legislation, the Refuge purpose is “a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife...” (Executive Order 8065, dated 1939) and “...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other purpose, for migratory birds” (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929).

1.3 Refuge Vision

Necedah NWR exemplifies a diverse and productive ecological system of woodlands, savannas, and wetlands managed to perpetuate waterfowl and other migratory birds, listed species, and native biological diversity within Wisconsin’s Central Sand Plain Natural Division. Refuge staff are a multi-disciplined team of biologists, technicians, and support staff who are dedicated to providing quality wildlife-dependent public use opportunities to a diverse and supportive public. The Refuge is a model in its commitment to create long-term mutually-beneficial relationships with its stakeholders, and has produced consistent growth in the public’s understanding and appreciation of the Refuge, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and Service trust resources.

1.4 Refuge Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide scientific and community leadership and support in the restoration, preservation, and management of waterfowl and other migratory birds, listed species, and native biological diversity within south central Wisconsin, while providing, to the extent possible, quality wildlife-dependent recreational and educational experiences that foster an understanding and appreciation of these resources, and expands the role humankind plays in their stewardship.

1.5 Purpose and Need for the Plan

This Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) identifies the role Necedah NWR will play in supporting the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and provides primary management guidance for the Refuge. The plan articulates management goals for the next 15 years and defines objectives and strategies that will achieve those goals. Legislative and other policies, including the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, have guided the development of this plan. These mandates include:

- Wildlife has first priority in the management of refuges.
- Wildlife-dependent recreation activities of hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education and interpretation are the priority public uses of the Refuge System. These uses will be accommodated when they do not interfere with a refuge's purposes or the mission of the Refuge System.
- Other uses of the Refuge will only be allowed when they are determined to be appropriate and compatible with the Refuge purposes and mission of the Refuge System.

Following the recommendations in the CCP will enhance management of Necedah NWR by:

- Providing a clear statement of direction for future management of the Refuge.
- Giving Refuge neighbors, visitors, and the general public an understanding of the Service's management actions on and around the Refuge.
- Ensuring that the Refuge's management actions and programs are consistent with the mandates of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Ensuring that Refuge management is consistent with federal, state and county plans.
- Establishing long-term Refuge management continuity.
- Providing a basis for the development of budget requests for Refuge operations, maintenance, and capital improvement needs.

1.6 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.



The Service manages the 93-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System of more than 545 national wildlife refuges and thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. Among its key functions, the Service enforces Federal wildlife laws, protects endangered species, manages migratory birds, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their international conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

The Service employs approximately 7,500 people at facilities across the country, with a headquarters in Washington D.C., seven geographic regions, and nearly 700 field units. Necedah NWR is located in the Great Lakes/Big Rivers Region of the Service, which includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin (Figure 1). The Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region manages over 1.2 million acres of land and water on 46 national wildlife refuges and nine wetland management districts, including more than 240,000 acres in waterfowl production areas. The Region also manages six national fish hatcheries, nine fisheries stations, 10 ecological services field offices, and 18 law enforcement field offices.

1.6.1 Mission Statement of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The mission of the Service is working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

1.6.2 Goals of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- Sustainability of Fish and Wildlife Populations: Migratory birds, endangered fish and wildlife species, interjurisdictional fish, and marine mammals are conserved, protected, enhanced, or restored. The Service is participating in conservation of other species when its expertise, facilities, or lands can enhance state, tribal, or local efforts.
- Habitat Conservation – Network of Lands and Waters: An ecologically diverse network of lands and waters, of various ownerships, is conserved to provide habitats for marine

mammals and migratory, interjurisdictional, endangered, and other species associated with ecosystems conserved in cooperation with others.

- **Connecting Americans to Wildlife:** The American public understands and participates in the conservation and use of fish and wildlife resources.
- **Workforce Excellence:** The Service's workforce, scientific capability, and business practices - in cooperation with the Department of Interior's scientific expertise - fully support achievement of the Service mission.

1.6.3 National Wildlife Refuge System

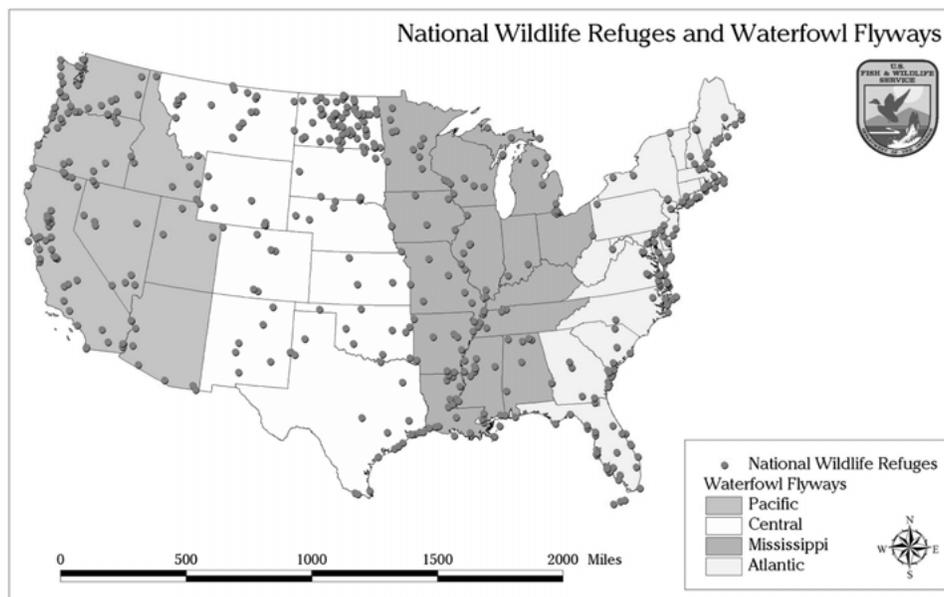
The National Wildlife Refuge System is the world's largest and most diverse collection of lands and waters set aside specifically for wildlife. The Refuge System began in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt designated 3-acre Pelican Island, a pelican and heron rookery in Florida, as a national bird sanctuary.



Today, over 545 national wildlife refuges have been established from the Arctic Ocean to the South Pacific, from Maine to the Caribbean. Varying in size from half-acre parcels to thousands of square miles, they encompass more than 92 million acres of the Nation's best wildlife habitats. The vast majority of these lands are in Alaska, with the rest spread across the rest of the United States and several U.S. territories.

Like Pelican Island, many early wildlife refuges were created for herons, egrets, and other water birds. Other refuges were set aside for large mammals like elk and bison. However, most national wildlife refuges were created to conserve migratory waterfowl. This is a result of the United States' responsibilities under international treaties for migratory bird conservation and legislation such as the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929. Refuges dot the map along the four major "flyways" that waterfowl follow from their northern nesting grounds to southern wintering areas (Figure 2).

Figure 2: National Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl Flyways



National wildlife refuges play a vital role in conserving endangered and threatened species and their habitat. Among these are Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, the winter home of the whooping crane; the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, which protects one of the Nation's most endangered mammals; the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, home of the Laysan duck and monk seal; and Necedah NWR, which provides critical habitat for the federally listed endangered Karner blue butterfly.

1.6.3.1 Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

1.6.3.2 Goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System

- Preserve, restore, and enhance in their natural ecosystems (when practical) all species of animals and plants that are endangered or threatened with becoming endangered.
- Perpetuate the migratory bird resource.
- Preserve a natural diversity and abundance of fauna and flora on refuge lands.
- Provide an understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife ecology and humankind's role in their environment and to provide refuge visitors with high quality, safe, wholesome and enjoyable recreational experiences oriented toward wildlife to the extent these activities are compatible with the purposes for which each refuge was established.

1.6.3.3 Guiding Principles of the National Wildlife Refuge System

Habitat: Fish and wildlife will not prosper without high quality habitat, and without fish and wildlife, traditional uses of refuges cannot be sustained. The Refuge System will continue to conserve and enhance the quality and diversity of fish and wildlife habitat within refuges.

Public Use: The Refuge System provides important opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

Partnerships: America's sportsmen and women were the first partners who insisted on protecting valuable wildlife habitat with wildlife refuges. Conservation partnerships with other Federal agencies, state agencies, tribes, organizations, industries, and the general public can make significant contributions to the growth and management of the Refuge System.

Public Involvement: The public should be given full and open opportunity to participate in decisions regarding the acquisition and management of our national wildlife refuges.

1.7 Other Planning Efforts

The following Federal, state, and local plans, planning efforts, and initiatives were reviewed and considered when developing the CCP for the Refuge:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Timber Wolf Recovery Plan
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bald Eagle Recovery Plan
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Plan

- Juneau and Wood County Land and Water Resource Management Plans
- Juneau and Wood County 10-Year Forest Management Plans
- Wisconsin DNR/Refuge Cooperative Agreement (Meadow Valley Management)
- Wisconsin DNR/Refuge Cooperative Agreement (Fire Protection Agreement)
- Savanna Partnership Memorandum of Understanding
- Golden Sands Resource Conservation and Development Area
- Central Wisconsin River Basin Partnership
- Hardwood Bombing Range Guidelines (pertaining to Refuge overflights)
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Partners In Flight Bird Conservation Plans
- U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan

1.8 Existing Partnerships

Necedah NWR is part of the Necedah Wildlife Management Area, a 111,564-acre area of Federal property. Land that is outside of the Refuge is managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as part of surrounding State Wildlife Areas through a cooperative agreement. The Service considers the Wisconsin DNR a major partner in conservation efforts in the area.

In addition, the Refuge has cooperative working relationships with several universities, other Federal agencies, the State of Wisconsin, educational institutions, and non-government organizations.



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1.9 Legal and Policy Guidance

The authority for developing CCPs for national wildlife refuges is the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. However, management and administration of refuges is governed by numerous national and regional directives derived from Secretarial Orders, Service Director's Orders, Service Regional Director's Orders, and Service Policy Guidance contained in the Interior Departmental Manual and the Service's Manual (see part 602 of the Service Manual at www.fws.gov).

In addition to the executive order establishing the Refuge, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, several federal laws, executive orders, and regulations govern the administration of Necedah NWR. Appendix E contains a partial list of the legal mandates that guided the preparation of this plan and those that pertain to Refuge management activities.