

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Erie National Wildlife Refuge

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Visitors can enjoy Erie National Wildlife Refuge regardless of the season, including this bird watcher.

Compatible Uses: Where People Meet Nature

Hunting on Erie National Wildlife Refuge has been an annual tradition for Pat Maloney since he got his first hunting license around the age of 12. He has pursued deer, squirrels, turkeys and even coyotes on the refuge, often accompanied by his younger siblings.

“We really enjoy it,” he says. “One difference between the refuge and private land around Guys Mill is that the refuge has some of the biggest chunks of unbroken woods there is in the area.”

Spring and summer are nature photographer Steven Parkin’s preferred seasons to visit the refuge. One of his favorite spots to capture wildflower shots is the Holly Trail on the

refuge’s Seneca Division near Cambridge Springs. “There are quite a few species you can see right off the boardwalk,” he says.

For cross-country skiers like Ron and Char Oswald, winter is prime time on the refuge. The refuge gives area residents a chance to experience nature, Ron Oswald says. “It allows the public to get out and see wildlife and woods.”

Erie National Wildlife Refuge receives an estimated 30,000 visits every year. It issues 1,900 hunting permits and welcomes dozens of school groups and other youth organizations for environmental education every year.

As part of the refuge’s comprehensive conservation planning process, now underway at Erie, refuge management must review all of the activities that occur on the refuge – from public uses such as hunting and hiking to agricultural production. They must analyze and determine if each activity is a “compatible use” – an activity that “based on sound professional judgment, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the national wildlife refuge,” according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Compatibility Policy, published in November, 2000. The written decision on *(story continued on page 3)*



Comprehensive Conservation Plan Update

Where We've Been...and Where We're Going

We continue to move along with collecting data and writing sections of the CCP, the Habitat Management Plan and the Visitor Services Assessment. Background chapters of the Plan are nearly complete and this fall, a college intern compiled information on the history of the refuge hunt program.

We will continue to work on the above mentioned throughout the winter as well as meet with state partners to discuss objectives and management strategies.

Wildlife photography can be enjoyed by visitors both young and young at heart.

Get Involved!

The Friends of Erie National Wildlife Refuge is a non-profit organization, established to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Erie National Wildlife Refuge and to provide assistance to Refuge programs.

The goals of the Friends group are to:

1. Increase awareness of the refuge and its mission,
2. Generate and then allocate funds to support the refuge,
3. Support refuge programs and projects, and
4. Advocate for the refuge locally, state-wide, and nationally.

This year, Friends of Erie National Wildlife Refuge will join over 400 Refuge Friends groups February 21-23 in the nation's capital to promote and support the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Friends of Erie National Wildlife Refuge will also continue to support refuge programs and special events including the Heritage Festival in June.

Interested in joining the Friends of Erie National Wildlife Refuge?

Please call 814-789-3585 for information.



Erie National Wildlife Refuge
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Compatible Uses: Where People Meet Nature (cont.)

whether a use is appropriate for a refuge is called a “compatibility determination.”

Even outside of comprehensive conservation planning, refuges are required to review each activity on the refuge at least every 10 or 15 years, depending on the type of activity, explains Refuge Manager Tom Roster. “We’re just trying to ensure that activities on the refuge don’t interfere with the purpose for which the refuge was established.”

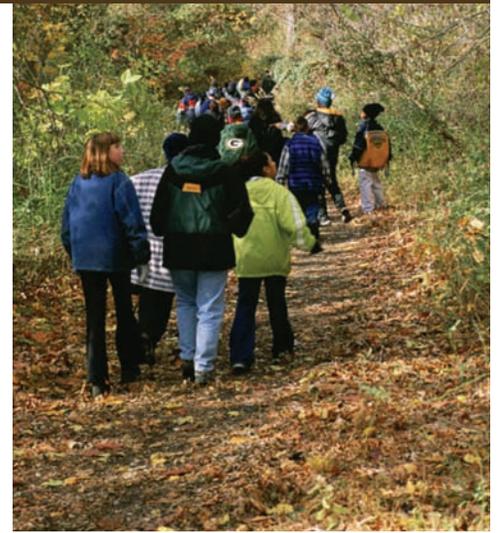
Erie National Wildlife Refuge was founded in 1959 as a refuge for migratory birds. The Compatibility Policy also notes that national wildlife refuges must “ensure that we maintain the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the National Wildlife Refuge System for present and

future generations of Americans.” This concept, discussed in the November, 2008, issue of *InsidErie*, emphasizes the importance of maintaining and, when possible, restoring natural systems of native plants and animals on refuges.

Wildlife comes first on national wildlife refuges. And while some refuges have determined that they cannot allow public access or other additional uses, most can. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 encourages refuges to allow hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation whenever possible. The act highlights these six activities as “priority public uses.” All other uses are “secondary uses,” and have lower priority than the six priority public uses.

Roster says that the idea behind this priority designation is that “by providing those opportunities, folks can gain an appreciation for wildlife and what the refuge is all about.”

While making compatibility determinations, each use is carefully analyzed. Refuge managers consider when the activity is conducted, what types of impacts it has on the refuge, and how much of the refuge’s budget and staff time the use requires, among other factors, Roster explains. Once a compatibility determination is drafted, there



Erie National Wildlife Refuge welcomes dozens of school groups and other youth organizations for environmental education every year.

is an opportunity for the public to make comments for consideration in the final determination.

The open comment period for Erie’s compatibility determinations will be part of the public review of the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan. No date has been set for that review, but Roster says the refuge is aiming to complete the draft in the spring of 2009.

Compatibility determinations help to ensure that the wildlife and habitat that visitors enjoy every day on Erie National Wildlife Refuge will be here for generations to come.



There are many fishing opportunities on Erie National Wildlife Refuge, particularly from the Pool K Fishing Pier on Boland Road.

“Discover” Erie NWR

Many resources are available for visitors to use while exploring the nooks and crannies of Erie National Wildlife Refuge. For educators and families, the “Discovery Kits” and “Discovery Packs” provide a wealth of information all-in-one.

- Family Discovery Packs – Backpacks filled with binoculars, guide books, and trail activities increase learning opportunities and can be borrowed for daily use.
- Educator Discovery Kits – Resource kits on Wetlands, Forests, and Migratory Birds can be borrowed for up to 3 weeks. Kits help youth leaders and teachers with suggested activities, props and materials, worksheets, and lesson plans.



INSIDEerie

Your source for the latest news from
Erie National Wildlife Refuge



Hunting, a priority public use on Erie National Wildlife Refuge, is considered by many to be a family tradition.

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