

Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge

Conservation Planning Newsletter

December 2006

Our Vision for the Refuge

The Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge will continue to be internationally and nationally renowned for preserving its wetland habitats and sustaining significant populations of waterfowl and other Service trust resources in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and the Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex. We will expand the refuge's role in protecting and restoring natural processes and managing native plants, animals, and community types. We will also showcase the best science and technology for implementing and demonstrating adaptive management for wildlife conservation, the importance of the natural world to the quality of human life, the value of and need for fish and wildlife management, and the human role in preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat.

Our partnerships will enhance our ability to address the issues affecting the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the region. Local communities will recognize the refuge as a national treasure, and actively participate in its stewardship. We will raise public awareness and understanding of the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System by welcoming visitors and providing safe, accessible opportunities and well-maintained facilities for compatible, high-quality, wildlife-oriented experiences.



Greater Scaup

USFWS



Tundra Swans

H. Davidson

Back on Track with Planning

Perhaps you recall that we began a comprehensive conservation planning process for Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge in 2002. Unfortunately, in 2003, changes in personnel and regional priorities caused us to put the project on hold. To get back on track, we have established a new planning team consisting of refuge staff, a regional planner, a regional resource specialist, contract planner, and representatives of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Another change we made since 2003 was to administratively merge Eastern Neck Refuge with the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex. Other refuges within the complex include Blackwater, Martin, and Susquehanna. Resource management, visitor programs, staffing, and budget priorities will be established for the entire refuge complex based on the overarching goals in the 2006 Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex comprehensive conservation plan (CCP). As we identify priorities and implementation schedules for the refuge complex, each of the four refuges will be considered equally in terms of their potential to contribute to those goals. In the case of Eastern Neck Refuge, this

change in organization could potentially increase the amount of resources available for refuge projects, assuming those projects are determined to be a priority for the refuge complex.

Once final, the CCP will provide strategic management direction for all refuge programs over the next 15 years. It will explain our priorities for wildlife and habitat management, visitor services, staffing and facilities, and ensure long-term continuity in managing the refuge.

Public Involvement

Public involvement is important to us, and we encourage your participation at any time during the planning process. We intend to build off the public scoping that began in 2002. Our first newsletter was mailed to 600 people and included a workbook in which readers could express their concerns on important issues affecting the refuge. Your responses, as well as the comments we received from other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specialists, our partners, and other stakeholders, have assisted us in determining what issues and concerns to address during the planning process (see the next page for a list of issues).

Public Information Session and Open House

Date: January 17, 2006

Time: 2-4 p.m., 6-8 p.m.

Location: American Legion Hall
21423 Sharp Street
Rock Hall, MD

Meeting Format: Open house, with
30-min presentation
at 3 and 7 p.m.

This location is fully accessible.

On November 8, 2006, we hosted a biological experts workshop to facilitate a discussion on natural resource priorities for the refuge. Twenty-five experts attended, representing other federal agencies, state agencies, researchers, and non-governmental conservation organizations. The participants identified resource priorities such as migrating and wintering waterfowl, federal and state-listed species, shallow water habitats, and healthy and diverse habitats, free of invasive species.

If you would like to learn more about the planning process and our public scoping, including previous newsletters, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Eastern%20Neck/ccphome.html>.

Next Steps

Our next step is to host a public information session and open house (see inset box above). At that meeting, we will bring everyone up-to-date on where we are in the planning process, what steps remain to be accomplished, our time frames, and our current refuge management priorities.

After our January meeting, we will begin to develop management alternatives based on refuge purposes, our vision and goals, and key issues. Some of those issues follow.

Refuge Goals

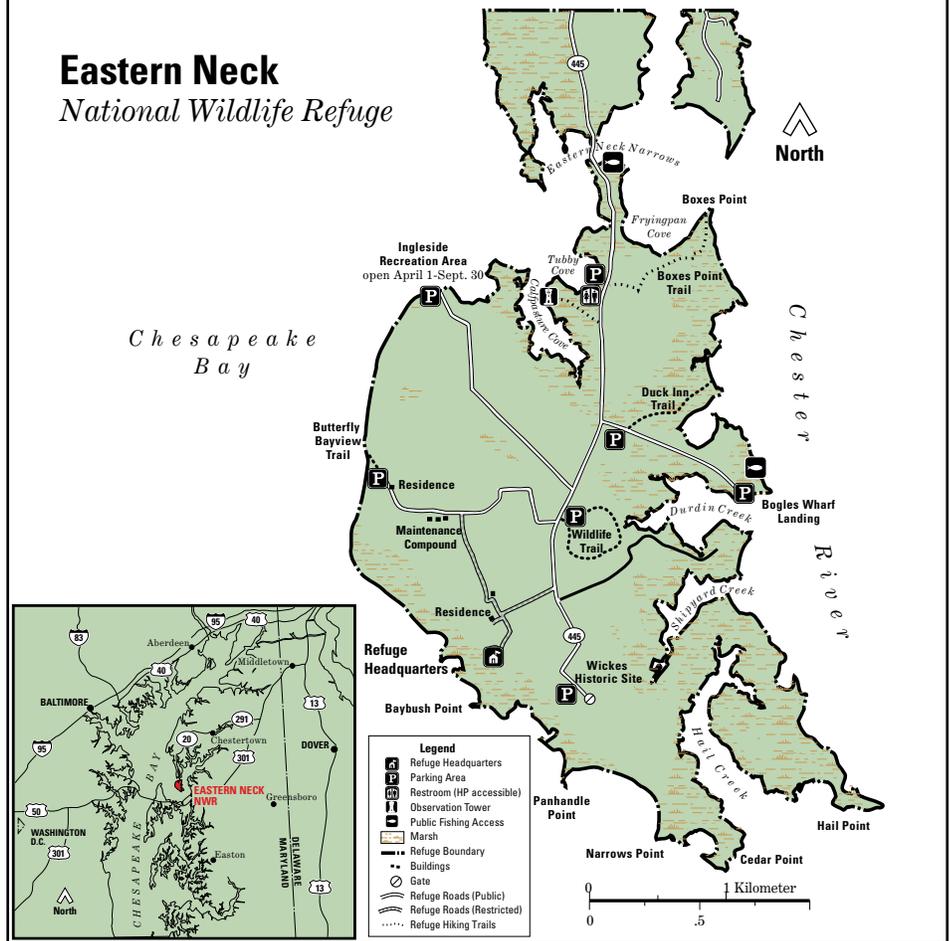
Goal 1: Protect and enhance Service trust resources and other species and habitats of special concern.

Goal 2: Maintain a healthy, diverse ecosystem supporting natural processes and protecting, managing, and restoring natural community types and native plants and animals to pass on to future generations of Americans.

Goal 3: Develop and implement quality scientific research, environmental education and wildlife recreation programs that raise public awareness and are compatible with refuge purposes.

Goal 4: Ensure that staffing, facilities, and infrastructure commensurate with natural and cultural resource protection are developed as we implement the plan.

Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge



- What are the most effective strategies to enhance habitat for migrating and wintering waterfowl? Do we continue cropland management? If so, how much, where, and using which crops?
- How can we make the biggest, long-term impact in the control of invasive plants?
- What can we do, in partnership with others, to minimize shoreline erosion and the degradation of shallow water habitats in the Chesapeake Bay?
- What is the refuge's role in contributing to the recovery of federal-listed species and other species of conservation of concern?

- Do our facilities and programs meet the needs and expectations of visitors?
- Could we make changes to increase visitor satisfaction that are consistent and compatible with our goals?
- What are the staffing, budget, and infrastructure needs that are commensurate with our long-term goals?

For further information, contact:

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Federal Relay Service for the deaf or hard of hearing: 1 800/877-8339

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>





The Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan

If you would like to receive future mailings about the planning process for the Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, please fill in the information below and mail this postcard to the address on the front, or e-mail your mailing address to: northeastplanning@fws.gov.

Name: _____

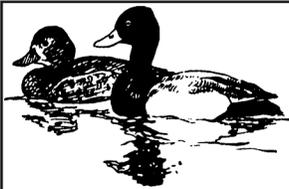
Business: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

E-mail: _____

Please realize that the names on the Comprehensive Conservation Plan mailing list become part of the public record for the planning process. The Service must release these names, if someone requests it, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974.



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