



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge Newsletter

Spring 2000

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Open Houses

The refuge will be hosting 3 open houses for the public. We invite you to come and share your ideas about the refuge.

Open Houses

October 24, 2000 7:00pm
Swanton Village Municipal Complex
Large Meeting Room
Swanton, Vermont

October 25, 2000 7:00pm
St. Albans Town Educational Center
St. Albans, Vermont

October 26, 2000 7:00pm
University of Vermont Campus
Liken Center, Room 104
Burlington, Vermont

Comprehensive Conservation Plans

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is starting work on a long-term plan for Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. A practical guide will be prepared for managing the refuge and protecting important wildlife habitat for the next 10 to 15 years. This guide will be called a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

This CCP for Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge will:

- Outline the direction and expectations of management operations of the Refuge for the next 10-15 years
- Clarify the role the Refuge will continue to play as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and in local communities,
- Identify how the Refuge can best help protect important habitats and species;
- Establish which public uses are compatible with managing for wildlife

This planning effort provides a unique opportunity for the Service to involve individuals and local communities in the long-term management of your National Wildlife Refuges. You can play a significant role in the development of this long-term plan.

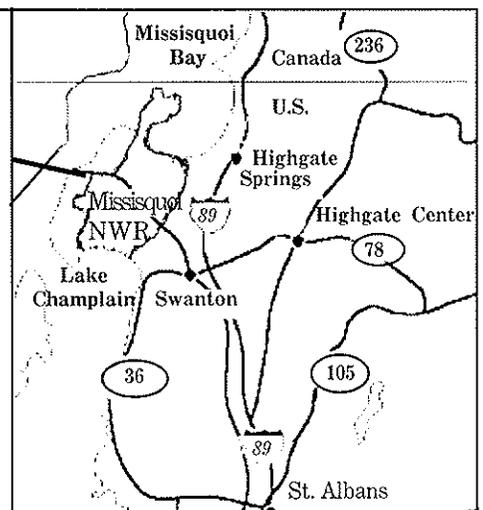
To develop such a plan, the Refuge needs your help answering the following questions:

- How are we doing with habitat and wildlife management and protection, public use, endangered species, and partnerships?
- What could the Service do better for wildlife and for you?
- How can we work together?

Missisquoi

National Wildlife Refuge

Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1943, is located on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain near the Canadian border in Franklin County, Vermont. The refuge headquarters is two miles northwest of Swanton, on Route 78.



Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge Planning

Why is this planning effort starting now?

In October 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. It establishes the mission of the Refuge System, a new process of determining compatible public use activities on refuges, and requires us to prepare CCPs for each refuge. The Refuge Improvement Act states that, first and foremost, the National Wildlife Refuge System must focus on wildlife conservation.



Digging for clues! Visitors to Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge may have noticed the archeologists and anthropologists working on the Refuge. These researchers are looking for artifacts of Missisquoi's rich cultural history. USFWS Photo

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

"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."

Who's Leading This Effort?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Service is the Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for the continuing benefit of people. The Service has major responsibilities for migratory birds and fish, endangered species, and certain marine mammals.

The Service also manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for the protection of fish and wildlife populations and habitats. The refuge system began in 1903, when President Theodore Roosevelt designated Pelican Island, a 3-acre pelican and heron rookery in Florida, as a bird sanctuary. Today, there are more than 500 national wildlife refuges from Alaska to Puerto Rico that encompass more than 93 million acres of the nation's best wildlife habitat. National wildlife refuges typically offer a variety of recreational opportunities and many have visitor centers, wildlife trails, and environmental education programs. Nationwide, more than 34 million visitors hunt, fish, observe and photograph wildlife, or participate in interpretive activities on refuges each year.

The Refuge

Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1943 under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. As one of the earliest refuges established with Migratory Bird funds, it continues to protect premiere habitat for migrating birds, especially waterfowl. The 6,592-acre refuge protects the Missisquoi River delta's marshes, open water, old fields, and wooded swamps. The Refuge and surrounding area combine to provide important feeding, resting, and breeding habitats for migratory birds, particularly waterfowl.

The CCP will address long-term plans for the refuge. Public uses, such as fishing, hunting, boating, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, interpretation and environmental education will be evaluated. Habitat management for migratory waterfowl and other species, and management practices for the state-listed spiny soft shelled turtle will be addressed. With help from Refuge partners opportunities for land protection will be proposed. The Refuge looks forward to hearing what ideas you have about Missisquoi NWR.

Getting Involved

Issues Workbook

Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge Goals

1. Maintain a healthy and diverse river delta ecosystem with a full range of natural processes, natural community types, and the full spectrum of native plants and animals.
2. Protect and enhance federal trust resources (migratory birds, interjurisdictional fish, threatened and endangered species) and other species of special concern.
3. Foster cooperative actions and partnerships with local communities, agencies, organizations, and the Province of Quebec to promote and further refuge goals.
4. Foster public understanding and appreciation of the value of the Missisquoi River delta ecosystem and the role of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge in protecting and sustaining this valuable resource.
5. Increase public awareness and understanding of the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the need for fish and wildlife management through promoting priority public uses (Big 6) where compatible.

You can help us focus our planning effort on those things that matter to you and your community. Your comments will assist us in identifying the best alternatives for long-term management of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

This newsletter has been mailed to everyone on our mailing list and will be handed out to everyone who attends the Open House meetings. The following workbook provides an effective way for us to share background information and to hear your ideas and concerns on important issues affecting the Refuge. We have compiled a list of questions to provide a basis for comparing your comments with others we receive. Answer any or all that are important to you. Feel free to add additional comments in the spaces provided, attach additional pages, give us a call, Email, or write us at the address provided on the last page.

The comments we receive in the workbooks and at the public meetings will help us identify issues and develop goals and objectives.

Values, Vision and the Service's Role

1. How many times a year do you visit Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge? (Please indicate the approximate number of days you visit per year)

_____	never
_____	1-5
_____	5-25
_____	25-50
_____	50+
2. What do you value most about the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge? With a larger perspective in mind, what do you value most about the Missisquoi River basin?
3. What do you consider to be the most important issue facing the refuge\ this area?

Vision Statement

Issues Workbook

Looking Ahead to 2015

The Missisquoi river delta is an international resource of importance for the people of the United States and Canada. The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge is a critical link in the maintenance of the ecological integrity of this river delta which provides breeding, staging, and migration habitat for thousands of waterfowl and other migratory birds annually. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with our partners, collaborate with other conservation efforts to reach out and forge broad alliances to protect and manage this vast and diverse resource to sustain a healthy ecosystem for future generations.

The Refuge protects the largest and most diverse wetland complex in the upper Lake Champlain basin. The diverse floral community is overshadowed only by the faunal diversity represented by the multitude of migratory bird species that use the Refuge. The future of the Missisquoi NWR and the sustained integrity of the river delta ecosystem relies on the understanding of the biological processes that created and maintain this large wetland complex and the human influence on the past, present, and future uses of the area.

Missisquoi NWR is a welcoming destination for those who wish to learn about the Missisquoi river delta and the history and wildlife of the Refuge. Enjoyed by backyard neighbors as well as new visitors, the refuge offers unique opportunities to pursue outdoor-related activities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation and environmental education (Big 6).

The cultural resources at the Refuge provide valuable insight into the history and way of life of early Native Americans. Understanding this history is critical to the understanding of human activity on the river delta.

4. What do you think of our Vision Statement and goals (see sidebar pg. 3 and 4) Any comments/suggestions?

5. What technical services would you like Refuge staff to provide to your local community? (check if appropriate)

- wetlands management
- management of endangered species
- management to benefit wildlife
- land protection funding
- control of invasive plant and animal species
- volunteer opportunities
- grants for habitat management
- fishing/hunter education
- environmental education

Other: _____

Opportunities for people

Environmental education, interpretation, fishing, hunting, photography, and wildlife observation are considered to be priority opportunities for people on National Wildlife Refuges. These opportunities are made available and managed based on the needs of wildlife at each refuge.

1. What are your favorite activities to engage in while on the refuge?

Issues Workbook



Springtime on the Missisquoi River. *Flood events, such as this, are a natural processes common to the river delta.*

Planning Schedule

October 2000

Open houses to identify issues and opportunities for the refuge

Ongoing

Meetings with agencies, groups, and other interested partners

Through May 2001

Defining issues, developing strategies and alternatives

Fall 2001

Draft CCP/ Environmental Assessment released and distributed

Winter 2001

Final CCP/ Environmental documents released and distributed



Premier birding. *Missisquoi NWR is a great place for bird watching.*

2. What improvements, changes or new activities are needed to provide better service to the public?

3. Do our recreational facilities meet your needs? (trails, parking, signs, etc.)

Habitat and Wildlife

NWRs are actively managed to maintain and improve the quality of fish and wildlife habitats. Healthy ecosystems include a diversity of native habitats and species. Refuges are managed to maintain and improve conditions for native fish, wildlife, and plants and their natural communities. Emphasis is placed on threatened and endangered species, and migratory birds.

1. What changes or improvements could be made in habitat and /or species management on the Refuge?

2. Are there specific areas within the Northern Lake Champlain Basin that, in your opinion, need protection? If so, please list them here, and explain why you think they are important.

Issues Workbook



Fishing is fun! Refuge staff offer a variety of special programs and activities each year. USFWS Photo

What are the Next Steps?

The following are the primary steps of the comprehensive planning process:

1. Compile existing information on natural resources and public use
2. Identify resource issues, opportunities, and ideas
3. Identify resource goals
4. Identify alternative ways to protect fish and wildlife, resolve the identified issues, and meet goals
5. Prepare a Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and environmental assessment for public review
6. Evaluate comments, revise draft plan, and adopt the final plan for the refuge

The Refuge is addressing steps 1 and 2 at this time. Your thoughts and comments are important to help identify the issues and opportunities to consider in the plan.

3. Which options should the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursue in protecting important habitats that are not currently in a National Wildlife Refuge? (Please check your top 3 choices)

- A. land acquisition
- B. conservation easements
- C. purchasing development rights
- D. partnerships with private land owners
- E. working with the State
- F. environmental education
- G. habitat restoration
- H. no active involvement
- I. other (please specify)

Administration

1. What concerns do you have about the Refuge? What is working well? What is not? How can we improve?

2. Are there groups we should work with to improve opportunities for wildlife and people?

3. Have you, or are you planning to, attend one of the Open Houses?

Yes _____ No _____

Issues Workbook

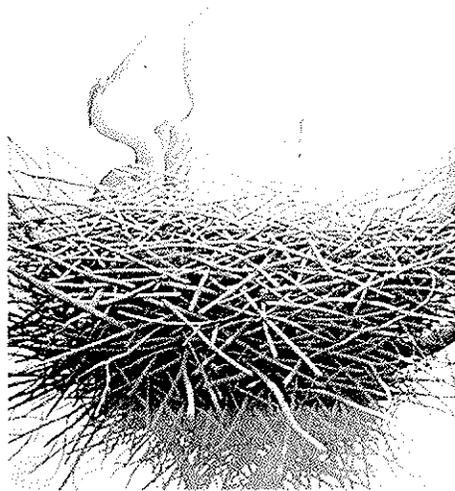
Please forward your workbook to:

Lindsay Krey
300 Westgate Center Dr.
Hadley, MA 01035-9589

by December 15, 2000. We look forward to hearing from you!

Please contact us if you have any questions or need additional information. Also, we would be happy to meet with your group or organization to discuss this process.

Mark Sweeny, Refuge Manager
 71 North River Street
 Swanton, VT 05488-0163
 phone: (802) 868-4781
 email:
 FW5RW_MSQNWR@fws.gov



Heron Rookery. *Missisquoi NWR is an important nesting area for many species, including these herons.*
 USFWS Photo

That is it! Thanks for your time!

Important: Now that you are finished, please separate pages 3-7, put them into the self-addressed envelope and drop it in the mail by December 15, 2000. We'll let you know the results as soon as we can. Please help us keep our mailing list updated by completing the following.

Are You on the Mailing List?

If you wish to receive future mailings about the Missisquoi NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan, please fill in the information requested below

- (Yes) Keep me on your mailing list
 (Yes) Add me to the mailing list to receive future information about the CCP Process
 (No) Please take me off your mailing list

Name: _____
 (please print)

Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

If you are acting in an official capacity as the representative of an organization, please complete the following two items.

Organization: _____

Title: _____

Thank you for your contribution to your National Wildlife Refuge! The future of the Missisquoi NWR and the sustained integrity of the river delta ecosystem relies on the understanding of the biological processes that created and maintain this large wetland complex and the human influence on the past, present, and future uses of the area.

Important: Please realize that 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

Signature: _____ Date: _____