

Chapter 1



Top of North Pack Monadnock
Andrew Ward/Conway School of Landscape Design

The Purpose of and Need for Action

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Introduction

Wapack National Wildlife Refuge (refuge) became the first national wildlife refuge in New Hampshire in 1972, when Laurence and Lorna Marshall donated land to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we, our). The terms of their deed prohibit hunting, fishing and trapping, cutting trees (except for maintaining trails), or driving motorized vehicles. It also requires us to manage the refuge in a “wilderness-like” setting.

This 1,625-acre refuge was established with the purpose of protecting migratory birds. It encompasses the 2,278-foot North Pack Monadnock Mountain in the towns of Greenfield and Temple (see map 1–1). Many people visit the refuge to hike its four trails, including a 4-mile section of the Wapack Trail, which passes over the top of the mountain and offers outstanding opportunities for viewing migratory hawks. The Wapack refuge is administered by staff from the Parker River refuge in Newburyport, Massachusetts.

This comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for the refuge was prepared pursuant to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1996 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Refuge Improvement Act) (Pub. L. 105-57; 111 Stat. 1253). An environmental assessment (EA), required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.; 83 Stat. 852), was prepared concurrent with the draft CCP.

This document presents the combination of management goals, objectives and strategies that will guide management decisions and actions on the refuge over the next 15 years. It will also be a tool to help the State of New Hampshire natural resource agencies, our conservation partners, local communities, and the public understand our priorities.

This document has 4 chapters and 8 appendixes. Chapter 1 explains the purpose of and need for preparing a CCP, and sets the stage for three subsequent chapters and the appendixes. It also

- presents the mission, policies and mandates affecting the development of the plan;
- identifies other conservation plans we used as references;
- lists the purposes for which we established the refuge and its land acquisition history; and,
- clarifies the vision and goals that drive refuge management.

Chapter 2, “The Planning Process,” describes the planning process we followed, including public and partner involvement, in the course of developing this final plan.

Chapter 3, “Refuge and Resource Descriptions,” describes the existing physical, biological and human environment.

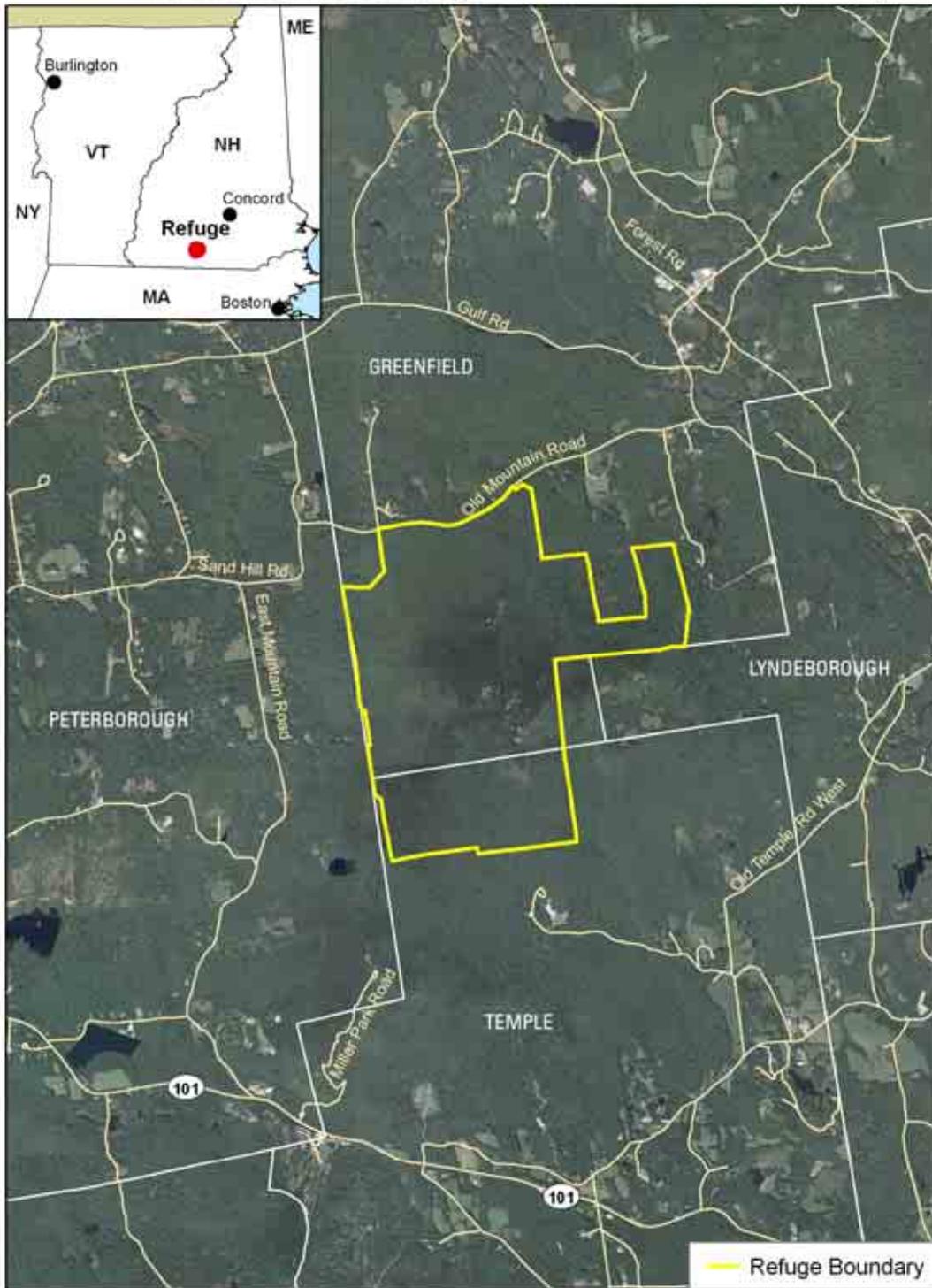
Chapter 4, “Management Direction and Implementation,” presents the general refuge management actions, and the goals, objectives and strategies that will guide decision-making and land management. It also outlines our staffing and funding needs to accomplish the management direction.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

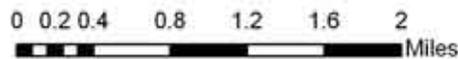
Wapack National Wildlife Refuge

Map 1-1



Data Sources:
NH GRANT - NAIP Quad - 2003; Public Roads; Political Boundaries;
USFWS refuge boundaries

Map prepared for Wapack National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive
Conservation Plan, September 2007.
This map is for planning purposes only.



The Purpose of and Need for Action

We developed a CCP for the refuge that best achieves its purpose, vision, and goals; contributes to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System); adheres to Service policies and other mandates; addresses significant issues; and, incorporates the sound principles of fish and wildlife science.

The *purpose* of a CCP is to provide each refuge with strategic management direction for the next 15 years, by

- stating clearly the desired future conditions for refuge habitat, wildlife, visitor services, staffing, and facilities;
- explaining clearly to state agencies, refuge neighbors, visitors, and partners the reasons for our management actions;
- ensuring that our management of the refuge conforms to the policies and goals of the Refuge System and legal mandates;
- ensuring that present and future public uses are compatible with the purposes of the refuge;
- providing long-term continuity and direction in refuge management; and,
- justifying budget requests for staffing, operating and maintenance funds.

We identify several reasons as the *need* for this CCP. First, the Refuge Improvement Act requires us to write a CCP for every national wildlife refuge to help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System. Second, the Wapack refuge lacks a master plan to accomplish the purposes above. The need for a strategic plan is even more compelling because this is an unstaffed refuge, and we rely heavily on informal agreements with partners to assist in managing it. This plan reflects the input of natural resource agencies in New Hampshire, affected communities, individuals and organizations, our partners, and the public.

The Service and the Refuge System Policies and Mandates Guiding our Planning

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its Mission

The Service is part of the Department of the Interior. Our mission is “*Working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.*”

Congress entrusts to the Service the conservation and protection of these national natural resources: migratory birds and fish, federal-listed threatened or endangered species, inter-jurisdictional fish, wetlands, certain marine mammals, and national wildlife refuges. We also enforce federal wildlife laws and international treaties on importing and exporting wildlife, assist states with their fish and wildlife programs, and help other countries develop their conservation programs.

The Service manual, available online at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/manuals>, contains the standing and continuing directives on fulfilling our responsibilities. The 600 series of the Service manual addresses land use management: sections 601–609 specifically address the management of national wildlife refuges.

We publish special directives that affect the rights of citizens or the authorities of other agencies separately in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR); the Service manual does not duplicate them (see 50 CFR 1–99 online at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>).

The National Wildlife Refuge System and its Mission and Policies

The Refuge System is the world’s largest collection of lands and waters set aside specifically for the conservation of wildlife and the protection of ecosystems. More than 548 national wildlife refuges encompass

more than 97 million acres of lands and waters in all 50 states and several island territories. Each year, more than 40 million visitors hunt, fish, observe and photograph wildlife, or participate in environmental education and interpretation on refuges.

In 1997, President William Jefferson Clinton signed into law the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Refuge Improvement Act). It establishes a unifying mission for the Refuge System.

“The mission of the System is 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.”—Refuge Improvement Act; Public Law 105-57

It also establishes a new process for determining the compatibility of public uses on refuges, and requires us to prepare a CCP for each refuge. The act states that the Refuge System must focus on wildlife conservation. It also states that the mission of the Refuge System and the purposes for which each refuge was established will provide the principal management direction on that refuge.

The Refuge System Manual contains policy governing the operation and management of the Refuge System that the Service Manual does not cover, including technical information on implementing refuge policies and guidelines on enforcing laws. You can review that manual at refuge headquarters. The following are a few noteworthy policies affecting this CCP.

Policy on Refuge System Planning

This policy (602 FW 1, 2, and 3) establishes the requirements and guidance for Refuge System planning, including CCPs and step-down management plans. It states that we will manage all refuges in accordance with an approved CCP that, when implemented, will help

- achieve refuge purposes;
- fulfill the Refuge System mission;
- maintain and, where appropriate, restore the ecological integrity of each refuge and the Refuge System;
- achieve the goals of the National Wilderness Preservation System and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; and,
- conform to other mandates.

The planning policy provides guidance, systematic direction, and minimum requirements for developing all CCPs, and provides a systematic decision-making process to fulfill those requirements. Among them, we are to review refuge lands for their potential for special area designations (e.g., wilderness and wild and scenic rivers), and incorporate a summary of those reviews into each CCP (602 FW 3).

Policy on the Appropriateness of Refuge Uses

Federal law and Service policy protect the Refuge System from inappropriate or harmful human activities, and ensure that visitors can enjoy its lands and waters. This policy (603 FW 1) provides a national framework for determining appropriate refuge uses and preventing or eliminating those that should not occur in the Refuge System. It describes the initial decision-making process the refuge manager follows when first considering whether to allow a proposed use. An appropriate use must meet at least one of the following four conditions.

1. The use is a wildlife-dependent recreational use, as identified in the Refuge Improvement Act.
2. The use contributes to fulfilling the purpose(s) of the refuge, the mission of the Refuge System, or the goals or objectives described in a refuge management plan approved after October 9, 1997, the date the Refuge Improvement Act became law.

3. The use involves the taking of fish and wildlife under State regulations.
4. The use has been found to be appropriate at the conclusion of a specified process that uses 10 criteria. The policy may be viewed online at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/library/06-5645.pdf>.

Policy on Compatibility

This policy (603 FW 2) complements the appropriateness policy. The refuge manager first must find a use appropriate before reviewing its compatibility. If the proposed use is inappropriate, the refuge manager will not allow it, and will not prepare a compatibility determination.

You may view this policy and its regulations online at <http://policy.fws.gov/library/00fr62483.pdf>, including a description of the process and the requirements for conducting compatibility reviews. Our summary follows.

- The Refuge Improvement Act and its regulations require an affirmative finding by the refuge manager on the compatibility of a public use before we allow it on a national wildlife refuge.
- A compatible use is one “that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the mission of the Refuge System or the purposes of the refuge.”—Refuge Improvement Act
- The act defines six wildlife-dependent uses that are to receive our enhanced consideration on refuges: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.
- The refuge manager may authorize those priority uses on a refuge when they are compatible, and are consistent with public safety.
- A compatibility determination will stipulate the required maximum reevaluation dates: 15 years for wildlife-dependent recreational uses; 10 years for other uses.
- The refuge manager may reevaluate the compatibility of any use at any time: for example, sooner than its mandatory date or even before we complete the CCP process, if new information reveals unacceptable impacts or incompatibility with refuge purposes (602 FW 2.11, 2.12).
- The refuge manager may allow or deny any use, even one that is compatible, based on other considerations, such as public safety, policy, or available funding.

Policy on Maintaining Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health

This policy provides guidance on maintaining or restoring the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System, including the protection of a broad spectrum of fish, wildlife, and habitat resources in refuge ecosystems.

Biological integrity refers to the composition, structure, and functioning of the biota at the genetic, organism, and community levels, when compared with historic conditions. The policy defines biological diversity as the variety of life and its processes, including the variety of living organisms, the genetic differences among them, and the communities and ecosystems in which they occur. Environmental health refers to the composition, structure, and functioning of soil, water, air and other abiotic features compared with historic conditions.

The policy provides refuge managers with a process for evaluating the best management direction to prevent the additional degradation of environmental conditions and restore lost or severely degraded environmental components. It also provides guidelines for dealing with external threats to the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of a refuge and its ecosystem (601 FW 3). It is available at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/library/01fr3809.pdf>

Other Mandates

Other federal laws, executive orders, treaties, interstate compacts, and regulations on conserving and protecting natural and cultural resources also affect how we manage refuges. The centralized library of Service-wide policies, executive orders, director's orders, and the "Digest of Federal Resource Laws of Interest to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service" are available at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/>.

Federal laws also require the Service to identify and preserve its important historic structures, archaeological sites, and artifacts. NEPA mandates our consideration of cultural resources in planning federal actions. The Refuge Improvement Act requires that the CCP for each refuge identify its archaeological and cultural values. Highlights of some of those laws affecting CCP development and implementation follow.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (Pub. L. 102-575; 16 U.S.C. 470) requires federal agencies to locate and protect historic resources—archaeological sites and historic structures eligible for listing or listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and museum property—on their land or on land affected by their activities. It also requires agencies to establish a program for those activities and carry them out in consultation with State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs).

The NHPA also charges federal agencies with locating and evaluating sites on their land and nominating them for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. We maintain an inventory of known archaeological sites and historic structures in the Northeast Regional Office, and file copies at each refuge. Our regional historic preservation officer in Hadley, Massachusetts, oversees our compliance with the NHPA and our consultations with state SHPOs. We must also comply with the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (Pub. L. 96-95, 16 U.S.C. 470aa-mm). It requires that we protect our archaeological sites from vandalism or looting and issue permits for site excavation.

The Service also owns and cares for museum properties. The most common are archaeological, zoological and botanical collections, art, and historical photographs or objects. Each refuge maintains an inventory of its museum property. Our museum property coordinator in Hadley, Massachusetts, guides the refuges in caring for that property, and helps us comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (25 U.S.C. 3001, et seq.) and federal regulations governing federal archaeological collections. Our program ensures that Service collections will continue to be available to the public for learning and research.

This plan is in compliance with the cultural and historic acts cited above, the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Endangered Species Act. As we mentioned previously, we developed this CCP and the draft CCP/EA to comply with NEPA.

Conservation Plans and Initiatives Guiding the Project

Birds of Conservation Concern 2002 Report

The Service developed this report (USFWS 2002) in consultation with the leaders of ongoing bird conservation initiatives and partnerships such as Partners in Flight (PIF), the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) and Joint Ventures, the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP), and the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan. The report fulfills the mandate of the 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§2901, et seq.), which requires the Secretary of the Interior to "identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory non-game birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973."

The 2002 report contains 45 lists that identify bird species of conservation concern at national, regional, and landscape scales. It includes a principal national list, seven regional lists corresponding to the seven regional

administrative units of the Service, and species lists for each of the 37 Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) designated by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) in the United States. NABCI defined those BCRs as ecologically based units in a framework for planning, implementing, and evaluating bird conservation. The refuge lies in the Atlantic Northern Forest BCR 14 (see additional discussion below).

Our agency's overarching goal in developing that report is to stimulate federal, state, and private agencies to coordinate, develop, and implement integrated approaches for conserving and managing the birds most in need of conservation. The report is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/reports/BCC2002.pdf>.

Atlantic Northern Forest Bird Conservation Region Blueprint (BCR 14)

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture partnership created its "Blueprint for the Design and Delivery of Bird Conservation in the Atlantic Northern Forest" (Dettmers 2005), in response to the NABCI challenge of building on existing partnerships to plan, implement, and evaluate cooperative bird conservation across North America. You may read the entire text of that document online at http://www.acjv.org/documents/bcr14_blueprint.pdf. It presents a strategic design of the key components that this BCR initiative will need to maintain healthy populations of birds native to the Atlantic Northern Forest (BCR 14). Specifically, it establishes a series of goals for moving BCR 14 toward a vision of sustained bird populations; it presents the biological foundation for its recommendations; and, it lays out a framework for implementing and evaluating those (Dettmers 2005).

The blueprint for BCR 14 identifies 53 bird species designated "highest" or "high" conservation priority in the region and 15 habitat types important for supporting one or more of those priority bird species during at least one of their life stages. Seven of the 53 highest and high-priority species have been observed on the refuge. The habitats identified either need critical conservation attention, or are crucial in long-term planning to conserve continentally and regionally important bird populations. The refuge offers three of the 15 priority habitat types. We considered each of those species and habitats in writing appendix C, "Species Known or Suspected on the Refuge, Including Species of Conservation Concern," and in developing our objectives and strategies for goal 1.

Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plans

In 1990, PIF began as a voluntary, international coalition of government agencies, conservation organizations, academic institutions, private industries, and citizens dedicated to reversing the population declines of bird species and "keeping common birds common." The foundation of its long-term strategy is a series of scientifically based bird conservation plans using physiographic areas as planning units.

The goal of each PIF plan is to ensure the long-term maintenance of healthy populations of native birds, primarily non-game birds. The plan for each physiographic area ranks its bird species according to their conservation priority, describes their desired habitat conditions, develops biological objectives, and recommends conservation measures. That priority ranking also factors in habitat loss, population trends, and the vulnerability of a species and its habitats to regional and local threats.

Physiographic Area 27—Northern New England (June 2000 Draft).—Our planning area lies in Physiographic Area 27, Northern New England. In developing our habitat goals and objectives, we referred to its draft plan, now online at http://www.blm.gov/wildlife/plan/pl_27_10.pdf. That plan (Rosenberg and Hodgman 2000) includes objectives for the following habitat types and associated species of conservation concern on the refuge.

- *Northern hardwood and mixed forest*: black-throated blue warbler, Canada warbler, and blackburnian warbler; and,
- *Mature conifer (spruce-fir) forest*: blackburnian warbler, bay-breasted warbler, sharp-shinned hawk.

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, National State Agency Herpetological Conservation Report (Draft 2004)

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) was created in response to the increasing, well-documented national declines in amphibian and reptile populations. PARC members come from state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, museums, the pet trade industry, nature centers, zoos, the power industry, universities, herpetological organizations, research laboratories, forest industries and environmental consultants. Its five geographic regions—Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest and Northwest—focus on national and regional herpetofaunal conservation challenges. Regional working groups allow for region-specific communication.

The National State Agency Herpetological Conservation Report (NHCR), a summary report sponsored by PARC, provides a general overview of each state wildlife agency's support for reptile and amphibian conservation and research through September 2004. Each state report was compiled in cooperation with its agency's lead biologist on herpetofaunal conservation. The purpose is to facilitate communication among state agencies and partner organizations throughout the PARC network to identify and address regional and national herpetological priorities.

PARC intends to expand the scope of the NHCR to include other states, provinces, and territories. It will also include other state agencies that are supporting herpetofaunal conservation and research, such as transportation departments, park departments, and forest agencies. New Hampshire has completed reports included in the NHCR online at <http://www.parcplace.org/documents/PARCNationalStates2004.pdf>. The next NHCR will integrate the list of species of conservation concern from each state's wildlife action plan (see below). We used the latest draft NHCR plan in developing appendix C, "Species Known or Suspected on the Refuge, Including Species of Conservation Concern."

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Wildlife Action Plan (WAP 2005)

In 2002, Congress created the State Wildlife Grant Program (SWG), and appropriated \$80 million in state grants. The purpose of the program is to help state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies conserve fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need. The funds appropriated under the program are allocated to the states according to a formula that takes into account their size and population.

To be eligible for additional federal grants, and to satisfy the requirements for participating in the SWG program, each state and territory was to develop its "Wildlife Action Plan" (WAP) and submit it to the National Advisory Acceptance Team by October 1, 2005. Each strategy was to address eight required elements, identify and focus on "species of greatest conservation need," yet address the "full array of wildlife" and wildlife-related issues, and "keep common species common."

The New Hampshire WAP resulted from that charge (NHFG 2005). The goal of the plan is to create a vision for conserving the state's wildlife and stimulate other state and federal agencies and conservation partners to think strategically about their individual and coordinated roles in prioritizing conservation.

In addressing the eight elements below, the NH WAP supplements and validates the information on species and habitat and their distribution in our planning analysis area, and helps us identify conservation threats and management strategies for species and habitats of conservation concern in this CCP. The expertise and the partner and public involvement in compiling the plan further enhance its benefit for us. We used it in developing the objectives and strategies for goal 1. These are the eight elements.

1. Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations, as the state fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the state's wildlife.

2. Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to the conservation of species identified in element 1.
3. Descriptions of problems that may adversely affect species identified in element 1 or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors that may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats.
4. Descriptions of conservation actions necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions.
5. Plans proposed for monitoring species identified in element 1 and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in element 4, and for adapting those conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions.
6. Descriptions of procedures to review the plan at intervals not to exceed 10 years.
7. Plans for coordinating, to the extent feasible, the development, implementation, review, and revision of the plan strategy with federal, state, and local agencies and Native American tribes that manage significant areas of land and water within the state, or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.
8. Plans for involving the public in the development and implementation of plan strategies.

Other Regional Information Sources

We also consulted the plans and resources below as we refined our management objectives and strategies.

- New Hampshire Big Game Plan, 2006; available online at http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Hunting/Hunting_PDFs/NH_Big_Game_Plan_FINAL.pdf
- Society for the Protection of NH Forests, New Hampshire's Changing Landscape, 2005; available online at <http://www.spnhf.org/research/research-projects.asp#nhcl>
- New Hampshire Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2003; available online at <http://www.nh.gov/oep/programs/SCORP/documents/scorpweb.pdf>

Refuge Establishment Purposes and its Land Acquisition History

With the first donation of 738 acres of land in 1972, the Service established the refuge for the following purpose and under the following authority: "for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds" (Migratory Bird Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 715d).

In 1977, another donated tract totaling 934 acres increased the size of the refuge to 1,672 acres. A final land survey in 1998 adjusted the refuge boundary line, excluding the town of Lyndeborough. That adjustment resulted in a loss of 47 acres. The refuge now comprises 1,625 acres.

Since the first donation of land in 1972, we have focused on managing the refuge as the deed requires, with minimal intervention, as in a wilderness area. We prohibit hunting, fish, trapping, cutting trees, and the use of motor vehicles.

Refuge Vision Statement and Goals

Refuge Vision Statement

Very early in the planning process, our team developed this vision statement to provide a guiding philosophy and sense of purpose in the CCP.

“Encompassing the North Pack Monadnock Mountain in southern New Hampshire, the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge provides exceptional mature spruce-fir and northern hardwood-mixed habitat for wildlife, particularly migratory birds. We will manage the refuge to preserve its natural conditions in a setting that appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.

All visitors are welcome to enjoy opportunities to observe and photograph nature along refuge trails, including a 4-mile segment of the Wapack Trail. The rock outcrop and cliff on the mountain peak afford an ideal location to view migrating hawks each fall. Old and new partnerships with other federal agencies, state agencies, local conservation organizations, and volunteers will foster public stewardship of this refuge and its resources, and enhance public understanding of the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in conserving our nation’s trust resources.”

Refuge Goals

We developed these goals after considering our vision and the purposes of the refuge, the missions of the Service and the Refuge System, and the mandates, plans, and conservation initiatives above. These goals are intentionally broad, descriptive statements of purpose. They highlight the elements of our vision for the refuge we will emphasize in its future management. The biological goal takes precedence; but otherwise, we do not present them in any particular order. Each offers background information on its importance.

Goal 1. Allow natural processes and disturbances to enhance biological diversity and integrity of upland wildlife habitat.

Goal 2. Establish a public use program that will encourage compatible, low-impact recreation on refuge trails.

Goal 3. Enhance the conservation and stewardship of wildlife resources through partnerships with public and private conservation groups, private landowners, State agencies and local entities.