



Cape Meares, Oregon Islands, and Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuges

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Planning Update 2



Pigeon Guillemots. Photo: David S. Pitkin, USFWS.

Greetings

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Cape Meares, Oregon Islands and Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuges (Refuges). The CCP will guide the management of these Refuges for the next 15 years.

As part of the CCP process, we requested input from the public, Tribes, conservation organizations, and local, State, and Federal government agencies. This planning update provides information on the status of the planning process

and what we have heard from our partners and the public so far.

Thank You for Participating

In October 2006, the Service mailed copies of Planning Update 1 to local conservation and interest groups, research organizations, local, State and Federal government agencies, Tribes, and others who have expressed an interest in the planning process. It was also posted on the Refuge website.

Planning Update 1 described the CCP process, explained Refuge purposes, identified preliminary

issues of concern, and helped us to expand our mailing list.

This second planning update summarizes the issues, concerns, and opportunities identified by the Service, its partners, and the public during the public scoping phase of the planning process. These issues will provide the basis for drafting management alternatives, objectives, and strategies for future public review and comment.

We would like to thank everyone who provided comments and/or attended an open house meeting, and we invite you to continue sharing your ideas with us. Your continued participation will be critical to the success of this planning effort.

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Planning Schedule

The initial steps of the planning process have been completed and a schedule of the remaining steps follows. The schedule may change as the process unfolds. If changes occur, they will be announced in future updates and on the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex website. (<http://www.fws.gov/oregoncoast/>)

<u>Planning Step</u>	<u>Target Date</u>
Planning Update 1 issued	October 2006.....completed
Preliminary Vision, Goals, and Issues defined	Fall 2006...completed
Public Scoping	November/December 2006.....completed
Develop Draft Goals, Objectives, and Alternatives.....	Summer 2007
Public Review/Comment on Draft CCP.....	Summer/Fall 2008
Final CCP/EA and Finding of No Significant Impact....	Winter 2008

Dates are tentative and subject to change as the planning process progresses.



Western hemlock at Cape Meares Refuge. Photo: Roy W. Lowe USFWS.

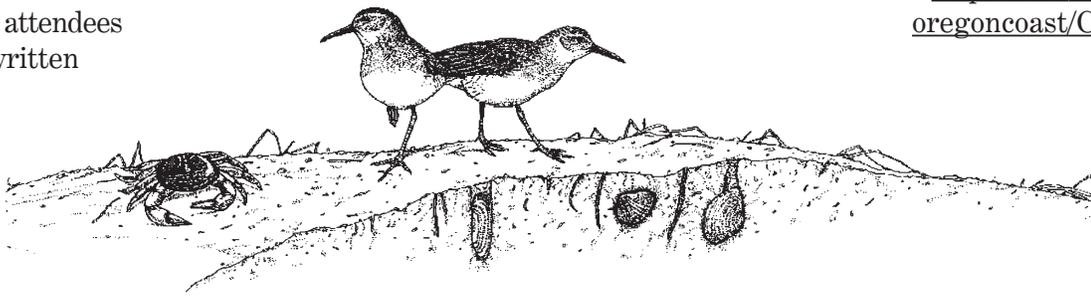
Public Scoping: What were your concerns for the Refuges?

The public scoping period for preparation of a draft CCP and EA for Cape Meares, Oregon Islands and Three Arch Rocks Refuges opened in October 2006. At the five public meetings held in November 2006, Refuge staff explained the CCP process; Refuge purposes, vision, and management; and preliminary management issues, concerns and opportunities that had been identified early in the planning process. We also answered questions from attendees and received written comments.

Private citizens and representatives from various organizations attended the meetings, providing comments on the issues and opportunities presented. Comments were transcribed during each meeting. Following the public meetings, a total of three letters were received from individuals or organizations.

Some comments received were about broad or long-range issues,

while others suggested very specific or detailed strategies that could be used to achieve biological or public use objectives. The Service planning team reviewed and grouped all comments received into three major issue categories summarized in this update—Wildlife and Habitat; Public Uses; and Management. For those who would like to see all verbal and written comments received during scoping, they are posted on the Refuge website at: <http://www.fws.gov/oregoncoast/CCP.htm>.



Summary of Issues and Comments

There was a wide range of issues and interests voiced at the public meetings. Many comments and questions we received were in regards to disturbance to wildlife and how those disturbances could be reduced or eliminated. Other commenters asked that the CCP address topics such as biological data needs for the Refuges, recreational uses, invasive species, contingency planning, citizen involvement, and coordination with other agencies. A brief summary of each issue category follows.

Wildlife and Habitat

Seabirds and marine mammals are highly vulnerable to disturbance by aircraft, and large numbers of eggs and young can be lost during a single disturbance event. Aircraft disturbance of wildlife on the rocks and islands is well documented. The CCP will address methods of reducing aircraft disturbance events, including but not limited to educating pilots and formally establishing an appropriate distance that is required for aircraft to avoid disturbing wildlife.

Boats, both motorized and non motorized, also frequently disturb wildlife on refuge rocks and islands. The CCP will examine ways to reduce boat-based disturbance. In addition, the effectiveness of the Three Arch Rocks Refuge's seasonal buffer zone closure in protecting breeding seabirds and marine mammals will be evaluated, and the CCP will examine whether the buffer zone should be replicated around other rocks and islands.

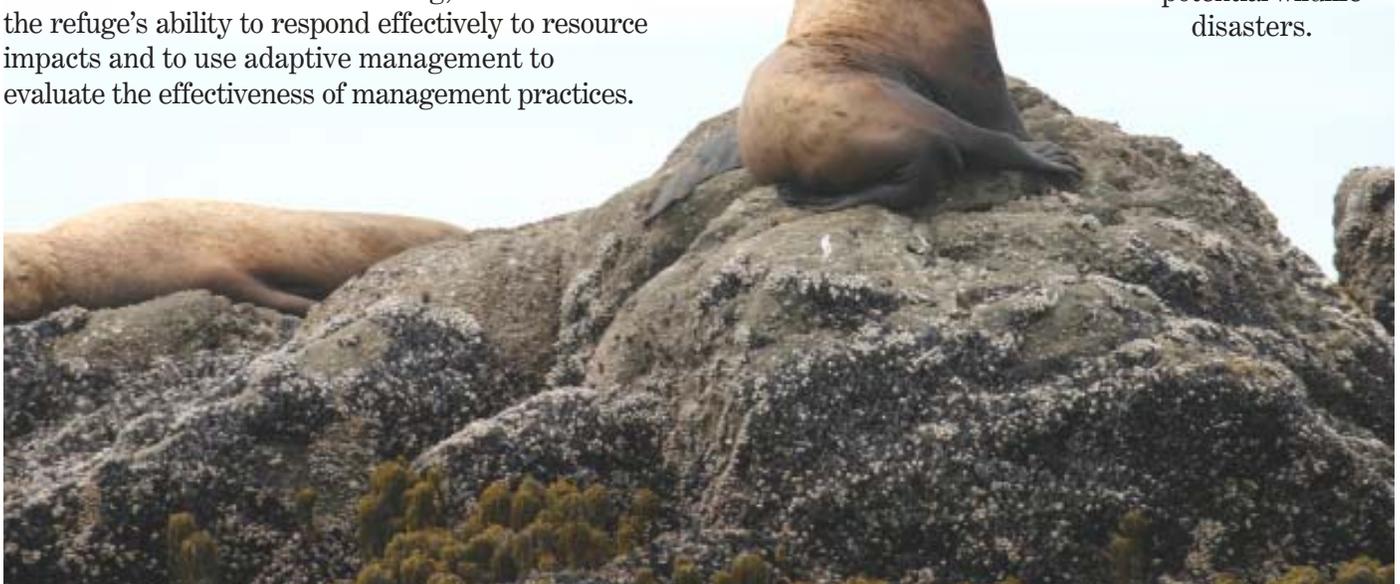
Baseline data on many refuge wildlife species and their associated habitats is lacking, which hinders the refuge's ability to respond effectively to resource impacts and to use adaptive management to evaluate the effectiveness of management practices.

In addition, the Refuge does not have enough staff to conduct all of the necessary research. The CCP will identify management oriented research needs based on Refuge System, ecosystem, and Refuge goals, and develop partnerships and methods for accomplishing high priority research.

Global climate change is expected to be a major factor affecting all coastal refuges in the future. Not enough is known about the marine ecosystem that affects refuge resources, especially with regard to seabird food resources. The CCP will assess what is known about global climate change and how it affects the species and ecosystems that depend on the Refuges, identify which issues can be further studied at the refuge and ecosystem levels, and determine how this information can be incorporated into wildlife management on the Refuges.

The presence of invasive species on the Refuges, and the potential for negative effects of invasive plant and animal species on seabird habitat, require us to address invasive species inventory and management issues.

Because the vast majority of Oregon's breeding populations of seabirds and marine mammals are concentrated on refuge rocks and islands, they are highly vulnerable to catastrophic events such as shipwrecks, oil spills, rat spills, concentrations of marine debris, diseases such as West Nile virus and avian flu, and wildfire spread from adjacent lands onto Refuge headlands. The CCP will address contingency planning for these and other potential wildlife disasters.



Steller sea lions on Oregon Island Refuge. Photo: Dave Ledig, USFWS.

Public Uses

The Oregon coast is an extremely popular tourist destination and there are numerous mainland facilities along the coast to view wildlife. With increasing visitation, more recreational activities are being requested for all public lands including the Refuges. All proposed and existing public uses will be evaluated for appropriateness and if found appropriate, will be reviewed for compatibility. The CCP will also explore possibilities for developing additional opportunities for wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation.

There currently is no Refuge law enforcement staff within the Refuge Complex and very limited support is available from outside the Refuge Complex. The

CCP will explore how the Service can work with other law enforcement entities to enlist their assistance in enforcing Refuge laws and regulations.

Management

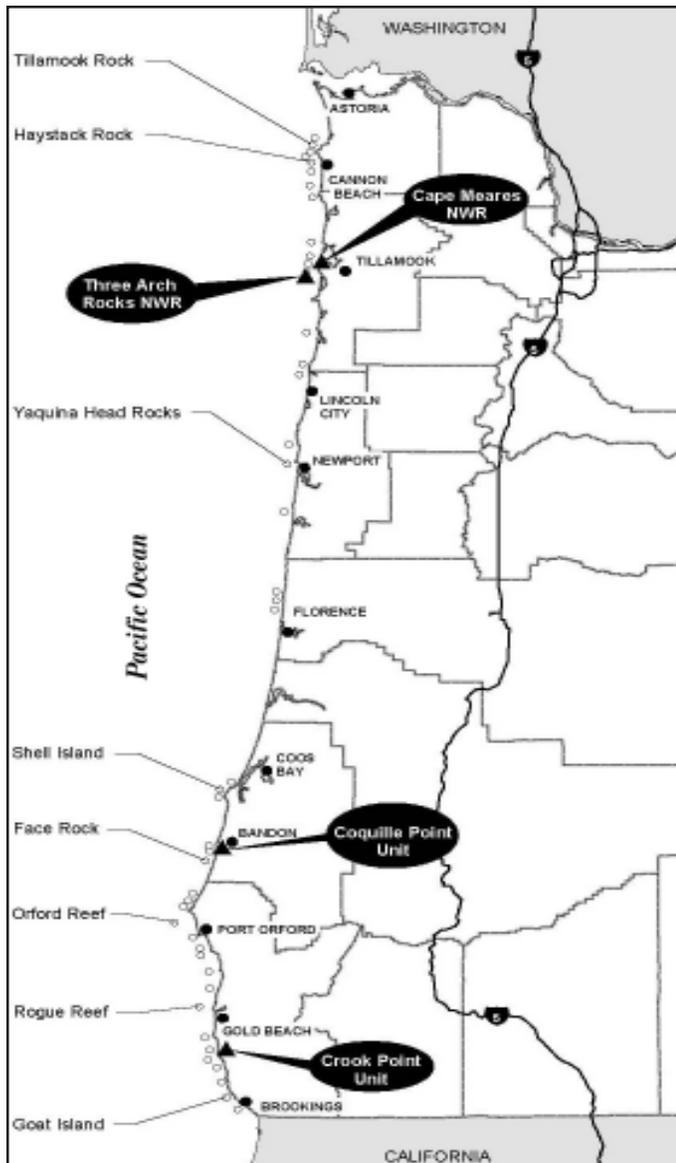
Rapid development along the Oregon coast is bringing with it a host of issues and problems that have the potential to negatively affect the Refuges' resources. Solutions to these issues will require close coordination with many entities. Numerous opportunities exist for working with partners to accomplish the Service's mission. The CCP will identify and seek to expand on these opportunities.

The CCP will seek to clarify the Service's jurisdiction and responsibilities regarding Oregon Division of State Lands, county and city zoning issues, pinniped management, and the Service's involvement in fishery or Marine Protected Areas management. We will also identify ways to use this information for resource protection and Refuge management.

Issues Outside the Scope of the CCP/EA

A number of issues were raised during public scoping which are considered to be outside the scope of the CCP/EA because they are not under the jurisdiction of these Refuges. The following issues will not be analyzed during the CCP process.

- Future specific plans for Oil Spill Mitigation funds—Refuge staff will be involved with any natural resource damage assessment projects that involve Refuge resources.
- Land acquisition, such as the establishment of new refuges to offset impacts of coastal development or the acquisition of forest habitat for marbled murrelets, is not financially feasible at this time.
- Snowy plover management on beaches, the potential for sea otter reintroduction along the Oregon coast, and management of other listed species not occurring on Refuge lands are all issues not within the scope of this CCP/EA, because they fall under the jurisdiction of other Service programs.
- Wildlife disturbance on lands and waters not included within the Refuges' boundaries will likely be part of cooperative management discussions with other resource agencies, but are not a target for analysis within this document.



Overview of Cape Meares, Oregon Islands, and Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuges

What is a Vision Statement?

A vision statement is a concise statement of what the planning unit should be, or what we hope to do or improve upon, based on the Refuge System mission, specific refuge purposes, and other mandates.

The vision statements for the Cape Meares, Oregon Islands, and Three Arch Rocks Refuges are broad statements of desired future conditions.



An aerial view of the Mack Reef and Crook Point Units of Oregon Islands Refuge. Photo: Roy W. Lowe, USFWS.

Draft Vision Statements

Cape Meares National Wildlife Refuge

A remnant of once vast old growth Pacific Temperate Rainforest, the fog shrouded Sitka Spruce and Western Hemlock forests of Cape Meares National Wildlife Refuge loom over precipitous coastal cliffs providing seabirds, falcons and a wealth of endemic coastal wildlife with protected sanctuary. In cooperation with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, we envision natural processes continuing to unfold in the most remote sections of the refuge while visitors are welcomed to the viewing decks and trails to observe and learn about this rare, intact functioning coastal ecosystem.

Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge

Spanning the Oregon coast, the wilderness islands and wind swept headlands of Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge are celebrated for their wildlife and rugged grandeur. Rocky islands and sheer cliffs provide critical breeding and resting habitat for diverse communities of birds, mammals, and plants along the wave-battered coastline. The isolated Crook Point headland continues to be reshaped by the geologic forces that created it, while visitors are drawn to the Coquille Point headland by the exceptional opportunities to observe and learn about coastal wildlife and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Together with our friends and partners, we will apply sound scientific principles to monitor, manage and protect the biological integrity of Pacific coastal wildlife and habitats. We envision the continued development and enhancement of inspiring viewing opportunities for hundreds of thousands of visitors, providing them with a window into this living heritage, while the island breeding grounds and Crook Point will continue to provide a haven for wildlife and plants.

Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge

A testament to seabird conservation, Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge sustains the largest and most diverse seabird colony in Oregon and is an important breeding site for Steller sea lions. Early protection of the nine offshore rocks that define this remote wilderness habitat set a precedent for conservation along the Pacific coastline, symbolizing a change in the way the American public protects and views these marine species. Formed by pre-historic lava flows and shaped by continuous oceanic forces, this Refuge will be managed as wilderness in perpetuity, for the benefit of wildlife and the American people.

How Do I Contact the Service

Send comments to or obtain information on the National Wildlife Refuges from:

Roy W. Lowe, Project Leader
Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex
2127 SE Marine Science Drive
Newport, Oregon 97365-5258

Phone: (541) 867-4550

Fax: (541) 867-4551

E-mail: oregoncoastCCP@fws.gov

Web: www.fws.gov/oregoncoast

For information on the CCP planning process contact:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Attn: Ben Harrison, Chief
Branch of Refuge Planning
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181

Phone: (503) 231-2231 or

Toll free: (877) 312-1751

Fax: (503) 231-6187

If you would like to be removed from the CCP mailing list, please contact us with your full name and address.



*U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
National Wildlife Refuge System
Division of Planning and Visitor Services
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232*

Address correction requested



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*In this issue:
A summary of the public comments we received on the long term management of the Cape Meares, Oregon Islands, and Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuges is provided.*

For more information visit our website: <http://www.fws.gov/oregoncoast>