



# U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

## Howland Island, Baker Island, and Jarvis Island National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update 1 — Summer 2005

### Comprehensive Conservation Planning Begins This Summer

*We want to hear from you!*

#### Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands National Wildlife Refuge CCP Public Scoping

Please send us your comments about the refuges and whether you would be interested in attending an informational scoping meeting.

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#### Greetings from the Refuge Manager

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is embarking on an important process to develop Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) for Howland Island, Baker Island, and Jarvis Island National Wildlife Refuges (refuges). These plans will help guide overall refuge management for the next 15 years. Your ideas and comments will be an important part of the process, so I encourage you to participate.

Before we begin the process, I'd like to provide you with some background about the refuges' history and current management. You'll also find some information about the National Wildlife Refuge System and how comprehensive conservation planning fits into the overall picture of refuge management.

This first "Planning Update" describes the beginning of the planning process and provides information about how to give your ideas to us. We would like to know if there is interest from the public in attending an informational scoping meeting. So please join us and share your thoughts about the refuges and let us know if you would like to participate in a planning meeting. If there is enough interest, we will schedule a meeting during the fall of 2005.

We will refer to aspects provided in this planning update throughout the CCP process. Please read this first planning update and become familiar with our process. We welcome your suggestions, questions, and comments. I hope you'll feel free to contact me or Charlie Pelizza, our Refuge Conservation Planner, if you have any questions. See page 5 to learn about the CCPs and page 6 for our contact information.



Howland Island NASA satellite image

Don Palawski  
Refuge Manager

## Refuge Location and Description

These refuges are part of the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which consists of 19 refuges found throughout the main Hawaiian Islands, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, Guam, and the central Pacific Ocean. Howland Island, Baker Island, and Jarvis Island refuges are composed of nearly 100,000 acres of submerged lands,

some of the most pristine and spectacular reefs found in the Pacific.

Historically, these islands were used by whaling vessels, guano miners, small groups of colonists, and the U.S. military during World War II. Howland Island is also noted as being the last destination of



*Howland Island sign and Amelia Earhart Day Beacon  
Photo by C. Newton*



*Montipora Aequituberculata coral at Jarvis Island Photo by J. Maragos*

associated waters, and coral reefs; and slightly less than 2,000 acres of exposed lands. Their location in the Pacific places Howland and Baker Islands approximately 1,650 miles southwest of Honolulu, and Jarvis 1,100 miles to the south.

The three islands and their associated coral reefs and marine waters provide nesting and feeding habitat for a variety of seabirds, sea turtles, endemic fish species, and a host of other marine species. The coral reefs within the refuge boundaries are

Amelia Earhart and Peter Noonan before their airplane disappeared on an around-the-world flight.

Considered U.S. territories, the islands were designated National Wildlife Refuges in 1974 by the Secretary of the Interior. Howland and Baker Islands are part of the Phoenix Islands, and Jarvis is found within the Line Islands.

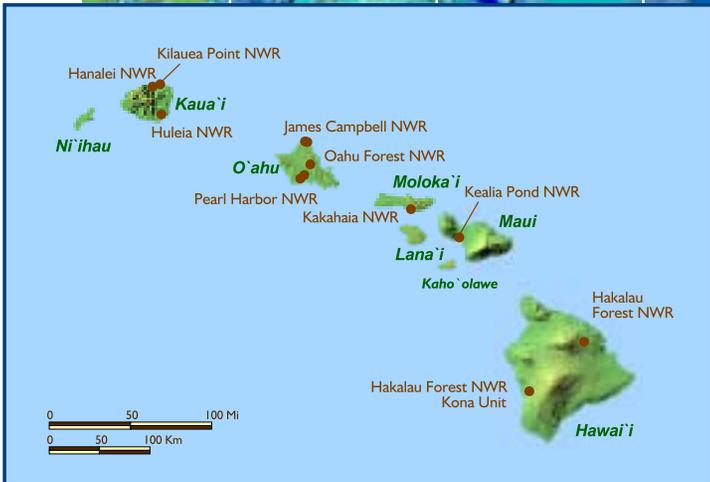
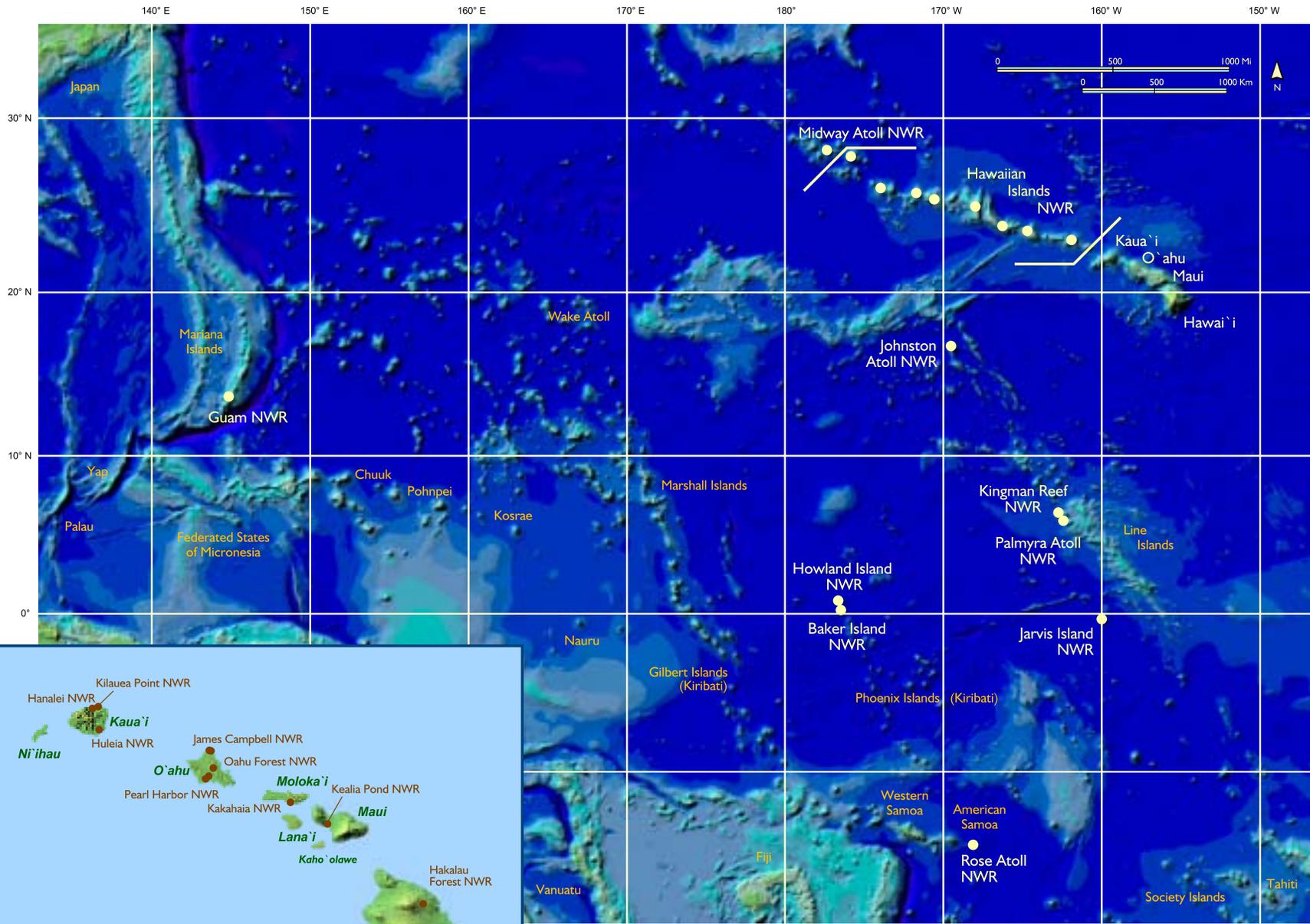
Current management of the refuges is limited to monitoring of marine and terrestrial plants and animals, removal of non-native vegetation, and prohibition of public access to protect migratory bird nesting and reduce the threat of invasive species.

### Refuge Purpose

These refuges were established under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956. The primary purpose of the refuges is the restoration and preservation of the complete ecosystem, terrestrial and marine, with special emphasis on the nesting seabird colonies.



*Sooty tern colony at Jarvis Island USFWS Photo*



# National Wildlife Refuges in the Pacific



## What is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Service manages the 95-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses more than 545 refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices, and 81 ecological services field stations.

The Service enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages and restores migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife



*Masked booby and aircraft wreckage on Howland Island*

*Photo by Mark Rauzon*

habitat such as wetlands, tropical forests and coral reefs, and helps foreign governments with their wildlife and habitat conservation efforts.

The Service also oversees the Federal Assistance program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

## What is the National Wildlife Refuge System?

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt protected an island with nesting pelicans, herons, ibis, and roseate spoonbills in Florida's Indian River from feather collectors decimating their colonies. He established Pelican Island as the Nation's first bird sanctuary and went on to establish many other sanctuaries for wildlife during his tenure. This small network of sanctuaries continued to expand, later becoming the National Wildlife Refuge System. In 1909, he established the first refuge in Hawaii, the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, effectively protecting most of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and their associated coral reef habitats.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the largest system of lands in the world dedicated primarily for the conservation of wildlife. It is spread across 50 states, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Johnston Atoll, Midway Atoll, and several other Pacific Islands. About 20.6 million acres in the Refuge System are managed as wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

## What is the mission of the Refuge System?

Refuges are places where wildlife comes first.

"The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge 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." (National Wildlife Refuge Systems Improvement Act of 1997)

The Service is a "primary use agency." This means that units of the Refuge System are managed first and foremost for the benefit of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. Our mission differs from other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service, which focuses on sustainable multiple-use management for the needs of people; the Bureau of Land Management, which sustains health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for use and enjoyment by people; and the National Park Service, which preserves natural and cultural resources for enjoyment, education, and inspiration.

## What is a CCP?

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. The Act defines the mission for the Refuge System and requires that all wildlife refuges must have a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) in place by the year 2012. These plans will provide a 15-year guide, using the best available scientific knowledge, to help managers achieve the purposes for which each refuge was established, and to work toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Act provides the Service with guidance for managing refuges in a way that ensures the long-term conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. Maintenance of biological integrity and diversity along with facilitating compatible wildlife-dependent recreation in the

Refuge System are two of the important principles laid out in the Act.

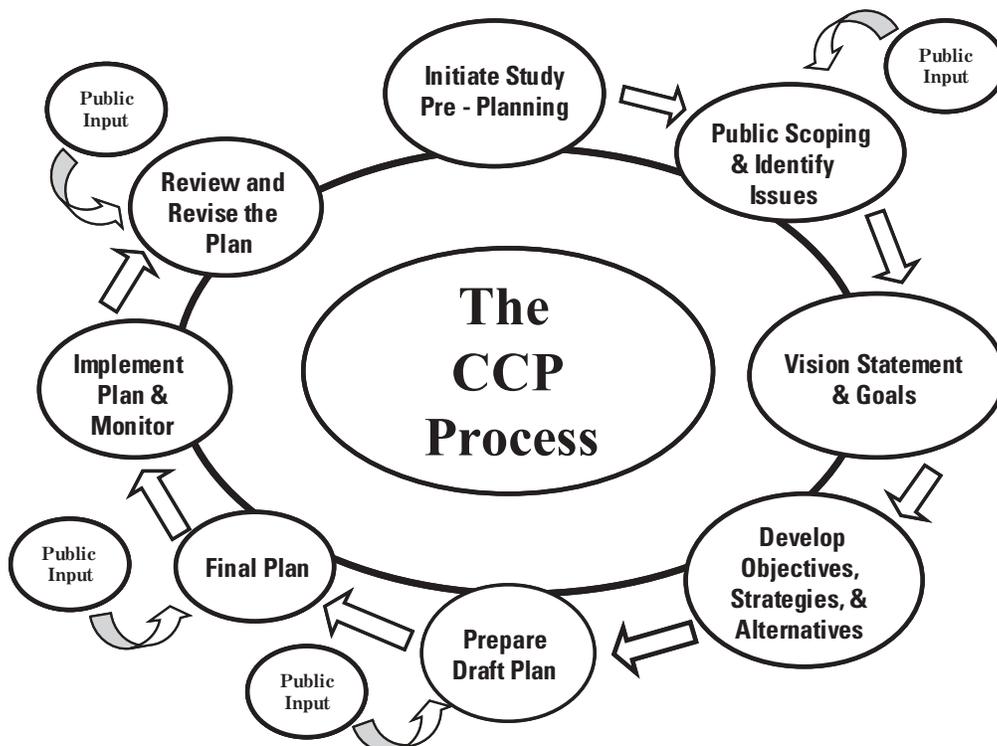
The CCPs for Howland Island, Baker Island, and Jarvis Island National Wildlife Refuges will outline goals, objectives, and management strategies for the refuges for a 15-year period. The accompanying Environmental Assessments will describe the alternatives considered and their environmental effects. The Service is preparing these CCPs for the following reasons:

- To ensure that management of these refuges reflects refuge purposes and the mission, policies, and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- To provide the public with an understanding of the reasons for management actions on each refuge.

- To provide a vision statement for each refuge.
- To ensure the compatibility of current and future uses of each refuge.
- To provide long-term continuity in refuge management.
- To provide budget justification for operation and maintenance and facility development requests.

The CCP will be flexible and a “living document.” It will be reviewed periodically to ensure that its goals, objectives and implementation strategies and timetables are still appropriate.

The key planning steps are described in the flow chart shown below. Currently, we are in the pre-planning phase which includes gathering data.



## Help Us Plan the Future

Over the next year, interested individuals, agencies, and organizations are invited to express their concerns and share their visions for the refuges. We will be sending these planning updates periodically to local constituents, government agencies, private organizations, and others who express interest.

This is your opportunity to help us identify issues and concerns, and for us to answer any questions you may have. Your participation is critical to the success of this planning effort. You will have an opportunity to review and comment on the draft CCPs and Environmental Assessments. We would like to hear from you if you would like to meet

U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Hawaiian and Pacific Islands  
National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 5-231  
Box 50167  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

with refuge staff and learn more about the refuges and the CCP process, and help us identify issues to be addressed in the CCPs.

A Notice of Intent to initiate the CCPs has been published in the Federal Register. The Notice can be accessed via the Internet at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>.

### Please feel free to contact us

We are available to provide additional information regarding the refuges and the planning process. Feel free to call, write, or e-mail.

If you did not receive this update through the mail and would like to be on our mailing list, please contact us.

If you would like to be removed from the list, just let us know.

#### **Charlie Pelizza, Refuge Conservation Planner**

Hawaiian and Pacific Islands  
National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 5-231  
Box 50167  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850  
(808) 792-9490  
[charlie\\_pelizza@fws.gov](mailto:charlie_pelizza@fws.gov)

#### **Don Palawski, Refuge Manager**

Pacific Remote Islands National  
Wildlife Refuge Complex  
300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 5-231  
Box 50167  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850  
(808) 792-9560  
[don\\_palawski@fws.gov](mailto:don_palawski@fws.gov)

