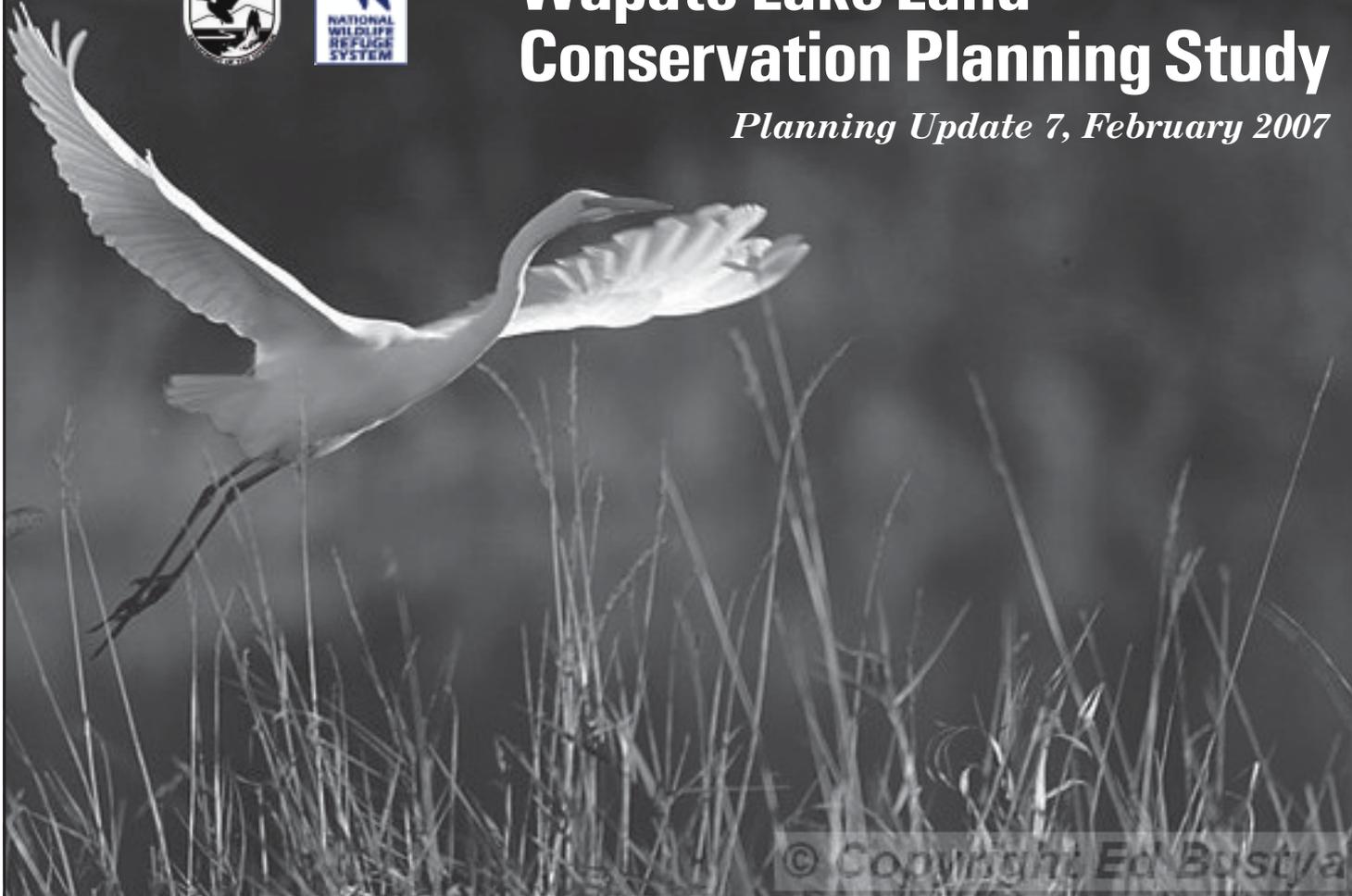




# Wapato Lake Land Conservation Planning Study

*Planning Update 7, February 2007*



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*The Service will protect habitat in the Wapato Lake area for a variety of fish, wildlife, and plant species. Photo: Great egret, © Ed Bustya.*

## Decision Protects Wapato Lake Wildlife

The Wapato Lake Unit will be established as an addition to the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, expanding the Refuge's approved boundary by 4,310 acres. This decision is based on analysis completed in the *Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Wapato Lake Unit Addition Land Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment (LCP/EA)*.

The decision, documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), is to implement Alterna-

tive D, the Preferred Alternative, as described in the LCP/EA. A map of the new Wapato Lake Unit is provided inside this update. This final update concludes the planning process for the Refuge addition.

Landowners with priority habitats within the Unit's boundary, interested in selling land or interest in land to the Service, now have the opportunity to pursue those options.

## Availability of the Planning Documents

The LCP/EA and the FONSI are now available. The EA includes the Service's responses to comments on the draft planning documents

received during the public comment period. Additional copies of the documents are available by request from the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge by calling (503) 590-5811, or by writing to Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, 16507 S.W. Roy Rogers Road, Sherwood, Oregon 97140-8306. These documents are also available on the Service's website at <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning>.

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*The Wapato Lake area floodplain habitats flood in fall and winter providing foraging and roosting winter habitat for large numbers of tundra swans (800 recorded in 1987). Photos: USFWS.*



*The Wapato Lake area provides wintering habitat for mallard, pintail, canvasback, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, and other species of waterfowl. Photos: Right © Ed Bustya, above USFWS.*



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## Results of the Public Review

The Service held an open house on May 4, 2006, in Gaston, Oregon, to describe the proposed action, answer questions and receive and respond to public comments in person. The purposes of public outreach were to identify and analyze the public's perspective on the alternatives and proposed management being considered for protecting Wapato Lake area habitats. In addition to the public comments received at the open house, the Service received written comments in letters and e-mail messages. The Service's responses to key issues raised by the public are organized by subject area, in the following paragraphs. More detailed responses to comments are provided in the EA, in Appendix C.

### Establishment of the Wapato Lake Unit

The Service selected Alternative D, as described in the EA, to establish the Wapato Lake Unit (Unit), because implementation of this alternative would support the greatest biological diversity without exposing the Unit to encroachment or external threats. Additionally, we concluded that implementing Alternative D would allow us to contribute to efforts across the Tualatin River basin to improve watershed health and function by protecting and restoring rare native habitats, such as scrub-shrub wetlands, riparian forest, and wet meadow prairies.

Many commenters concurred with the Service's Preferred Alternative, however, many others favored Alternative E stating it would provide the

broadest conservation, connectivity, partnership, stewardship, and education and research opportunities. The Service appreciates the greater potential for wildlife conservation and partnerships associated with Alternative E, however, the Service selected Alternative D to avoid urban related concerns including the construction of a raw water pipeline in the northern portion of Alternative E. Even without the northern portion of Alternative E being included within the Unit's boundary, the Service will widely pursue partnerships for conserving habitat and to enable us to offer a full array of priority, wildlife-dependent public uses.

### Land Acquisition Program

It is the established policy of the Service to acquire lands or interest in lands from willing sellers. Designation of a Service approved refuge boundary does not preclude landowners from developing or otherwise using their property in a manner consistent with local zoning and regulatory provisions. Landowners within an approved refuge boundary retain all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of private land ownership including the rights to access the property, control trespass, sell to any party, and develop their properties. Land acquisition for the Unit will be prioritized based on the wildlife habitat value of the land and will proceed according to the availability of funds.

### Wildlife-Dependent Public Use/Cultural Resources

The Service will seek to facilitate and implement safe, high quality public hunting programs on the Wapato Lake Unit, compatible with Refuge purposes

and the mission of the Refuge System. The Service will evaluate opportunities to provide recreational hunting programs in close coordination with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, during the Refuge's comprehensive conservation planning process scheduled to begin in 2009.

During the conservation planning process, the Service will also evaluate opportunities for compatible wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education and interpretation programs; including collaborating with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and others regarding the cultural history and land use of the Wapato Lake Unit. The Service will preserve Native American history and cultural sites, trails, and artifacts and ensure that Refuge management activities do not have an adverse effect on historic and cultural resources.

The Service anticipates that the income generated for the local economy from public visitation to the Wapato Lake Unit, through associated buying of local goods and services in the community, will help off-set the economic values lost from farmland acquired from willing sellers and taken out of production for management of the Wapato Lake Unit.

### Water Access and Delivery to Private Landowners

Establishment of the Wapato Lake Unit does not add to or alter the prevailing land use laws and zoning regulations administered by the State of Oregon and the local jurisdictions. All existing easements for private access to private lands are unchanged. The Tualatin Valley Irrigation District (Tualatin District) is responsible for delivery of

irrigation water stored behind Scoggins Dam to Tualatin District assessed lands in the area. The Tualatin District delivers water to lands that have primary and secondary irrigation rights in the Wapato Lake area through an agreement with the Wapato Improvement District (Wapato District) to use their infrastructure. Lands within the existing Tualatin District and Wapato District boundaries, whether in Service or private ownership, will continue to be assessed duties for the delivery of irrigation water. In cooperation with the Wapato District, the Service will continue to investigate an arrangement with the Tualatin District that will allow for operation, annual maintenance, and administration of the Wapato District water distribution system.

### Wetland/Habitat Restoration and Management

Due to the relatively flat contours of the Wapato lake basin, restoration of wetland habitats will not begin until a significant percentage of lands within the Wapato lakebed are under management authority of the Service. The duration of seasonal flooding of the lakebed would be managed to mirror historic hydrology as much as possible. Should the need arise to protect the health and safety of the public or a wildlife population, the Service may manage mosquitoes on Refuge lands using the least intrusive means possible. The Service would use compatible management techniques for mosquito control and give full consideration to the integrity of nontarget populations consistent with integrated pest management strategies and policies of the Department of the Interior and the Service.

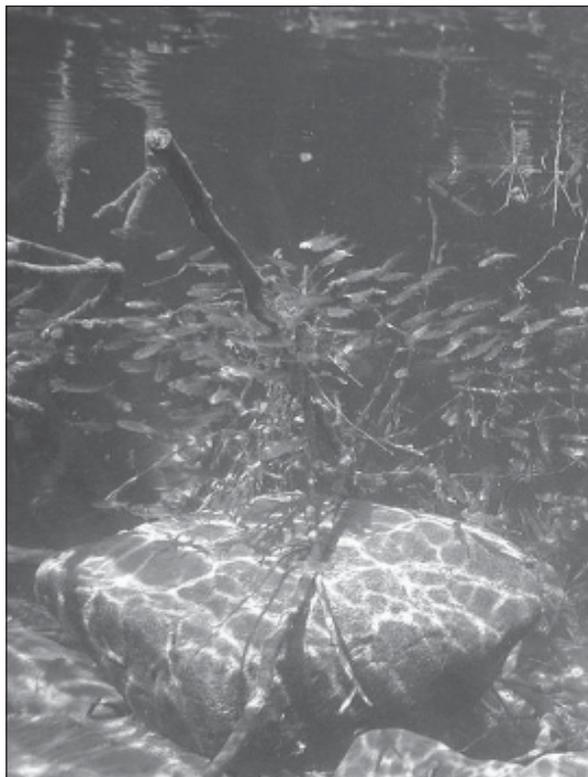
*Thank you for participating in the planning process for the Wapato Lake Unit. Please contact us for more information.*

**For Information on the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, Contact:**

Ralph Webber, Project Leader or  
Christopher Lapp, Deputy Project Leader  
Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge  
16507 S.W. Roy Rogers Road  
Sherwood, Oregon 97140-8306  
Phone: (503) 590-5811, Fax: (503) 590-6702

**For information on Land Acquisition, Contact:**

Carmella Mares, Realty Specialist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Division of Realty and Refuge Information  
911 N.E. 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97232  
Phone: (503) 231-2235, Fax: (503) 231-6161



*Restoring meandering river channels and riparian habitat along the Tualatin River and restoring floodplain wetlands will improve habitat quality and enhance fish migration in the Tualatin River system. Photo USFWS.*



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Attn: NWRS/PVS  
911 N.E. 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181

*Address correction requested*

*In this issue:  
The decision  
regarding adding  
the Wapato Lake  
Unit to the  
Tualatin River  
National Wildlife  
Refuge is  
announced.*