



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

# Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

## *Planning Update #6, May 2007*



Canada geese are one of many waterfowl species supported by wetland habitat on Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: USFWS.

## Thank You! The Comprehensive Conservation Plan is Complete!

We are pleased to announce that the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is completed. The help of many dedicated people was essential to the development and completion of the CCP. We deeply thank all the individuals and organizations who participated in our planning process and provided valuable comments.

Since the last planning update announcing the public comment period for the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment, the CCP planning team has responded to public comments and made revisions to the CCP. The revised CCP, signed by the Service's Regional Director on March 27, 2007, will guide

management of the Refuge for the next 15 years. The CCP can be obtained by contacting the Refuge at (509) 235-4723. It is also available on the Internet at: <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning>.

## What Happens Next?

As funding becomes available, projects will be implemented as identified in the CCP.

■ **Habitat Management:** Forest and riparian management, management of pest plants and wetland restoration are high priorities under the CCP.

■ **Public Uses:** High priority projects include developing observation and photography blinds, interpretive signs, and a new visitor contact center; and establishing a Refuge elk and waterfowl hunt.

■ **Research:** We will prioritize water quality monitoring, a hydrology study of Stubblefield

Lake, and monitoring of prescribed fire activities.

■ **Land and Water Conservation:** High priority will be given to voluntary cooperative activities and/or technical assistance with Refuge neighbors for conserving habitat and water resources.

## Summary of Public Involvement and Outreach

The CCP Planning Team is grateful for the public interest expressed during the 45-day public review and comment period for the draft CCP. The draft was released on June 30, 2005. It was distributed to organizations, agencies, elected officials, Tribal governments, and approximately 170 members of the public. It was also posted on the

Service's website. During the public comment period the planning team held two public open houses on July 12, 2005, in Spokane, and on July 13, 2005, in Cheney. A Planning Update summarizing actions in the Draft CCP/EA was distributed to approximately 1,200 members of the public, including Refuge

neighbors, nonprofit organizations, local, State, and Federal agencies, Tribes, and elected officials. We received nearly 100 comments and a petition, signed by numerous individuals. The comments and our responses are presented in the revised CCP. Major comments are summarized in the following table.

## CCP Changes Based on Public Comments

The main issues raised during the Draft CCP/EA comment period and resulting changes to the preferred alternative follow.

Issues Raised During Public Review of the Draft CCP	Non-Consumptive Public Use Programs	Hunting
Changes to the Preferred Alternative in the CCP	<p><b>Environmental Education.</b> The proposed increases and improvements in the EE program were supported by nearly all 22 respondents who mentioned this program. Several advocated for full funding and increased staffing and classroom space.</p> <p><b>Hiking and Bicycle Trails.</b> Most comments supported the expansion of hiking trails envisioned under Preferred Alternative 3. A few opposed increasing bike trails.</p> <p><b>Wildlife Observation/Photography/ Interpretation.</b> Several people supported improving and increasing viewpoints and interpretation. The State would like more emphasis on elk and waterfowl viewing and photography.</p> <p><b>Environmental Education.</b> No changes to the CCP. The Preferred Alternative calls for additional staff and space for the EE program.</p> <p><b>Hiking and Bicycle Trails.</b> No changes to the CCP. The main purpose of the proposed bike path (on a discontinued road) is to increase the safety of visitors already using bikes to access the Refuge.</p> <p><b>Wildlife Observation/Photography/ Interpretation.</b> No changes to the CCP. The Interpretive Prospectus for the Refuge calls for panels about wildlife which would include waterfowl and elk. The Refuge can add to discussions about elk and waterfowl in the EE program.</p>	<p><b>Elk Hunting.</b> We received 30 letters supporting elk hunting. Much of the commentary was qualified, supporting a limited hunt carefully controlled and managed for conservation purposes. Suggestions included changing areas designated for hunting, emphasizing a mix of bull and cow hunts, developing an archery hunt or a hunt for hunters with disabilities; and using other methods to manage the elk population including opening hunt areas for hiking and other public use.</p> <p><b>Waterfowl Hunting.</b> Public reaction to the proposed youth waterfowl hunt was evenly split between supporters and opponents. Some opponents stated that the hunt is contradictory to Refuge purposes or is not justified. One commenter asked why we didn't address the issue of waterfowl numbers shifting to the west of Turnbull before devoting resources to a hunt.</p> <p><b>Elk Hunting.</b> No changes to the CCP. The elk hunt is proposed to decrease habitat damage and off-Refuge depredation. Hunt areas were designed to ensure public safety and minimize conflicts with other uses. A step-down Hunt Plan will incorporate flexibility in hunt boundaries, season, and permit numbers. All options will be analyzed during Hunt Plan development including other elk management tools.</p> <p><b>Waterfowl Hunting.</b> No changes to the CCP. Hunting is a priority public use of the Refuge System. A youth hunt was determined compatible with Refuge purposes. The westward shift of waterfowl is predominantly the result of thousands of acres of crops and wetlands now available on lands that were historically shrub-steppe. In concert with the drainage of almost 70 percent of the wetlands in the area surrounding the Refuge, the location of waterfowl habitat has shifted west. The CCP proposes to protect and restore wetland habitat within the Stewardship Area surrounding the Refuge, which may reverse part of the westerly trend.</p>

## How Can I Help?

Implementing the plan will require continued citizen and community support.

We will need volunteers and partners to help with new and expanded environmental education, interpretation, and hunting programs, habitat restoration, and wildlife and habitat monitoring.

## You Can Help By . . .

- Becoming a volunteer or a member of the Friends of Turnbull Refuge. The Friends group provides support and advocacy for the Refuge and for the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Assisting the Refuge with projects and programs.
- Helping us promote the Refuge in the community as a place for wildlife and people.

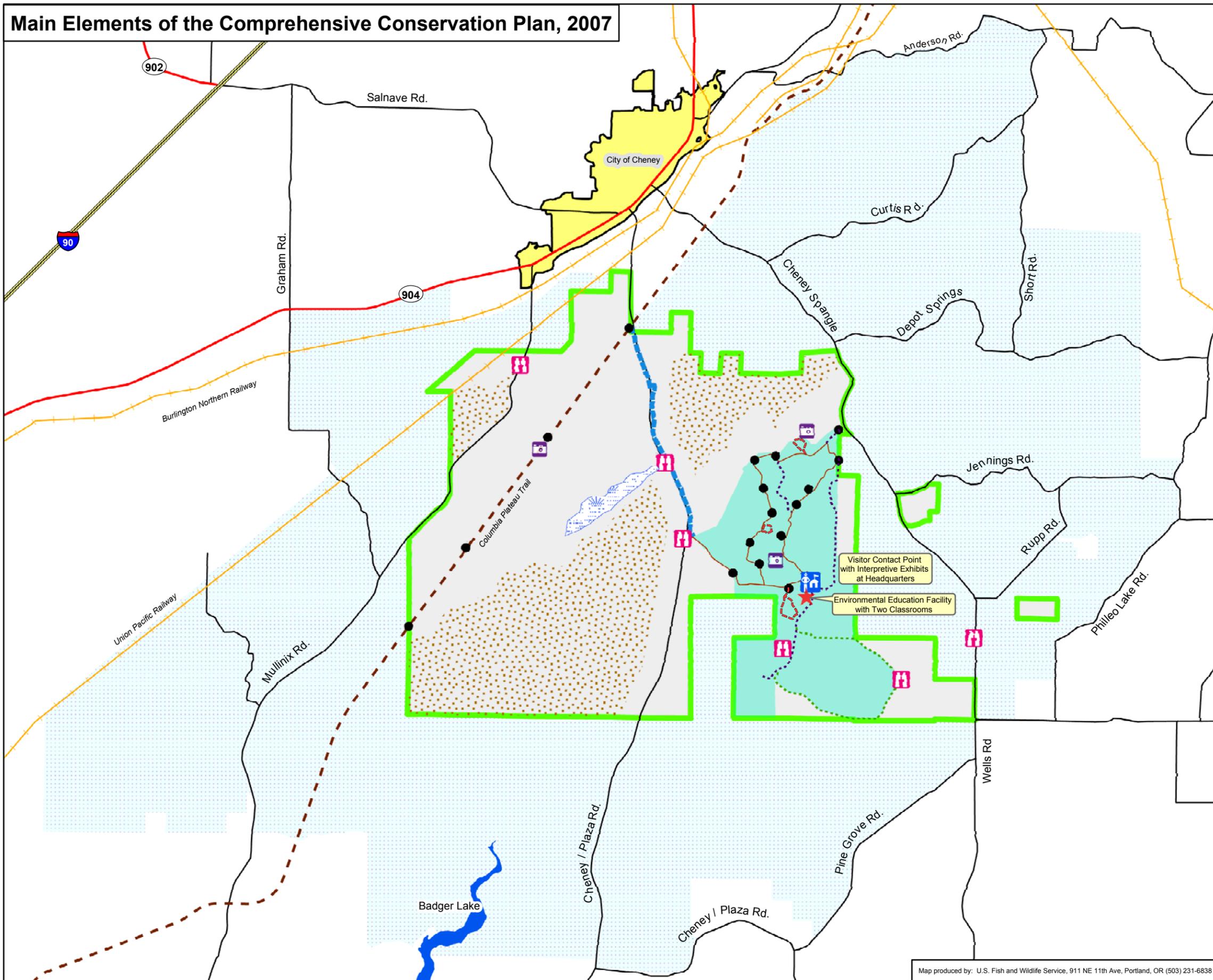


Restoring habitat. Photo: USFWS.

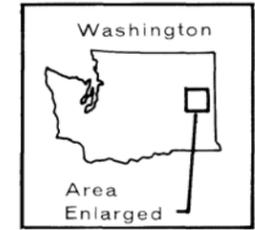
If you are interested in helping the Refuge, please contact Nancy Curry, Refuge Manager, at (509) 235-4723.

Habitat Management	Land and Water Conservation
<p>A few comments were received on habitat management. These included: support for wetlands restoration; concern about the Refuge's prescribed fire practices; concern for declining nesting Canada geese; support for stable funding for the Refuge's habitat projects; questions about funding assistance to private landowners; concerns about wind-blown weed seed; and a comment urging the Service to ban trapping, new roads, grazing, logging, mining, drilling, prescribed burning, and the use of herbicides.</p> <p>No changes to the habitat management program will occur as a result of comments on the Draft CCP/EA. The CCP adopts the Refuge's 1999 Habitat Management Plan with only very minor changes. The Service will continue to utilize active management practices including prescribed fire, forest thinning, and integrated pest management.</p>	<p>We received 56 letters with comments on the Land Protection Plan (LPP) included as an appendix to the CCP. A majority of the comments were in support of the Preferred Alternative which protects land and waters within a Stewardship Area. The comments expressed a variety of reasons for supporting the Preferred Alternative, including the need to protect wildlife habitat, water sources, water quality, and the area's ecological integrity. Several commented that critical habitat losses are occurring rapidly in Eastern Washington. Some expressed interest in participating in the proposal right away. A petition and 24 letters were received opposing the land protection proposal, due to concerns about potential condemnation of property or taking land out of production and/or off the tax rolls. A couple of comments questioned whether compliance with NEPA and the Regulatory Flexibility Act was adequate.</p> <p>After the public comment period we wrote a letter to landowners within the Stewardship Area and met with Federal, county, and city elected officials to reaffirm the voluntary nature of proposed land protection actions. Eight additional letters were received from landowners during this period, most expressed interest in land management assistance or in participating in the Stewardship Area proposal. The officials we contacted understand the Service's willing seller policy and none of them expressed concern about the proposal.</p>
<p>No changes will occur to the overall concept presented in the LPP. We did make minor adjustments to the Stewardship Area boundary, by removing 12 parcels of land encompassing 148 acres. It is Service policy to acquire land or interest in land from willing sellers only. Everything associated with the proposed Stewardship Area is voluntary. There is nothing regulatory about any of the proposals in the CCP, therefore, the Regulatory Flexibility Act does not apply.</p> <p>An economic analysis was completed as part of the Draft CCP/EA. The analysis showed that the Preferred Alternative would have minor negative impacts on the agricultural economy, however, the negative impacts would be offset by positive effects from additional expenditures made by Refuge visitors utilizing the Refuge's expanded facilities and programs for recreation, such as hunting, additional trails and viewpoints, and a visitor contact facility with interpretive exhibits. The Draft CCP/EA shows overall economic benefits of 165 jobs and \$3 million in personal income under the No Action Alternative. The economic benefits under the Preferred Alternative are about 30 percent larger, with 225 jobs and \$4.1 million in personal income.</p>	

# Main Elements of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan, 2007



## TURNBULL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN 2007



### LEGEND

#### Land Conservation Features

Stewardship Area \*\*\*

\*\*\* Stewardship Area: An informally designated conservation zone surrounding the Refuge. Within this area, the Service will actively work with partners and neighbors for voluntary, cooperative activities that protect habitat and water resources. Key tools include but are not limited to: conservation easements, use of conservation grants and/or enrollment in various habitat reserve programs, well casing, and technical assistance programs.

In addition, Service acquisition of up to 12,000 acres from willing sellers through fee or cooperative agreement could occur on priority lands within the Stewardship Area.

#### New Public Use Features

- New viewpoints
- New photoblinds
- New hiking trails
- Youth waterfowl hunt area
- Elk hunting area
- New designated 2.7 mile bike trail
- Expanded Public Use Area
- Interpretive trails

#### Existing Features

- Existing viewpoints
- Existing hiking trails
- Columbia Plateau Trail
- Auto tour route
- Railways
- Refuge Fee Title Ownership

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## Project Contacts

### For Information on the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

Nancy Curry, Refuge Manager  
Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge  
26010 South Smith Road  
Cheney, Washington 99004  
Phone: 509/235-4723 Fax: 509/235-4703

### For Information on Land Acquisition

Tom Manabe, Realty Specialist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Division of Realty and Refuge Information  
911 NE 11th Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97232  
Phone: 503/231-2154 Fax: 503/231-6161



*A fawn on Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: © Charles Kerkering, Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge.*



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In this issue: The  
Turnbull National  
Wildlife Refuge's  
Comprehensive  
Conservation  
Plan is completed!

Visit our website at <http://www.fws.gov/turnbull/>