



U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge Planning Project

Summer 2008

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is developing a long-term plan for the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge. This comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) is a practical guide for managing the refuge and protecting important wildlife habitat for the next 15 years.

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This CCP for Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge will:

- Outline the direction and expectations of management operations of the Refuge for the next 10-15 years;
- Describe significant Refuge resources and their importance;
- Identify how the Refuge can best protect these resources;
- Clarify which public uses are compatible with managing significant wildlife resources; and
- Identify the Refuge's role within the local community and as a national resource.

This planning effort provides a unique opportunity for the Service to involve individuals and local communities in the long-term management of your National Wildlife Refuges. You can play a significant role in developing this far-reaching plan!

Why is this planning effort starting now?

In October 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. It establishes the mission of the Refuge System, a new process of determining compatible public use activities on refuges, and requires us to prepare CCP's for each refuge by 2012. The Refuge Improvement Act states that, first and foremost, the National Wildlife Refuge System must focus on wildlife conservation.

Who's Leading This Effort?

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for the continuing benefit of people. The Service has major responsibilities for migratory birds and fish, endangered species, and certain marine mammals.

The Service also manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for the protection of fish and wildlife populations and habitats. The refuge system began in 1903, when President Theodore Roosevelt designated Pelican Island, a 3-acre pelican and heron rookery in Florida, as a bird sanctuary. Today, there are more than 540 national wildlife refuges from Alaska to Puerto Rico that encompass more than 93 million acres of the nation's best wildlife habitat.

Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge

About Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

“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.”

Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge is located in the rolling clay hills of the lower Georgia Piedmont in Jones and Jasper counties. Nearby towns include Monticello, Gray, Juliette, Forsyth and the city of Macon. The Refuge is situated east of the Ocmulgee River and just north of the fall line separating the physiographic regions of the Piedmont from the Coastal Plains.

The Refuge was established in 1939 under the Resettlement Act when erosion, the boll weevil, and finally the great depression made it impossible for the small farms to provide a living for their owners. The refuge was established on 30,000 acres as a demonstration area for the integration of forestry and wildlife management. It was also identified for use as an inviolate sanctuary and breeding ground for birds and other wildlife.

Today the refuge has intergreted forestry and fire management techniques to manage 35,000 acres of predominately upland pine-hardwood forest for native wildlife species including the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. The refuge is rich in wildlife diversity including white-tailed deer, wild turkey, fox squirrels, bobcat and fox. Resident wood ducks and wintering waterfowl can be found on the 11 man-made impoundments or on the numerous creeks and beaver ponds. Over 200 species of birds occur on the refuge, including neotropical songbirds of concern, such as Bachman's Sparrow, prairie warbler, brown-headed nuthatch, Swainson's warbler, wood thrush and yellow-billed cuckoo. Of the 165 species of butterflies found in Georgia, 92 species have been recorded on the refuge.

The refuge is managed to provide public access to traditional, wildlife-dependent outdoor recreational activities. The refuge has a long history of providing wildlife related recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and environmental education. The refuge is open to the public year round during daylight hours, except during big game hunts. The visitor center is open weekdays. Access to most parts of the refuge is by gravel road and foot travel paths. There are over 50 miles of refuge gravel roads that are open to vehicle travel most of the year. There are five designated hiking trails and a 6- miles auto tour route for wildlife viewing.

As required by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, wildlife resources must be given first priority with recreational uses available to the public as long as these activities are compatible with the mission of the Service and the purpose for which the refuge was established.

How You Helped Focus Our Planning Effort

The overwhelming response during the first public comment period will help focus our planning effort on those things that matter to you and your community. We appreciate everyone that took the time to send us your thoughts, concerns and recommendations. Your public comments will assist us in identifying the best alternatives for long-term management of the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge

Public Scoping Meeting Success

The refuge hosted a public open house meeting on May 12, 2008 and an intergovernmental meeting on May 13th at the Refuge Visitor Center in Round Oak, GA. During the 30 day public comment period from May 12 – June 12, 2008 over 1,000 public comments were received from the general public.

Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge

Piedmont NWR Draft Vision Statement

Please contact us if you have any questions, would like to be added to the mail list or need additional information.

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“Piedmont NWR serves as a demonstration area of quality wildlife habitat through active forest management in the southern piedmont region. Management creates and maintains fire dependant open canopy oak-pine forest with areas of prairie and savannahs for red-cockaded woodpecker, Bachman’s sparrow, brown headed nuthatch, bobwhite quail and associated wildlife species. Stretches of cane breaks along streams and bottomlands provide enhanced habitat for Swainson’s warbler, Kentucky warbler, and cane dependant butterfly species. Cooperative partnerships integrate refuge wildlife habitat management into a landscape vision of a healthy forest. Wildlife-dependant opportunities are provided to enhance the public’s awareness and appreciation of the areas natural resources for present and future generations

Whats Next ?

All the public comments will be read and then the main issues will be grouped into five main topics:

Fish and Wildlife Population Management

Habitat Management

Resource Protection

Visitor Services

Refuge Administration

After reviewing all comments received from the public and the intergovernmental scoping process, the core planning team will pull together a list of topics to be considered in the planning process. The core planning team consists of refuge staff, a FWS planner, a contract planner from Tennessee Valley Authority and representatives from Georgia DNR and USFWS Ecological Services.

The planning team will use these comments to help identify issues and then develop draft goals and objectives within each of the main topics above. This will provide directions for the development of the long-term management plan. This process will be completed during the fall of 2008.

The planners will then assist the refuge staff with the development of a draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and accompanying Environmental Assessment. This document is scheduled to be released for public review and comment in the spring of 2009.

Thanks for your time. We look forward to working with you in the future and look forward to hearing from you once we release the draft plan for public comment!