Sandhill cranes. (Photo © Roger Windemuth)

Preliminary Management Alternatives for Ridgefield NWR

The Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (CCP/EA) process for Ridgefield NWR is moving forward. In this planning update, we present preliminary versions of four management scenarios (alternatives) being considered for the future of Ridgefield NWR. These alternatives are designed to meet Refuge purposes and the Refuge System mission, while addressing the issues raised during the public scoping process. This planning update presents revised versions of the Refuge's management goals, a summary of each alternative, and a detailed comparison of the alternatives. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on these preliminary alternatives by April 10.

Currently, the planning team is preparing the draft CCP/EA, which will evaluate and compare the four management alternatives. We anticipate that the draft CCP/EA will be available for public review and comment in the summer of 2009. The final CCP (alternative) selected by the Service will be determined, in part, by the comments received on the Draft CCP/EA.

Greetings!

This is the third in a series of planning updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intended to keep you informed about our planning process for Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

Public Open House Meeting

A public open house meeting will be held in Ridgefield, WA on March 26, 2009 to discuss the preliminary draft alternatives for the CCP/EA. See page 8 for more information.

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Wildlife and Habitat Goals

Goal 1: Provide and manage a mixture of secure, diverse, productive grassland habitats for foraging migratory waterfowl and grassland-dependent wildlife.

Goal 2: Annually provide agricultural crops as forage for migratory waterfowl and sandhill cranes.

Goal 3: Provide, manage, and enhance a diverse assemblage of wetland habitats characteristic of the historic lower Columbia River.

Goal 4: Protect, manage, and restore a natural diversity of native floodplain forests representative of the historic lower Columbia River ecosystem.

Goal 5: Protect, manage, and restore a natural diversity of native upland forests representative of the historic Lower Columbia River ecosystem.

Goal 6: Protect, enhance and where feasible, restore riverine habitat and tidal wetlands representative of the historic lower Columbia River ecosystem to benefit salmonids and other native aquatic species.

Goal 7: Collect scientific information (inventories, monitoring, research) necessary to support adaptive management decisions on the Refuge associated with Goals 1-6.

Youth Hunting Day. (USFWS Photo)

Public Use Goals

Goal 1: Waterfowl hunters of all abilities will enjoy a quality, safe hunting program that provides a variety of waterfowl hunting experiences, promotes youth hunting, balances hunt program needs with other public use program needs, and reduces impacts to non-target species. As a result of participating in the waterfowl hunting program, hunters will gain a better appreciation of the refuge's purposes and its resource management.

Goal 2: Visitors of all abilities will have the opportunity to participate in safe, quality wildlife-dependent recreation programs, including wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, and fishing, consistent with the needs of other public use programs and which limit wildlife disturbance in the face of increasing Refuge visitation. These programs will focus on enhancing public understanding and appreciation of wildlife, and building support for the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

Goal 3: The Refuge will preserve, evaluate, and interpret its cultural resources and heritage. Cultural resources and the Cathlapotle Plankhouse will be interpreted to enlighten visitors about the Refuge's unique natural and cultural history. Through accurate interpretive and educational opportunities, visitors will gain an understanding and appreciation of the Refuge's natural and cultural heritage.

Goal 4: Through Refuge outreach efforts local residents will have the opportunity to gain an appreciation and understanding of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge and National Wildlife Refuge System missions.

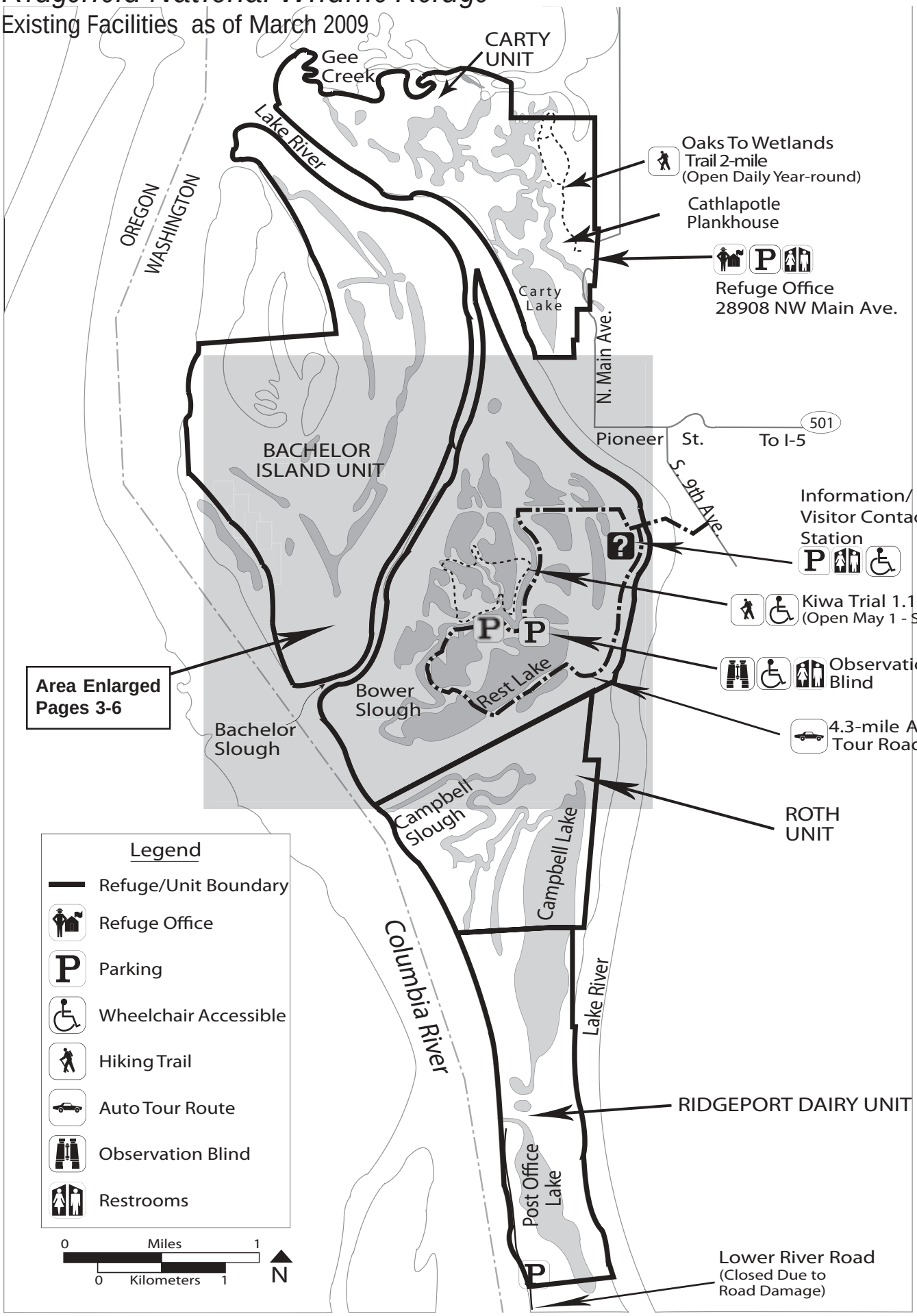
Goal 5: Environmental Education: Students from southwest Washington schools will participate in quality on-refuge environmental education programs that meet State educational requirements and provide safe and memorable experiences that foster a connection with nature and the Refuge. As a result of their participation in these programs, students will understand the Refuge's role in wildlife conservation and incorporate a conservation ethic into their everyday lives.

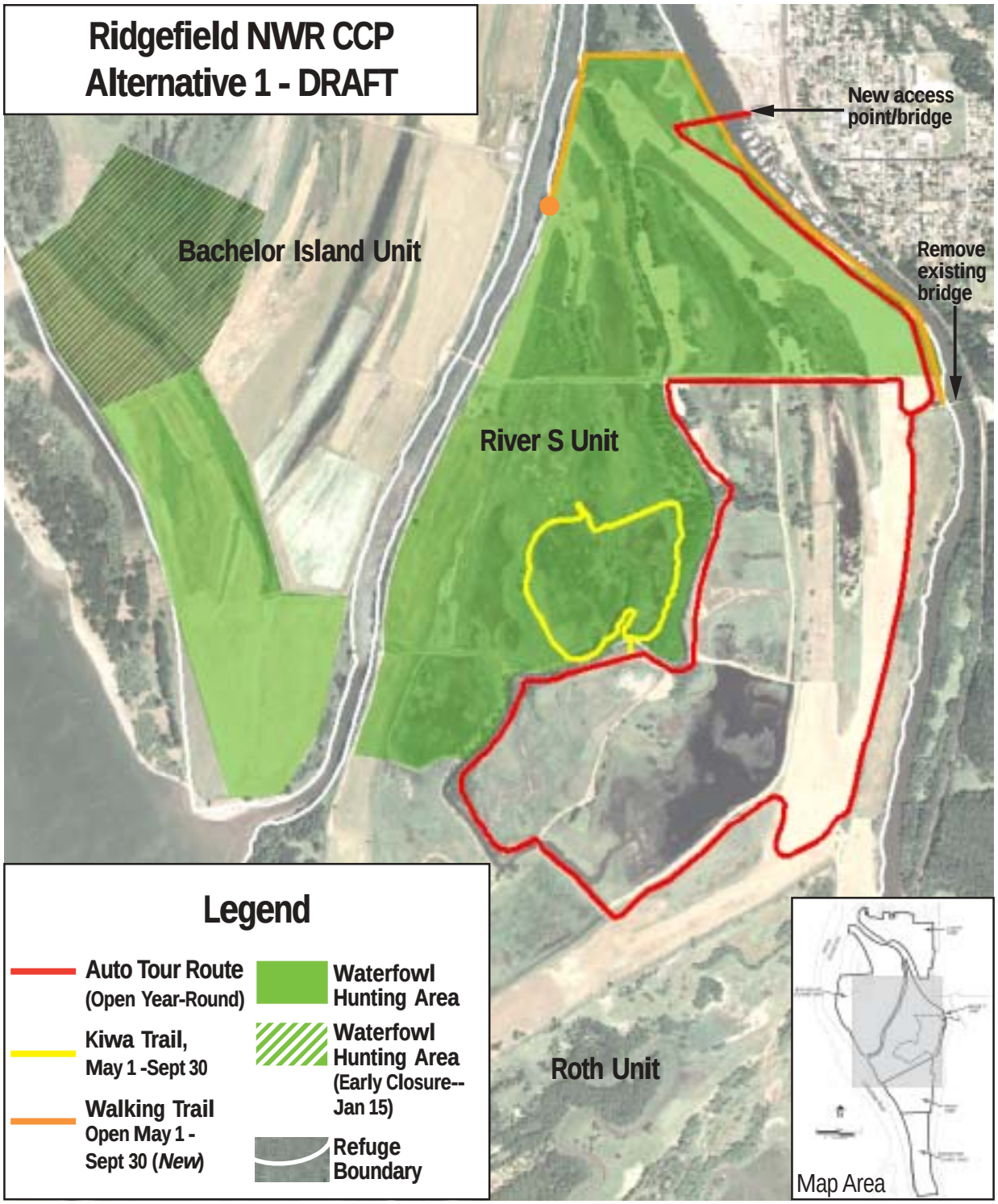
Goal 6: The Refuge will reduce the carbon footprint of its administrative, habitat management, and visitor services programs. Messages about climate change and how visitors can reduce their carbon footprint will be incorporated into interpretive and educational programs.

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

Existing Facilities as of March 2009

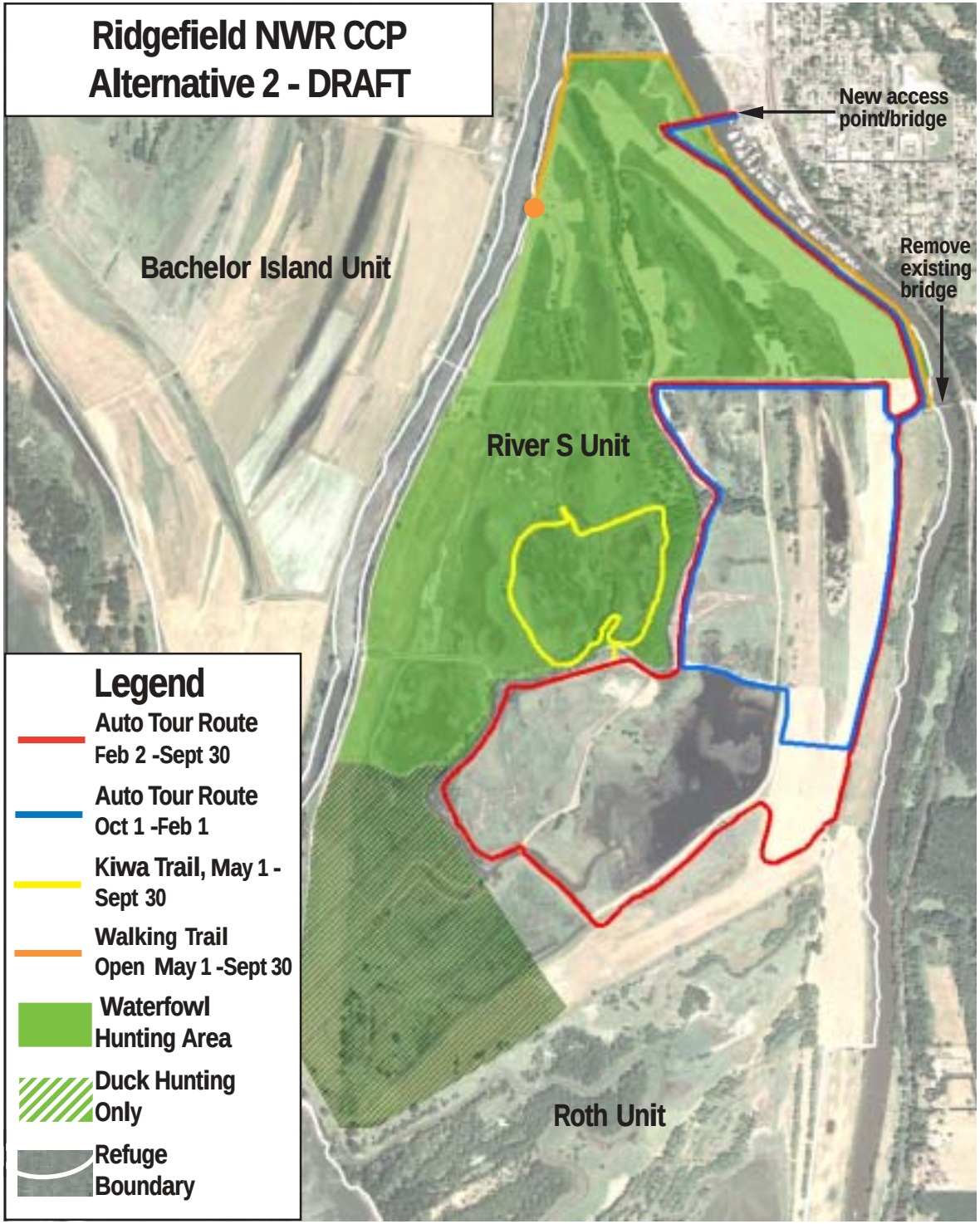




Alternative 1: Preliminary Preferred Alternative

Wildlife and Habitat: The Refuge continues to protect, maintain, and where feasible restore habitat for priority species, including the dusky Canada goose, other waterfowl, and Federal and State listed species. Winter browse (managed pasture) for Canada and cackling geese is maintained. Wetlands are maintained, but management to increase productivity increases. Invasive species monitoring and control increases in forest and oak woodland. 160 acres of riparian forest are restored, and 265 acres of old fields are restored to other habitats. Inventory, monitoring, and research activities increase.

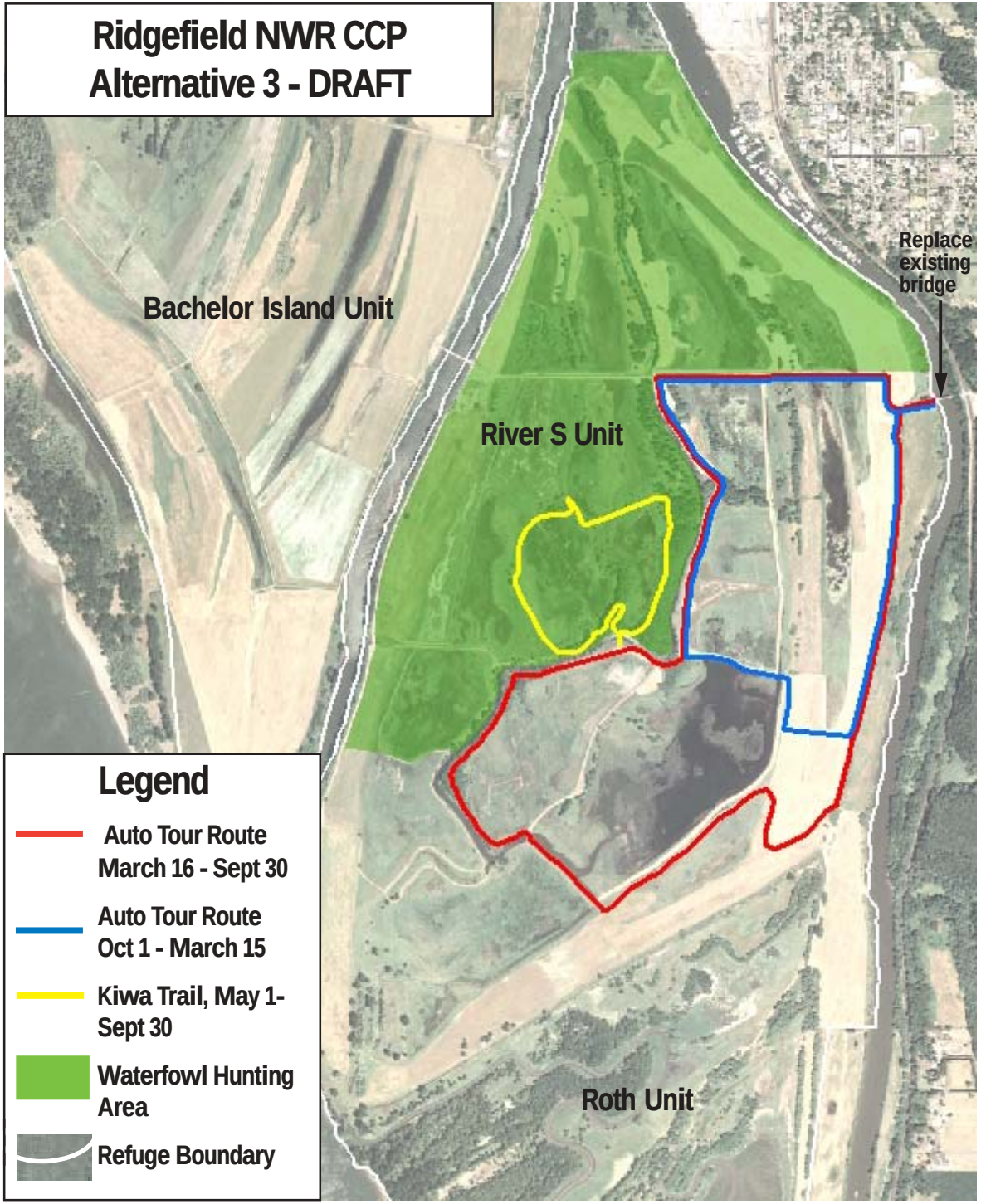
Public Use and Access: The River "S" and Carty Units are open to public use year-round. The Roth and Ridgeport Dairy Units, and most of Bachelor Island are closed to public use to provide sanctuary area for wildlife. A new access point to the River "S" Unit is developed (a 2-lane bridge originating from the Port of Ridgefield property).
The existing bridge to the River "S" Unit is removed. The south end of River "S" Unit (207 ac), adjacent to the Roth Unit, is closed to hunting, providing a larger contiguous sanctuary area for dusky Canada geese and sandhill cranes. The south end of Bachelor Island (292 ac) is opened to waterfowl hunting, increasing the waterfowl hunt area from 790 to 875 acres. The existing auto tour route remains in its current configuration and is open year-round. Walking dates on the River S Unit remain the same as current (May 1-Sept 30). A new 1.85- mile (one way) dike-top walking trail is constructed on the north end of River S Unit.



Alternative 2:

Wildlife and Habitat: The Refuge continues to protect, maintain, and where feasible restore habitat for priority species, including the dusky Canada goose, other waterfowl, and Federal and State listed species. Winter browse (managed pasture) for Canada and cackling geese is maintained. Wetlands are maintained, but management to increase productivity increases. Invasive species monitoring and control increases in forest and oak woodland. 170 acres of riparian forest are restored, and 265 acres of old fields are restored to other habitats. Inventory, monitoring, and research activities increase.

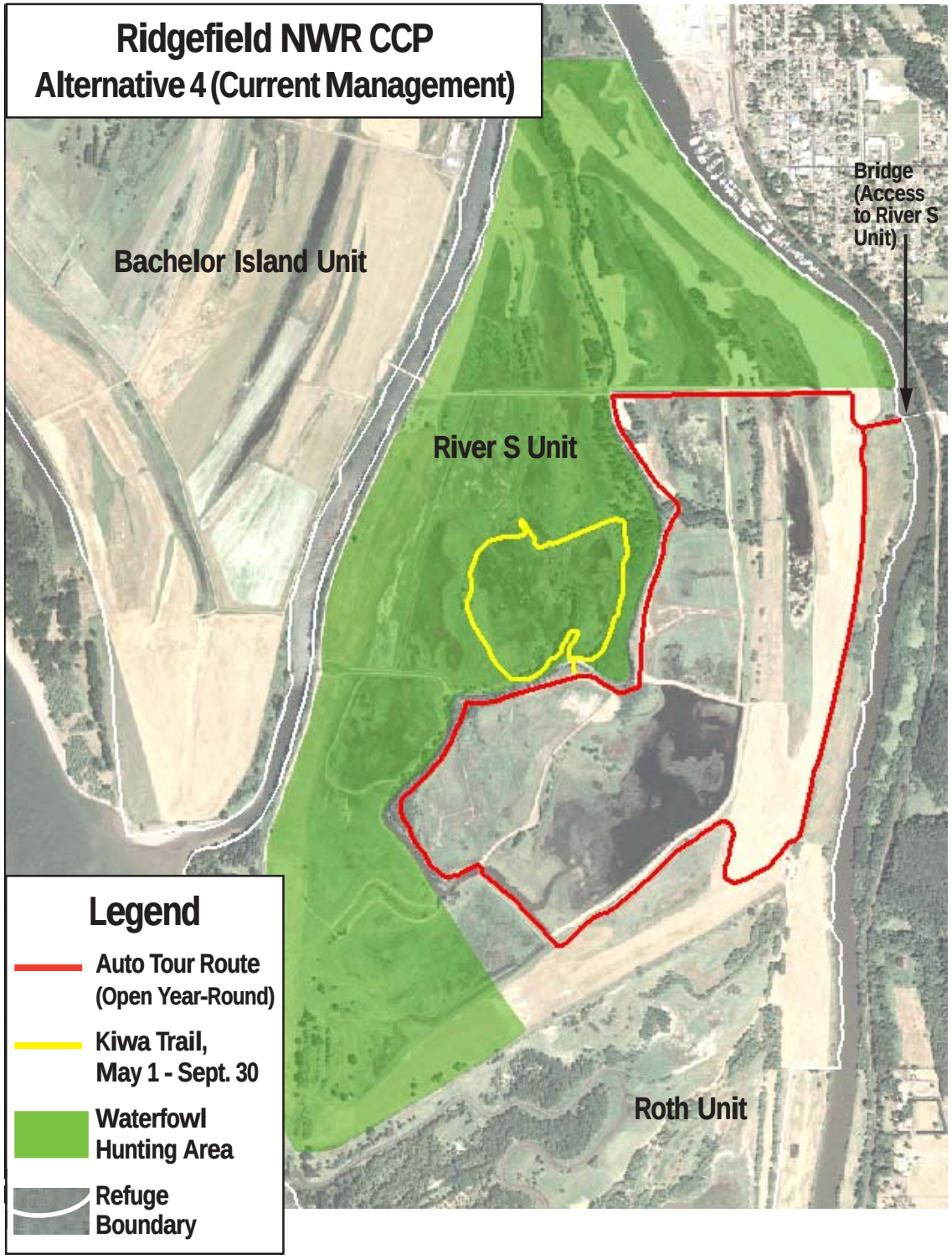
Public Use and Access: The River "S" and Carty Units are open to public use year-round. The Bachelor Island, Roth and Ridgeport Dairy Units are closed to public use to provide sanctuary area for wildlife. A new access point to the River "S" Unit is developed (a 2-lane bridge originating from the Port of Ridgefield property). The existing bridge to the River "S" Unit is removed. The hunt area remains the same size and location as in the No Action alternative; however, the south end of River "S" Unit (207 ac) is closed to goose hunting, reducing take of dusky Canada geese. The south end of the auto tour route is closed during the hunt season (Oct 1-Feb 1), reducing the length of the auto tour from 4.3 to 2.6 miles. Walking dates on the River S Unit remain the same as current (May 1-Sept 30). A new 1.85- mile (one way) dike-top walking trail is constructed on the north end of River "S" Unit.



Alternative 3:

Wildlife and Habitat:
The Refuge continues to protect, maintain, and where feasible restore habitat for priority species, including the dusky Canada goose, other waterfowl, and Federal and State listed species. Winter browse (managed pasture) for Canada and cackling geese is maintained. Wetlands are maintained, but management to increase productivity increases. Invasive species monitoring and control increases in forest and oak woodland. 185 acres of riparian forest are restored, and 280 acres of old fields are restored to other habitats. Inventory, monitoring, and research activities increase.

Public Use and Access: The River "S" and Carty Units are open to public use year-round. The Bachelor Island, Roth and Ridgeport Dairy Units are closed to public use to provide sanctuary area for wildlife. The existing access point to the River "S" Unit is retained, but a new 2-lane bridge that eliminates the in-grade railroad crossing is constructed and the entrance road widened (requires either land acquisition or an expanded/relocated easement). The south end of the River "S" Unit is closed to hunting, decreasing the size of the hunt area from 790 to 585 acres. The south end of the auto tour route is closed during the waterfowl season (Oct 1-March 15), reducing the length of the auto tour from 4.3 to 2.6 miles. Existing walking trails are maintained. Walking dates on the River "S" Unit remain the same as current (May 1-Sept 30).



Alternative 4: Current Management (No Action Alternative)

Wildlife and Habitat: The Refuge continues to protect, maintain, and where feasible restore habitat for priority species, including the dusky Canada goose, other waterfowl, and Federal and State listed species. Winter browse (managed pasture) for Canada and cackling geese is maintained. Wetlands are maintained, primarily through water level management. Forested habitats are maintained but limited restoration and invasive species monitoring/control takes place. The Roth Unit provides an important sanctuary area for dusky Canada geese and sandhill cranes (major roost site on Campbell Lake).

Public Use and Access: The River "S" and Carty Units are open to public use. The Bachelor Island, Roth, and Ridgeport Dairy Units are closed to public use to provide sanctuary area for wildlife. The hunt area remains at its present size and location (790 acres on River "S" Unit with 21 hunt blinds). The existing auto tour route (4.3 miles) remains in its current configuration and is open year-round. Existing walking trails are maintained. Walking dates on the River "S" Unit remain the same as current (May 1-Sept 30). The existing access point to the River "S" Unit remains unchanged. The existing one-lane bridge is repaired or replaced with a like structure. The entrance road is maintained in its current condition (one lane, gravel) and the in-grade railroad crossing is retained.

Ridgefield NWR – Comparison of Preliminary Draft Alternatives

<table>
<tr><th>Issue</th><th>Alternative 1
(Preliminary Preferred)</th><th>Alternative 2</th><th>Alternative 3</th><th>Alternative 4
(Current Management)</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">How will the Refuge maintain and manage wildlife habitat?

What is the appropriate balance of managed habitat (e.g. pastures, managed wetlands) to native habitat?</td><td colspan="3">• Maintain existing acreage of managed pastures (1525 ac) and wetlands (1700 ac) to benefit dusky Canada geese and other migrating/overwintering waterfowl</td><td rowspan="5">Maintain habitats in current status:
• 1425 acres improved pasture
• 400 ac old fields
• 175 ac cropland (corn, winter wheat, clover); no crops on south end of River S Unit
• 1700 ac total wetlands, including:
- 650 ac managed seasonal and semipermanent wetlands
- 150 ac nonmanaged seasonal wetlands
- 150 ac permanent wetlands
- 450 ac tidal wetlands
- 300 ac wet meadow
• 1150 acres woodland habitat, including:
- 730 ac riparian
- 330 ac Oregon ash forest
- 70 ac oak woodland
- 15 ac mixed conifer forest</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">• Maintain existing riparian/woodland habitat (1150 ac), and restore additional 160-185 acres over the lifetime of the CCP</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">• Over the lifetime of the CCP, convert 265-280 acres of old fields to other habitat types: 90 ac to wet meadow, 65 ac to improved pasture, 85-100 acres to riparian, 20 acres to oak woodland, 5 ac to ash forest</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Increase cropland from approx 175 to approx 300 acres to benefit waterfowl, sandhill cranes. Resume crop planting (may include corn) on south end of River S Unit.</td><td>• Increase cropland from approx 175 to approx 350 acres to benefit waterfowl, sandhill cranes.</td><td>• Increase cropland from approx 175 to approx 350 acres to benefit waterfowl, sandhill cranes. Resume crop planting (may include corn) on south end of River S Unit.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">• Put approx ½ of managed wetlands (350 ac) into rotation to improve productivity, manage vegetation (drain and disk approx 100 ac of wetlands annually)
• Increase monitoring to determine efficacy of habitat management, need for additional treatments, and document wildlife response
• Hire additional staff to expand volunteer program and partnerships (needed to meet research, monitoring and invasive species control goals)</td><td>• Manage vegetation in wetlands primarily using water level manipulation</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">How will the Refuge maintain and restore native habitats of the lower Columbia River?</td><td colspan="3">• Maintain/enhance existing riparian, ash forest, oak woodland (1150 ac)
• Restore 160-185 acres riparian habitat, mostly in old fields, over lifetime of CCP
• Restore 5 acres ash forest, and 20 acres oak woodland over lifetime of CCP</td><td>• Maintain/enhance existing riparian, ash forest, oak woodland (1150 ac)
• Allow natural succession to riparian in select wetland basins; no restoration</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">• Investigate techniques to enhance recruitment of ash and cottonwood in older, even-aged stands
• Conduct habitat assessments and baseline inventories of native fish, wildlife and vegetation to guide future management actions
• Pursue burning permit to manage/restore oak woodland habitat
• Feasibility studies for restoring native wet meadow and grassland</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Issue	Alternative 1 (Preferred)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4 (Current Mgmnt)
Native habitats of the lower Columbia River, cont.	• Allow Post Office Lake to re-establish tidal connection to Columbia River through natural processes Restore tidal connection to Duck Lake • Tidal wetland restoration plan and feasibility studies (see Instream Habitat below)			• Allow Post Office Lake to re-establish tidal connection to Columbia River through natural processes
How will the Refuge control invasive species and prevent new invasives from becoming established?	• Increased monitoring of all habitat types for invasive species, efficacy of treatment, and need for additional treatment • Conduct studies to investigate control techniques for ricefield bulrush, reed canarygrass, carp, nutria			• Continue current levels of monitoring and control of invasive species, e.g. ricefield bulrush.
	• Increased application of wetland management techniques (flooding, drying, disking) to reduce reed canarygrass			• Manage vegetation in wetlands primarily using water level manipulation
	• Treat and monitor 10% of riparian and oak woodland habitat (100 ac), and 20% of mixed conifer forest (3 ac) for invasives annually		• Treat and monitor 20% of riparian and oak woodland habitat (200 ac), and 40% of mixed conifer forest (6 ac) for invasive species annually	• Treat and monitor 5% of riparian and oak woodland habitat (50 ac) for invasives annually. Treat trail edges only in mixed conifer forest.
How will the Refuge assist in recovery of endangered and threatened native species of the lower Columbia River ecosystem?	• *As in Current Management, but also:* • Conduct feasibility study for reintroduction of Columbian white-tailed deer within 5 years • Conduct baseline surveys to establish presence/absence of rare plants and animals		*As in Current Management, but also:* • Conduct feasibility studies for reintroduction of Columbian white-tailed deer, western pond turtle • Conduct baseline surveys to establish presence/absence of rare plants and animals	• Continue monitoring ponds containing water howellia • Continue partnerships to conduct test plantings of Bradshaw's lomatium, Nelson's checkermallow
How will the Refuge address impact of climate change, and increasing development on surrounding lands?	*As in Current Management, but also:* • Increase habitat connectivity by: - Pursuing acquisition boundary expansion to include up to 500 acres south of the Refuge to allow management of Post Office Lake and create a corridor of contiguous habitat - Restoration of riparian habitat to link existing blocks of habitat • Monitor changes in migration patterns; monitor climate-sensitive species (e.g. salmonids) and their key habitat parameters (e.g. stream temperature) • Develop facilities that link the Refuge to regional walking/bicycling trails, mass transit. • Develop partnerships/incentives to increase use of low emissions vehicles on auto tour route. • Incorporate climate change messages into communications, interpretation, and EE.			• Acquire land within existing acquisition boundary if funding available and willing sellers • Use green building technology in new construction.
How will the Refuge improve conditions in its instream habitat and tidal wetlands for native fish?	*As in Current Management, but also:* • Riparian plantings along 0.8-1.25 miles of Gee Creek • Habitat assessments on Gee Creek, Campbell Slough, Campbell Lake to guide future restoration • Develop tidal wetlands restoration plan • Through purchase or management easement, acquire historic bed of Post Office Lake			• Gee Creek watershed partnerships • Riparian plantings along 0.8 miles of Gee Creek • Prepare contingency plan for Post Office Lake in the event of a dike breach

Issue	Alternative 1 (Preferred)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4 (Current Mgmnt)
How will the Refuge address the impacts of increasing visitation on wildlife, and minimize impacts to purposes species?	• Public use footprint is seasonally expanded, and sanctuary area reduced, by 85 acres, by opening south end of Bachelor Island (292 ac), and closing south end of River S Unit (207 ac), to waterfowl hunting. • Auto tour route remains at current length (4.3 miles) and location	• Public use footprint and sanctuary area remains same as present. • South end of auto tour route closed Oct 1-Feb 1 (reduces auto tour route from 4.3 to 2.6 miles). • Hunt area remains at present size (790 ac) and location. Duck hunting allowed on south end of hunt area (207 ac) only.	• Public use footprint is seasonally reduced and sanctuary area increased by 207 acres, by closing south end of River S Unit (207 ac) to waterfowl hunting; closing south end of auto tour route Oct 1 - March 15 (reduces length of auto tour route from 4.3 to 2.6 miles).	• Public use footprint (area where wildlife is potentially influenced/disturbed by public use): River S Unit, Carty Unit. • Hunt area remains present size (790 ac) and location • Auto tour route remains at current length (4.3 miles) and location
	• Alt 1 reduces disturbance to dusky Canada geese and cranes on south end of River S Unit, a key area for these species. Take of duskys would be expected to decrease. • Disturbance from auto tour would continue, but goose and crane use may increase on the south end of River S, esp with crop planting.	• Alt 2 reduces, but does not eliminate, disturbance to duskys and cranes on south end of River S Unit, since waterfowl hunting is still allowed in this area. Take of duskys would be expected to decrease. • Effect of auto tour cutoff on waterfowl using Rest Lake is uncertain.	• Alt 3 greatly reduces disturbance to dusky Canada geese and cranes on the south end of River S Unit, a key area for these species. Increased goose/crane use of area likely, esp with crop planting. Take of duskys expected to decrease • Effect of auto tour cutoff on waterfowl using Rest Lake is uncertain.	
	As in Current Management, but also: • Existing closures remain in effect, except south end (292 ac) of Bachelor Is. seasonally opened to waterfowl hunting. • Monitor wildlife response to public use; change timing/location of use if unacceptable levels of disturbance	*As in Current Management, but also:* • Monitor wildlife response to public use activities; change timing/location of use if unacceptable levels of disturbance		• Retain closure of Roth, Bachelor Island and Ridge-port Dairy Units to public use, except guided tours. • River S Unit closed to walking Oct 1-April 30 • Refuge closed to bicycling, dog walking, horseback riding
How will the Refuge provide safe, accessible, high quality wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities in the future? *Visitor access/River S Unit*	• New access point to River S unit from Port of Ridgefield property with new 2-lane bridge to eliminate in-grade railroad crossing; new 1-mile entrance road	• New access point to River S unit from Port of Ridgefield property with new 2-lane bridge to eliminate in-grade railroad crossing; new 1-mile entrance road	• Retain existing access point; replace bridge with 2-lane bridge to eliminate in-grade railroad crossing	• Retain existing access point to River S Unit; replace existing one-lane bridge with like structure; retain in-grade railroad crossing.
	• Abandon existing entrance road and easement to River "S" Unit; demolish existing bridge		• Improve/widen entrance road. Requires expanded easement or land acquisition (33 ac)	• Retain current easement; maintain existing one-lane un-paved entrance road

Issue	Alternative 1 (Preferred)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4 (Current Mgmnt)
Wildlife-dependent recreation, cont. *Visitor facilities, access (Carty Unit)*	*As in Current Management, but also:* • Create walking and limited (emergency) vehicle access to Carty Unit from Port site, with small bridge over Gee Creek		*As in Current Management*	• Construct new visitor contact station and EE center (pending EA and funding) • Replace footbridge to Carty Unit with ADA accessible structure.
Trails	*As in Current Management, but also:* • New 1.85 mile dike-top walking trail, running north to an overlook and south to the existing River "S" bridge (see maps)		*As in Current Management*	• Maintain existing walking trails (Oaks to Wetlands, Kiwa); River S Unit open to walking May 1- Sept 30; Carty Unit open year-round.
	• Implement measures to reduce congestion on auto tour route at peak times and encourage use of walking trails (e.g., provide pedestrian access to Refuge walking trails from Ridgefield)			
Environmental education (EE)	• Expand EE program to serve 4,500 students annually • Hire full time EE coordinator; develop curricula and Refuge-specific instructor training • Offer 1-2 annual teacher trainings preparing teachers to instruct all/portions of their educational visits • Recruit and train volunteer instructors (with an emphasis on retired educators) to lead EE activities; maintain 30 trained volunteer instructors. • Explore options to partner with the Ridgefield School District to develop EE programming that integrates the Refuge into the District's curriculum. • Provide EE shelter and study sites on Carty Unit; classrooms as part of visitor contact station and EE center (pending EA and funding)			• EE program serves 2,000-3,000 students annually • No full time EE coordinator; most classes led by staff/volunteers • Classrooms as part of visitor contact station and EE center (pending EA and funding)
How will the Refuge improve the quality of its waterfowl hunt, while minimizing impacts to dusky Canada geese?	• Hunt area increases from 790 to 875 acres (+85 acres) • Close core dusky habitat on south end of River S Unit (207 ac) to hunting; open south end of Bachelor Island (292 ac) to waterfowl hunting and provide access road, 1-3 parking areas.	• Hunt area/location remains same as present (790 acres) • Reduce take of dusky Canada geese by closing core dusky habitat on south end of River S Unit to goose hunting (may prevent early closing of goose season)	• Hunt area decreases from 790 to 583 acres (-207 acres) • Close core dusky habitat on south end of River S Unit (207 ac) to hunting	• No change to current hunt area/location (790 acres)
	• Staged floodup of hunt areas to provide more shallow-water habitat (not all wetlands will have water early in season; reduced pumping need late in season) • Alternate (early/late season) and/or movable blinds • Wetland rotation to improve productivity and habitat conditions for waterfowl			• Flood all hunt areas by Oct 1 to create relatively deep-water conditions in many hunt units throughout the hunt season • Fixed blind locations
How will the Refuge protect its cultural resources and educate the public about them?	• Explore grant to hire full time plankhouse coordinator; within 7 years have plankhouse staffed at least 4 hours/day on weekends and as needed for EE groups. • Develop interior interpretive plan and artifact quality standards for plankhouse Develop EE program tailored to the Plankhouse • Provide secure storage for Cathlapotle artifacts on or near Refuge • Semiannual meetings with affected Tribes; establish protocol for consultation			• Provide 1-2 cultural events at Cathlapotle Plankhouse annually • Plankhouse staffed by volunteers as available • Provide secure storage for Cathlapotle artifacts on or near Refuge

Actions Common to All Alternatives

Some of the proposed projects and programs would occur regardless of which alternative is ultimately selected for implementation. These are identified as Actions Common to All Alternatives.

Implementation Subject to Funding Availability: Actions will be implemented as funding becomes available. Project priorities and projected staffing/ funding needs will be included in the Draft CCP/EA.

Maintain Waterfowl Sanctuary in Support of Western Washington/Oregon Planning Efforts: Defining the role and extent of sanctuary areas (areas closed to hunting and significant disturbance from other public uses) is a component of Pacific Flyway waterfowl management plans. Ridgefield NWR will continue to manage waterfowl sanctuary and will make adjustments as needed, in support of these plans.

Maintain Existing Pastures for Goose Browse: To address Flyway concerns about depredation and providing winter habitat for dusky and cackling geese, existing areas of improved pasture will be maintained.

Invasive Species Control. Because invasive plants and animals currently represent the greatest threat to the Refuge's wildlife and habitat, control of invasive species will be a high priority management activity in all alternatives. Invasive species and state and county-listed noxious weeds would continue to be a primary management concern.

Emphasis on wildlife-dependent public uses. With its close proximity to Portland and Vancouver, Ridgefield NWR's visitation is high and continues to increase. Therefore, providing wildlife dependent public uses is a high priority in all alternatives.

Maintain waterfowl hunting opportunities. Because providing waterfowl hunting opportunities is an establishing purpose of the Refuge, and because demand has remained virtually constant over the past 40 years (despite declining trends elsewhere in the state) the Refuge will continue to provide waterfowl hunting opportunities. Location of blinds and location/ size of hunt areas will vary by alternative.

Monitor Effects of Public Use Programs on Wildlife. Monitoring to assess effects of public use on wildlife and habitats will be conducted. Area, timing and/or conduct of public use will be modified if disturbance to wildlife or habitat degredation reaches unacceptable levels.

New Visitor Contact Station/EE Center: Ridgefield NWR is expected to receive funding to construct a new administrative and visitor contact/EE center as part of the economic stimlus package. If so, a separate EA will be prepared for this project. Funding will also be sought to replace the existing footbridge to the Carty Unit with an ADA accessible structure.

Contigency plan for dike breach. A dike breach between Post Office Lake (75 ac), on the south end of the Refuge, and the Columbia River is a reasonably foreseeable event within the lifetime of the CCP. A breach would re-establish the former tidal connection between river and lake. The Refuge does not own the dike, which is likely to fail in a foreseeable future flood event. A contingency plan in the event of a dike breach is common to all alternatives.

State Coordination: The Service will continue to maintain regular discussions with the Washington and Oregon Departments of Fish and Wildlife. Key topics are management plans for dusky Canada geese and cackling geese, depredation plans, wildlife monitoring, hunting and fishing seasons and regulations, and endangered species management.

Tribal Coordination: The Refuge will coordinate and consult with the Cowlitz and the Chinook Tribes on a regular basis. Other Tribes with interests relating to traditionally shared resource corridors along the lower Columbia River will also be included in consultations affecting those resources.

Participation in Planning and Review of Area Development Activities: The Service will participate in planning and studies pertaining to development, transportation, recreation, contamination, and other potential concerns that may affect Refuge resources. The Service will continue to cultivate working relationships with county, State, and Federal agencies to stay abreast of current developments.

Volunteer Opportunities and Partnerships: Volunteer opportunities and partnerships are key components of the successful management of public lands, and will continue to be vital to the implementation of Refuge programs.

Cultural Resource Protection. Actions with the potential to affect cultural resources will undergo thorough review before being implemented, consistent with the requirements of cultural resource laws.

Comments or questions? Contact us

Address comments, questions, and requests for further information to:

Bob Flores, Project Leader
Ridgefield NWR Complex
PO Box 457
Ridgefield, Washington 98642
(360) 887-4106

Comments may be faxed to (360) 887-4109, or e-mailed to:
FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
Please put "Ridgefield NWR CCP Alternatives" on the subject line.

Public Open House Meeting

We invite you to join us at our upcoming open house, where we will describe and answer questions about the preliminary draft alternatives. It's our chance to hear your thoughts about the alternatives as we develop the draft CCP.

March 26, 2009, 6:00-8:00 P.M.
Ridgefield Community Center
210 North Main Avenue
Ridgefield, WA 98642

For more information on our planning process, go to our website at: http://www.fws.gov/ridgefieldrefuges/RNWRHome.htm

What's Next? Upcoming Meetings and Milestones

Public Open House (Preliminary Draft Alternatives)	March 26, 2009
Comments on preliminary alternatives due	April 10, 2009
Public Review of Draft CCP & Open House; Planning Update #4	Summer 2009
Response to public comments on Draft CCP	Fall 2009
Distribution of the Final CCP; final planning update	Fall 2009

U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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