



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Swan Lake

National Wildlife Refuge

Frequently Asked Questions

September 2010

Why change Silver Lake water management?

Silver Lake can do more for wildlife, especially migrating waterfowl. The lake covers more than 2,000 acres – one fifth of the Refuge – yet produces very little food for migrating birds. Improving land and water for wildlife is the core mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We want to manage the water levels in Silver Lake to increase the amount of native foods and make it more productive for wildlife while still maintaining it as a reservoir for source water to fill moist soil units during the fall migration. We will make this clear in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

Will Silver Lake be drained?

No. Silver Lake will continue to exist and will continue to provide source water for management of other Refuge wetlands. We are proposing to increase the amount of food for wildlife by lowering water levels during the growing season to establish vegetation within Silver Lake. We do not intend to increase vegetation at the expense of source water. Water management on Silver Lake will not change until we have more data and have completed a step-down management plan. We expect to complete the step-down plan within 2-3 years.

What are you doing with moist soil units?

The total amount of moist soil area is expected to remain the same. Some existing moist soil units are difficult

to manage and may be moved, but we do not intend to decrease the total amount of moist soil and expect it to continue to play an important role at Swan Lake NWR.

Will you maintain source water for managing moist soil units?

Yes. Source water is a major concern for the Service and any future plans for Silver Lake will address source water for managing moist soil units. We have been collecting data on source water and will continue to do so in future years. Ultimately, we will evaluate whether wetland vegetation can be established by lowering water levels in Silver Lake and still maintain reliable source water to fill moist soil units.

What about management of South Pool and the S&T Lanes?

We recognize the value of these two units to migratory birds, especially shorebirds and waterfowl. In addition to moist soil, South Pool (M14) has a large component of bottomland forest and provides good cover for wildlife. The S&T Lanes (M15) are challenging to manage because of frequent flooding from Yellow Creek and the Grand River. We will continue to modify our management in response to these



Northern Shoveler. Photo credit: FWS

challenges. Specific management of these units will be addressed in a step-down management plan.

Will there be public review and comment on step-down management plans?

Yes. The Swan Lake NWR step-down management plans will offer additional opportunities for everyone interested in the Refuge to review and comment. These plans also contain additional details and specific actions. Planning for a national wildlife refuge is like planning for a trip, first you decide on the destination and then you figure out directions. The Comprehensive Conservation Plan identifies our destination – more native foods for wildlife at Swan Lake NWR. In the step-down management plan we will get down to the directions for how we get there.