

# Issues Workbook

## **Purposes for which the refuge was established (from the *Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Act of 1991*)**

*(1) to conserve, protect, and enhance the Connecticut River valley populations of Atlantic Salmon, American shad, river herring, shortnosed sturgeon, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, osprey, black ducks, and other native species of plants, fish and wildlife;*

*(2) to conserve, protect, and enhance the natural diversity and abundance of plant, fish and wildlife species and the ecosystems upon which these species depend within the refuge;*

*(3) to protect species listed as endangered or threatened, or identified as candidates for listing, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C 1531 et seq.);*

*(4) to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of wetlands and other waters within the refuge;*

*(5) to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States relating to fish and wildlife and wetlands; and*

*(6) to provide opportunities for scientific research, environmental education, and fish and wildlife oriented recreation and access to the extent compatible with the*

## **Let's Get Started...**

At this early stage of planning we are seeking your input via meetings, this workbook, and any other written or verbal comments submitted to us. We would like to hear directly from you - to learn how you feel about the Refuge, any issues or concerns you have, and any suggestions you may have about how to better accomplish our mission. We encourage you to provide comments to us as soon as possible. The sooner we receive your comments, the sooner we will be able to incorporate them into the planning process.

Thanks for taking the time to give us your input!

## **Questions on Values, Vision and the Service's Role**

1. What do you value most about the Connecticut River and its watershed?
2. What do you consider to be the most important problem facing the watershed?



*Shortnose sturgeon/USFWS*

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3. Which of the following Refuge-sponsored activities have you heard about or participated in? Which do you think sound valuable?

Activities	Heard About	Participated In	Valuable
Exhibits at the Montshire Museum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational programs at Montshire Museum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exhibits at the Great North Woods Visitor Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs at Great North Woods Visitor Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exhibits at Great Falls Discovery Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs at Great Falls Discovery Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive plant control workshops for land managers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive plant conferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer invasive plant control projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Endangered species volunteer work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical assistance from Refuge staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial assistance through grants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooperative projects with partners in land protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooperative projects with partners to control invasive species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hunting on Refuge lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fishing on Refuge lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walking/hiking/skiing/snowshoeing on Refuge lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Birding or other wildlife observaiton on Refuge lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photography on Refuge lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental education/interpretation programs on Refuge lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental education/interpretation programs at other outdoor locations sponsored by the Refuge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Snowmobiling on the Nulhegan Basin or Pondicherry Divisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Bobolink/USFWS

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Wood Thrush/USFWS

4. Where have you heard of the Refuge's CCP efforts before?

## Questions on Conservation

5. Please keep in mind that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concentrates its efforts on migratory species and federally endangered species. In your opinion, which species or habitats should be a priority for the Refuge? Please rank the following in priority order (1 being the highest priority, 2 being the second highest, and so on). If you do not think we should be engaged in a choice, please place an X in the blank.

- declining songbird populations
- songbirds whose natural range is mostly in New England
- migratory fish (e.g. Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, eels)
- federally threatened and endangered species (piping plover, bald eagle, Puritan tiger beetle, dwarf wedge mussel, shortnose sturgeon, Jesup's milk-vetch, small-whorled pogonia, northeast bulrush)
- regionally declining plants
- state-listed threatened and endangered species
- rare habitats
- protection of large blocks of forest
- protection of large blocks of grassland
- restoration of floodplain forests
- protection/restoration of wetlands
- protection/restoration of riparian areas
- other \_\_\_\_\_



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6. Which tools should the Service use to help them conserve, protect, and enhance priority species and habitats? Please rank the following tools in priority order (1 being the highest priority, 2 being the second highest, and so on). If you do not think we should be engaged in a choice, please put an X in the blank.

- land acquisition from willing sellers at market value
- focused land management on appropriate Refuge lands (to enhance conditions for priority species)
- conduct research on Refuge lands
- conduct monitoring on Refuge lands
- provide research and demonstration areas on Refuge lands
- Small whorled pogonia* technical assistance to encourage focused land management on appropriate private lands
- purchase of development rights
- work with other agencies and conservation groups
- work with private landowners
- targeted education to decision makers and land managers
- work to remove barriers to fish passage
- work to improve in-stream habitats
- other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Which of the following issues should be a priority for the Refuge? Please rank the following issues in priority order (1 being the highest priority, 2 being the second highest, and so on). If you do not think we should be engaged in an issue, please place an X in the blank.



- loss of habitat to suburban and industrial development
- fragmentation of habitats by roads and development
- lack of fish passage due to dams and culverts
- impacts of human activities to water quality and aquatic habitats
- loss of surface water levels or flow reductions due to water withdrawals
- effects of recreational use on wildlife habitats
- lack of management capability to maintain optimal habitats
- displacement of native species by invasive exotic plants and animals *Removin*
- threats to federal-listed species
- negative public sentiment toward certain management techniques (e.g. forestry, burning, herbicides)
- other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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## Questions on Education



8. Please rank the topics you think we should be teaching in priority order (1 being the highest priority). If you do not think we should be engaged in a choice, please place an x in the blank.

- general natural resource concepts
- wildlife/habitat concepts
- the needs of migratory species
- the problems faced by endangered species
- resource stewardship
- how to control invasive species
- how to manage land for wildlife
- impact of personal choices on ecosystem health
- value of biodiversity
- how to connect with/enjoy the outdoors
- others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Please rank the audiences you think we should be reaching in priority order (1 being the highest priority). If you do not think we should be engaged in a choice, please place an X in the blank.

- K-12th grade students
- teachers of K-12th grade students
- nature center staffs
- special audiences that can influence/solve certain problems (landowners, foresters, recreational users, etc.)
- urban residents
- rural residents
- college students
- families
- others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_



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10. Please rank the educational tools you think we should be using in priority order (1 being the highest priority). If you do not think we should be engaged in a choice, please place an X in the blank.

- \_\_\_ articles in newspapers and magazines
- \_\_\_ field trips and workshops
- \_\_\_ general educational programs
- \_\_\_ mobile exhibits that visit fairs, schools, nature centers
- \_\_\_ demonstration projects
- \_\_\_ others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions on Recreation and Public Access

While natural diversity conservation and ecosystem health are the Refuge's primary purposes, some public uses can be allowed when they do not impact these resources. In fact, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 identifies six priority wildlife-dependent public uses that are to receive enhanced consideration on national wildlife refuges: environmental education, interpretation, fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, and photography. These six uses will be evaluated in this planning process.

Other uses must be evaluated by the refuge manager to see if they are "appropriate" and "compatible." Such things as whether the activity contributes to fulfilling the refuge's purposes, its consistency with applicable laws, regulations and policies, whether it can be offered consistent with public safety, whether the refuge has the budget and staffing resources to administer the use, whether the activity will impair the existing wildlife-dependent recreational uses, whether the activity is available/can be done elsewhere, and anticipated impacts to resources are all considered prior to allowing uses.



11. Are any of these activities or current levels of use on the Refuge a concern?

- wildlife viewing
- photography
- environmental education
- interpretation
- hunting

Please explain your concerns:

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12. In your opinion, what other activities should occur on Refuge lands?



*Putting up Refuge boundary signs/  
USFWS*

13. Have you used any of our recreational facilities (visitor/education centers, roads, trails, kiosks, other signage). Do they meet your needs?



*Great North Woods Visitor Center/  
USFWS*

14. Do you have other comments on recreational use?

**Mail/Email Issues Workbooks to:**

Beth Goldstein, Refuge Planner  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035  
Email: northeastplanning@fws.gov

**For Additional Information**

Contact the Refuge:

Silvio O. Conte NFWR  
103 East Plumtree Road  
Sunderland, MA 01035

Phone: 413/548-8002 ext. 111 or  
877/289-8565

Email: andrew\_french@fws.gov,  
northeastplanning@fws.gov

**That's it! Thank you for your time.**

IMPORTANT: Now that you are done, please separate pages 3-10 and mail them back to us by **April 13, 2007**. We will summarize these public comments and those received at the public meeting in our next newsletter. Please help us keep our mailing list updated by completing the following.

If you have specific challenges, needs, opportunities that you would like to bring to our attention, please attach information or contact us at anytime in the process.

If you wish to receive future "Planning Updates" about the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge comprehensive conservation plan, please fill in the appropriate information below and return the with the Issues Workbook.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Yes) Keep me on your mailing list/add me to your mailing list

\_\_\_\_\_ (No) Take me off your mailing list.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are acting in an official capacity as the representative of an organization please complete the following two items.

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

IMPORTANT: Please note that names on the CCP mailing list become part of the public record for this project. The Service must release names only, if requested, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974. To retain you on our mailing list we need your permission. Please sign below.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



*Setting up Refuge kiosk/USFWS*

**Federal Relay Service for the deaf or hard of hearing:**

1 800/877-8339

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>

**March 2007**

