

# Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

## Comprehensive Conservation Planning Update

### Moving Forward

This newsletter updates the progress of comprehensive conservation planning efforts for Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. In 2010, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service began developing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental assessment (EA) for the refuge. This CCP/EA will provide strategic management direction for the next 15 years and explain the refuge's priorities and plans for wildlife and habitat management, public use, staffing, and facilities.

During the past year, the planning team has been working to develop refuge goals, objectives, and strategies. The team has also developed four draft management alternatives. In this newsletter we would like to share with you highlights of our preliminary alternatives.

### Summarizing the Draft Alternatives

The four alternatives in the draft CCP/EA address key issues identified by the planning team and the public. The draft CCP/EA will compare the four alternatives in detail. Each will identify objectives and strategies for meeting refuge management goals. Here we present a very brief overview of the alternatives. For a more detailed matrix of the alternatives, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Great%20Swamp/ccphome.html>.

### Alternative A - Current Management

This alternative is the "no action" alternative, which continues current refuge management.

- Continue present management of refuge habitats, including about 500 acres of five impoundments and 700



Michael Stadelmeier

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

- acres of grassland and shrubland.
- Continue monitoring and managing habitat for priority wildlife species, especially bog turtle and Indiana bat.
- Maintain current public uses: Wildlife Observation Center, Helen C. Fenske Visitor Center, annual 5-day deer hunting season, 1.5 miles of boardwalk with 3 observation blinds, and wilderness trails.
- Remain active in partnerships.

### Alternative B - Enhance Biological Diversity and Public Uses

- Maintain a balance of forest, grassland, and impoundment habitats.
- Concentrate managed grassland and shrubland areas into fewer, larger blocks for ecological benefit and management efficiency.
- Evaluate impoundment management to determine ecological benefits versus other management options.
- Propose to add 168 acres to the wilderness area.
- Use prescribed burning when and where appropriate.
- Explore options for increasing populations and distributions.
- Enhance or expand wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities.
- Create additional trails and provide seasonal pedestrian access to certain management roads.

### Draft Refuge Vision

*Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is a rich natural oasis immersed within the bustling New Jersey-New York metropolitan area. At Great Swamp migrating birds feed and rest amongst whispering trees while butterflies flutter through wildflower-laced meadows. Turtles bask in the warm summer's sun, as the drum of a red-headed woodpecker echoes across an expansive marsh. Barred owls break the evening silence with unmistakable calls from deep within the forest while frogs chorus in excited trills and croaks in the wet meadows. These sights and sounds are the very same ones that were heard by the Lenape Tribes centuries before.*

*Great Swamp is an ecological treasure that invites people to engage with the natural world in ways that are educational, memorable, and rewarding. Visitors are refreshed by the beauty, peace and solitude of this wild and natural setting, where wildlife comes first. Vital partners continue working together to protect the Great Swamp and its watershed to ensure its myriad of benefits for future generations.*

John J. Mosesso/NBII



Wood turtle

- Erect observation towers in key wildlife viewing locations.
- Open refuge to an archery deer hunt and open a spring turkey hunt.
- Expand public outreach methods, especially in urban areas, to increase interest in the refuge.
- Increase staffing to 14.5 full-time employees (per national staffing models).

Tim McCabe



Wood duck

**Alternative C - Emphasis on Maximizing Forest Habitats**

Alternative C explores allowing regeneration to habitat types that would naturally occur without manipulation. In many cases, the areas will succeed to forested swamp.

- Maximize forest habitat by reducing active management of impoundments, grassland, and brushland and by allowing natural succession to forest.
- Concentrate remaining grassland and shrubland habitats around wildlife observation opportunities.
- Public use is the same as under alternative B.

**Alternative D - Emphasis on Expanding Priority Public Uses**

- Habitat management is the same as under alternative B.

- In addition to public use strategies presented in alternative B:
- Create additional trails and parking lots to maximize wildlife observation, photography, trail usage, and access.
- Collaborate with adjacent landowners to create or link additional trails.
- Open the refuge to fishing and expand opportunities for biking, canoeing, and kayaking.
- Expand environmental education and interpretation programs, especially directed toward urban populations.
- Open most management roads to pedestrian traffic.

**Planning Timeline**

This winter and spring, we will

continue to fine-tune objectives and strategies and are working toward releasing the draft CCP/EA in the late spring of 2012. The draft will be available on CD-ROM, the Web, and in print. Soon after its release, we will provide opportunities for the public to comment, including at public meetings. After the public comment period we will make any necessary changes to the draft. We hope to have a final CCP by the fall of 2012.

**Contact Information**

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