



John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Update

This planning update describes the progress the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) has made in developing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum (John Heinz NWR, refuge). It also summarizes the different alternatives the planning team considered for managing the refuge and includes information about how to obtain and comment on the draft CCP.

The Refuge

John Heinz NWR was established in 1972 to preserve and restore the natural area known as Tinicum marsh as well as develop a wildlife interpretative and environmental education center. Refuge habitats include freshwater tidal marsh, coastal plain and floodplain forest, managed grasslands, and open water on 993 acres.

Comprehensive Conservation Plans

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. Its main components include a unifying mission for the Refuge System, a new process for determining compatible uses of refuges, and a requirement to prepare CCPs for each refuge in the Refuge System by 2012.



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Yellow-rumped warbler



View of downtown Philadelphia from the refuge

Larry Woodward\USFWS

A CCP is a 15-year strategic plan guiding management for all refuge programs. Service policy requires that CCPs be revised at least every 15 years, or sooner if significant new information or needs surface.

Draft Plan Available for Public Review

We formally began preparing a CCP for this refuge in 2010. We have now completed a draft plan which we are distributing for public review and comment through April 23, 2012.

An environmental assessment (EA), required by the National Environmental Policy Act, accompanies the draft plan. The EA describes the three alternatives that we evaluated in detail to achieve the refuge purposes, vision and goals (see highlights below). It also provides an analysis of their effects on the environment.

We have identified alternative B as the Service-preferred alternative.

How to Obtain a Draft Plan

To request a print copy or CD-ROM of the draft plan, contact Gary Stolz,

Refuge Manager, the address under "Contact Information" (see last page).

You may also view and download the draft CCP/EA online:

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/John%20Heinz/ccphome.html>

How to Provide Comments

We invite you to share your comments about the draft plan either in writing or in person at our public meetings (see below). We will accept letters, faxes, and emails. To be considered, all comments must be emailed, faxed, or postmarked by April 23, 2012.

Mail: Lia McLaughlin
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035
Phone: 413/253-8575
Fax: 413/253-8468

Email: northeastplanning@fws.gov
(Please put "John Heinz NWR" in the subject line)

Public Meetings

You may also wish to participate in our public meetings in Philadelphia, PA. There are two sessions, each of these repeated sessions will include a short presentation on the draft plan, then opportunities to informally speak with staff and provide comments.

April 10, 2012 - Philadelphia, PA

Afternoon session: 2:00 pm-4:00 pm
Evening session: 6:00 pm-8:00 pm
John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge
8601 Lindbergh Blvd.
Philadelphia, PA 19153
Directions can be accessed online at:
<http://www.fws.gov/heinz/welcome.htm>

People with disabilities who need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact refuge staff at 215-365-3118 or the Federal Relay Service at 1-866-377-8642. Requests for accommodations should be made at least 5 business days in advance.

Alternatives Considered

All alternatives are contingent on staff and funding.

Alternative A - Current Management

This alternative describes our current refuge programs for habitat management, fish and wildlife inventories and monitoring, environmental education, administrative infrastructure and staffing, and visitor services.

Land Protection

- Continue to work with willing sellers and in partnership with other agencies and organizations to protect the remaining 207 acres within the refuge's authorized acquisition boundary.

Habitat Management

- Continue to utilize a combination of mowing, herbicide application,



Ruby-throated hummingbird on cardinal flower

Draft Goals

We developed the following goals to describe the desired future conditions of the refuge and to establish a framework within which to develop management objectives.

- Goal 1.** Protect, maintain, and restore where possible, the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of southeastern Pennsylvania coastal plain ecological communities that are unique to the refuge and sustain native plants and wildlife, including species of conservation concern.
- Goal 2.** Contribute to the enhancement of native species diversity in the Delaware Estuary, including migratory birds and other species of conservation concern, within the refuge's managed open waters and grasslands.
- Goal 3.** Provide a wide range of environmental educational opportunities, accessible to the full spectrum of the American public, which raises awareness of the National Wildlife Refuge System, inspires appreciation and stewardship of our natural and cultural resources, and expands understanding of Tinicum marsh as a unique component of the Delaware Estuary and the local community.
- Goal 4.** Ensure that visitors, students, and local residents of all ages and abilities enjoy their refuge experience, understand and appreciate the refuge's natural and cultural resources and its contribution to conserving those resources in the Delaware Estuary, and are inspired to become better stewards in their everyday lives.
- Goal 5.** Provide quality, wildlife-dependent recreation that allows a diversity of visitors to connect with nature in the outdoors.
- Goal 6.** Communicate and collaborate with local communities, Federal and state agencies, tribal governments, academic institutions, and conservation organizations throughout the Delaware Estuary to promote natural and cultural resource conservation and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

and other strategies to manage freshwater tidal marsh, non-tidal wetlands, coastal plain and floodplain forests, grasslands, and open waters owned by the Service.

- Complete the proposed 55-acre tidal marsh restoration project.
- Continue to monitor the impacts of the deer herd on habitat structure and biodiversity.
- Continue to host a series of environmental education programs throughout the school year.
- Continue to provide at least 11 interpretive and outreach programs (five off the refuge and six on the refuge).
- Continue maintaining existing access points and infrastructure, including trails, parking, and interpretive exhibits, the refuge Web site, and signs.

Refuge Administration

- Staffing would remain at ten positions. Headquarters office would remain on refuge and we would accomplish the upgrades necessary for safety, accessibility and utility over time.

Alternative B - Increased Restoration and Increased Focus on Urban Youth; Service-preferred

This alternative develops new, focused environmental education and interpretation programs and expands habitat restoration efforts.

Land Protection

- Same as alternative A

Habitat Management

- Expand freshwater tidal marsh restoration to up to 173 acres within the refuge.
- Initiate a deer management program to restore biodiversity.
- Expand our inventory and monitoring to inform our understanding of how sea level rise may impact long-term habitat management.

Visitor Services

- Develop a series of environmental education programs focusing on urban youth, especially in the Philadelphia area.
- Provide more interpretive options readily accessible to urban youth and expand Web-based resources for visitors.

Draft Vision Statement

John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum is a green respite nestled within the urban setting of the city of Philadelphia. Refuge lands are a thriving sanctuary teeming with a rich diversity of fish, wildlife, and plants native to the Delaware Estuary. Healthy and productive expanses of freshwater tidal marsh, open waters, mudflats, and forests support the hundreds of species that breed, rear their young, rest during migration, and call the refuge home year-round.

With partners' support, the refuge leads by example in the restoration and conservation of freshwater tidal marsh within the Delaware Estuary. Also, given its accessibility and visibility to over 35 million Americans living within a 2-hour drive, the refuge serves as a prominent ambassador of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Its high quality programs promote natural and cultural resource stewardship, demonstrate the conservation of urban wildlife habitat, encourage compatible outdoor public use, and serve as a living classroom to connect people with nature and local history. Those who visit John Heinz NWR are inspired to take action to improve the quality of life for themselves and those around them.



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Youth birdwatching as part of a refuge interpretive program.

Refuge Administration

- Add 5 staff positions to support expanded habitat management efforts and increases in the visitor services program.
- Expand existing administrative facilities to accommodate the additional staff and co-locate refuge law enforcement with the other refuge programs.

Alternative C - Delayed Restoration with Increased Focus on Regional Role in Higher Education in Conservation and Research

This alternative resembles alternative B concerning refuge administration and visitor services, but differs significantly in its habitat management and inventory and monitoring programs.

Land Protection

- Same as alternative A

Habitat Management

- Tidal marsh restoration in alternative C would be delayed to allow for additional data collection and sea level rise analysis.
- Initiate a deer management program to restore biodiversity.
- Restore degraded forests and specific grassland areas to a scrub-shrub habitat, which is largely unavailable on the refuge.

Visitor Services

- Environmental education programs would target high school, college, and post-graduate level students. Programs would focus on encouraging and training the next generation of conservation professionals and environmentally concerned citizens.
- Expand opportunities for all six priority public uses, including the addition of hunting through a limited hunt program.

Next Steps

1. Distribute draft CCP/EA for public review and comment; host 2 public meetings at the refuge.
2. Evaluate public comments and revise the CCP as warranted.
3. Submit final recommendation for Regional Director approval.
4. If approved, publish a notice of availability in the Federal Register and distribute final plan.
5. Implement CCP

Contact Information

To learn more about the refuge, please visit the refuge Web site:

<http://www.fws.gov/heinz/index.html>

Or contact:

Mail: Gary M. Stolz
Refuge Manager
John Heinz NWR
8601 Lindbergh Blvd
Philadelphia, PA 19153
Email: Gary_Stolz@fws.gov
Phone: 215/365-3118

To learn more about the planning process contact Lia McLaughlin at the address and phone number under "How to Provide Comments."

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

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