

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Update #3

Moving Forward

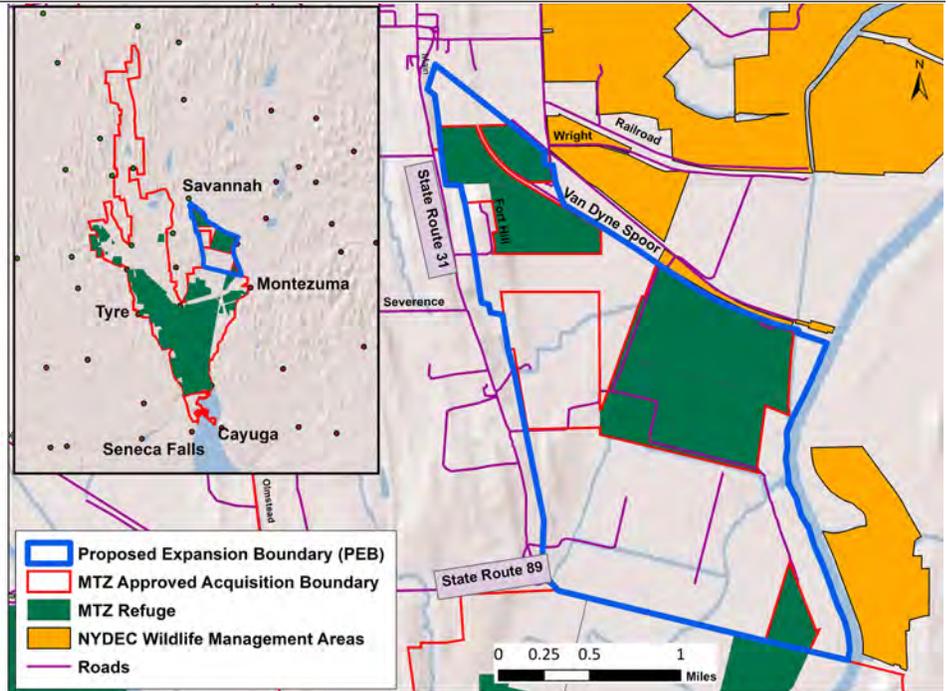
This newsletter updates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service, we) progress on comprehensive conservation planning for Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Our last newsletter, in July 2010, described our draft vision statement, our draft goals for the refuge, and the results of the public scoping process.

Since that time, we have been determining key issues, developing draft management alternatives, and evaluating the consequences of each of these alternatives. In the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (Draft CCP/EA), we will present the different management alternatives and their associated effects.

Land Protection

Two of the management alternatives that will appear in the Draft CCP/EA include a proposed Land Protection Plan (LPP), which would expand the refuge's current approved acquisition boundary by approximately 1400 acres (see map).

The proposed LPP is based on a process that began in 1991 with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared to help protect important habitat within the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. This complex includes a 7,800 acre New York State Department of Conservation (NYSDEC) Wildlife



Map showing the proposed refuge boundary expansion (blue line).

Management Area (WMA), the Montezuma NWR, and other conservation lands.

The 1991 EIS led to a joint Service and NYSDEC 50,000-acre acquisition area with a division line between the Federal area of interest and the State area of interest. The proposed expansion boundary (PEB) in the LPP is located within the area originally identified for NYSDEC acquisition. This adjustment is made with the support and approval of NYSDEC. With their support, we have already acquired about 730 acres within the PEB. The LPP would formalize our authority to acquire about 1400 additional acres.

As would be the case under NYSDEC ownership, lands acquired by the Service are no longer subject to property taxes. The Service does make revenue sharing payments to local governments where we own property. These payments vary

from year to year, primarily depending on Congressional appropriations.

Habitat Value of Land within the PEB

The PEB lies between the towns of Savannah and Montezuma just east of State Route 31 and contains mucklands, forests, and riparian areas.

The mucklands could become valuable wetlands supporting a variety of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds. In addition, habitat fragmentation would be decreased, benefitting species that require large intact areas.

Loss, alteration, and fragmentation of habitat have been identified in the NYSDEC Wildlife Action Plan as the greatest threats to wildlife in this area. By expanding the acquisition boundary as outlined in the proposed LPP, we could address all three of these habitat issues. Expanding the refuge's acquisition

Donna Dewhurst/USFWS



Green-winged teal



Rose-breasted grosbeak

boundary would also facilitate habitat management and public use by avoiding a patchwork of State and Federal ownership within this area.

After acquisition, and restoration if needed, we envision opening these areas to priority public uses (e.g., waterfowl and deer hunting, wildlife observation and photography) similar to nearby refuge land.

Next Steps

We are finishing the draft management alternatives and the environmental assessment. We anticipate that the Draft CCP/EA

should be available for public comment this summer.

When the Draft CCP/EA is completed and available for public review and comment, we will send a newsletter announcing its availability, post the document on the refuge's planning website, publish a notice in the Federal Register, and hold one or more public meetings. There will be at least 30 days for public review and comment on the Draft CCP/EA.

Contact Information

For additional information on Montezuma NWR, please visit the refuge's website at:

<http://www.fws.gov/r5mnwr/>.

You may also reach refuge staff at:

Telephone: 315/568-5987

Fax: 315/568-8835

Please send mail to:

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
3395 US Route 20 East
Seneca Falls, NY 13148

For more information on the planning process please contact:

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Email: northeastplanning@fws.gov
Please put "Montezuma NWR" in the subject line.

You can also visit the planning website for updates on the CCP process:

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Montezuma/ccphome.html>

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



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