

# Patuxent Research Refuge CCP



Public Review Draft

# Patuxent Research Refuge Mandates

- **Established in 1936 under the following purpose:**
  - The purpose of Patuxent Research Refuge acquisition is, "to effectuate further the purposes of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act," and to serve "as a wildlife experiment and research refuge." Initially, 2,670 acres of land were transferred from the Department of Agriculture. Additional lands have been added under other authorities and contributed to the original purpose of the refuge, bringing the total refuge size to 12,841 acres.





## Priority Resources of Concern

- Mammals – 38 species, 7 MD SGCN (Eastern harvest mouse, Eastern red bat, least shrew, silver-haired bat)
- Amphibians & Reptiles – 55 species, 11 MD SGCN (Eastern box turtle, Eastern hog-nosed snake, Eastern spadefoot toad)
- Fish – 55 species, 14 MD SGCN (American shad, comley shiner, banded sunfish)

# Priority Resources of Concern (Cont.)

- Birds – 248 species, 95 MD SGCN
- Insects – 25 orders, 47 dragonflies/damselflies MD SGCN
- Plants – 165 species trees/shrubs, 554 herbs/forbs; MD E 6 species, MD T 3 species

# Bird Priority Resources of Concern

<b>Bird Group</b>	<b>BCR 30 HH (#1 Priority)</b>	<b>BCR 30 H (#2 Priority)</b>	<b>PIF 44 1 (#1 Priority)</b>	<b>PIF 44 2 (#2 Priority)</b>	<b>MD WLD PLAN GCN Species</b>
<b>Waterbirds</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b> (1 breeding)
<b>Waterfowl</b>	<b>1</b> (1 breeding)	<b>6</b> (1 breeding)	<b>1</b> (1 breeding)	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b> (1 breeding)
<b>Shorebirds</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Landbirds</b>	<b>5</b> (4 breeding)	<b>22</b> (17 breeding)	<b>13</b> (13 breeding)	<b>13</b> (11 breeding)	<b>74</b> (35 breeding)

# The CCP Goals

## *Research*

**Goal 1:** Maintain and actively promote Patuxent Research Refuge as an “outdoor laboratory,” providing a diversity of wildlife and natural resource research opportunities on the refuge in such areas as landscape conservation, habitat fragmentation, climate change, and other emerging issues, as well as the more traditional types of wildlife research, including inventory and monitoring techniques, land management, and understanding ecological processes. Research that supports the overall Service mission, and evaluates the best methods for protecting natural resources throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System and other land management agencies will be a priority.



# The CCP Goals

## *Biological*



**Goal 2:** Protect, maintain, and restore, where possible, the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of **forested ecological communities** to provide habitat for species of conservation concern, including migratory birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates.

**Goal 3:** Protect, maintain, and restore, where possible, the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of **refuge aquatic habitats**, including the Patuxent, Little Patuxent, and Anacostia River Watersheds, and impoundments, to provide habitat for species of conservation concern, including fish, invertebrates, and plants.

**Goal 4:** Manage refuge **non-forested upland communities** to provide ecological structure, composition, and function to support native plants and wildlife, including species of conservation concern. Where appropriate, restore the biological integrity and diversity of these habitats.



# The CCP Goals

## *Visitor Use*

**Goal 5:** Provide high-quality recreation, environmental education, and interpretive programs to enhance refuge visitors' understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife conservation.

**Goal 6:** Provide high-quality hunting and fishing experiences for hunters and anglers.

**Goal 7:** Enhance partnerships with local communities and various organizations to garner support and promote refuge programs and resources.

# Current Status of CCP



- Currently in public comment period which will end November 26th, 2012
- Final CCP/EA – January 2013



# Issues

- Biological Integrity - focus on forest interior
- Support of research and PWRC
- Balancing uses on North Tract (hunting, wildlife observation, range use)
- Consideration for longer public hours
- Impoundment and Grassland Management
  - Fragmentation effects and management costs of maintaining impoundments and grasslands vs. benefits to species and research

# Common to all alternatives

- Implement provisions of the Facilities Modernization Plan
- Develop a separate LPP with public and agency involvement in compliance with Service policy and the NEPA
- Work with NSA to improve condition and environmental management of shooting ranges

# The Three Alternatives

- **Alternative A is the “no action” alternative - continue our current management.** It describes existing management priorities and activities, and serves as a baseline for comparing and contrasting Alternatives B and C.
- Alternative B is our preferred alternative - emphasizes restoration and management of specific refuge habitats to support migratory forest birds. **It maintains some balance of forest, grassland and impoundment habitats.**
- Alternative C is **maximum forest restoration** - includes keeping Cash Lake, Lake Allen, and Snowden Pond, but explores restoring the maximum number of impoundments and grasslands.



# Current Habitat Management

Habitat	Alt A
Administrative	462 acres
Grassland/old field	517 acres
Shrub/early successional forest	224 acres
Oak-pine savannah	132 acres
Deciduous, pine and mixed forest	8,242 acres
Floodplain forest and swamp	1,946 acres
Floodplain shrub wetland	73 acres
Depressional forest wetland	752 acres
Depressional shrub wetland	6 acres
Emergent wetland	105 acres
Open water	370 acres

A variety of open water, emergent marsh, green tree reservoir, gravel pits, and dynamically managed impoundments

Maintain 2,700 acres of bottomland floodplain forest.  
Maintain 8,400 acres of upland forest.

Restoration of 132 acres of rare savannah habitat.

Provide shrubland habitat along 9 miles of powerline ROW.

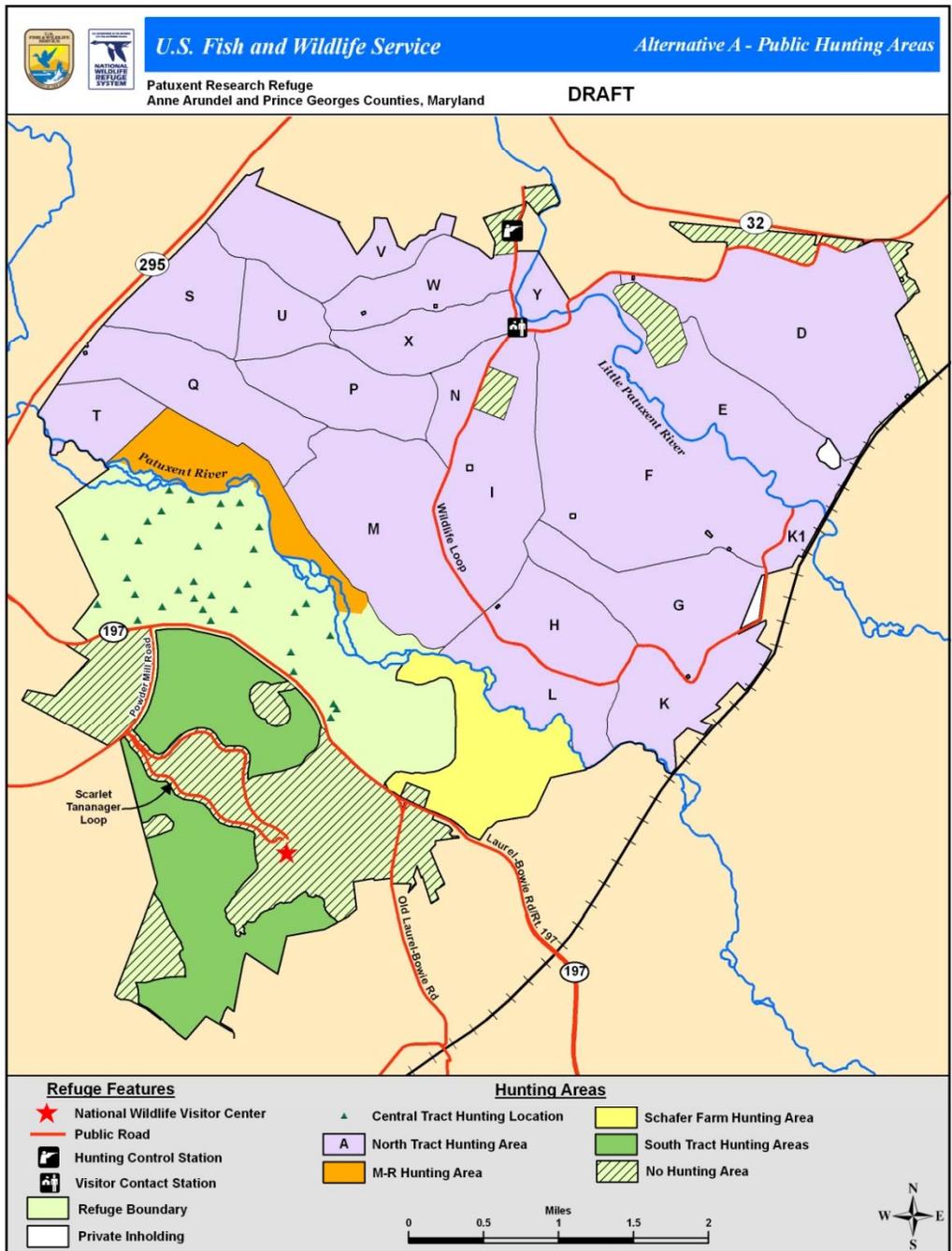
Maintain 517 acres of grassland habitat (patches ranging from .5 to >50 acres).



## Current Public use

- Over 200,000 visits per year
- Hunting and fishing according to State and Refuge seasons and regulations
- Observation tower, wildlife drive, photography blind, and 25 miles of trails
- Volunteer and permanent staffing of two public entrances daily
- Friends group runs tram tours
- Extensive environmental education and interpretation programs

# Alternative A Public Hunting

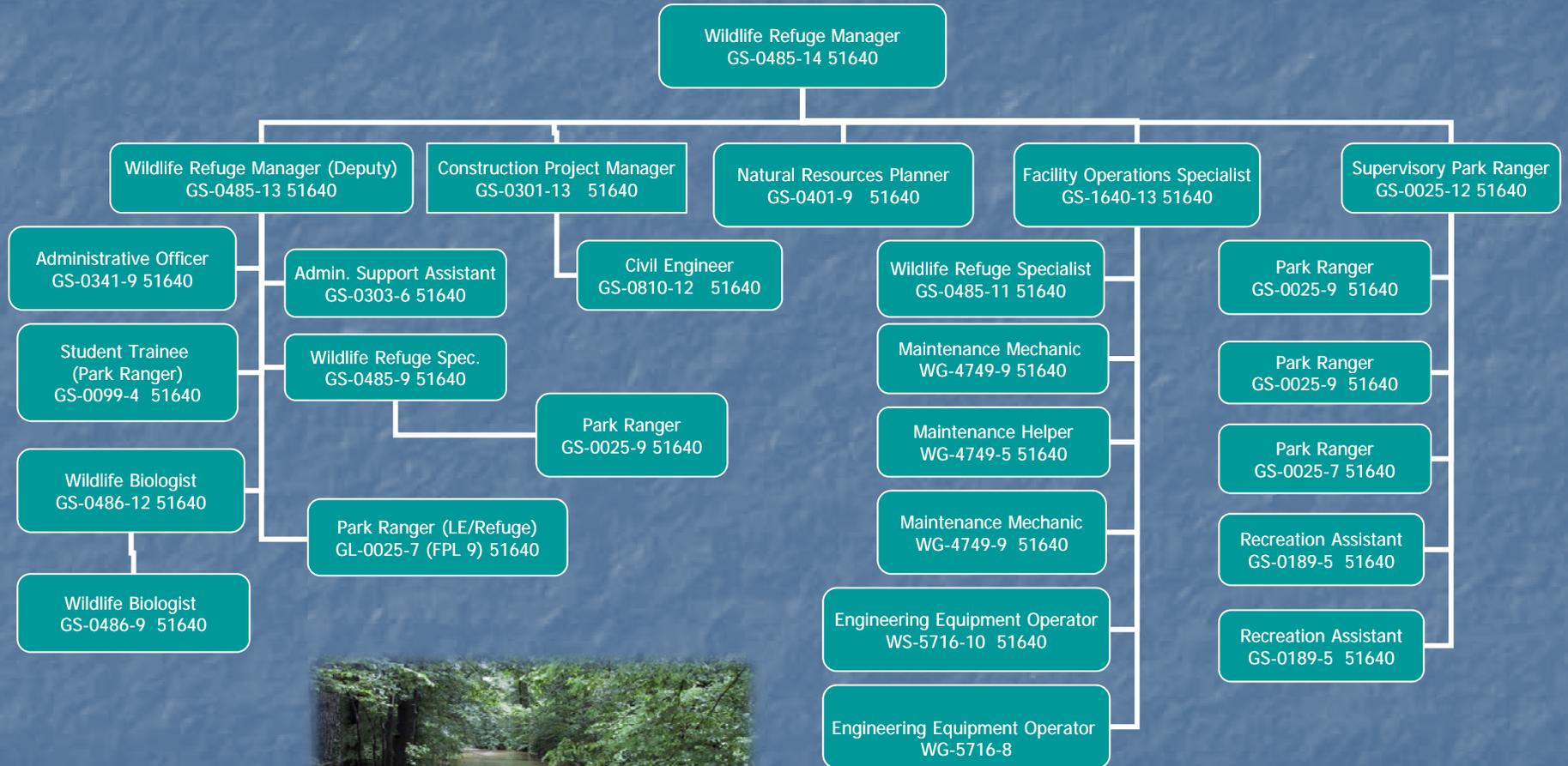


# Current Research

- Research SUPs case by case with PWRC scientists and non-staff research
  - Research refuge purpose
- Less research oriented toward land management in recent years
- Focus on pen complex and contaminant research



# Alternative A Staffing



# Alternative B: Habitat Management

## *Service Preferred Alternative*

*(All strategies are in addition to Alternative A)*

Habitat	Alt B
Administrative	429 acres
Grassland/old field	256 acres
Shrub/early successional forest	261 acres
Oak-pine savannah	132 acres
Deciduous, pine and mixed forest	8,432 acres
Floodplain forest and swamp	2,210 acres
Floodplain shrub wetland	34 acres
Depressional forest wetland	759 acres
Depressional shrub wetland	5 acres
Emergent wetland	55 acres
Open water	255 acres

Allow 14 impoundments to revert to forest or floodplain forest; resulting in 197 acres of floodplain forest & 9 acres of upland forest.

Restore approximately 478 acres of forest.

Consolidate grasslands into large (>50 acre) blocks.

Scrub-shrub along powerline ROWs.

Savannah restoration area (132 acres).

# Alternative B: Public Use

- Create additional NT trail (2.5 miles)
- Develop 4-6 new interpretive programs annually
- Create and offer historical interpretive tours on Central and North Tract
- Rehab and improve viewing tower at Wildlife Viewing Area
- Designate and develop an outdoor exploration area on the South Tract
- Increase Environmental Education by 10%
- Increase teacher workshops by 50%
- Require clean-up for horseback riding
- Allow virtual and no-impact geocaching

# Alternative B: Public use (cont.)

- Increase youth and disability hunting opportunities
- Open trails with 50 yard buffer during deer bow season and small game season
- Open Blue Heron Pond to fishing
- Expand fishing hours on NT
- Expand calendar days for fishing at Cash Lake
- Expand hours for grounds and trails (dawn to dusk at NWVC)



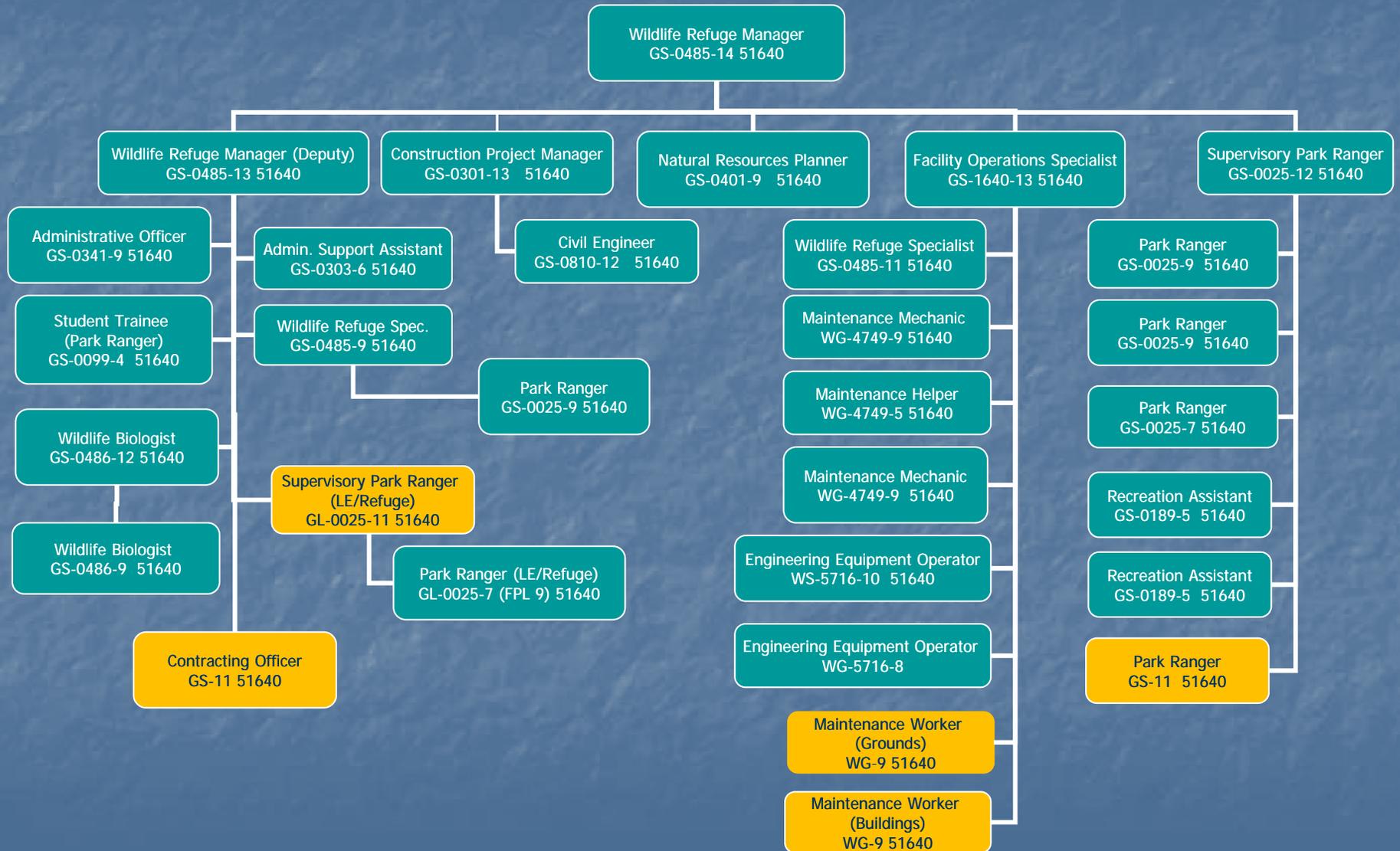
# Alternative B: Research

*Same as Alternative A plus*

- Develop and strengthen partnerships with USGS and other agencies, state partners, academic institutions, non-profit organizations and volunteers in the conservation community for research and monitoring needs
- Encourage landscape scale research (climate change, wildland urban interface, fragmentation)



# Alternative B Staffing



# Alternative C: Habitat Management

Habitat	Alt C
Administrative	429 acres
Grassland/old field	71 acres
Shrub/early successional forest	243 acres
Oak-pine savannah	132 acres
Deciduous, pine and mixed forest	8,720 acres
Floodplain forest and swamp	2,235 acres
Floodplain shrub wetland	33 acres
Depressional forest wetland	708 acres
Depressional shrub wetland	5 acres
Emergent wetland	51 acres
Open water	202 acres



Approximately 750 acres revert to forest.

Convert 23 impoundments to floodplain forest.

Mostly gravel pit complexes and fishing areas remain.

Allow additional acres of scrub-shrub to succeed to forest.

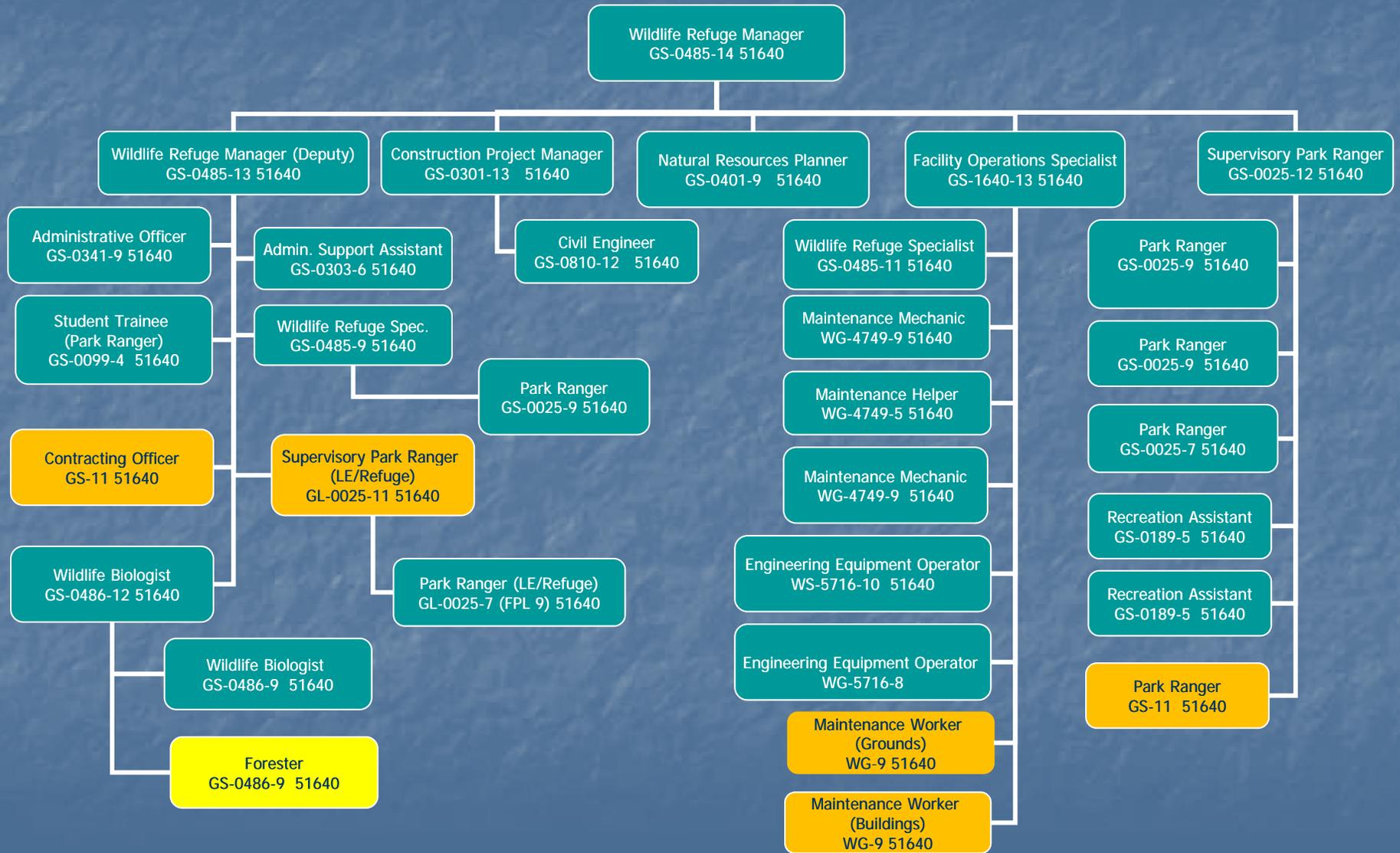
Reduce grasslands to 71 acres.

Allow remaining grasslands to succeed to shrub or forest.

# Alternative C: Public Use

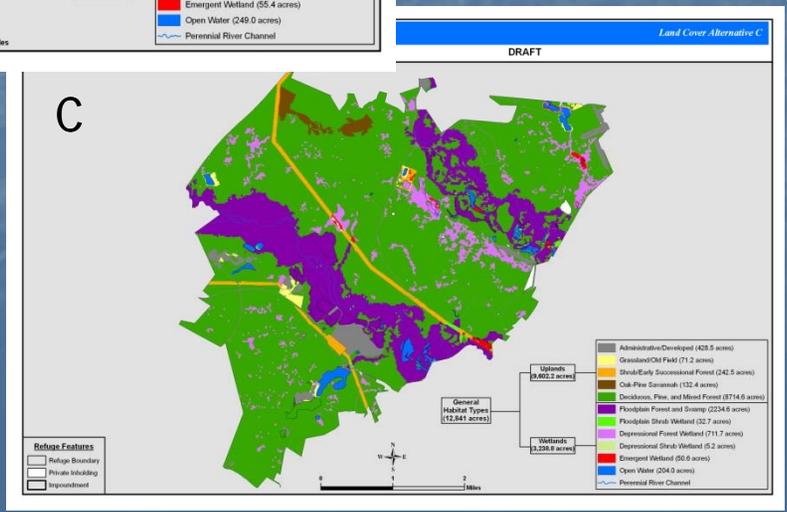
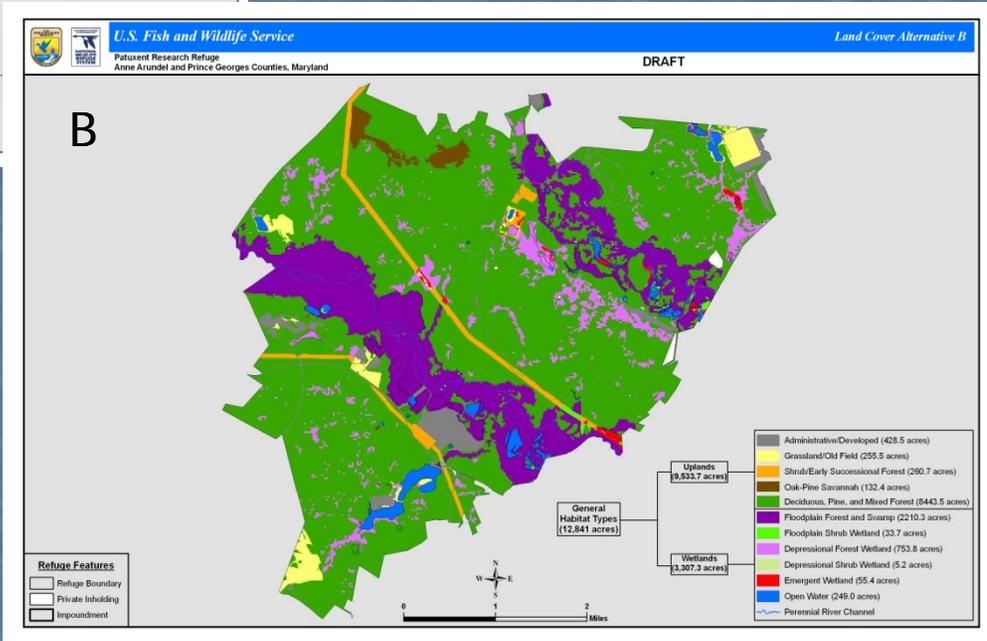
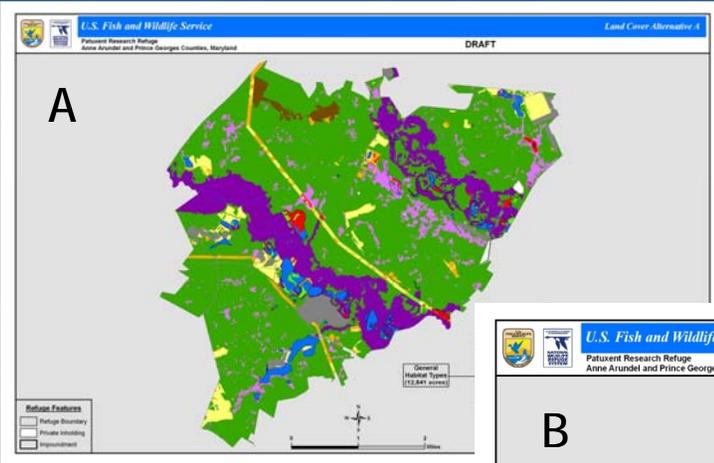
- Explore fee options for refuge entry, programs, and activities
- Reduce interpretive programs and special events
- Eliminate horseback riding
- Eliminate dog walking
- Close some hunt areas seasonally to allow for other uses
- Eliminate January hunting except deer firearms season

# Alternative C Staffing



# Comparison of Habitat Acres for All Alternatives

Habitat	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C
Administrative	462 acres	429 acres	429 acres
Grassland/old field	517 acres	256 acres	71 acres
Shrub/early successional forest	224 acres	261 acres	243 acres
Oak-pine savannah	132 acres	132 acres	132 acres
Deciduous, pine and mixed forest	8,242 acres	8,432 acres	8,720 acres
Floodplain forest and swamp	1,946 acres	2,210 acres	2,235 acres
Floodplain shrub wetland	73 acres	34 acres	33 acres
Depressional forest wetland	752 acres	760 acres	708 acres
Depressional shrub wetland	6 acres	5 acres	5 acres
Emergent wetland	105 acres	55 acres	51 acres
Open water	370 acres	255 acres	243 acres



We invite you to share comments about the draft plan. We will accept letters, faxes, phone calls, and emails. To be considered, all comments must be received or postmarked by November 26, 2012.

*Email*

[northeastplanning@fws.gov](mailto:northeastplanning@fws.gov) (place "Patuxent CCP" in the subject line)

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You may view and download the draft CCP/EA for Patuxent  
online @

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

