

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge

Release of Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Greetings from Presquile Refuge!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) is pleased to announce the release of a draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Presquile National Wildlife Refuge (Presquile NWR, the refuge) for public review and comment. Once final, this plan will guide refuge management over the next 15 years.

In this newsletter, we summarize the two different management alternatives we evaluated for the refuge. We also explain how you can obtain and comment on the draft CCP/EA and provide details about upcoming public meetings.

Comprehensive Conservation Planning

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act requiring the Service to prepare CCPs for each national wildlife refuge. A CCP is a 15-year strategic plan guiding management for all refuge programs. CCPs will be revised at least every 15 years, or sooner if significant new information becomes available or conditions change.



Iggoch/Flickr

Prothonotary warbler



Meghan Carfoli/USFWS

Tidal swamp forest at Presquile NWR

The Refuge

Presquile NWR is an island in the James River, located near the City of Hopewell, Virginia, 20 miles southeast of Richmond, Virginia. The 1,329-acre refuge was established in 1953 as a sanctuary for migratory birds. It serves as one of many important stopover sites along the Atlantic Flyway. The refuge offers a diversity of protected feeding, breeding, and wintering habitats, including the open waters of the James River; tidal swamp forest, tidal freshwater marshes, grasslands, mixed mesic forest, and river escarpment.

Presquile NWR is one of the four refuges managed by the Eastern Virginia Rivers NWR Complex staff.

Draft Plan Available for Public Review

Refuge and regional Service staff and a representative from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) began preparing a CCP for Presquile NWR in January 2011.

We have now completed the draft CCP/EA, which we are distributing for a public review and comment period that will end on September 7, 2012.

Management Alternatives Considered

The draft CCP/EA describes in detail the two management alternatives for Presquile NWR. Each alternative aims to achieve the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals. Brief descriptions of the two alternatives are detailed below and in the table. Complete descriptions of each alternative are provided in chapter 3 of the draft CCP/EA. A detailed analysis of the potential impacts resulting from implementation of each alternative is provided in chapter 4 of the draft plan.

Alternative A - Current Management

This alternative describes our current management priorities and activities at the refuge. It serves as a baseline for comparing and contrasting alternative B.



American black duck

Presquile Refuge Draft Goals

Goal 1: Protect, maintain, and restore the integrity of the refuge's tidal swamp forest and tidal freshwater marsh to sustain native plants and wildlife, including species of conservation concern, and benefit aquatic resources of the James River watershed and Chesapeake Bay.

Goal 2: Protect, restore, and enhance the refuge's upland habitats, with emphasis on the mixed mesic forest ecological community, to sustain plants and wildlife native to the James River area, in particular those species of conservation concern.

Goal 3: Protect and conserve the refuge's cultural resources and landscape, and seek opportunities to increase knowledge and appreciation of the refuge's history as part of the James River region.

Goal 4: Provide environmental education experiences for visitors to inspire appreciation and stewardship of the refuge in relation to the James River watershed, the Chesapeake Bay estuary, and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Goal 5: Provide wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities (interpretation, wildlife observation, nature photography, and hunting) for visitors to enjoy and connect with nature and develop an enhanced appreciation for and understanding of the refuge's natural and cultural resources.

Alternative B - Focus on Species of Conservation Concern (*Service-preferred Alternative*)

This alternative describes a change in refuge management by focusing on species of conservation concern that would benefit from continued protection of tidal freshwater marsh, swamp, and upland forests. Under this alternative, we would emphasize maintenance and restoration of important habitats for species of conservation concern through increased monitoring and data collection, and a more aggressive response to habitat changes. We would also convert the nearly 200 acres of grassland to forest.

Under alternative B, we would enhance our visitor services programs by building on existing partnerships and creating new ones. Through our existing partnership with the James River Association, we would offer an increased number of environmental education programs for a greater number of students throughout Virginia. We would also evaluate opportunities to expand the hunting program to include turkey hunting, and a youth deer or turkey hunt.

Alternative B is the Service-preferred alternative because it combines the actions we believe would best achieve the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals; respond to key issues; and support species of conservation concern.

How to Obtain a Draft Plan and Provide Comments

You may view and download the draft CCP/EA online: http://www.fws.gov/northeast/presquile/refuge_planning.html

You may also request a hard copy or CD-ROM of the draft plan from the Presquile NWR staff.

We invite you to share your comments about the draft plan in writing or at our public meetings (see below). We will accept letters, faxes, phone calls, and emails. To be considered, all comments must be received or postmarked by September 7, 2012.

Email: EasternVirginiaRiversNWRC@fws.gov
(Please put "Presquile CCP in subject line)

Mail: Meghan Carfioli
Eastern Virginia Rivers
NWR Complex
11116 Kimages Road
Charles City, VA 23030

Phone: 804/829-5413
Fax: 804/829-9606

Public Meetings

Please consider attending one of the upcoming public meetings about the CCP/EA for Presquile NWR. At each meeting, we will give a short presentation on the draft plan, followed by an open house. Attendees will have opportunities to speak directly with the planning team and provide comments on the plan. We will record all of the comments and suggestions from the meeting.

August 7, 2012 - Chester, VA
Evening Session: 6:00-8:00 pm
Chesterfield County Library
11800 Centre Street
Chester, VA 23831

August 8, 2012 - Richmond, VA
Afternoon Session: 2:00-4:00 pm
Evening Session: 6:00-8:00 pm
Virginia Department of Game and
Inland Fisheries
4010 West Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23230

People with disabilities who need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact refuge staff at 978/465-5753 or the Federal Relay Service at 1-866-377-8642. Requests for accommodations should be made at least 5 days in advance.



Refuge environmental education program

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge: Comparison of Alternatives

<p style="text-align: center;">Alternative A <i>Current Management</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Alternative B <i>Focus on Species of Conservation Concern (Service-preferred Alternative)</i></p>
Forested and Emergent Wetlands and Aquatic Resources	
<p>Continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect 738 acres of tidal swamp forest to enhance habitat for wildlife of conservation concern (e.g., bald eagles and prothonotary warblers). Protect 189 acres of tidal freshwater marsh for migrating and wintering waterbirds and waterfowl. Work with partners to promote James River health. 	<p>In addition to alternative A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an index of forest integrity to establish what habitat features should be inventoried, monitored, and maintained as forested wetlands. Partner with VDGIF to evaluate opportunities to enhance migrating and wintering waterfowl habitat on and adjacent to the refuge. Identify and prioritize locations for restoration plantings to offset loss of refuge lands to erosion or catastrophic storm events.
Upland Habitats	
<p>Continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage 46 acres of mature mixed mesic forest and 20 acres of transitional mixed mesic forest to benefit migratory birds of conservation concern. Maintain 200 acres of grassland habitat for migratory birds of conservation concern. Control invasive species. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain integrity, diversity, and health of 46 acres of mature mixed mesic forest to provide habitat for forest interior dwelling birds of conservation concern. Allow 200 acres of grassland to succeed to native forest. Control invasive species. Enhance and protect the refuge's 11 acres of river escarpment to benefit species of conservation concern.
Cultural Resources	
<p>Continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect known archaeological sites to avoid unintended impacts through outreach, enforcement, and limiting public access. Maintain partnerships and museum collections and archival materials to increase our knowledge and understanding of the refuge's cultural resources and history. 	<p>In addition to alternative A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to develop strategies that emphasize prevention and mitigation of significant cultural resource loss. Through field investigations, walkover surveys, and a landscape study, identify, evaluate, and record additional cultural resources on the refuge. Weave cultural resources information and Virginia Indian perspectives into educational and interpretive communications.
Environmental Education and Wildlife-dependent Recreation	
<p>Continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide environmental education programs on the refuge for up to 120 students annually in partnership with the James River Association. Conduct environmental education programs off the refuge approximately two times per year. Conduct on and off-refuge interpretive programs for about 400 people per year. Implement the annual 3-day shotgun deer hunt in the fall for a maximum of 120 hunters. Provide opportunities for wildlife observation and photography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the Ecology School with the James River Association to provide meaningful outdoor experiences. Increase environmental education opportunities for up to 2,000 students annually. Assist partners with off-refuge environmental education programs up to four times per year. Enhance interpretive programs, displays, and materials and increase participation by 20 percent. Continue to implement the current deer hunt, but include flexibility to adjust number of hunt days from three to five. Evaluate opportunities to open the refuge to turkey hunting, and a youth deer or turkey hunt.



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

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Federal Relay Service for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing
1 800/877 8339

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Presquile National Wildlife Refuge Vision Statement

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge exemplifies the majesty of our natural world and the significance of the Lower James River as a major tributary of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Throughout the year, bald eagles perch on the island's forested shores and survey the rich assemblage of wildlife: the wake of the prehistoric sturgeon heading to spawn each spring, basking turtles in the warm spring sun, colorful warblers darting amongst trees all summer, and thousands of wintering waterfowl resting in the quiet waters of the winding river.

This isolated island bridges the modern world to its long and storied history of people connecting to the land. The joyful sound of children learning in the natural classroom echoes through the forest in this gateway to wild places. Stewardship fostered here generates action beyond the river in communities across their watershed.



Presquile Refuge - Daniel Lay



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