



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge

*Planning Update Number 2, April 2011*



*Lazuli bunting* / ©Scott Carpenter

## Thank You For Participating

Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge is developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated environmental assessment. Upon completion, the CCP will guide refuge management for 15 years. This planning update provides information on the status of the planning process and summarizes what we heard from the public and agencies during scoping.

In November 2010, we distributed Planning Update 1 to a wide range of individuals, organizations and government agencies. Planning

Update 1 included background information on the refuge, described the CCP planning process, and identified preliminary issues to be addressed in the CCP. We invited you to get involved by providing your comments at public meetings, by telephone or in person, or in writing by email, fax, or postal mail.

During November and December 2010, we held one agency and two public scoping meetings to solicit comments concerning development of the CCP. The three meetings had a total of 116 participants, most of whom

provided comments. In addition, we received written comments from 114 individuals, agencies, and organizations. We read through every comment and we appreciate your thoughtful suggestions and heartfelt concerns.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas with us. Your continued participation will be critical to the success of the CCP.

*Chris Lapp*  
Acting Refuge Manager  
Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge



*Bufflehead*  
©Bjorn Fredrickson

## In this issue

Review of Comments  
Draft Refuge Vision Statement  
Draft Refuge Goals  
Next Steps

# Your Comments Covered Many Issues

## Wildlife and Habitat Management

The refuge manages habitat for native fish and wildlife. Many commenters urged the refuge to maintain, expand and improve native habitats. They noted that the refuge has substantial gaps in habitat and several areas where connectivity between habitats is narrow. Management plans and actions should reduce fragmentation and re-connect native habitats. Some people also expressed concern about disturbance to sensitive species and urged that habitats away from public use areas be managed for minimal disturbance. Elk, deer, and waterfowl management attracted many comments due to economic damage they cause on private lands.

## Restoration to Natural Water Regimes

Numerous commenters encouraged the removal of dikes and water control structures and the return to natural water regimes regulated by the Tualatin River and its tributaries. They urged the refuge to restore floodplain areas that historically supported native habitats of the Willamette Valley such as wetlands, wet prairies, and riparian forests. They believed that allowing the river and its tributaries to dictate inundation heights and frequencies would support a diversity of fish and wildlife species and habitats, including aquatic habitats. They said that appropriate restoration of these habitats should support salmon and other native fish recovery, as well as other species like western pond turtles. Comments regarding the use of prescribed fire as a restoration tool were a mixture of support and opposition. Some participants expressed concerns about the potential effects of climate change on refuge habitats and species.

## Non-native/Invasive Plants & Animals

Non-native and/or invasive plants and animals on the refuge degrade habitats and directly impact native wildlife. Many commenters noted that the need to control plant and animal invasive species is a complex, long-term challenge for the refuge. Bullfrogs, nutria, and feral cats, in particular, were identified as priority species for management. Some commenters were specific about the kind of management they would support, such as trapping or lethal removal.

## Public Access and Public Use Facilities

The refuge offers wildlife-dependent public use opportunities while also protecting wildlife and habitat. Many commenters suggested improvements to refuge public use facilities or ideas for new facilities, particularly at the Wapato Lake Unit. The desire for more trails on the refuge, trails to the refuge from surrounding areas, and public access to the Tualatin River to launch canoes and kayaks were frequent comments. Commenters urged integration of the refuge into regional trail plans, such as the Tonquin Trail and the Tualatin River Water Trail, to provide foot, bicycle and small watercraft access to and from the refuge. Several commenters supported expansion of the refuge's environmental education program. Those who commented on the idea of an entrance fee and/or user fees for specific activities were either opposed, fearing it would discourage refuge visitation and harm community relations, grudgingly supportive of fees as necessary to provide sustainable funding for public use programs and facilities, or generally supportive.

## Wapato Lake Water Management

Wapato lakebed management is an issue of great concern. Commenters addressed lakebed management from a variety of perspectives, ranging from habitat restoration opportunities to the future of the Wapato Improvement District and a continued supply of irrigation water to agricultural lands. Some commenters advocated for the removal of dikes, water control structures and pumps, and a return to natural water regimes. Other commenters requested assurance that infrastructure would be maintained and that the past water management and irrigation water delivery would continue into the future. Clean Water Services, the Joint Water Commission, and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality wanted assurances that over the long term, even if more natural water management is selected as the preferred alternative in the CCP, poor-quality water will not be released into the Tualatin River.

## Hunting and Fishing

Waterfowl, upland bird, and big game hunting were of notable interest. Commenters described inadequate hunting opportunities on public lands in western Oregon, particularly the Portland metropolitan area, and their strong interest in seeing opportunities provided on the refuge. They said that refuge acquisition of the Wapato Lake Unit came with public expectations that it would offer hunting and fishing opportunities. Many hunting advocates mentioned the potential for special hunts, such as early season hunts and hunts for youth and disabled persons. Many other respondents expressed equally strong opinions in opposition of establishing hunting programs on the refuge. They stated that the refuge is too small to safely accommodate hunting and that it should be a sanctuary for wildlife. A number of commenters supported a fishing program on the refuge.

## Community Partnerships

Several commenters cited the importance of the refuge actively collaborating with other natural resource planning and management ventures in the region, including Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife management programs, Metro, neighboring public and private natural areas, and the statewide Oregon Conservation Strategy, Willamette Synthesis Planning Project, and Portland/Vancouver Area Regional Conservation Strategy. They said it is important to work cohesively in the management of a network of wildlife conservation areas and to engage in research that enables managers to better understand, assess the effects of, and respond to climate change. Other commenters identified additional ways in which volunteers could be engaged on the refuge. Still other commenters recommended new public or private partnerships to achieve refuge management goals.



For a comprehensive look at all of the comments we received, go to our website at:

[www.fws.gov/tualatinriver/refugeplanning](http://www.fws.gov/tualatinriver/refugeplanning)

Western tiger  
swallowtail  
©Ed Bustya



## Draft Refuge Vision Statement An image of the future

*Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge is a natural treasure where an abundance of native wildlife thrive in a mosaic of wetland, prairie, forest and stream habitats characteristic of the Willamette Valley that the Atfalat'i people knew. The refuge is a sanctuary for both wildlife and people, a place where the ebb and flow of the river marks the natural rhythms of the refuge through the seasons. It's a special place, an icon where the stories of the refuge reflect the importance of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The refuge has a rich history of community vision where friends and neighbors helped create, and continue to care for, this urban refuge and the watershed that supports it. It's a model that combines excellence in landscape conservation, learning, and partnerships to strive for a healthy natural world. Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge is a place where rich traditions, outdoor learning experiences, and discovery foster a love of and caring for nature that endures for generations to come.*



Spotted sandpiper chick / ©Bjorn Fredrickson

## Draft Refuge Goals

*The CCP planning team has drafted a series of goals and is now developing objectives and strategies to meet these goals and to address the concerns identified during scoping. Included below are key aspects of our draft goals.*

- Maintain, enhance, and restore a variety of habitats of the historic Willamette Valley ecosystem to support breeding and migratory land birds, water birds, and other native species. These habitats include: bottomland riparian forest; mixed coniferous/deciduous uplands; oak/pine savanna; and wet and dry meadow prairies.
- Maintain, enhance, and restore a diversity of wetland habitats of the historic Willamette Valley ecosystem to support migratory land birds, water birds and shorebirds with special emphasis on wintering waterfowl.
- Cultivate and maintain cereal grain crops and green pastures as forage for migratory waterfowl and other native species.
- Support the recovery and protection of federal and state listed threatened and endangered species, as well as other special status species.
- Maintain, enhance, and where feasible, restore in-channel stream and off-channel backwater slough habitats representative of the historic Tualatin River Valley ecosystem to benefit salmon, steelhead, and other native aquatic species.
- Minimize adverse impacts of non-native and nuisance plant and animal species.
- Collect scientific information as necessary to support adaptive management decisions on the refuge.
- Protect and manage the Refuge's cultural resources for their educational, scientific, and cultural values.
- Provide visitors, local residents, volunteers, and partners with opportunities to understand and appreciate the purpose, ecology, and management of the refuge, the Refuge System, and fish and wildlife conservation.
- Provide students and teachers from the greater Portland area with compatible and high-quality opportunities to participate in environmental education.
- Provide refuge visitors with diverse, compatible, and high-quality opportunities to participate in wildlife observation and photography.
- Provide refuge visitors with compatible and high-quality opportunities to participate in hunting and fishing.
- Improve safe and easy public access to, from, and within the refuge.
- Provide opportunities for local communities and their citizens to be involved with and actively support fish and wildlife conservation, as well as claim ownership in and assist with the refuge purpose and programs.



Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge  
19255 SW Pacific Highway  
Sherwood, OR 97140

## 4

### Next Steps for the CCP

**Developing Alternatives:** A preliminary set of alternatives, with detailed objectives and strategies by goal, is under development by the planning team and will be completed in June 2011.

**Reviewing Preliminary Alternatives with the Public:** A planning update summarizing the preliminary alternatives will be distributed to the public in July 2011.

**Preparing a Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment:** A draft CCP with accompanying environmental analysis will be released for public review and comment in Spring 2012.

Questions or Concerns? Please contact us.  
Chris Lapp, Acting Refuge Manager  
Phone: 503-625-5944  
Email: [tualatincep@fws.gov](mailto:tualatincep@fws.gov)

