

Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 1: CCP Overview and Issues Workbook

Comprehensive Conservation Planning

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is starting work on a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge. The plan will establish management goals and objectives for all refuge programs over the next 15 years. For example, our wildlife, habitat, land protection and visitor services programs will all be evaluated during the planning process.

This planning project provides a unique opportunity for the Service to involve individuals and local communities in the long-term management of the refuge. You can play a significant role in the development of this far-reaching plan!

Who Will Be Involved in Developing the Plan?

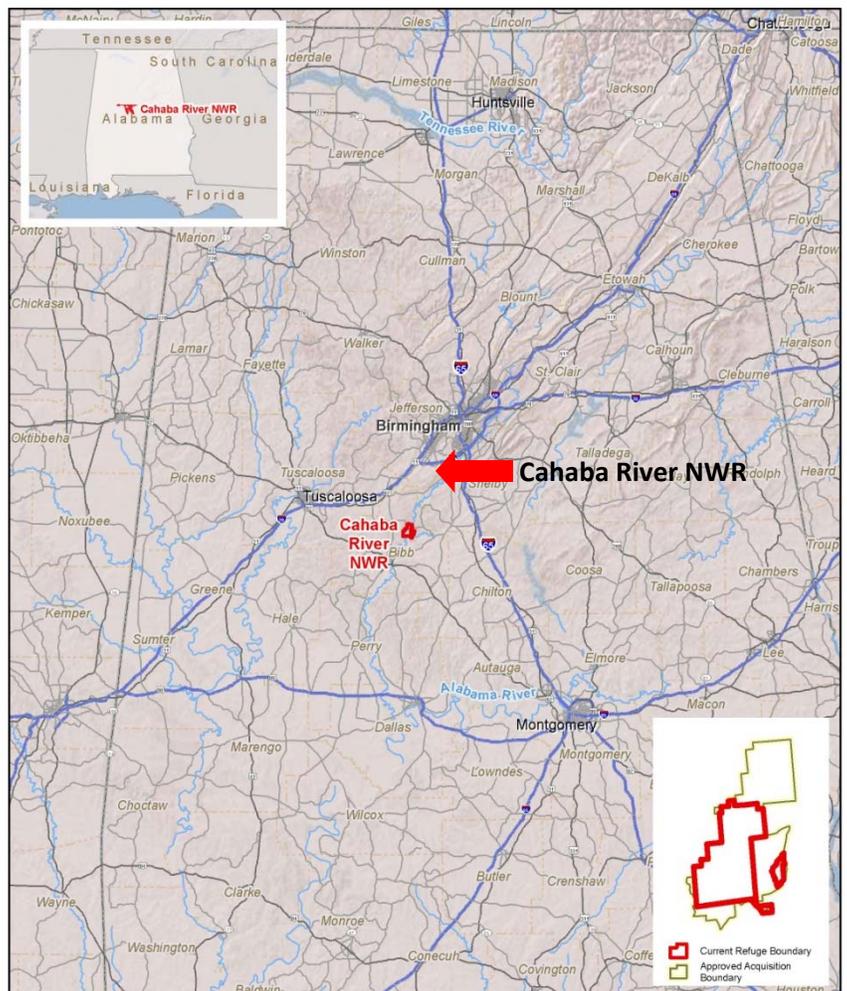
Refuge staff in Anniston and Decatur, Alabama will lead the effort, with assistance from the Service's Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta. We will invite other Service experts, as well as representatives from the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, to serve on our core planning team.

We hope that you, and other interested groups and individuals, will participate in this planning process. We would like to hear your thoughts on current management, your vision for the future of the refuge's biological and public use programs, or any other issues of importance to you. We hope to engage local residents and community leaders in discussing ways the refuge could become a welcome and integral part of the community. Please let us know how we can reach you with further details by completing the mailing information on the back of this newsletter.

How Can I Get Involved?

The Issues Workbook, starting on page 3, is an attempt to jump start your involvement. We will also provide other forums to facilitate public participation. Below is a list of options we intend to use. We would be interested to know if you have other ideas you would like us to pursue.

- Hold open houses (see next page)
- Develop informational newsletters
- Participate in civic and professional group events
- Give presentations at community leadership meetings
- Write feature articles
- Provide status updates on refuge website



Planning Newsletter

Upcoming Open Houses

At least one open house will be held in the vicinity of the refuge in early 2013. During the open house, there will be the opportunity to speak with refuge and planning staff, as well as time to provide comments on issues, concerns, and opportunities to explore during the CCP planning process.

For more information, contact the refuge by phone at: (256) 848-6833.

All facilities are fully accessible.

What is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, part of the Department of the Interior, is the principle Federal agency responsible for conserving protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. The Service also manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for the protection of fish and wildlife populations and habitats. Refuges provide important habitats for native plants and animals, facilitating the preservation of threatened or endangered species. Refuges also offer a wide variety of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, and many have visitor centers, interpretive trails, and environmental education programs.

What should I know about Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge?

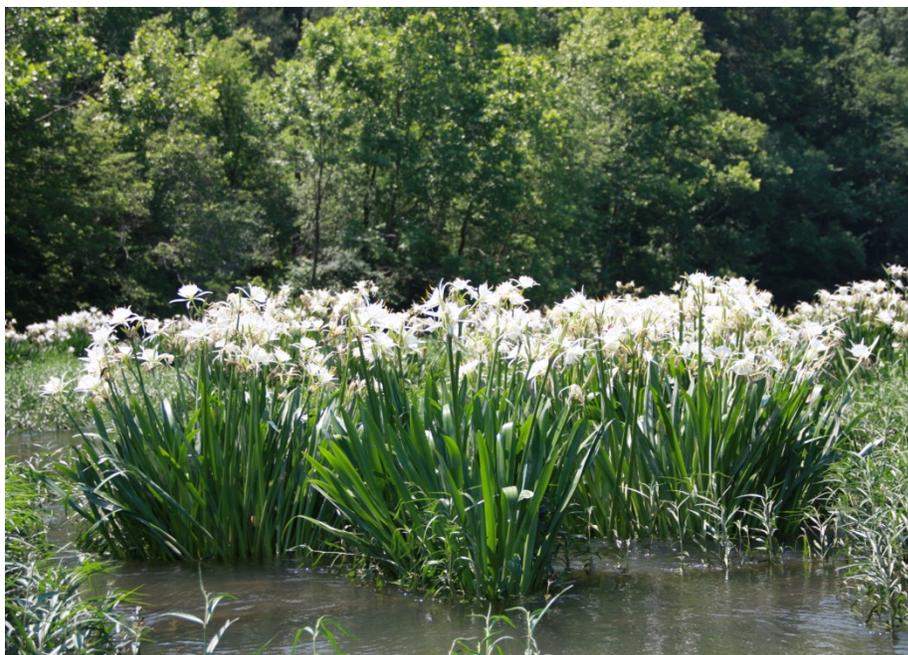
The 3,600-acre Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) lies just north of the confluence of the Little and Cahaba Rivers, about five miles east of West Blocton, Alabama. Habitats on the refuge include longleaf pine forests, loblolly plantations, mixed hardwood-pine forests, mesic hardwoods, bottomland hardwoods, and other wetland types.

Current refuge goals include:

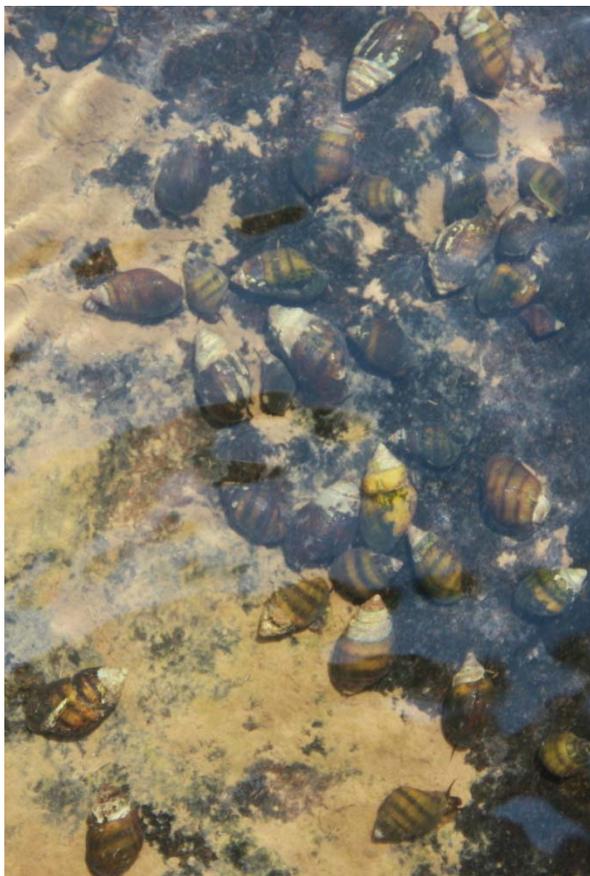
- Preserve and manage a unique section of the biologically significant Cahaba River.
- Protect and manage habitat for five federally listed species including the Cahaba shiner, goldline darter, round rocksnail, and cylindrical lioplax snail.
- Restore planted loblolly pine to native mountain longleaf pine.
- Develop and implement environmental education and interpretation programs focusing on ecosystem management and stewardship.

Management includes: habitat restoration, community partnerships, law enforcement, education/interpretation, and research.

Public use opportunities include hunting, fishing, canoe access to the Cahaba River, wildlife observation and photography along several trails, and environmental education.



Cahaba lily shoals - USFWS



Various aquatic snails (genus Elimia) from the Cahaba River- USFWS



Bird's foot violet (Viola pedata)- USFWS

Let's Get Started...

Participation by you and other interested groups and individuals is critical to the success of this planning process. Only then can we develop effective management which reflects your interests.

At this early stage in the planning process we are seeking your input via public meetings and this Issues Workbook. Our intent is to hear directly from folks like you - to learn how you feel about the refuge, any issues or concerns you might have, as well as your ideas for getting things done.

The following workbook will be available at the public meetings, and will be shared with refuge visitors, neighbors, and partners who may not be able to attend the meetings. We have compiled a list of questions to provide a basis for comparing your comments with others we receive.

Please answer any or all questions that are important to you. Feel free to add additional comments in the space provided. Give us a call, email or write us at the address below. The comments we receive in the workbooks and at the public meetings will help us identify issues and develop goals and objectives.

Questions on Values, Vision and the Service's Role

1. How many days do you visit Cahaba River refuge each year? ____ 0 - 4 days ____ 5 - 10 days ____ 11 - 24 days ____ 25 - 49 days ____ 50 + days
2. What are your favorite activities to engage in while visiting the refuge? What areas of the refuge do you usually visit?
3. What do you value most about the refuge?

Questions on Values, Vision and the Service's Role Continued

4. What do you consider to be the most important problem facing the refuge?

5. Have you participated in any refuge-sponsored events or activities? If so, which ones?

6. What technical services would you like refuge staff to provide to your local community? (Check if appropriate)

Longleaf pine management/restoration ____

Management of endangered species ____

Habitat management to benefit wildlife ____

Land protection funding ____

Control of invasive plant and animal species ____

Volunteer opportunities ____

Grants for habitat management ____

Other (please specify): _____

Questions on Recreation and Public Access

While fish, wildlife, and plant conservation is the refuge's primary purpose, some public uses can be allowed when they do not impact these resources. In fact, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 identifies six priority, wildlife-dependent public uses to receive enhanced consideration on national wildlife refuges: environmental education and interpretation, fishing, hunting and wildlife observation and photography. These six uses will be evaluated in this planning process.

According to Service policy, only those public uses that are "compatible" with the purpose(s) for which a refuge was established are allowed. Compatibility with refuge purpose(s) is determined by the refuge manager, based on an evaluation of:

- Anticipated impacts to natural resources;
- Whether safety among and between users can be maintained; and,
- Whether the refuge has the budget and staffing resources to administer the activity

Cahaba River refuge has active programs for hunting, wildlife observation, and photography. Environmental education and interpretation activities are limited, given the small staff. This planning process will evaluate opportunities within each of these programs.

7. Are any of these activities, or current levels of use on the refuge, a concern?

8. In your opinion, what other wildlife-related activities should occur on the refuge?



Freshwater mussels of the Cahaba River USFWS



Canoeing the Cahaba River - USFWS



Environmental education - USFWS

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8. In your opinion, what other wildlife-related activities should occur on the refuge?

9. Do our recreational facilities meet your needs? (trails, , signs, etc.) Please explain.

10. Please include here any additional comments on recreation, education, and public access.



Southern rosinweed (Silphium asteriscus) USFWS



Largemouth Bass- USFWS



Snapping Turtle- USFWS

Questions on Natural Resources Conservation

The Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge provides excellent wildlife habitat for threatened and endangered aquatic species, migratory birds, resident fish and wildlife, and a variety of plant species. This plan will emphasize the need to conserve, protect, and enhance these habitats and the species dependent on them.

11. Are there other areas within the vicinity of the refuge that, in your opinion, need protection? If so please list them here, and explain why you think they are important.

12. Which options should the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursue in protecting important habitats in the vicinity of the refuge? (Please check up to 3 choices)

- Land acquisition
- Conservation easements; e.g. purchasing development rights
- Partnerships with private land owners
- Work with conservation groups
- Environmental education
- Grants programs
- Habitat restoration
- No active involvement
- Other (please specify)



Wood Thrush- USFWS



Georgia aster (*Symphotrichum georgianum*)
USFWS

12. How do you feel about the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service acquiring land from willing sellers in the Cahaba River NWR area?

13. In your opinion, which species or habitats should be a management priority?

14. Are any of the following natural resource issues a concern to you in the Cahaba River NWR area? If so, please check your top three choices.

- Fragmentation of important habitats
- Invasion of exotic plant and animal species
- Overdevelopment of fragile habitats
- Increased recreational use in sensitive habitat areas
- Water quality
- Lack of active management to improve wildlife habitats
- Other issues (please specify)

15. If possible, please provide additional details on why you selected the above. In particular, we would be interested to know specific locations of concern.

16. Please include here any additional comments on conserving fish and wildlife habitat.

That's it! Thank you for your time.

Mail Issues Workbooks to:

Oliver van den Ende
Refuge Planner
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Wheeler NWR
2700 Refuge Headquarters Drive
Decatur, AL 35806

For Additional Information

Contact the refuge:
Cahaba River NWR
PO Box 5087
407 Baby Bains Gap Road
Anniston, AL 36205
Email: cahabariverccp@fws.gov

IMPORTANT: Now that you are done, please separate pages 3-8 and mail them back to us. We will summarize these public comments, along with those received at the public meeting, in our next newsletter.

If you wish to receive future planning updates about the Cahaba River NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan, please fill in the appropriate information below and return with the Issues Workbook.

_____ (Yes) Keep me on your mailing list/add me to your mailing list

_____ (No) Take me off your mailing list.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State _____ Zip Code: _____

If you are acting in an official capacity as the representative of an organization please complete the following two items.

Organization: _____

Title: _____

IMPORTANT: Please note that names on the CCP mailing list become part of the public record for this project. The Service must release names, only if requested, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974. To retain you on our mailing list we need your permission. Please sign below.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov>

February 2012

