

Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 2: Public and Inter-agency Scoping

Greetings from the Refuge

This is the second Planning Update from the refuge to keep you informed and involved regarding the comprehensive conservation planning process for Cahaba River refuge.

Inter-agency Participation

The intergovernmental scoping phase of the CCP process was conducted during May 2012. Local, state, federal agencies, and Tribe representatives were invited to submit their issues, concerns, and ideas.

Thank You for Participating

Thank you to everyone who took part in the February 2013 public scoping meeting held at the Cahaba Lily Center in West Blocton, as well as those who provided comments through other means.

Public Scoping

We began the Comprehensive Conservation Planning (CCP) process in late 2011 and held a public scoping meeting in February 2013. The purpose was to introduce the public to the refuge and the CCP process, and to hear the public's comments and concerns about Cahaba River NWR.

Around 10 people attended the public scoping session with approximately 50 comments received during the scoping period. These comments are grouped into four main categories: wildlife and habitat management, resource protection, public use, and refuge administration.

Wildlife and habitat management comments included the need for:

- reintroduction of listed species,
- increased control of invasive species,
- increased forest management,
- a survey for the glades ecosystem within the refuge,
- more prescribed burning, and
- increased longleaf pine habitat connectivity.

Resource protection comments included the need for:

- increased partnership efforts to improve water quality and
- acquiring additional lands within the acquisition boundary.

Public use comments included the need for:

- access to the eastern/southern portions of the refuge,
- improved access via existing roads/trails,
- evaluating waterfowl hunting on the refuge,
- evaluating deer gun hunting on the refuge,
- educational programs,
- increased interpretive programs,
- benches and bathrooms,
- a wildlife drive, and
- improvements to River Trace Road

Refuge administration comments included the need for:

- increased staff,
- improvements to roads (e.g. Belcher Road), and
- increased prescribed fire management.

Vision Statement and Goals

The Service has developed a draft refuge Vision Statement, as well as draft refuge Goals.

Draft Vision Statement

Clear waters flow through shoals of blossoming Cahaba lilies, while vast stands of mountain longleaf pine cover the slopes of nearby hills. These vistas are part of the vision of Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge, which through collaborative efforts with volunteers and partners will be managed to conserve, enhance and restore native aquatic and terrestrial communities to support a diversity of plants and wildlife, including a host of threatened, endangered, and imperiled species. Cahaba River refuge will provide the public with a broad range of opportunities to appreciate and enjoy a biologically diverse and disappearing southern landscape.



Cahaba lilies – P. Graves

Draft Management Goals

For refuges, goals are descriptive and often broad statements of desired future conditions. The following draft goals have been developed for the refuge:

Goal 1: Conserve and restore the Cahaba River native aquatic habitats on and adjacent to the refuge to support native species, including T&Es, and imperiled species.

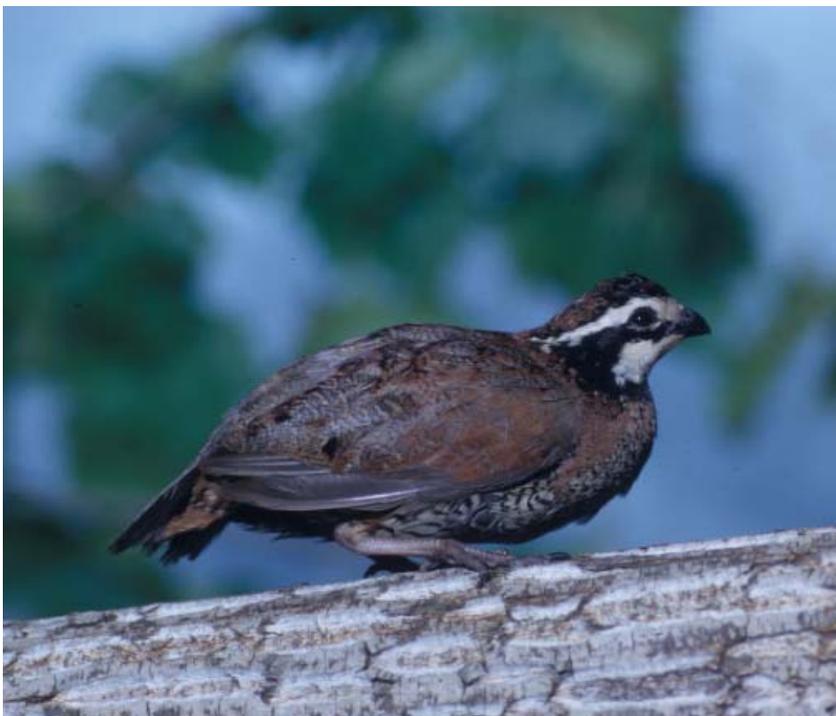
Goal 2: Conserve and restore native plant communities to support native species, including state- and federally-listed, and imperiled species.

Goal 3: Restore and enhance populations of native aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species.

Goal 4: Develop, and maintain recreational and educational opportunities to promote an understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife conservation.

Goal 5: Promote public awareness, through the use of volunteers and increased cooperation with partners, of the resources of the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System and encourage public participation in the conservation of those resources.

Goal 6: Adequately protect biological and cultural resources and refuge infrastructure.



Bobwhite Quail - USFWS



Smooth phlox (*Phlox carolina*) - USFWS

For Additional Information

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov>

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What's Next?

The next phases in the CCP process include:

Development of management alternatives – as required under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Service will consider all of the scoping comments to be “issues to resolve” during the planning process. A range of management alternatives or “ways to manage the refuge” will be developed for analysis in the environmental assessment.

Management Objectives and Strategies - following the environmental assessment, refuge staff will write objectives and strategies to be implemented over the 15-year life of the CCP to achieve the refuge vision and goals in accordance with the purposes for which the refuge was established. While goals are descriptive and often broad statements of desired future conditions, objectives are concise statements of what the refuge wants to achieve and how. Strategies are specific tools and techniques used to achieve objectives (i.e. prescribed fire, exotic plant removal, biological surveys etc.). Refuge objectives and accompanying strategies were developed for all aspects of the refuge, including management of wildlife and habitat, resource protection, public uses, and refuge administration.

Although the official scoping comment period ended in March 2013, comments are welcome at any time during the planning process.



Juvenile copperhead -USFWS