

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Public Scoping Meeting Announced for Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP, 15-year management plan) for Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The first public scoping meeting for the Crystal River NWR CCP was in February 2008. Much has changed for the Refuge and the community since 2008 and the CCP for the Refuge was put on hold in the intervening time. A public workshop was held in January 2011 to specifically address waterway management of Three Sisters Springs. Now, in 2013, we are conducting additional scoping to re-engage the public and to revive development of the future management plan for Crystal River NWR.

Public Scoping Meeting

Topic: **Future Management of Crystal River NWR**

Date: **March 19, 2013**

Time: **Tuesday, 6:00-9:00 pm**

Location: **Magnolia Ballroom
Plantation Inn and Golf Resort
9301 W. Fort Island Trail
Crystal River, FL 34429**

The meeting will address the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP, 15-year management plan) for Crystal River NWR. The meeting is specific to future management of Crystal River NWR. It will not address the restrictions established through rulemaking for the Kings Bay Manatee Refuge or the Kings Bay manatee sanctuaries, since, although they are managed by Crystal River NWR, those specially designated manatee protection areas are not part of the national wildlife refuge.

Priority Issues Raised to Date

Based on previous public scoping and governmental coordination, several priority issues have been identified to date, as listed. The 2013 scoping period will provide additional information and issues for the Refuge to consider in the development of the draft CCP and the Environmental Assessment.

Overarching Issues

- Impacts from increasing and changing ecotourism activities
- Complex jurisdictional issues
- Complex regulatory issues
- Need for strong and effective existing and new partnerships
- Need for enhanced and effective media communications and community relations

Wildlife and Habitat Management

- Declines in and threats to Crystal River NWR habitats, including impacts on water quality and quantity and severe erosion at Three Sisters Springs
- Threats to West Indian manatees
- Lack of wildlife and habitat survey and monitoring

Resource Protection

- Increasing wildlife viewing and associated impacts and disturbance

Visitor Services

- Need for effective outreach and environmental education programs to minimize negative impacts from human activities
- Need for management of access to Three Sisters Springs when manatees are present
- Need for development of the Three Sisters Springs property in accord with the management plan

Refuge Administration

- Lack of sufficient administrative resources to address increasing demands and increasing impacts

What is the Estimated Timeline for CCP Completion?

Planning Phase	Estimated Dates
Conduct Additional Public Scoping	March 2013
Conduct Public Review and Comment on Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment	Early/Mid 2014
Complete Final CCP	Late 2014

2 Key Definitions

With the designation of the Kings Bay Manatee Refuge in 2012, we recognize that there is some confusion between Manatee Refuge and National Wildlife Refuge. We offer two definitions to help differentiate the two separate entities.

Crystal River NWR - part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is a system of lands and waters set aside specifically for the management of fish and wildlife resources. National wildlife refuges can be established by Executive Order by the President, through a Congressional action, or administratively through conservation planning by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. National wildlife refuges are managed under a variety of laws and policies, notably the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (1997), the Refuge Administration Act (1966), and the Refuge Recreation Act (1962). The CCP will address future management of Crystal River NWR.

Kings Bay Manatee Refuge - a special manatee protection area that was designated by an administrative action known as rulemaking under the Endangered Species Act (1973) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972). The Kings Bay Manatee Refuge is not a national wildlife refuge. No federal land or water ownership results from the establishment of a manatee protection area. Although the Kings Bay Manatee Refuge was created by an administrative action and although it is not a national wildlife refuge, it is managed by Crystal River NWR. The CCP will not change the restrictions outlined in the designation of the Kings Bay Manatee Refuge.

How to Get More Information?

- Attend the 3.19.2013 Public Scoping Meeting
- Visit the Refuge's website: <http://www.fws.gov/crystalriver/>
- Email: CrystalRiverCCP@fws.gov
- Contact the Refuge Manager, Michael Lusk: 352.563.2088
- Contact the CCP Planner, Cheri Ehrhardt: 321.861.2368

How to Submit Comments?

To comment on future management of Crystal River NWR, please send your **written comments** by:

- email to CrystalRiverCCP@fws.gov;
- mail to Crystal River NWR CCP, PO Box 2683, Titusville, FL 32781-2683;
- fax to 321.861.1276; and/or
- hand delivery
 - to Crystal River NWR, 1502 SE Kings Bay Drive, Crystal River, FL 34429 or
 - at the 3.19.2013 public scoping meeting.

&/or

To comment on future management of Crystal River NWR, please submit your **verbal comments** by:

- attending the public scoping meeting.

We request that scoping comments be received by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by **April 2, 2013** to ensure their consideration in the development of the draft CCP and the Environmental Assessment for Crystal River NWR.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwsHQ, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws>, and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsHQ>.

