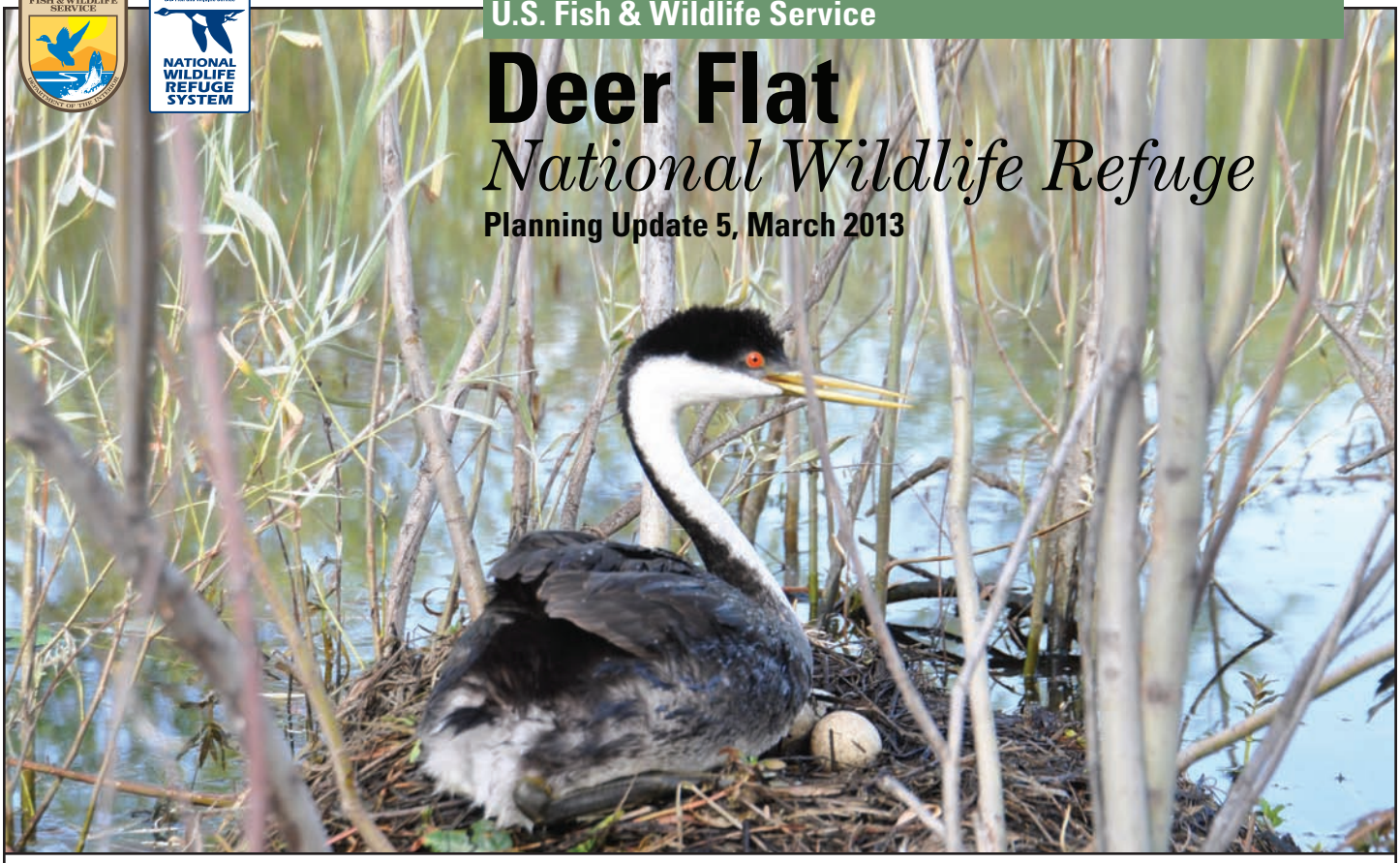
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Deer Flat
National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 5, March 2013



Western grebe / *Addison Mohler, USFWS*

The Refuge's Draft CCP/EIS is Available for Public Comments

Your Comments are Important to Us

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Draft CCP/EIS) for Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is available for public review and comments on our Web site: www.fws.gov/deerflat.

We welcome your review, and invite you to submit written comments by May 15, 2013. See the back page for our mailing and fax information. After the 60-day comment period ends, we will analyze and address your comments in the final CCP/EIS. The final CCP will guide Refuge management actions for 15 years. Actions will be implemented as funding becomes available.

The Draft CCP/EIS was developed to provide reasonable, scientifically grounded guidance for maintaining and improving the Refuge's fish and wildlife habitats, and providing high quality visitor experiences. Details regarding our management of wetland, shrub-steppe, riparian, mudflat, and emergent vegetation habitats, migratory birds, native plants and animals, and public uses, are provided in the Draft CCP/EIS. Four management alternatives are compared side-by-side in a table on pages 2-3, followed by summaries and maps of each alternative. Alternative 1 displays current management, Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative, and Alternatives 3 and 4 expand on the wildlife conservation actions found in Alternative 2.

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Public Involvement

Public comments are due May 15, 2013

Public Open Houses will be held at the Refuge's Visitor Center

at 13751 Upper Embankment Road, Nampa, ID 83686 on . . .

- March 29, 2013, at 12pm-3pm and 6pm-9pm
- March 30, 2013, at 10am-3pm
- April 26, 2013, at 12pm-3pm and 6pm-9pm
- April 27, 2013, at 10am-3pm

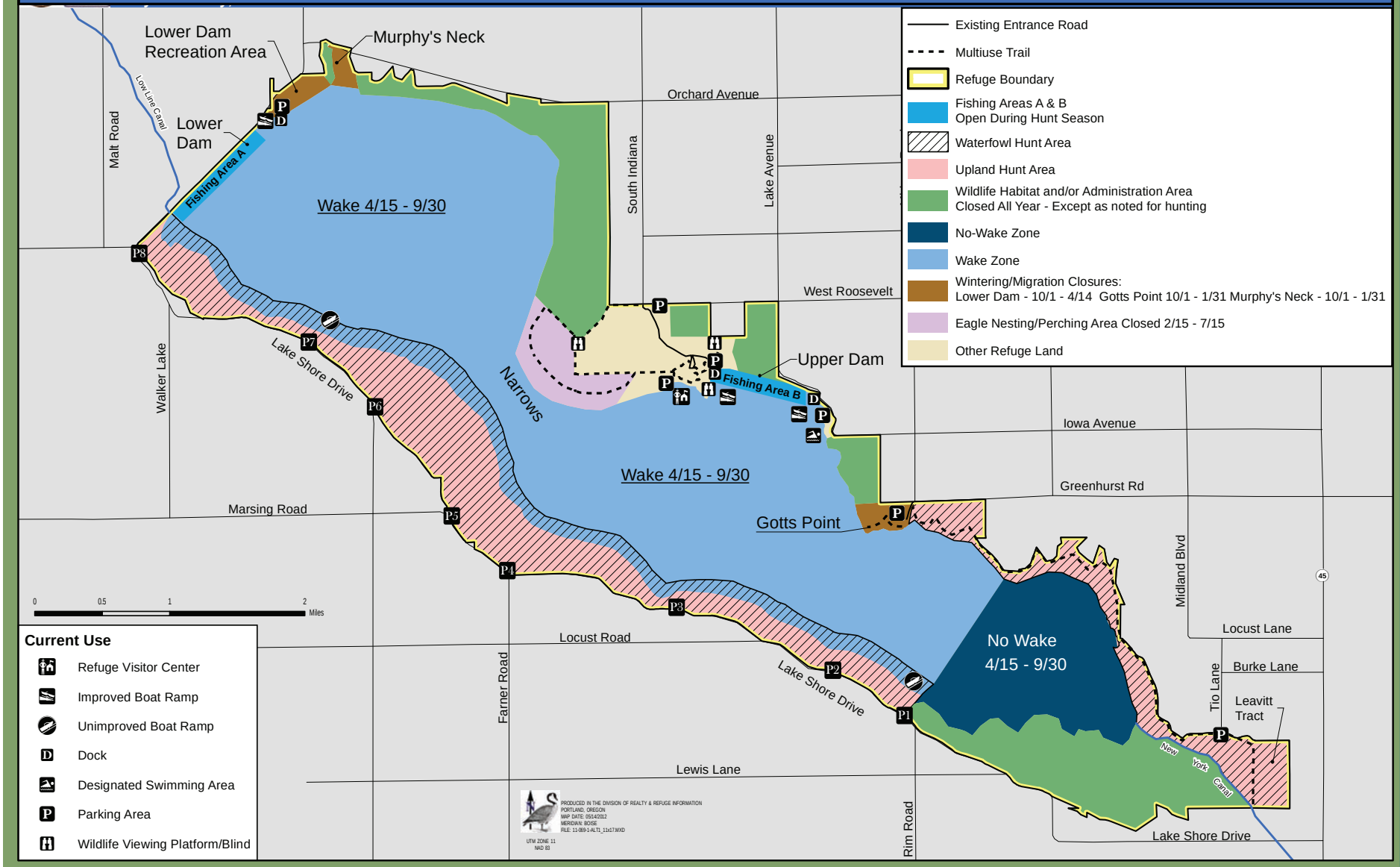
Draft CCP/EIS Alternatives Comparison Table

Topic	Alternative 1 Current Management	Alternative 2 Preferred Alternative	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
How should the Refuge manage public use to protect valuable fish and wildlife resources on the Lake Lowell Unit?				
Recreational Boating	Maintain a no-wake zone at the east end of Lake Lowell (lake).	No-wake zone on the lake east of Parking Lot 1 and Gotts Point. No-wake zone in the narrows and 200-yards from the edge of the vegetation between parking lots 1 and 8.	Wake zone on the west pool noon-sunset, except for a 200-yard no-wake zone on the west pool's south side. No-wake zone in the east pool. All uses subject to mudflat and emergent bed protections.	No-wake zone on the entire lake, except for a closed area on the southeast end, and emergent bed and mudflat closures.
Boating Season	Lake is open 4/15-9/30.		Lake is open 4/15-9/20.	Lake is open 4/15-9/30.
Protection of Emergent Beds	All emergent beds open to public use.	All emergent beds open to public use except a 500-yard closure around active/historic grebe nesting colonies during boating season. Closure in place until 7/15 of following year.	Murphy's Neck, emergent beds from parking lots 3-8, and 500 yards around active/historic grebe nesting colonies closed to public use during boating season.	Murphy's Neck, all emergent beds, and 500 yards around active historic grebe nesting colonies closed to public use during boating season.
Protection of Mudflats	All mudflats open to public use.	Seasonal closure on the east pool shorebird area during low water level (less than 2,522 feet).	100-yard buffer from west pool mudflats is closed to use from 7/15-4/14.	100-yard buffer from west pool mudflats closed all year.
Enhancement of Mudflats	No shoreline tree removal.	Remove 5 to 25 acres of shoreline vegetation adjacent to west pool mudflats.		
Noise	No decibel limit.	Enforce state/county decibel limits.		
Swimming	Swimming allowed at East Upper Dam beach and elsewhere.	Swimming allowed in areas designated at Lower Dam Recreation Area and at Upper Dam only.	Swimming allowed only in area designated at Lower Dam Recreation Area.	Swimming not allowed.
Upland Access and Activities	Access on maintained roads and trails only (except for hunting). Walking, jogging, bicycling, and horseback riding would continue to occur.	Wildlife-dependent activities allowed off-trail in East Side Recreation Area year-round, at Gotts Point 2/1-9/30 and in all other open areas 8/1-1/31. Nonwildlife-dependent activities allowed on designated trails only. Walking, jogging, horseback riding, bicycling, and dogs on-leash.	Only wildlife-dependent activities allowed, except for limited bicycling. Access only on maintained roads and trails (except for hunting).	Only wildlife-dependent activities allowed. Access only on maintained roads and trails (except for hunting).
How should the Refuge protect its valuable fish and wildlife resources on the Snake River Islands Unit?				
Nesting protection	Snake River Islands would be open to public use 6/1-1/31.	Most Refuge islands would be open to public use outside of goose nesting season, from 6/15-1/31. Some Refuge islands (currently 4-6 islands) would open later, on 7/1, to reduce disturbance to nesting herons, gulls, and terns.		

Topic	Alternative 1 Current Management	Alternative 2 Preferred Alternative	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
How will the Refuge provide safe, accessible, high quality, compatible wildlife dependent recreation in the future?				
Wildlife Observation and Photography	Maintain existing observation and trail facilities.	Maintain existing and add trails and observation facilities (see pink icons on map).		
Environmental Education (EE) and Interpretation	Maintain current EE program.	Increase interpretive opportunities. Reduce current EE program by emphasizing on-site programs.		Tailor EE to teachers' needs/Refuge themes.
Lower Dam Recreation Area (LDRA)	Maintain LDRA trails and facilities	Redesign LDRA, include new facilities/trails.		
Upland Game Hunting • **Locations**	Provide upland game hunting at Snake River Islands Unit. Upland game bird hunting at Lake Lowell Unit between Parking Lots 1 and 8, and from the Leavitt Tract's east boundary to the Greenhurst Road entrance.		Provide upland game hunting at Snake River Islands Unit. Upland game bird hunting at Lake Lowell from Leavitt Tract's west boundary to the Greenhurst Road entrance. No upland hunting in emergent beds.	Provide upland game hunting at Snake River Islands Unit. No upland hunting opportunities at Lake Lowell Unit.
Waterfowl Hunting • **Locations**	On Snake River Islands Unit, and on Lake Lowell Unit between Parking Lots 1 and 8, and from the Leavitt Tract's east boundary to the entrance at Greenhurst Road.		Provide at Snake River Islands Unit, and Lake Lowell Unit between Parking Lots 3 and 8.	Provide at Snake River Islands Unit, and on the Lake Lowell Unit between Parking Lots 1 and 8.
• **Shell limit**	No shotgun shell limit.	25 shotgun shells per hunter per day on Lake Lowell Unit.		
• **Type of hunt**	General season hunt.		Establish a controlled hunt (sign in/out or lottery).	General season hunt.
• **Youth hunt**	Provide in all designated waterfowl hunting zones.	Allow youth hunt east of Parking Lot 1 only.	Provide in all designated waterfowl hunting zones.	Allow youth hunt east of Parking Lot 1 only.
Deer Hunting • **Locations**	General season hunt on Snake River Islands Unit. Controlled hunt on Lake Lowell Unit.			
Fishing	From shoreline in all open Refuge areas. During waterfowl hunting season, restricted to Fishing Areas A and B.	Additional shoreline fishing access from designated trails and docks (see map). Access in all open areas of lake. Anglers allowed off-trail in East Side Rec. Area year-round, at Gotts Pt. 2/1-9/30, at Murphy's Neck 3/15-9/30, in all other open areas 8/1-1/31, and from fishing areas A and B 10/1-4/14.	Provide additional shoreline fishing access from designated trails and docks (see map). Access in all open areas of the lake. During waterfowl hunting season, fishing is restricted to Fishing Areas A and B, and to new fishing facilities outside the hunt areas.	Provide additional shoreline fishing access from designated trails/docks. Access in all open areas of lake. During waterfowl hunting season, fishing is restricted to Fishing Areas A, B, and new facilities outside hunt areas.
Fees and Permits	No access fee required.	No access fee required. Evaluate charging visitors an entrance fee and/or a boat launch fee.		
Bass Tournaments	Allow every other weekend from LDRA, 4/15-5/13 and 7/10-9/30.		Allow every other weekend from Upper Dam West, 7/1 thru end of boating season.	
Gotts Point Access	Walk-in only.	Vehicles allowed upon implementation of a law enforcement agreement with the County to reduce illegal activities.		Walk-in only on accessible trail from parking to shoreline trails.

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge | Canyon County, Idaho

Alternative 1 (Status Quo)



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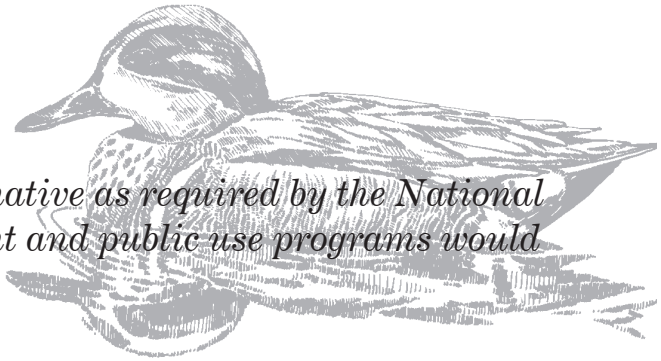


Alternative 1 is the status quo (no action) alternative as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Habitat management and public use programs would continue at current levels under Alternative 1.

Wildlife and Habitat Management

Lake Lowell Unit
Under Alternative 1, the Refuge's wildlife management would continue to involve population monitoring on the Lake Lowell Unit. Habitat management would continue to be focused on invasive species control, with limited restoration. Invasive plant control would be conducted by Refuge staff and volunteers using mechanical, chemical, and biological controls.

A no-wake zone would remain southeast of parking lot 1, and the entire lake would close annually October 1-April 14 for wintering birds. No other on-water protection would be provided for wildlife.

The emergent vegetation along Lake Lowell's shoreline, which provides erosion control, nesting habitat for grebes and other birds, foraging habitat for waterfowl and wading birds, and foraging, nesting, and brood rearing habitat for numerous fisheries, would remain unprotected.

Snake River Islands Unit
Management of wildlife on the Snake River Islands Unit would continue to involve basic population monitoring activities. Because of logistical and staffing limitations invasive species control and/or restoration efforts would be limited on the islands.

Public Use Management

Lake Lowell Unit
Existing public uses would continue, including the Service's six priority wildlife-dependent public uses—hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. Nonwildlife-dependent activities would continue, including horseback riding, biking, jogging, personal watercraft and motorized boating, water skiing, picnicking, and swimming.

Under Alternative 1 there are few actions that would alter when, where, or how public uses would occur at the Refuge. Nearly the entire Refuge would continue to be available for on-trail public recreation, including wildlife observation, photography, jogging, bicycling, on-leash dog walking, and horseback riding.

No additional trail or lake access would be provided. Upland and waterfowl hunting would continue to be allowed between Parking Lots 1 and 8, and from the east boundary of Gotts Point to the east boundary of the Leavitt Tract.

A youth waterfowl hunt would continue to be hosted in current waterfowl hunt zones. Gotts Point would remain closed to vehicular traffic, and limited bank fishing opportunities would exist around the lake. Lake users would continue to participate in numerous surface water recreational activities.

The lake would open to boating on April 15 and close on September 30. The current no wake zone, from Parking Lot 1 east, would remain in place.

Environmental education (EE) would continue on and off the Refuge. Public contact with Refuge staff would remain limited and intermittent due to the small number of Refuge employees. Opportunities for visitors to obtain additional information while visiting the Refuge would remain largely dependent on kiosks, brochures, and the availability of volunteers.

Snake River Islands Unit
Existing public uses would continue, on the Snake River Islands Unit including wildlife observation, and deer, upland, and waterfowl hunting. The unit is open June 1-January 31 for shoreline fishing and other off-trail, free-roam activities.

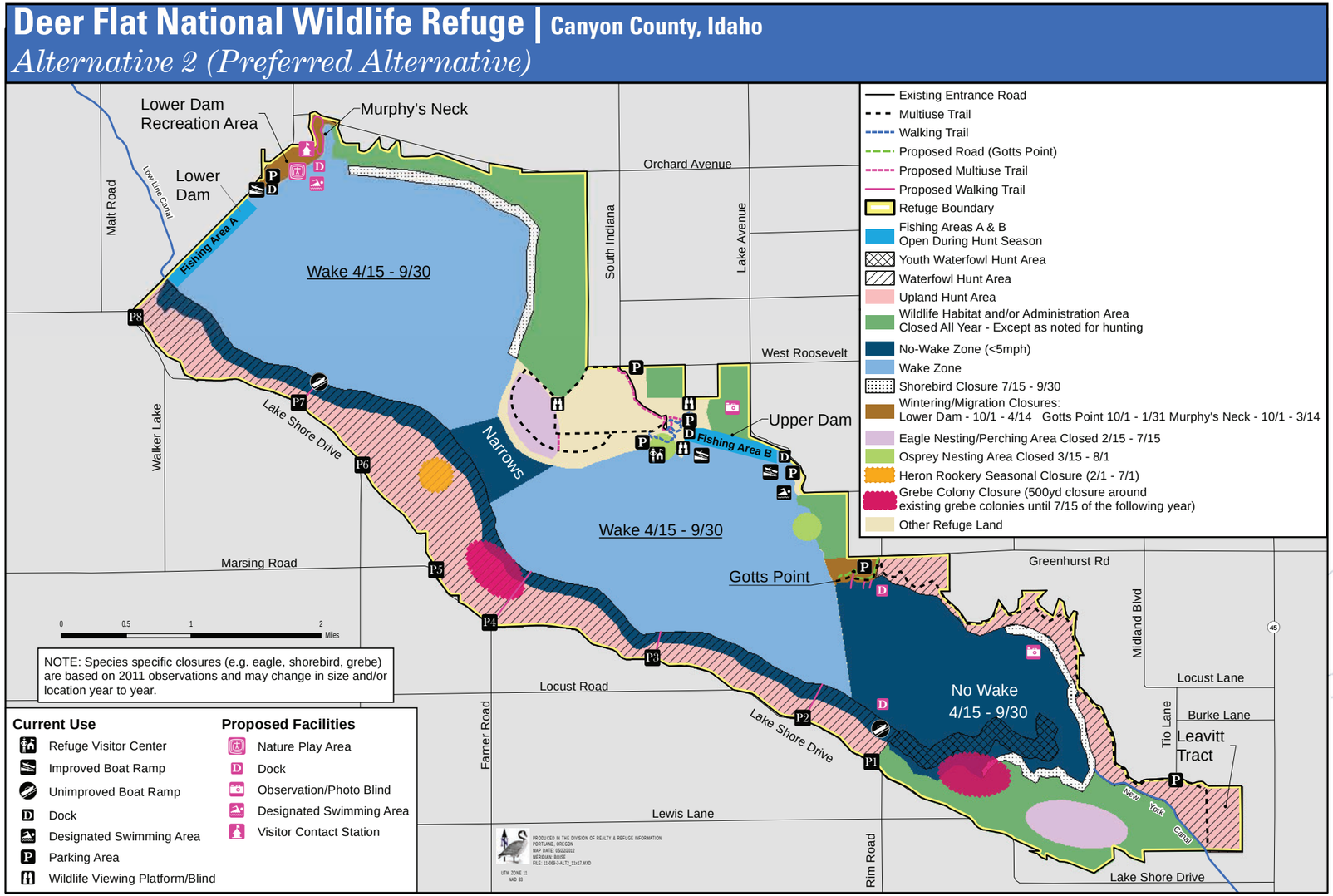
Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, our preferred alternative, we would close habitats seasonally to protect wildlife, and provide almost all existing upland and on-water recreation.

Wildlife and Habitat Management

Under Alternative 2 we would provide needed protections for lake-dependent wildlife by establishing a 200-yard no-wake zone along the lake's south side, between parking lots 1 and 8. The entire lake would continue to be closed October 1-April 14 annually, for wintering and migrating birds. No-wake zones would be established in the Narrows. The existing no-wake zone on the lake's southeast end would be expanded to start between Gotts Point and parking lot 1. In the no-wake zones, boats would be allowed to travel at speeds that do not create a wake, generally less than 5 mph. We would also close some areas seasonally, to protect migratory birds, such as heron rookeries, eagle nests, and nesting grebe colonies. Specific wildlife and habitat management objectives under Alternative 2 follow.

- Maintain 100 acres and enhance 250 acres of emergent wetland plant beds along the shoreline.
- Maintain 350 acres and enhance 560 acres of mudflats to benefit migrating shorebirds.
- Maintain and enhance 6,430 acres of open-water habitat to benefit migrating, nesting, and wintering waterfowl and waterbirds.
- Maintain 520 acres and enhance 1,200 acres of riparian forest habitat at Lake Lowell Unit.
- Maintain 70 acres and enhance 85 acres of nonlake wetlands to improve water quality and diversify habitats.
- Maintain 520 acres and enhance 300 acres of sage-steppe at the Lake Lowell Unit to benefit migrating loggerhead shrikes, sage thrashers, burrowing owls, and other species.
- Maintain and enhance Refuge islands through seasonal closures and habitat management.
- Maintain grain and forage crops on 250 acres for migratory ducks and geese and resident wildlife.
- Increase invasive species control and monitoring.
- Prioritize habitat management on biologically intact islands.

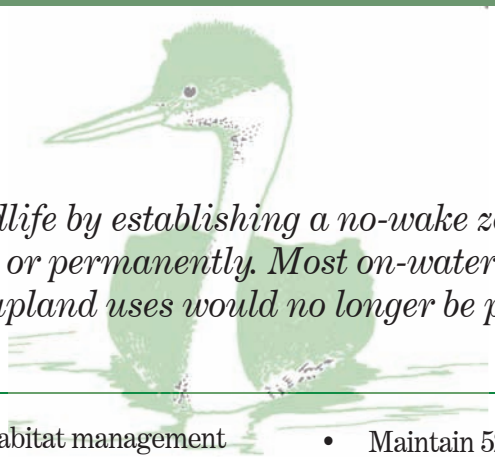


Public Use Management

Under Alternative 2, we would provide a wide range of recreational activities for Refuge visitors, and protect wildlife through no-wake zones and seasonal closures. We would emphasize our six priority wildlife-dependent recreational activities—hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We would also enhance Refuge visitors' experiences and reduce disturbance to wildlife from recreational activities by:

- Developing a visitor contact station, new trails, and a fishing dock/observation platform at the Lower Dam Recreation Area.
- Improving law enforcement at Gotts Point for vehicle use, and improving access to the water's edge for all visitors.
- Emphasizing conservation-oriented activities in interpretive programs that promote the Refuge's purposes and goals and benefit wildlife.
- Providing current hunting areas and a youth hunt southeast of parking lot 1. Waterfowl hunters would be limited to 25 shotgun-shells per day.
- Providing wildlife-dependent uses on-trail year round, off-trail in the East Side Recreation Area year-round, and off-trail in the South Side and North Side Recreation Areas seasonally.
- Providing on-leash dog walking, horseback riding, bicycling, and other nonwildlife-dependent uses on multiuse trails only.
- Not providing on-ice activities or large group and competitive nonwildlife-dependent activities.
- Allowing wake-causing activities outside no-wake zones and seasonally closed areas at speeds greater than 5 mph, in the east and west pools April 15-September 30.
- Allowing swimming in designated swimming areas only.
- Opening heron and gull nesting islands July 1-January 31.
- Opening all other Refuge islands June 15-January 31.

Alternative 3



Under Alternative 3 we would protect wildlife by establishing a no-wake zone in the east pool and closing some habitats seasonally or permanently. Most on-water activities would continue. Several nonwildlife-dependent upland uses would no longer be provided.

Wildlife and Habitat Management

Emergent plant beds at the Lake Lowell Unit's Murphy's Neck and between parking lots 3-8 would be closed year-round. The entire lake would be closed seasonally to protect wintering and migrating birds.

All active and historic grebe nesting colonies would be closed to public use by establishing a 500-yard closure around each colony during boating season. There would be a 100-yard seasonal closure July 15-September 30 to protect shorebird habitat along the shoreline from Murphy's Neck to the Narrows. A 200-yard closed area and 200-yard no-wake zone would protect emergent beds and wildlife on the south side of the west pool. Specific wildlife and habitat management objectives under Alternative 3 follow.

- Maintain 100 acres and enhance 250 acres of emergent plant beds along Lake Lowell's shoreline.
- Maintain 350 acres and enhance 560 acres of mudflats to benefit migrating shorebirds.
- Maintain and enhance 6,430 acres of open-water habitat for migrating, nesting, and wintering waterfowl and waterbirds.
- Maintain 520 acres and enhance 1,200 acres of riparian forest habitat at the Lake Lowell Unit.
- Maintain 70 acres and enhance 85 acres of nonlake wetland basins to diversify wetland habitats and improve water quality.
- Maintain 520 acres and enhance 300 acres of sage-steppe habitat at the Lake Lowell Unit to benefit migrating birds including sage thrasher, loggerhead shrikes, burrowing owls, and other species.
- Maintain and enhance all Refuge islands through seasonal closures and habitat management.
- Maintain 250 acres of grain and forage crops to benefit migratory ducks and geese and resident wildlife.
- Increase invasive plant control and monitoring.
- Prioritize habitat management needs on the most biologically intact islands.

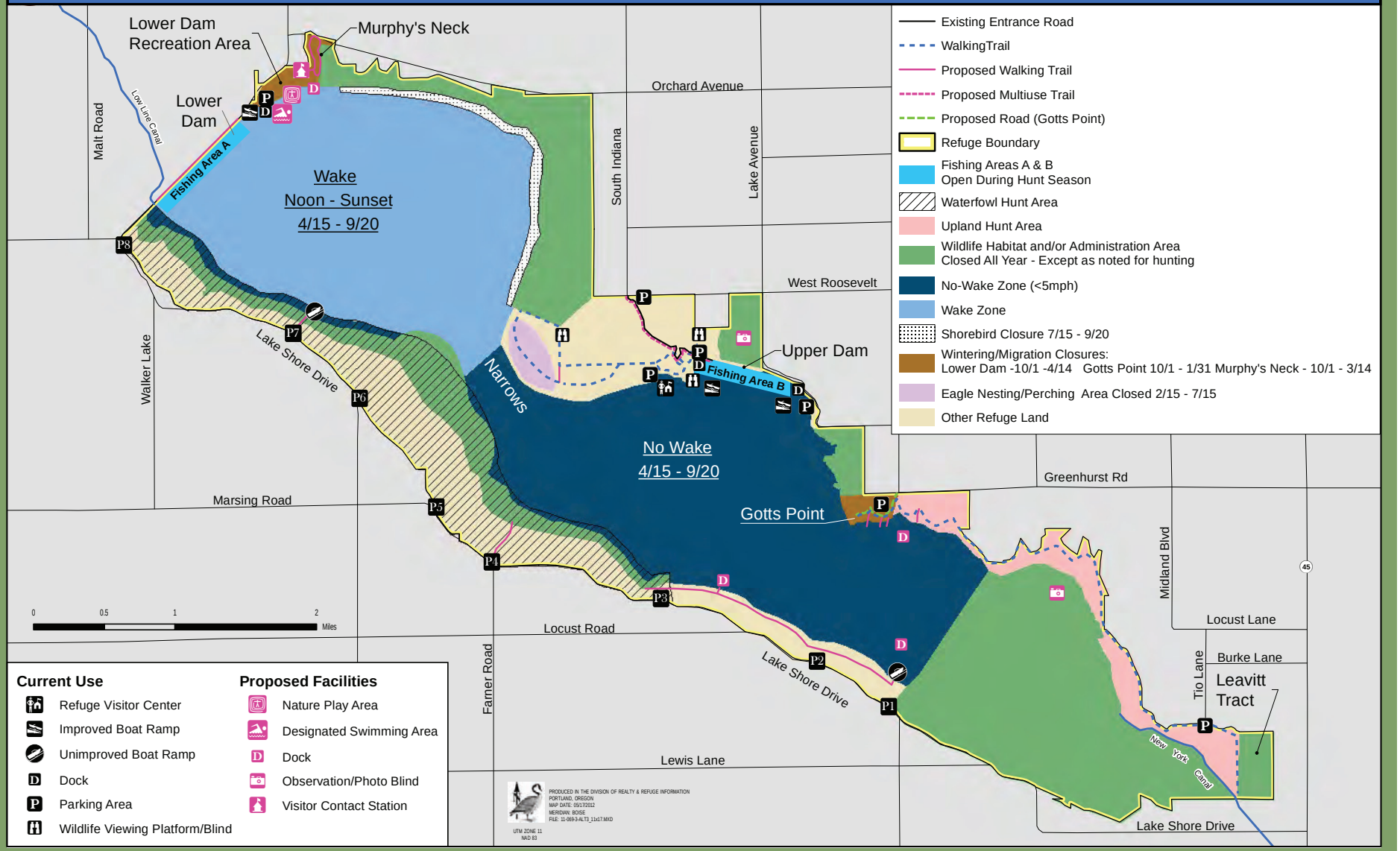
Public Use Management

Under Alternative 3, the lake would be open April 15-September 20 with only no-wake activities allowed in the east pool and wake causing activities allowed from noon to one hour before sunset in the west pool. We would also protect wildlife and enhance visitors' recreational experiences through the following actions.

- Provide a visitor contact station, new trails, and an observation platform/fishing dock at the Lower Dam Recreation Area.
- Open Gotts Point to vehicular traffic after law enforcement issues are adequately addressed. Improve accessibility to the water's edge for all visitors.
- Emphasize the Refuge's purpose and goals in interpretive programs to promote resource awareness; reduce off-site environmental education events.
- Separate upland and waterfowl hunting areas to improve the quality of hunting in these areas. Limit waterfowl hunters to 25 shotgun-shells per day.
- End the boating season on September 20 to improve the quality of the youth hunt.
- Provide wildlife-dependent uses on-trail year-round.
- Develop a wildlife observation and photography boardwalk between parking lots 1 and 3.
- Provide over-water access along the boardwalk on two docks.
- Provide other fishing docks as shown on map.
- No longer provide horseback riding and dog walking.
- Allow bicycling on the trail adjacent to the entrance road only.
- Provide swimming at the Lower Dam Recreation Area only, to increase safety and reduce impacts to anglers.
- Open heron and gull nesting islands July 1-January 31.
- Open all other Refuge islands June 15-January 31.

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge | Canyon County, Idaho

Alternative 3



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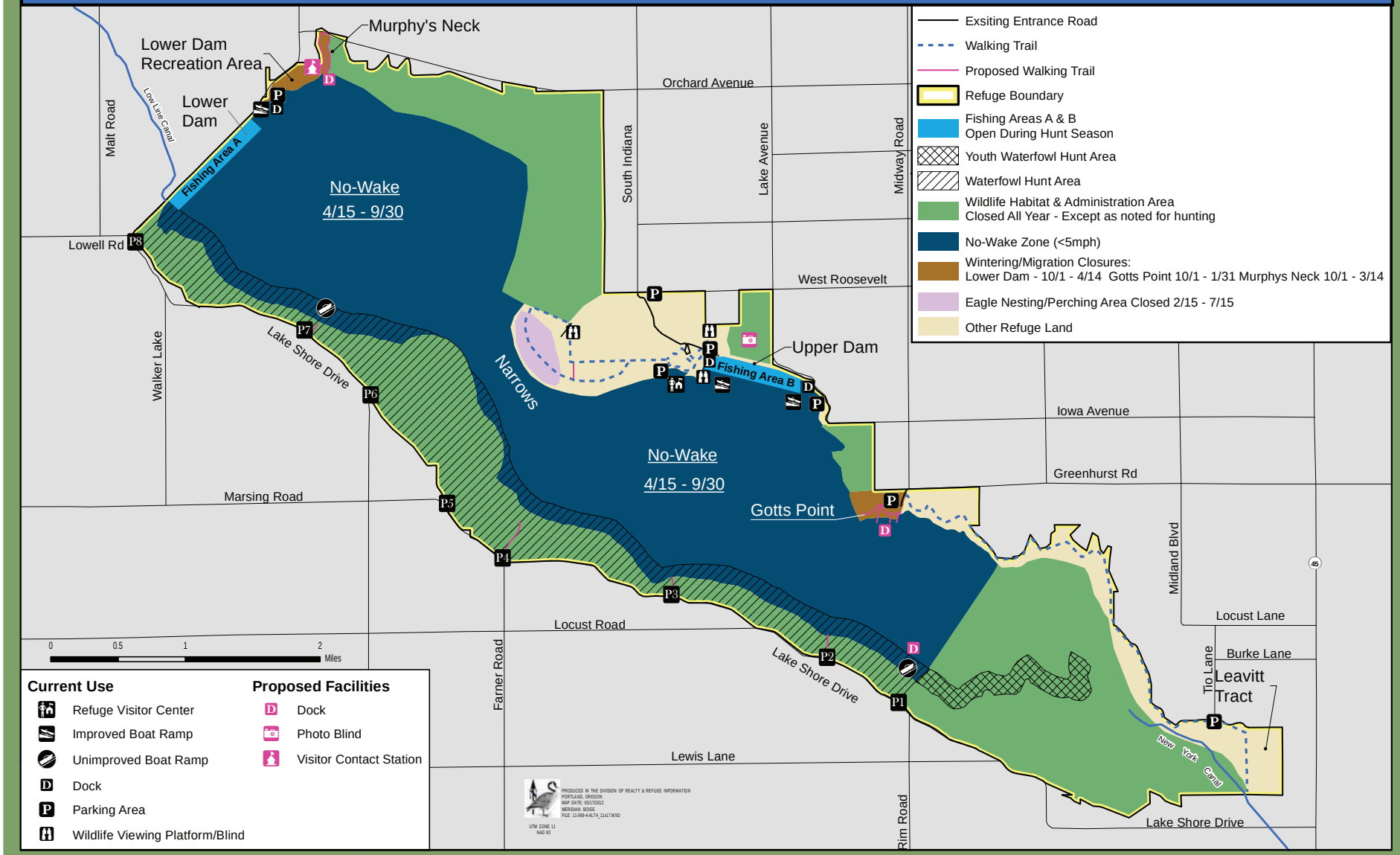
Alternative 4



Alternative 4

Alternative 4 would provide the most wildlife habitat protection through permanent closures of many emergent plant beds and a no-wake zone on all of Lake Lowell. Only wildlife-dependent recreation would be provided on the Refuge.

Wildlife and Habitat Management

Under Alternative 4, we would continue to close Lake Lowell to the public from October 1 to April 14 each year, for wintering and migrating birds. Emergent bed closures and a no-wake zone on all open areas of the lake would provide added protection for nesting, feeding, and resting wildlife in open water and emergent bed habitats. Specific wildlife and habitat objectives in Alternative 4 follow.

- Maintain 100 acres and enhance 250 acres of the lake's emergent plant beds along the shoreline.
- Maintain 350 acres and enhance 560 acres of mudflat habitat to benefit migrating shorebirds.
- Maintain and enhance 6,430 acres of open-water habitat, to benefit migrating, nesting, and wintering waterfowl and waterbirds.
- Maintain the Lake Lowell Unit's riparian forest habitat on 520 acres and enhance it on 1,200 acres.
- Maintain 70 acres and enhance 85 acres of nonlake wetland basins, to diversify wetland habitats and improve water quality.
- Maintain the Lake Lowell Unit's sage-steppe habitat on 520 acres and enhance it on 300 acres, to benefit key migrating birds including sage thrashers, loggerhead shrikes, burrowing owls, and other species.
- Maintain and enhance Refuge islands through seasonal closures and habitat management.
- Maintain grain and forage crops on 250 acres, to benefit migratory ducks and geese, and resident wildlife.
- Increase treatment and monitoring of invasive species.
- Prioritize the habitat management needs of the most biologically intact Refuge Islands.

Public Use Management

Under Alternative 4, we would provide a high level of protection for migratory birds and other species by changing when, where, and how public uses would be allowed. Boating would be allowed at no-wake speeds only, on all areas of Lake Lowell from April 15 to September 30. Several portions of the Refuge would be closed to all public activity (see map).

The Refuge would not provide nonwildlife-dependent activities including horseback riding, dog walking, bicycling, and ice skating.

Under Alternative 4, we identify the following proposals for protecting wildlife and enhancing Refuge visitors' experiences.

- Develop a visitor contact station, trails, and an observation platform/fishing dock at the Lower Dam Recreation Area.
- Keep Gotts Point closed to vehicle traffic and provide all visitors an accessible trail to the water's edge.
- Provide environmental education and interpretation, with an emphasis on meeting local educational needs.
- Conduct outreach at the Refuge primarily through volunteers.
- No longer provide upland game bird hunting at the Lake Lowell Unit.
- Allow waterfowl hunting at the Lake Lowell Unit between parking lots 1 and 8, with a 25-shotgun-shell limit.
- Provide a youth waterfowl hunt in accordance with State regulations, from Parking Lot 1 to the New York Canal.
- Provide wildlife-dependent activities on-trail year-round, such as wildlife observation and photography.
- No longer provide nonwildlife-dependent activities, including horseback riding, swimming, dog walking, and bicycling.
- Open heron and gull nesting islands July 1 to January 31.
- Open all other Refuge islands June 15 to January 3.

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge
13751 Upper Embankment Road
Nampa, Idaho 83686

Have you moved? If so, please send us your updated address. *Thank You*

In This Issue:

- ***Review and comment on summaries of the management alternatives*** identified in Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge's Draft CCP/EIS
- ***Attend an Open House at the Refuge's Visitor Center***
  13751 Upper Embankment Road
  Nampa, ID 83686
  - March 29, 12pm-3pm and 6pm-9pm
  - March 30, 10am-3pm
  - April 26, 12pm-3pm and 6pm-9pm
  - April 27, 10am-3pm

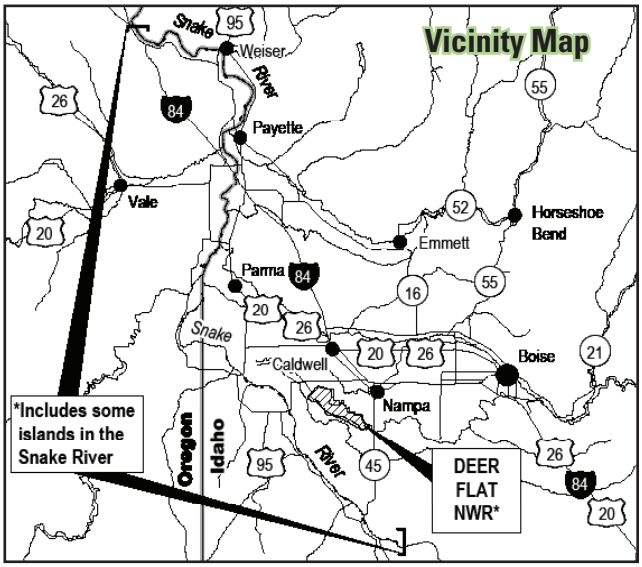
Send Us Your Comments or Questions

Mail: Jennifer Brown-Scott, Refuge Manager
Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge
13751 Upper Embankment Road
Nampa, ID 83686

Phone: (208) 467-9278
Fax: (208) 467-1019
Email: deerflat@fws.gov

Web site: Visit *http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/* to view, download, or comment on the Draft CCP/EIS.

Public Libraries: Copies of the Draft CCP/EIS are available at Caldwell, Homedale, Nampa, Payette, Boise, Ada County, and the Lizard Butte District libraries.



What's Next? *Upcoming Public Involvement Opportunities and Milestones*

Public Open Houses.....March 29-30 and April 26-27, 2013
Comments due on Draft CCP/EIS.....May 15, 2013
Final CCP/EIS released with Planning Update.....Fall/Winter 2013
Record of Decision signed.....Winter 2013/2014
Final CCP and Planning Update distributed.....Winter/Spring 2014