



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# Michigan Islands *National Wildlife Refuge*

## Planning Information

*for the*

## Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

*Public Open Houses, July 7, 8 & 9, 2009*

### Comprehensive Conservation Planning

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is starting work on a long-term management plan for islands in the Great Lakes that are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The plan will cover five Great Lakes island refuges:

- Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)
- Harbor Island NWR
- Huron NWR
- Gravel Island NWR
- Green Bay NWR

Between June 17 and July 23, the Service will hold open house events in eight locations near the islands.

On July 7, 8 and 9, open houses will focus on four islands that are part of Michigan Islands NWR (Big Charity Island, Little Charity Island, Scarecrow Island and Thunder Bay Island).

This plan, known as a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), will serve as a guide for managing the Refuges for the next 15 years. We are preparing this plan to comply with the Congressional mandate in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.



*View of Little Charity Island. Photo credit: USFWS*

Our intent is that the CCP will:

- Provide a clear statement of the desired future condition of the Refuge.
- Ensure that management of the Refuge is consistent with the purposes of the Refuge and consistent with the policies of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Provide Refuge visitors, neighbors, and partners with a clear understanding of the reasons for management actions.
- Provide for long-term continuity in Refuge management.
- Provide a basis for Fish and Wildlife Service staffing and for operation, maintenance, and capital improvement budget requests.

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Preparing a CCP typically takes about 2 years. The process begins with listening to everyone interested in Refuge management – from Refuge and Service staff to neighbors, state and federal agencies and non-government organizations. What we hear about Refuge management will be the basis for developing different management alternatives, and these alternatives will be evaluated in a document called an environmental assessment. Once we've completed the environmental assessment and selected a preferred alternative for Refuge management, we will release a Draft CCP and invite comment on the document. Then we will revise the document as necessary based on the comments received and issue a Final CCP.

## Getting Involved

You can play an important role in the planning process by sharing your thoughts and ideas related to islands that are part of Michigan Islands NWR. Participating in the development of this plan gives you the opportunity to learn more about the Refuge, raise concerns, ask questions, and ensure that we consider topics that are important to you.

Getting involved now, while Refuge staff are developing a list of issues that will be addressed in planning, is an opportunity for you to contribute to the heart of Refuge planning – identifying the issues and opportunities that will shape future management alternatives.

Comments on planning and the plan are welcome anytime, however the current scoping period and, later, the review of the draft CCP are two key points when your ideas can be incorporated into the CCP.

Please take a moment to review this handout, then use the comment form provided to express your thoughts and ideas. Comments can be submitted in person at the open houses



Thunder Bay Island lighthouse and keeper's house USFWS photo



Pitcher's thistle, Big Charity Island. USFWS photo

(July 7 at the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center in Alpena, Michigan, July 8 at the Au Gres Community Library in Au Gres, Michigan, and July 9 at Sleeper State Park in Caseville, Michigan) or via mail, e-mail, or through the web site for the Great Lakes Islands NWRs comprehensive conservation planning:

**Mail:** U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Shiawassee NWR  
Attention: CCP Comment  
6975 Mower Road  
Saginaw MI 48601

**Email:** [r3planning@fws.gov](mailto:r3planning@fws.gov)  
(Please note the name of the Refuge and "Great Lakes IslandsNWR Comment" in the subject line.)

**Web Page:**

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/GreatLakesIslands>

## About the Refuge

Eight islands comprise Michigan Islands NWR. Thunder Bay, Scarecrow, Big Charity and Little Charity Islands are managed by Shiawassee NWR in Saginaw, Michigan, because they are located closer to that Refuge. Hat, Shoe, Pismire and Gull Islands are managed by Seney NWR in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

The Service will seek public comment on issues related to the islands managed by Seney NWR in a series of open houses July 20-23 in the Upper Peninsula.

Michigan Islands NWR was established by Executive Order in 1943 as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. In 1970, Scarecrow, Pismire and Shoe Islands were officially designated as Michigan Islands Wilderness Area. In 2000, Scarecrow and Thunder Bay Islands were designated part of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve.

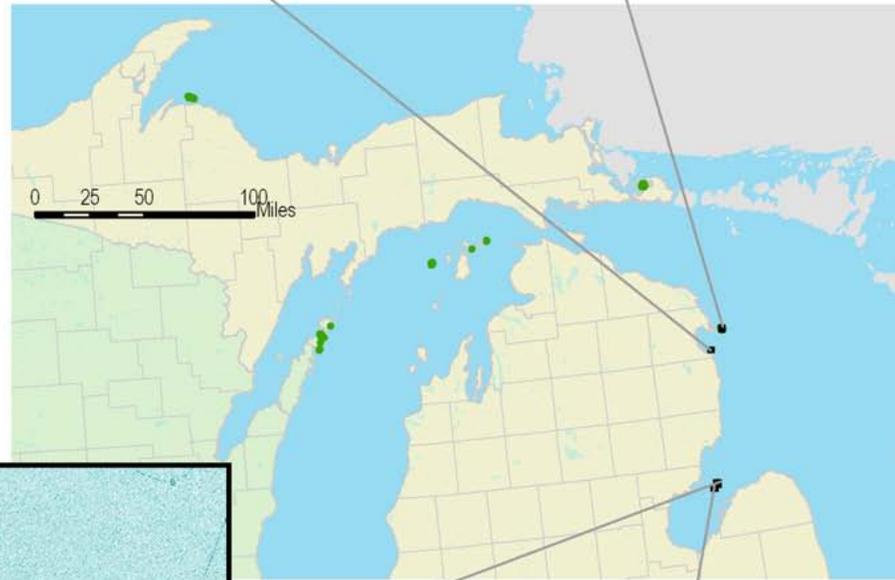
## Michigan Islands NWR: Islands Managed by Shiawassee NWR

Inset Maps Scale: 1:30,000  
0 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 Feet

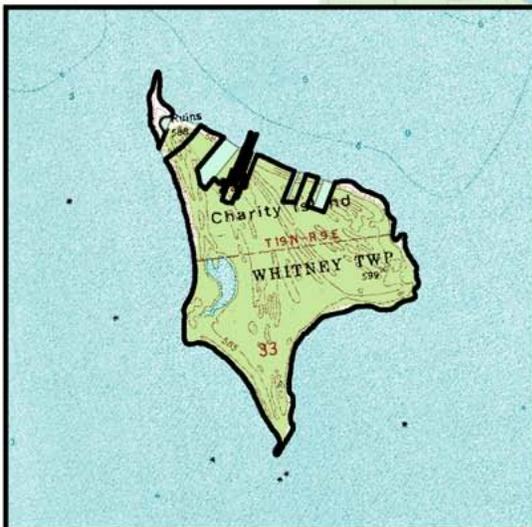


Scarecrow Island

Thunder Bay Island



Charity Island



Little Charity Island





*Black-crowned Night-Heron. USFWS photo*

Island habitats range from cobblestone beaches, grasses and wildflowers above the high water line, shrub-covered sand dune areas, interior mixed hardwoods, balsam fir, and white cedar. Big Charity Island has an 11-acre inland lake. Thunder Bay Island is a rare ecological community with little bluestem alvar grassland, alvar pavement, and a limestone bedrock lakeshore.

Two federally-listed plants, the dwarf lake iris and Pitcher's thistle, are found on the islands.

The islands are used by American Redstarts, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and Common and Caspian Terns.

Public use on Michigan Islands NWR is limited in an effort to protect plants and wildlife. Fishing from boats around the islands is allowed in accordance with State regulations, but otherwise public use is allowed only through a special use permit.

## Who We Are

The Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Service is an agency under the direction of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Department of the Interior, the Service, and the National Wildlife Refuge System are described in the following paragraphs.

### U.S. Department of the Interior

Established by Congress in 1849, the Department of the Interior (DOI) is the nation's principle conservation agency. The overarching purpose of the DOI is to protect America's treasures for future generations, and the responsibilities of its eight agencies and bureaus encompass responsibilities for the nation's natural and cultural heritage, Native

American relations, energy and mineral resources, land and water resources, fish and wildlife populations, as well as scientific research and recreation opportunities. The DOI manages approximately one-fifth of the land in the United States and supplies roughly 30 percent of the nation's energy resources.

Agencies and offices that are part of the DOI include:

- National Park Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Minerals Management Service
- Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is:

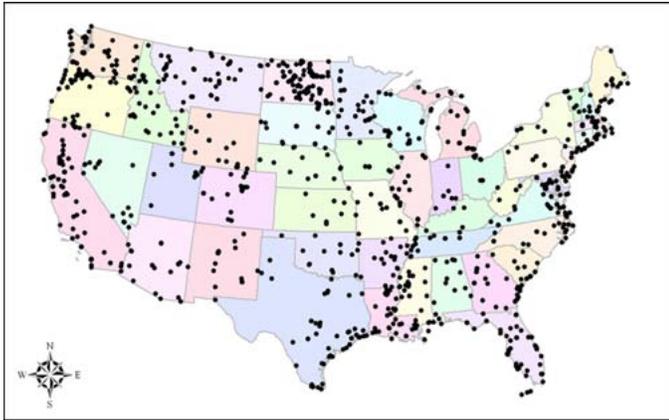
Working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats in the United States.

The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System and operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The Service enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird



*Inland lake, Big Charity Island. USFWS photo*



Map shows locations of national wildlife refuges in the lower 48 states.

populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts.

The Service also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

## National Wildlife Refuge System

The mission of the Refuge System is:

To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

The National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses more than 96 million acres and is comprised of 550 national wildlife refuges, 37 wetland management districts, and 49 coordination areas.

The Refuge System was established in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt designated Pelican Island as the first refuge set aside for wildlife needs. Today there is at least one refuge in each of the 50 states, as well as many U.S. territories. These refuges are home to over 700 species of birds, 220 species of mammals, 250 reptile and amphibian species, and over 200 species of fish.

More than just places for wildlife, 40 million visitors each year take advantage of the recreation opportunities provided by refuges. These opportunities include hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, interpretation, and other wildlife-dependent activities.

## Share Your Thoughts

There are a variety of important issues to consider during the planning process. We have provided a short list of questions and topics that we feel are of particular relevance and importance to the Refuge. Your comments are not limited to these topics, they are merely intended to provide food for thought. We appreciate all feedback – positive or negative – regarding the issues and concerns that are important to you.

### Questions

- What do you value most about the Refuge?
- What do you feel is the greatest challenge facing the Refuge?
- What is the most important thing the Refuge can do in the next 15 years?
- What changes or factors do you see coming that will affect the Refuge?
- As the Refuge Manager, what would you do to improve the Refuge?



Common Egret chicks, Little Charity Island. USFWS photo

- What role do you feel the Refuge plays or could play in the community?

**Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Topics**

- wetlands and aquatic habitat
- erosion and sedimentation
- wildlife management
- Double-crested Cormorants
- fishery management
- threatened and endangered species
- migratory bird conservation
- fire management
- invasive species
- scientific research and monitoring

**Recreation and Public Use Topics**

- hunting

- fishing
- wildlife viewing and photography
- environmental education
- interpretive programs
- public facilities
- access to Refuge lands

**Other Topics**

- water quality
- land acquisition
- partnerships
- historical resources
- aesthetics
- cultural values

*Thank you for your participation in this planning process!*

## Comments Are Welcome!

You are welcome to leave a comment with Refuge staff at the open house or, if you prefer to mail it in later, just fold the page, tape it closed, attach a stamp and drop it in the mail.

The next step in the planning process will be to develop a list of issues that will be addressed in the CCP. Please let us know what issues you think should be addressed in this plan. Your comments are most helpful if we receive them by August 4, 2009.

*(Please note that information and comments submitted become part of the public record for this project. Under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1975, the Service may be obligated to release the names of people who have submitted comments.)*

Comments can be mailed to the Project Manager at:

**Steve Kahl**  
**Refuge Manager**  
**Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge**  
**6975 Mower Road**  
**Saginaw MI 48601**

You can also send your comment via **e-mail** to: **r3planning@fws.gov** (Subject: Great Lakes Islands CCP). Please include your name and address if you would like to be added to our mailing list.

Additional planning information can be found at: **<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/GreatLakesIslands>**

*My Comment:*

Return Address

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Steve Kahl  
Shiawassee NWR  
Attention: CCP Comment  
6975 Mower Road  
Saginaw MI 48601

Place  
Stamp  
Here