



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

# Gravel Island and Green Bay

*National Wildlife Refuges*

## Planning Information

*for the*

# Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

*Public Open Houses, June 17 & 18, 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 Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), which includes Gravel and Spider Islands, and Green Bay NWR, which includes Hog, Pilot and Plum Islands, along with three other island refuges in Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and Lake Superior.

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.

Our intent is that each Refuge's 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.



*View of Hog Island. Photo credit: USFWS*

- 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.

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

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Great Blue Heron. USFWS photo

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 Gravel Island NWR and Green Bay 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 (June 17 at Washington Island, Wisconsin, and June 18 in

Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin) 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  
Horicon NWR  
Attention: Patti Meyers  
W4279 Headquarters Road  
Mayville WI 53050

**Email:** [r3planning@fws.gov](mailto:r3planning@fws.gov)  
(Please note the name of the Refuge and “CCP Comment” in the subject line.)

**Web Page:**

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

## About the Refuges

The islands that comprise Gravel Island NWR and Green Bay NWR are essential breeding and nesting grounds for a variety of migratory birds.

### Gravel Island NWR

Located in Door County, Wisconsin, the Refuge includes Gravel Island (4 acres) and Spider Island (23 acres). The islands are located about 1 mile east of the northern tip of the Door County Peninsula in Wisconsin. The islands were set aside by an Executive Order in 1915 as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds.

Spider Island had a birch-cedar-tamarack forest until the 1970s, but it has since succumbed to the activities of thousands of colonially nesting birds that breed there. All of the trees have now fallen over or been washed away. Waterfowl use is limited since there is very sparse vegetation, but the fallen trees of Spider Island do provide some cover for scattered nesting of species like Mallards,



Light and Keeper's House at Pilot Island. USFWS photo

## Location of Green Bay NWR and Gravel Island NWR

Green Bay NWR - Plum & Pilot Islands

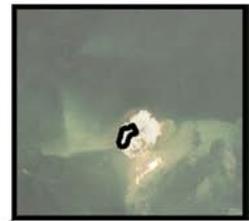


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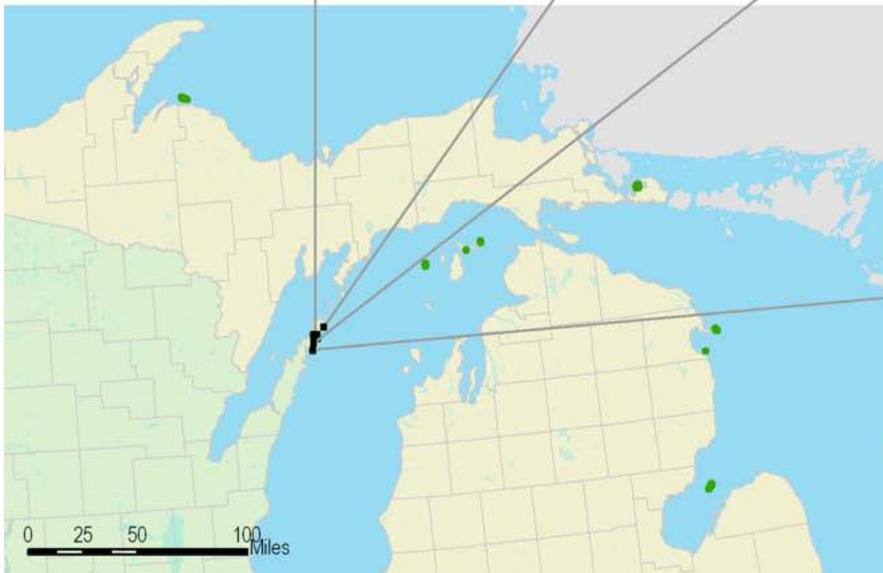
Green Bay NWR - Hog Island



Gravel Island NWR - Gravel Island



Gravel Island NWR - Spider Island



0 25 50 100 Miles





Plum Island USFWS photo

Black Ducks, and Canada Geese. Gravel Island has no permanent vegetation due to periodic overwashing by waves and ice during high water years.

Together, Gravel and Spider Islands support large colonies of Herring Gulls and Double-crested Cormorants. A Caspian Tern colony and one pair of Black-backed Gulls have nested on Gravel Island during the last several years.

The shores of Gravel and Spider Islands provide shorebird habitat during low-water conditions. In such circumstances, a wide, flat area of dolomite pavement becomes exposed and numerous fissures and shallow depressions in limestone retain water after rain, storms, or heavy seas. This water is quickly warmed and, along with racks of vegetation that wash up, supports invertebrates and feeding shorebirds.

## Green Bay NWR

Green Bay NWR is also located in Door County and includes Hog Island (2 acres), Plum Island (325 acres) and Pilot Island (3.7 acres). The islands are located off the tip of Door Peninsula. The Refuge is managed by staff at Horicon NWR in Mayville, Wisconsin.

Hog Island was set aside by Executive Order in 1913 as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds. Plum and Pilot Islands were transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard to the Fish and Wildlife Service in 2007. The islands were acquired to protect native bird habitat and endangered species habitat in the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem.

Hog Island supports a nesting colony of Herring Gulls and a few nesting Great Blue Herons and Red-breasted Mergansers. No development has occurred on Hog Island due to its small size, remoteness, and landing difficulties.

Portions of Plum and Pilot Islands were developed to serve as lighthouse facilities or life saving stations during the late 19th century. Plum Island essentially functions as a small ecosystem and retains natural qualities absent on the nearby mainland. Today Pilot Island supports nesting colonies of Double-crested Cormorants and Herring Gulls. A handful of Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons also nest on Pilot Island.

## Who We Are

The Refuges are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and are 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



Bald Eagle. USWS photo

- 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.

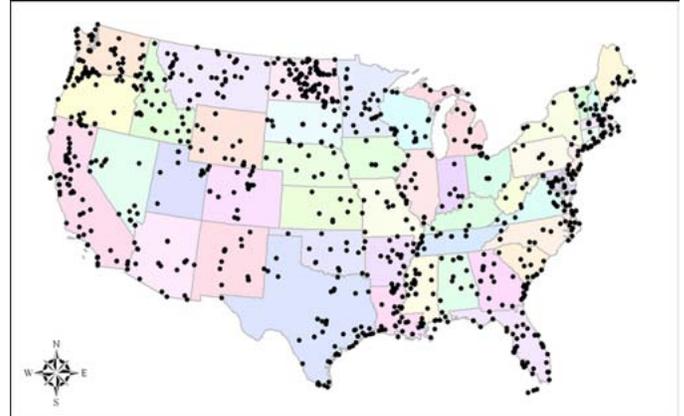
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System of more than 550 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also 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 populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It 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 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



*Black-crowned Night-Heron. USFWS photo*



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

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.

### *Refuge System mission statement:*

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.

## 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 Gravel Island NWR?  
What do you value most about Green Bay Island NWR?
- 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?
- What role do you feel Gravel Island NWR or Green Bay Island NWR 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:

**Patti Meyers**  
**Refuge Manager**  
**Horicon National Wildlife Refuge**  
**W4279 Headquarters Road**  
**Mayville WI 53050**

You can also send your comment via **e-mail** to: **r3planning@fws.gov** (Subject: Green Bay NWR/Gravel Island NWR 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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Patti Meyers  
Horicon National Wildlife Refuge  
Attention: CCP Comment  
W4279 Headquarters Road  
Mayville WI 53050

Place  
Stamp  
Here