

**Selection of Alternative  
And  
Finding of No Significant Impact**



**Proposed Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge  
McHenry County, Illinois and Walworth County, Wisconsin**

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to identify and publicly disclose the possible environmental consequences that establishment of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, Refuge) and implementation of the Conceptual Management Plan could have on the quality of the physical, biological, and human environment as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The EA evaluated three action alternatives for restoration and protection of a significant tallgrass prairie and wetland ecosystem in Northeastern Illinois and Southeastern Wisconsin. The EA also evaluated the consequences of no action by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS, Service).

**Alternative Selection:** Alternative C, which includes core Refuge units (11,200 acres) and connecting natural corridors, is selected for implementation.

**Justification:** Several grassland bird species are declining throughout their range. The Service is the primary federal agency responsible for conserving these species. Recent research has shown that large blocks of grasslands such as those proposed in this Refuge project may be key to reversing the downward trend. The proposed Refuge could eventually restore and connect a landscape that includes large blocks of grasslands, wet prairies, and natural stream watercourses.

The Service seeks to provide Refuge visitors with an understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources through environmental education and interpretation and through wildlife-oriented recreational experiences to the extent these activities are compatible with the purposes for which a Refuge is established. The official Service land acquisition policy for urban Refuges is to acquire lands and waters in or adjacent to metropolitan statistical areas to protect fish and wildlife resources and habitats that will provide the public wildlife-oriented recreation, education, and interpretation opportunities. The primary purpose for establishment of new urban Refuges will be to foster environmental awareness and outreach programs, and to develop an informed and involved citizenry that will support fish and wildlife conservation.

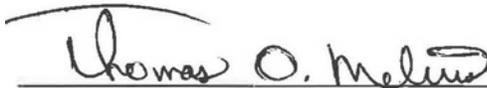
The proposed Refuge would contribute to a long-standing vision held by conservation organizations across the Greater Chicago metropolitan area. These partners have worked to identify key lands for conservation, open space, and greenways aimed at providing a way to connect urban and suburban residents with nature. The establishment of a refuge would provide an anchor for this broad-based conservation and environmental education initiative. In addition:

- Acquisition of lands would be from willing sellers only.
- Habitat restoration programs and efforts contributed by partner agencies and organizations are a vital part of the proposed Refuge.
- The Refuge will contribute toward the Service's Urban Refuge Policy.
- Net impacts to the regional economy will be positive.
- Cultural resources will be protected on acquired lands.
- This action will not have an adverse impact on threatened or endangered species.

**Finding:** Based on an evaluation of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment and supporting documents, the establishment of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge under Alternative C is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

**Supporting Documents:**

Environmental Assessment  
Conceptual Management Plan  
Land Protection Plan

  
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Regional Director

5/16/12  
Date