Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Williamson, Jackson, and Union Counties, Illinois

Proposed action: Adopt and implement a comprehensive conservation plan that will guide management for the next 15 years.

Lead agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

Responsible Official: Robyn Thorson, Regional Director

For further information:

Refuge Manager
Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge
8588 Route 148
Marion, Illinois 62959
Tel: (618) 997-3344
Email: conwr-ccp@fws.gov

Abstract: The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop and implement a Comprehensive Conservation Plan for all national wildlife refuges. Five alternative approaches to management, including a Preferred Alternative and a No Action (Current Management) Alternative, were considered for Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. The five alternatives are described and evaluated in the Final EIS. All alternatives would achieve the Refuge's purposes of wildlife conservation, agriculture, recreation, and industry. Under all alternatives, group camps and most non-wildlife dependent recreation would remain; technical rock climbing would be prohibited; a modified recreational fee structure would be implemented; a 14-day camping limit would be instituted; management of sport fish populations would continue; use of prescribed fire would increase; and the agricultural acres would not change by more than 5 percent. All alternatives would maintain necessary food for a significant population of wintering Canada Geese. Alternative A would continue the present course of management. Alternative B would reduce habitat fragmentation and emphasize wildlife-dependent recreation. A land exchange with Southern Illinois University would be a significant part of this alternative. Alternative C would emphasize management of open lands and consolidate and improve recreation facilities. Alternative D would emphasize management of forest lands and consolidate and improve recreation facilities. Alternative E, the preferred alternative, would reduce habitat fragmentation and consolidate and improve recreation facilities. Conflicts among water users would be addressed by increasing areas designated as no-wake zones and better enforcement of current use zoning regulations. The quality of campgrounds and marinas would be increased by consolidating and improving them. The agricultural program would remain pretty much intact and its economic effect continued. The industrial program would continue to support the munitions manufacturing industry. By encouraging other industries to locate in nearby industrial parks, the economic effect of the industry would remain in the local economy, and the needs of the industry would be met more efficiently. With goal, objective, and strategies formalized to better improve communication between the Refuge and the community, we would do a better job of talking with and listening to the community.