

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **The Process and the Plan**

This document represents a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) that guides the management of DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs, refuges) in Nebraska and Iowa. The CCP is the result of a collaborative, multiple-year planning process that includes preplanning, scoping, alternatives development, environmental assessment (EA) and Draft CCP document preparation, public review and comment, and the adoption of this final plan to guide management of the refuges over the next 15 years. The planning process for DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges is described in further detail in chapter 2.

## **The Refuges**

DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges straddle the Missouri River in Nebraska and Iowa 15 miles north of the Omaha–Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area. DeSoto NWR, established in 1958 as a migratory bird refuge, contains 8,365 acres of floodplain wetlands, grasslands, and forests surrounding DeSoto Lake, an oxbow lake cut off from the main channel of the Missouri River in 1960. DeSoto NWR is home to a diversity of resident and migratory species, hosting over 250 bird species, 35 mammal species, 30 reptile and amphibian species, and 60 fish species. DeSoto NWR Visitor Center also hosts the Steamboat Bertrand Museum Collection, one of the premier assemblages of Civil War era artifacts in the United States. The refuge attracts over 250,000 visitors annually—making DeSoto NWR one of the more heavily visited refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Boyer Chute NWR, authorized in 1992 and established in 1997, is located immediately south of DeSoto NWR. The Service has acquired 4,040 acres of the refuge, or 40 percent, of its 10,010-acre authorized boundary. When full acquisition from willing sellers is complete, the refuge will connect with DeSoto NWR through Wilson Island State Recreation Area to the north and with the Neale Woods Nature Center to the south. Boyer Chute NWR contains wildlife and habitats similar to those found at DeSoto NWR, and together the refuges provide a broad range of wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities and experiences to the public.

## **Document Chapters**

This first chapter provides a brief introduction to the comprehensive conservation plan. The remaining chapters provide more detailed information on the refuge planning and policy context (chapter 2), the refuge environment and current management (chapter 3), and the objectives, rationales, and potential implementation strategies that will guide management of the refuges over the next 15 years (chapter 4). Appendices include the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), species lists, abbreviations and glossary, legal and policy guidance, literature cited, appropriate use designations, compatibility determinations, the list of preparers and contributors, the communications list, and the response to comments on the EA and Draft CCP.