

# Chapter 2: The Planning Process

## Introduction

The planning process for this comprehensive conservation plan began in April 2002. Initially, members from various Service programs met in the regional office to identify a list of issues and concerns that were associated with the management of the Refuge. These preliminary issues and concerns were based on staff knowledge of the area and contacts with citizens in the community. The Planning Team then asked Refuge neighbors, organizations, local government units, and interested citizens to share their thoughts at a series of open house events. Public input toward development of the CCP continued throughout the summer and fall of 2002. A series of open house events, meetings, and workshops were held in local communities:



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- # On June 19, 2002, an open house was held at the Copeland Recreation Center in Wyandotte.
- # On June 20, 2002, an open house was held at Monroe City Hall.
- # In conjunction with these open houses, we held small group discussions centered around three issue categories; (1) hunting and fishing, (2) wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and (3) habitat conservation and restoration.
- # On August 30, 2002, an interagency meeting was held in Windsor, Ontario, to coordinate planning efforts for the Refuge and for other purposes. In attendance were 24 representatives from various Service programs, Environment Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and several non-profit conservation groups.
- # On September 24, 2002, a joint open house event with Michigan DNR was held at the Lake Erie MetroParks facility in Brownstown.
- # On September 24, 2002, we also met with a group of industry representatives to discuss ways to work together to enhance fish and wildlife habitats. Industries such as BASF, Detroit Edison and National Steel are the major landowners along the river.
- # On September 26, 2002, the Service, along with many Canadian partner organizations, participated in an open house in Windsor co-hosted by Environment Canada.

In total, more than 150 people attended the open houses and meetings. The Planning Team received 35 written comment forms during these events and took numerous pages of notes from small group and individual discussions.

## Vision, Goals and Objectives Workshop

The Planning Team hosted a workshop on October 15-17, 2002, at the Lake Erie MetroParks facility in Brownstown Township. The purpose of the workshop was to develop a draft vision statement, goals and objectives for the Refuge. Representatives from state, county and local governments, private industry, conservation groups and private citizens were invited to participate in the 2.5 day workshop. The 28 participants were divided into two working groups and both made significant progress during the workshop. The results of the workshop were used by the Planning Team to develop the Environmental Assessment associated with this plan.

## Issues and Opportunities

Members of the public, resource agencies, conservation groups and Service staff raised a diverse range of issues and opportunities during scoping for the CCP. These topics have been considered in the decision-making process and many have been developed into implementation strategies in this CCP.

The CCP planning team organized all of the issues/concerns/opportunities received during the public scoping process into seven major categories. Many of the goals and strategies to be presented in this CCP relate to one or more of the issue categories. The categories include Habitat Restoration, Management and Creation, Land Conservation, Contamination/Pollution, Functional Partnerships, Environmental Education, the Future of Hunting and Fishing, and Secondary Public Uses.

*Habitat Restoration, Management & Creation:* This topic concerns the appropriate level of habitat restoration and maintenance given funding constraints and desired future conditions. The Detroit River ecosystem has been heavily altered and natural or “soft” shoreline restoration, wetlands, and specific migratory bird and fish habitats will be a priority for the future.



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*Land Conservation:* The CCP will need to identify the key areas within the Refuge boundary that require conservation measures. Many people have suggested reviewing the remaining natural islands and coastal wetlands in the area for possible acquisition and long-term conservation within the Refuge System.

*Contamination/Pollution:* The shorelands, islands, and sediments of the Detroit River contain environmental contaminants that have the potential to affect wildlife and human health. Many participants expressed a desire for the Refuge to help reduce the level of

environmental contamination within the river ecosystem. Contamination issues also create unique management decisions, including whether recreational use should be prohibited on some existing Refuge lands.

*Functional Partnerships:* A functional partnership between governments, conservation groups, landowners, industry, and local citizens was often recognized as key to success of the Refuge. A number of benefits and strategies for forming partnerships were outlined by planning participants.

*Environmental Education:* Natural areas for local residents to enjoy along the Detroit River and adjacent Lake Erie shoreline are limited. School-age children, especially in the urban region near Detroit, often have very little contact with wildlife in a natural setting. Participants encouraged us to garner support for the Refuge within the vast human population in southeast Michigan by providing education opportunities at the Refuge and at other locations with education centered on the importance of habitat and the management of fish and wildlife populations.

*Future of Hunting and Fishing:* Several participants expressed concern over the future of hunting and fishing within a growing metropolitan region. We were asked to provide opportunities for hunting, especially of waterfowl, without impacting critical feeding and resting areas of these migratory birds.

*Secondary Public Uses:* The demand for recreational use on any open space in the Detroit region is high, especially on the river itself. Sometimes there is competition and even conflict between users of these limited resources and the needs of fish and wildlife. Some participants encouraged us to manage Refuge-owned lands and waters to resolve conflicts between wildlife habitat and recreational uses.

## **Preparation and Publishing of the CCP**

Sections of the Detroit River IWR CCP and EA were written by a variety of Service and Michigan DNR staff. Contributions of text also came from Environment Canada and the U.S. Geological Survey. The plan was published in draft and final phases and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The Draft EA (Appendix A) presented a range of alternatives for future management and identified the preferred alternative. A public review period of at least 30 days followed release of the draft CCP and EA in June 2004.

## **Comments From the Public on the Draft CCP**

Verbal and written comments received from the public concerning the Draft CCP contributed to several modifications in this document. The Planning Team received 20 letters, forms and e-mail comments during the 30-day review period. The comments covered a variety of topics and detail and not all thoughts could result in direct changes to the CCP. For example, several writers simply endorsed the future direction of Refuge management or a specific program presented in the plan. In a few cases, reviewers offered technical changes in wording and we were able to easily incorporate those changes. Please see Appendix M for a listing of comments we received and how we have addressed them in the final plan.