



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Proposed
Hackmatack
National Wildlife Refuge
Project Update

October 2010

Study of Proposed Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge Now Under Way

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is studying the need and potential for a new national wildlife refuge in southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois.

The area being studied includes 350,000 acres within Lake and McHenry Counties in Illinois and Kenosha, Racine and Walworth Counties in Wisconsin.

Interest in a new national wildlife refuge encompassing parts of Wisconsin and Illinois is home-grown. A group of local citizens and organizations joined together and began promoting the idea of establishing a national wildlife refuge. Their efforts resulted in the governors of both states and several Congressional members requesting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to begin exploring the possibility of establishing a refuge.

The Service's Preliminary Project Proposal for the proposed refuge was approved in spring 2010, which authorized further study of the refuge proposals. The Service has begun work on an Environmental Assessment that will evaluate several possible options ranging from doing nothing to establishing a national wildlife refuge.

Service planners expect to complete a Draft EA for public review by late spring 2011.



The Environmental Assessment will determine whether a new national wildlife refuge is warranted and, if so, identify an area where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be authorized to purchase land.

Your Comments are Important to Refuge Planning

Service planners want to know your thoughts on the proposal to establish a new national wildlife refuge. For example:

- Are there natural resources that you believe need to be conserved?
- What threats to natural resources do you see in the area?
- What do you think are the best ways to conserve the natural resources in the area?
- Are there specific issues that you think should be addressed in planning?

Your ideas are welcome throughout the planning process, however they are most useful if we receive them by Nov. 1, 2010.

There are a variety of ways to submit a comment in addition to attending an open house, including:

Mail: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Conservation Planning Division
BHW Federal Building, Room 530
1 Federal Drive
Ft. Snelling, MN 55111

E-mail: r3planning@fws.gov
(Please note "Proposed Hackmatack NWR Comment" in the subject line.)

Web: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/Hackmatack>

The National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses more than 96 million acres and is comprised of more than 550 national wildlife refuges, 37 wetland management districts and 49 coordination areas.

The Refuge System's mission statement is:

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.

The Refuge System was established in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt designated Pelican 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 more than 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 wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities provided by refuges. These opportunities include hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, interpretation, and other wildlife-dependent activities.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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. The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species



The study area for the proposed Hackmatack NWR includes more than 60 publicly and privately owned parks, preserves and conservation areas. Photo credit: FWS

Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, and conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands.

You can learn more about the Fish and Wildlife Service on the agency's website: <http://www.fws.gov>

How Are Refuges Established?

It takes time, public involvement and ultimately the purchase of land to establish a national wildlife refuge.

Typically, the Service or interested citizens identify an area that has either habitat or a species that warrant the Service's involvement in conservation. For example, an area might be unique because it has remnants of tall grass prairie or oak savanna, both rare habitats, or it might have a plant or animal species that is declining and would benefit from federal conservation efforts.

Service planners prepare a Preliminary Project Proposal that seeks authorization to formally study a refuge proposal. The Preliminary

Project Proposal must be approved on the national level before a project can move forward.

Once an area is identified and a PPP has been approved, Service planning staff conduct an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement to evaluate different alternatives, including options for establishing a refuge and not establishing a national wildlife refuge.

The draft Environmental Assessment is released for public review and, typically, there is a 30-day comment period.

The Environmental Assessment is reviewed by a variety of programs within the Fish and Wildlife Service. If the Environmental Assessment indicates that establishing a refuge would enhance conservation of habitat or species for which the Service is responsible, it is signed by the Regional Director and forwarded to Washington, D.C. for review and signature by the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The stroke of a pen isn't enough to actually establish a refuge, however. A national wildlife refuge isn't formally established until the Service acquires the first piece of land.