

The Next Steps

The next phases of the CCP process will focus on data gathering, research, and the development of alternative management strategies. Planning team members will continue to focus their efforts on data gathering through December 2003. In January, the core planning team will reconvene to develop several management alternatives for the refuge. Alternatives will address conservation techniques and refuge management actions as well as compatible wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities.

When draft management alternatives have been produced, the planning team will again turn to the public for input. During a series of public open houses, the planning team will present the proposed alternatives and solicit feedback and ideas for refinement of the alternatives. We encourage you to stay involved in the planning process, and to provide input on the proposed management alternatives when they are presented to the public.

The Planning Schedule

Preplanning	Oct 2002 - Jan 2003
Draft Vision Statement and Goals	Feb 2003 - Feb 2003
Public Scoping	May 2003 - Aug 2003
Data Gathering and Research	May 2003 - Dec 2003
Develop and Analyze Alternatives	Jan 2004 - Jun 2004
Public Input	Jun 2004 - Jul 2004
Prepare Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment	Aug 2004 - Oct 2004
Public Review of Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment	Nov 2004 - Jan 2005
Develop Final CCP and Environmental Assessment	Feb 2005 - May 2005

Want to Get Involved?

Participation by you and other interested groups and individuals is critical to the success of this planning process. Only then can we develop effective management taking your comments into consideration. In addition to public open houses, periodic planning updates will be sent to individuals on our mailing list. If you would like to be on our mailing list, we must have your written permission. Please complete the enclosed consent form and return to the contact listed below.

Contact Information

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Understanding Trust Resources and the CCP Process

Most people readily recognize that Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is managed differently than other wildlife areas, most notably wildlife areas managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). Why these lands are managed differently is less understood.

Kirwin NWR is managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, a federal agency, while state wildlife areas are managed by the KDWP, a state agency. The fundamental difference in management is that the federal government and state government are responsible for different types of wildlife or different "trust resources."

Federal trust resources are animals that move between states and between other countries. **State trust resources** are animals that spend their whole life within the states borders. Examples include:

Federal Trust Resources
Migratory birds: ducks, geese, swans, hawks, cranes, meadow larks, sandpipers, terns

Interjurisdictional and anadromous fish: paddlefish, sturgeon, salmon

Federally listed threatened and endangered species: least terns, whooping cranes, bald eagles, California condor, loggerhead sea turtles, manatees

State Trust Resources
Resident birds: pheasants, quail, turkeys, prairie chickens

Resident fish: walleye, bass, crappie

State-listed threatened and endangered species: cave salamander, Arkansas darter, Scott riffle beetle, rabbitsfoot mussel

Other resident wildlife: deer, elk, antelope, raccoons

The federal trust resources that apply to Kirwin NWR are migratory birds and threatened and endangered species. Consequently, those resources will receive priority consideration during the planning process.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update

Volume Two, November 2003

Greetings,

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is preparing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) to help guide the conservation of natural resources and promote appropriate public uses of Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Sharing your ideas and concerns will help us prepare a plan that is sensitive to your needs.

We have already received some public input through a series of open houses held in local communities during May 2003. Thanks to all of you who participated in our public open houses, and to those who submitted electronic and written comments. This planning update provides another opportunity to submit comments. Just complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to us in the self-addressed postage paid envelope provided. If you would like to be placed on the CCP mailing list, to receive future planning updates and a draft CCP for review, please be sure to complete the CCP mailing list authorization form on the reverse side of the questionnaire. If you have already provided comments and/or completed the mailing list consent form, you need not do so again; your comments have been recorded and placed in the official planning record.

Refuge staff are available to meet with individuals or groups to answer comprehensive conservation planning questions. If you would like a special presentation to your group, or would like to make an appointment to meet individually, please call the refuge office to make arrangements.

I look forward to working with you throughout this important planning process.

Sincerely,

Erich Gilbert
Refuge Manager
Kirwin NWR

Prairie landscape at Kirwin NWR



Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge...

Public Involvement

The purpose of developing the comprehensive conservation plan with public input is to craft informed decisions through the exchange of ideas between the public and the Service. The public involvement process ensures that interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies and governmental entities are consulted and given opportunities to have their ideas heard.



Informing the Public

Throughout the planning process, the Service will strive to inform the public, gather input, and review and analyze public comments.

Planning Updates and Announcements

Over the course of the planning process, planning updates will be published and distributed to the public. The updates will report on the CCP process, announce opportunities for public involvement, and document the progress of the CCP. Updates will be sent to individuals on the CCP mailing list and distributed at presentations, open houses and local community events.

Media Coverage

Announcements in local newspapers and on television and radio stations will notify the public about opportunities for involvement and the progress of the CCP.

Website

The public may access information about the planning process on-line at: mountain-prairie.fws.gov/planning.

Public Open Houses

The public will be encouraged to participate in a series of open houses held at strategic phases of the planning process including public scoping, management alternatives, draft plan and environmental assessment review, and final plan and public celebration. The purpose of the open houses is to inform the public on refuge issues and the planning process, generate ideas, and gather public input. Open houses were held in the communities of Kirwin, Phillipsburg, and Hays, KS during the public scoping phase of the planning process. Open houses will continue to be held in the communities of Kirwin and Phillipsburg for each strategic phase of the planning process. Due to no public

participation at the open house in Hays, this location will not continue to be used for public open houses during subsequent phases of the CCP process.

Presentations and Briefings

To keep the public and stakeholder groups posted on the CCP process, presentations and briefings will be conducted by refuge staff at local community events and group meetings throughout the planning process.

Analyzing Public Input

The Service will review and consider all substantive comments gathered at public open houses, local community events, other public meetings, and those comments received electronically and via mail.

"Where prairie and wing touch the Kansas sky"

Summary of Public Comments

Three open houses held in Kirwin, Phillipsburg, and Hays, Kansas in May 2003 provided a forum for the public to provide input on the draft vision statement and goals, refuge qualities, issues, and opportunities to be considered during the planning process. Thanks to all who participated in our May open houses, and to those who submitted electronic and written comments! The following is a synopsis of all comments received. We could not include all the comments in this publication due to space limitations, but rest assured that all comments have been placed in the planning record and will be considered in the development of proposed management alternatives for the CCP. This planning update reports what we learned from the public comments received. Comments were highly varied as to people's desires. This is particularly true regarding the hunting and fishing program on the refuge, with some wanting no hunting and fishing on the refuge and others wanting expansion of the current hunting and fishing programs.

Topics of Interest (by percentage of all comments received)	
Public Use Programs	68%
Habitat and Wildlife	14%
Water Resources	7%
Refuge Facilities	6%
Public Outreach, and Partnerships	3%
Vision Statement and Goals	2%

Public Use Programs

- **Hunting and Fishing:**
 - Continue hunting and fishing programs at current or expanded levels.
 - Place more emphasis on non-consumptive recreational uses such as wildlife observation and photography.
 - Stop hunting because it jeopardizes the safety of non-hunting visitors, and because refuges should be sanctuaries for wildlife.
- **Environmental Education:** Expand environmental education and interpretation programs.
- **Trail Development:** Develop more trails on the refuge.
- **Water Sports:**
 - Do not support water skiing and the use of jet skis on the reservoir.
 - Continue water skiing and use of jet skis.
- **Camping:** Continue to permit camping at the refuge.

Habitat and Wildlife Management

- **Habitat Protection:** Protect prairie habitat for native prairie wildlife species.
 - **Habitat Restoration:** Convert cropland to grassland for grassland-nesting migratory bird species.
 - **Nongame Bird Species:** Place more management emphasis on nongame bird species.
 - **Invasive Species:** Place more emphasis on the control of invasive species (including trees) and noxious weeds.
 - **Dead Trees:** Cut down dead trees around the reservoir.
- ### Water Resources
- **Water Management:**
 - Work toward maintaining higher water levels in the reservoir.
 - Would benefit the economy of the area by providing outdoor recreation (which declines as water levels drop).
 - Would benefit the irrigation district.

Public Outreach and Partnerships

- **Public Outreach:** Compliments to the refuge staff on their efforts to keep the public informed.
- **Partnerships:** Create a support group for the refuge.

Refuge Facilities

- **Refuge Roads and Boat Ramps:** Provide more access to the reservoir (i.e., roads and boat ramps).

Vision Statement and Goals

- Change vision statement to reflect President Theodore Roosevelt's original vision of the National Wildlife Refuge System as a sanctuary for wildlife where guns are forbidden.

Public open house in Kirwin, KS.



USFWS photo

Grassland-nesting birds, as a group, are in a steeper long-term decline than any other bird assemblage in North America. To understand this decline, envision the landscape that existed during settlement - essentially a sea of grass with forested riparian areas. Changes that we've made to the landscape (i.e., farming, roads, houses, etc.) have dramatically limited the suitable habitat for these species. As we work through the planning process, we will be assessing the potential contribution Kirwin NWR can make to address the decline of grassland-nesting birds.

Dog Town interpretive trail at Kirwin NWR.



J. and K. Hollingsworth