



Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update

Volume Three, March 2006

Establishment, Acquisition, and Management History

Authorized under a General Plan approved by the Secretary of the Interior on June 17, 1954, Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge was established to provide habitat for and facilitate the management of the Nation's migratory bird resources.

Consisting of 10,778 acres, the refuge supports diverse wildlife habitat including grasslands, wooded riparian areas, open water, and wetlands. It is one of a system of over 540 refuges administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

Basic authority for the existence of the refuge stems from the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, which authorized the establishment of wildlife areas on federal water projects.

The refuge is an overlay on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Kirwin Reservoir project. Fee title to the land is held for the United States by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Water level control of the reservoir rests with Reclamation and the Kirwin Irrigation District. Refuge staff manage all other activities on the land and water.



Planning

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act requires that a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) be developed for each national wildlife refuge in the Nation. These plans guide the management of each refuge for the next 15 years. The Service has prepared a draft CCP and environmental assessment for managing the Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge.

Future of the Refuge

If the proposed action is selected, the Service will implement the objectives described in *Alternative B- Wildlife, Habitat, and Public Use*. Under this alternative, the refuge would continue to be managed in accordance with the current memorandum of agreement between Reclamation and the Service. Other actions include:

- Continue habitat management for waterfowl and game species.
- Expand habitat management for nongame species and species of conservation concern by increasing efforts to manage and plant native grasses and forbs.
- Promote wildlife-dependent recreation, with hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation receiving priority attention.

Vision Statement

Along the seam where the tall and short grasses of the rolling prairie embrace and dance in the Kansas wind, two valleys join and beckon wildlife and visitors alike. Visitors to the refuge will find themselves charmed by the melody of the meadowlark, captivated by the expansive vistas from limestone outcrops and delighted by the bountiful resources of its land and waters. Wildlife-dependent recreation amid the solitude of the refuge will provide present and future generations with an experience to remember for a lifetime.

- Discontinue non-wildlife-dependent recreation uses (i.e., water and jet skiing, personal water craft, camping, swimming, horseback riding, volleyball, basketball, tournament fishing, power and speed boating).
- Enhance management of invasive species.
- Collect in-depth baseline wildlife and habitat data on the refuge, from which to monitor management actions.
- Develop partnerships with other state, federal, and conservation organizations to achieve common goals that enhance and support the refuge program.

Wildlife-dependent recreational use: Use of a refuge that is dependent on the presence of wildlife. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 establishes hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation as the priority public uses of the Refuge System.

Please provide your
comments!

We invite you to review the plan and tell us what you think. Your comments on the draft plan will help us write a final plan that is both visionary and practical.

You may attend the upcoming open house to personally comment on this draft plan. The open house will be held at the Huck Boyd Center in Phillipsburg, KS, April 20, 2006, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Public comments will be also be accepted in written format at the address listed below. In order for us to consider your comments when writing the final plan we need to receive them by April 23, 2006.

Please send comments to:

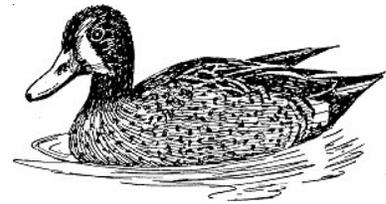
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Planning Steps Completed

- √ Preplanning: research refuge history and gather information.
- √ Public Scoping: newsletters distributed, open houses, and public comments collected.
- √ Draft vision and goals.
- √ Develop range of alternatives.
- √ Prepare draft CCP and environmental document.

Planning Steps Remaining

- Public review of the draft CCP and environmental assessment, March-April 2006.
- Prepare final plan and environmental document for approval by the Service's regional director, July 2006.



"In the larger context of conserving biological diversity in agricultural and natural ecosystems in North America, prairies are a priority, perhaps the highest priority."

F.B. Samson and F.L. Knopf 1994