

2 The Planning Process

The Service is following the planning steps listed below—in a thorough manner that meets requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Service policies—to determine the future management of Arrowwood NWR.

The CCP process is a series of steps that are displayed sequentially (figure 3). However, CCP planning, along with the associated environmental analysis and documentation, occur simultaneously. Although public involvement is listed as part of two steps, the Service will take public input at any point in the following planning process:

- Preplan (form a planning team, review available data, organize efforts).
- Initiate public involvement and scoping (public input gathered on issues).
- Develop draft vision and goal statements.
- Develop and analyze alternatives including a proposed action with draft objectives.
- Prepare documentation of the environmental analysis, including the draft CCP (proposed action alternative).
- Conduct internal review (the Service, other federal, state, and tribal partners) and gather public input on the draft CCP and EA.
- Analyze and respond to public comments.
- Select one of the alternatives to become the final CCP.
- Make revisions as necessary and prepare the final CCP.
- Approve and carry out the CCP.
- Monitor and evaluate actions and results.

The planning team (appendix C) is comprised of representatives from various Service programs, including the refuge staff, has prepared this draft CCP and EA. Coordination with the North Dakota Department of Game and Fish (NDGF), the public, local groups, and other agencies has been essential in developing a realistic, meaningful plan. After reviewing a wide range of public comments and management needs, the Service developed a proposed action alternative (alternative 3). This alternative addresses all significant issues while determining how best to achieve the intent and purposes of the refuge. Alternative 3 is the Service's



The purple coneflower is one of the colorful, native prairie plants at Arrowwood NWR.

recommended course of action for the future management of the refuge and represents the draft CCP described in detail in chapter 6.

The following sections describe the decisions to be made about management of Arrowwood NWR. In addition, there are descriptions of the public involvement and other coordination activities, followed by the issues related to management of the refuge. Step-down management plans and the CCP revision process are discussed.

DECISIONS TO BE MADE

Based on the environmental analysis documented in this EA, the following decisions will be made by the Service's regional director for region 6, headquartered in Lakewood, Colorado.

The type and extent of management and public access that will occur on the Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge.

Whether or not the management and public access on the Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge will have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment.

As part of the decision-making process, the Service developed this EA in accordance with the NEPA. Three alternatives provide options for addressing management concerns and for resolving public issues. The draft CCP for the refuge is described in alternative 3 (the Service’s proposed action) of this EA. This document displays the results of CCP planning to date. It includes a description of the existing environment at the refuge, alternatives for management, and an assessment of the effects of carrying out the alternatives.

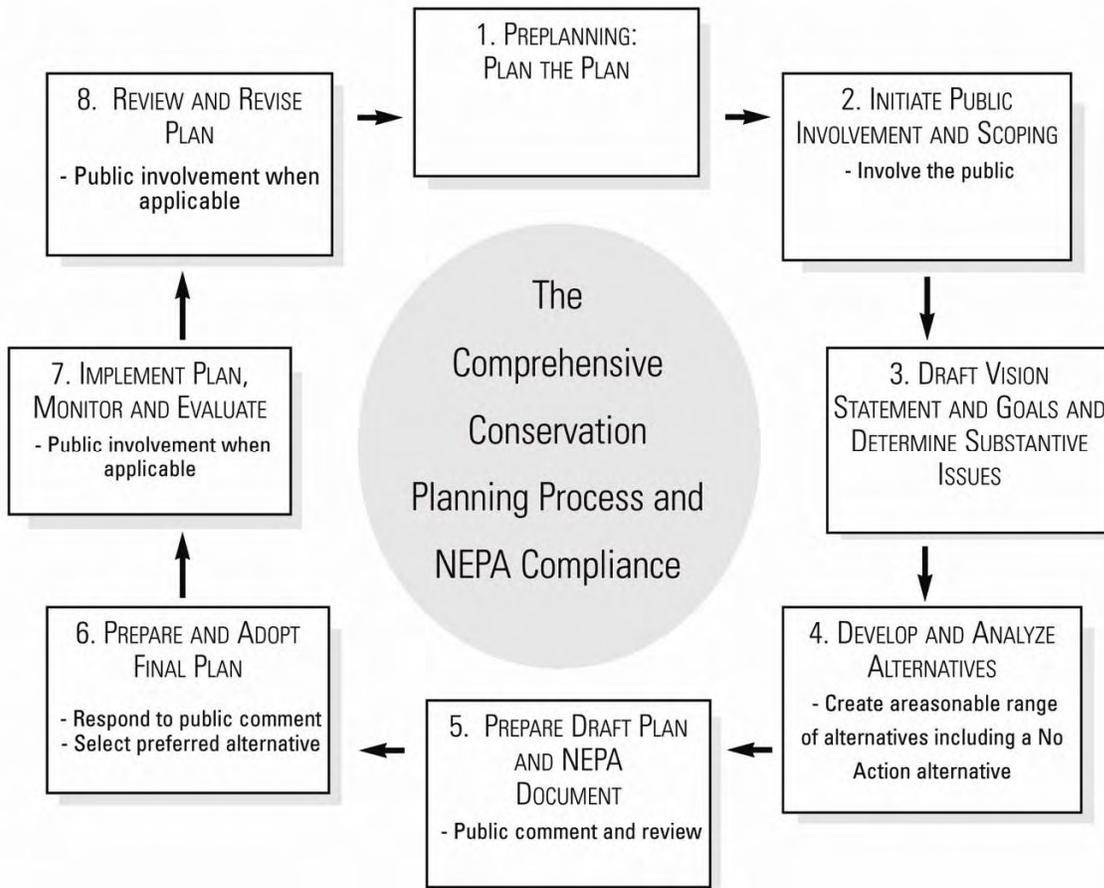


Figure 3. The planning process.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Service is using the NEPA process to engage the public in refuge planning, while determining whether the proposed action for management of Arrowwood NWR will have significant effects.

Scoping is the term for requesting input from the public, in this case, regarding management of the refuge. The primary thrust for the planning process is to provide a forum for ideas and issues to be shared,

reviewed, and evaluated among agency staff and the public. Comments are reviewed to identify issues and public concerns about, or advocacies for, future management of the refuge. These issues are addressed in the draft CCP and EA, other plans, and decision documents.

Public scoping was initiated for Arrowwood NWR in a notice of intent (NOI) dated August 1, 2001. The NOI announced the availability of an issue workbook and the dates for open houses to be held for public input on management of the refuge. On

August 14 and 15, 2001, open house scoping sessions were held within the communities of Kensal, Pingree, Carrington, and Jamestown, North Dakota. A summary of those who participated in public involvement is in appendix D.

COORDINATION WITH OTHERS

The Service coordinated with tribes, other federal agencies, and state agencies as part of the planning process. The Service provided a planning update to relevant federal, state, and county representatives (including all county chairpersons). The planning update introduced them to the CCP process for Arrowwood NWR and welcomed their comments. Interested agencies are on the planning mailing list (appendix D).

Tribal Coordination

In the preliminary phase of planning (April 2001), the Service's director of region 6 sent an invitation letter for participation in the CCP process to the following tribes:

- Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana
- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, South Dakota
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, South Dakota
- Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, South Dakota
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, South Dakota
- Santee Sioux Tribe, Nebraska
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, South Dakota
- Spirit Lake Tribe, North Dakota
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, North Dakota
- Yankton Sioux Tribe, South Dakota

None of the tribes contacted expressed interest in participating in the planning process.

Federal Agency Coordination

Coordination with the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) took place throughout the planning process. Reclamation representatives provided information pertinent to the development of the draft CCP and EA related to the ongoing mitigation project.

The planning team worked with representatives from the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center (Jamestown, North Dakota) of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

State Coordination

The NDGF is charged with managing the state's natural resources. Their mission is to "protect,

conserve, and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for sustained public consumptive and nonconsumptive uses." The state manages more than 78,000 acres in support of wildlife, recreation, and fisheries.

The Service's director of region 6 sent an invitation letter for participation in the CCP process to the director of the NDGF. The local NDGF wildlife managers and the refuge staffs maintain excellent and ongoing working relations, preceding the start of the CCP process.

State Wildlife Grants Program

Over the past several decades, documented declines of wildlife populations have occurred nationwide. The State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program was created by Congress in 2001. This program provides states and territories with federal dollars to support conservation aimed at preventing wildlife from becoming endangered and in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act. The SWG program represents an ambitious endeavor to take an active hand in keeping species from becoming threatened or endangered in the future.

According to the SWG program, each state, territory, and the District of Columbia must complete a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy (CWCS) by October 1, 2005 to receive future funding.

These strategies will help define an integrated approach to the stewardship of all wildlife species, with additional emphasis on species of concern and habitats at risk. The goal is to shift focus from single species management and highly specialized individual efforts to a geographically based, landscape-oriented, fish and wildlife conservation effort. The Service approves CWCSs and administers SWG program funding.

The State of North Dakota CWCS was reviewed and information was used during development of the CCP. The goals and objectives of the State of North Dakota CWCS are supported by the CCP through implementation of habitat goals and objectives.

PLANNING ISSUES

Internal and public scoping meetings, an internal management review, and a review of completed issues workbooks indicated seven major issues regarding the refuge.

Water Quantity

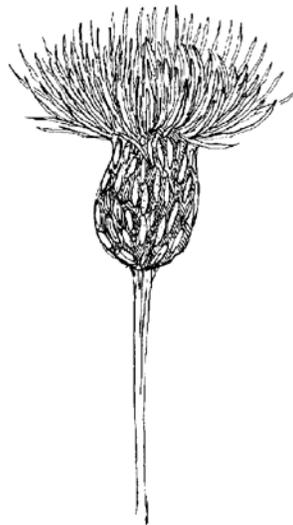
Jamestown Reservoir lies downstream of Arrowwood NWR on the James River in North Dakota. During high-water years, the reservoir backs up onto the refuge, floods pools, and eliminates

or severely reduces water management capabilities at the refuge. The refuge has experienced increased flooding and water management problems since Jamestown Reservoir filled to normal operating levels in 1965. High water levels preclude moist soil management and result in decreased productivity at the refuge during most years.

In addition, Jamestown Reservoir supports rough fish such as carp and big mouth buffalo that invade the refuge during high-water periods. Rough fish can cause extensive damage to aquatic resources important for migratory and nesting waterfowl. When wetland elevations are high, there may be no winterkill of the rough fish.

Invasive Plants

Invasive plants are an ongoing problem at the refuge and adjacent private agricultural lands. Invasive plants at the refuge degrade the quality of croplands, uplands, and hay harvested at the refuge by cooperative farmers. Since most refuge lands are not cropped, grazed, or mowed annually, these lands are viewed as weed sources that infest nearby private croplands.



Canada Thistle
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Visitor Services

The refuge offers a wide variety of year-round, accessible, recreational opportunities that are wildlife dependent. There is a keen interest in wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, especially hunting and fishing. There is also interest in trapping, wildlife photography, and wildlife observation. Activities that are not dependent on the presence of wildlife are also of interest, for example, picnicking, boating, canoeing, and kayaking.

All types of recreational opportunities should be universally accessible by young and old, abled and disabled.

However, there was concern about letting public use go too far. Some residents felt recreation needs to be controlled and restricted to ensure it stays compatible with the wildlife mission of the refuge. Examples include not allowing all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), snowmobiles, or jet skis, as there are other areas nearby already developed for these activities.

Agricultural Practices

The refuge conducts cropping, grazing, and haying—usually by private cooperators—to meet management objectives. The refuge has steadily decreased its cropland acreage, which has decreased economic benefits to cooperators.

Wildlife Depredation

The refuge is located in a predominately small-grain, row-crop, agricultural area. Migratory birds and other wildlife such as deer feed on crops on private as well as on refuge lands; Canada geese are of particular concern. Neighboring farmers would like to see the refuge managed to attract and hold wildlife on refuge lands to keep depredation on private land crops to a minimum.

Naturalness

Some area residents expressed a desire for the primary mission of the refuge to be restoration and protection of the natural ecosystem, including less artificial management (for example, water management) in favor of natural processes. This may include reestablishing native prairie, big game species such as elk and bison. There is concern with habitat disturbance and vegetative damage such as that caused by the Arrowwood NWR mitigation project.

Economic Benefits

Foster and Stutsman counties, where the refuge is situated, receive annual payments under the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act. These payments are made to counties in lieu of taxes, using revenues derived from the sale of products from refuges. Local officials express concern and discontentment that the allocations are but a fraction of the entitlement.

Area farmers and ranchers benefit economically by acting as cooperators to crop, hay, or graze at the refuge. The refuge gains valuable and cost-effective habitat treatments to meet management goals while offering an additional source of income for these cooperators.

STEP-DOWN MANAGEMENT PLANS

A CCP is intended as a broad umbrella plan that provides general concepts and specific wildlife, habitat, endangered species, visitor services, and

partnership objectives. Step-down management plans provide detail to managers and staff who carry out specific actions authorized in a CCP. Based on this draft CCP and EA, table 1 presents plans needed for Arrowwood NWR.

CCP REVISION

Plans are dynamic—management strategies need to be reviewed and updated periodically. The Service will review the final CCP at least annually to determine if the plan requires any revisions. The CCP and associated step-down plans will be modified whenever this review or other monitoring

and evaluation determine changes are needed to achieve the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals.

Monitoring and evaluation will determine whether management activities are achieving the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals. The CCP can be revised when significant new information becomes available, ecological conditions change, major refuge expansions occur, or other needs are identified.

Revision will occur, at a minimum, every 15 years. If the plan requires a major revision, the CCP process starts anew. CCP revisions require NEPA compliance. The public will continue to be informed of and involved with any revision to the CCP for Arrowwood NWR.

Table 1. Step-down management plans for Arrowwood NWR, North Dakota.

<i>Plan</i>	<i>Status</i>
Disease Contingency Plan	To be completed in 2006
Environmental Management Plan	Completed in 2003; revised annually
Fire Management Plan	Completed in 2001; revised annually
Habitat Management Plan (HMP)	To be completed in 2008
Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM Plan)	Completed in 2005
Law Enforcement Plan	To be completed in 2008
Visitor Services Plan	To be completed after the CCP is final
Predator Management Plan	Completed in 2006
Safety Plan	Completed in 1991; revised annually
Water Use Plan	Completed in 2006; revised annually

