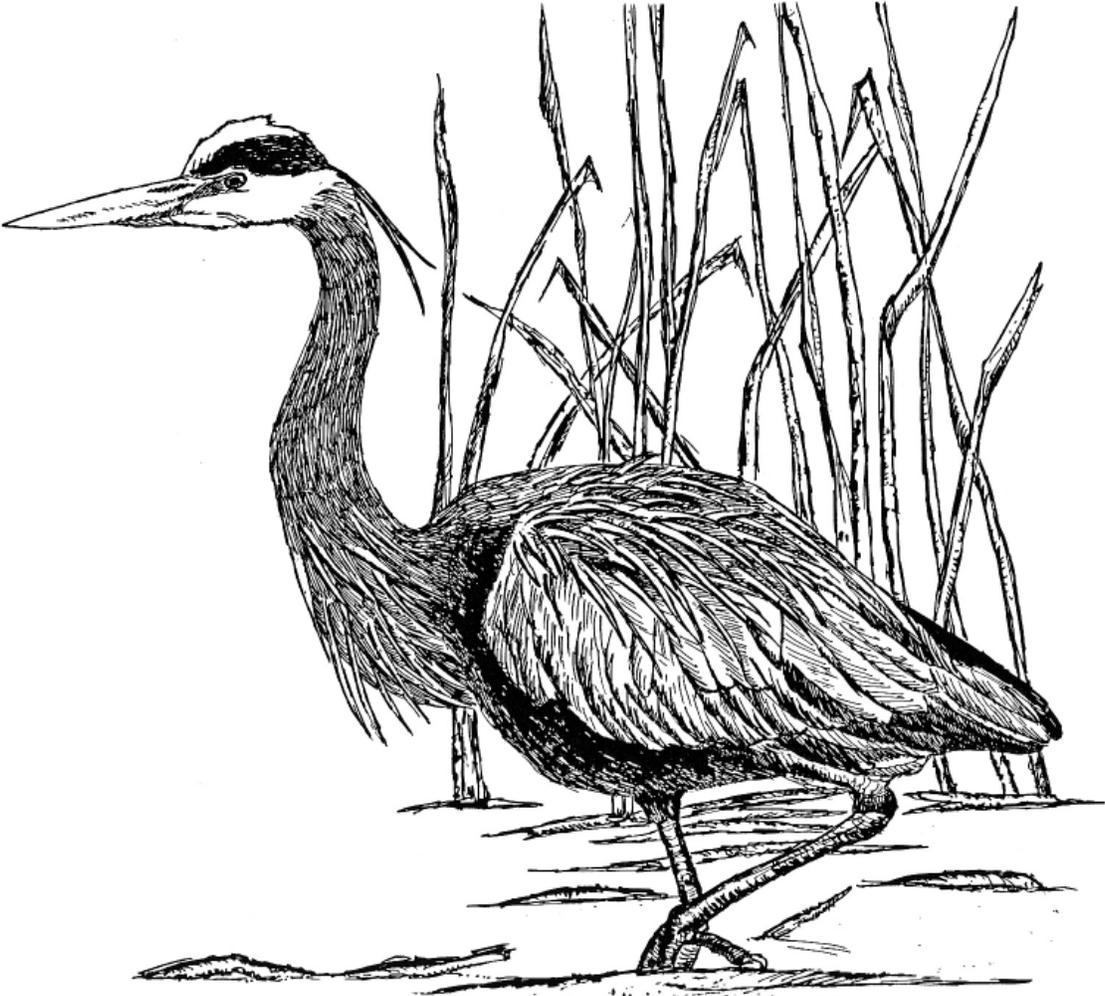


# 3 Alternatives





# 3 Alternatives

## INTRODUCTION

Alternatives are different approaches to management of the refuge. They are designed to resolve issues, achieve the refuge purpose, vision, and goals as identified in the CCP, and fulfill the mission of the Refuge System. They must also comply with current laws, regulations, and policies. NEPA requires an equal and full analysis of all alternatives considered for implementation.

In fall 2004 the Service held a meeting with the public to identify the issues and concerns that were associated with the management of the refuge. The public involvement process is summarized in greater detail in chapter 2. Based on public input, as well as guidelines from NEPA, the Improvement Act, and Service planning policy, the planning team selected the substantive issues that will be addressed in the alternatives. Substantive issues identified for the refuge are:

- habitat and wildlife management
- public use
- water management
- management activities
- cultural resources

A draft CCP/EA was developed and released for public review and comment. An open house was held in Sturgis, South Dakota, on February 28, 2007, at the Community Center. Ten individuals attended representing state, county, tribal, local conservation organizations, and landowners interests. In addition, nearly 90 comment letters were received as well as phone calls. These comments were all reviewed by the planning team and taken into consideration (see appendix C).

The planning team discussed alternatives for management that addressed the substantive refuge issues and met the goals of the Refuge System. Each alternative described in the following sections addresses the substantive issues somewhat differently. Based on further evaluation, consideration of tribal concerns, issues raised by the public, and comments from the initial scoping and the draft public review, alternative A—current management (no action) is the preferred alternative.

According to refuge planning policy (May 25, 2000), the CCP should be revised when significant new information becomes available. This should occur every 15 years or sooner, if necessary. It is important to note that if conditions change, the Service could reconsider actions approved in the CCP. If revisions were considered, full disclosure through extensive

public involvement using NEPA and other compliance procedures would be closely followed. The draft CCP/EA identified alternative B as the proposed action.

This chapter describes two management alternatives for the refuge: the preferred alternative A—current management (no action), and alternative B—relinquish easement to current landowners.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

One alternative the planning team considered would increase the Service's management activities at the refuge. This alternative was rejected because current management of the refuge is provided by the SDGFP, and the area is currently managed as a state park. Increased management by Service personnel would conflict with the state's ability to administer, operate, and maintain the area as they have been doing under the cooperative agreement since 1967.

This alternative was also eliminated from further study because Service personnel determined that it is not feasible to maintain the refuge's habitat alongside the recreational uses (e.g., camping and picnicking) that occur at the park.

The other alternative considered but eliminated from further study was to transfer the easement to another entity. Under the provisions of the easement agreements, however, the Service cannot turn over the easement to any party except the current landowners.

## DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

The theme and general management direction for each alternative are described below.

### PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE A—CURRENT MANAGEMENT (NO ACTION)

Under the no-action alternative, the Service would continue to manage the refuge within the parameters of the cooperative agreement with the SDGFP. Existing habitat within the easement and all public programs would continue to be administered and maintained by the state.

Current habitat and wildlife practices would be carried out by park personnel and levels of public use would remain the same. The park facilities and activities—hiking, picnicking, designated camping, fishing, and a horse camp—that are provided on the southeast side of Bear Butte Lake would continue to be offered.

Refuge staff would support partnerships between the state and the tribes for the ongoing protection of cultural resources. The Service would continue passive management and maintenance of facilities (no refuge staff is currently assigned to the station).

### **ALTERNATIVE B—RELINQUISH EASEMENT TO CURRENT LANDOWNERS**

Alternative B would take the refuge out of the Refuge System and relinquish the easement to the current landowners. Under this alternative, the habitat, public use, cultural resources, and operations would be managed by the landowners. The Service's easement requirements would no longer exist.

The Service would divest its interest in the refuge. This would be carried out within the life of the plan. Once the CCP is approved, the managing station would work with the Service's Division of Realty and the Land Protection Planning Branch within the Division of Planning to prepare a combined program proposal to divest this refuge. The proposal would be submitted to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission for concurrence and then submitted for congressional approval.

### **COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES**

The two alternatives evaluated in this planning process are: (1) alternative A—current management (no action), and (2) alternative B—relinquish easement to current landowners. A comparison of the alternatives is shown in table 1.



*Bear Butte State Park*

**Table 1. Comparison of the alternatives**

| <i>Issue</i>               | <i>Preferred Alternative A (No Action)</i>  | <i>Alternative B (Relinquish Easement to Current Landowners*)</i>   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Habitat and Wildlife       | Passive management; maintain existing habitat with easement   | The landowners have sole responsibility to manage habitat and wildlife                                    |
| Public Use                 | Continue to allow the state, the Bureau of Land Management, and private landowner to manage all public-use programs | Same as A   |
| Cultural Resources         | Support partnerships between the state and the tribes for the ongoing protection of cultural resources              | The landowners have sole responsibility to protect cultural resources                                     |
| Operations and Maintenance | Passive management and no maintenance   | The landowners are responsible for operations and maintenance   |
| Partnerships               | Continue to work with state, tribal, and federal partners   | Continue to work with state, tribal, and federal partners   |
| Easement Rights            | Maintain the right to impound water   | All easement rights, including the right to impound water, would be voluntarily relinquished to the state |

\* *i.e. the SDGFP and other current landowners*

