



# The Souris River Loop National Wildlife Refuges

*Des Lacs NWR, J. Clark Salyer NWR, Upper Souris NWR*

## Planning Update

Volume One, March 2003

### The National Wildlife Refuge System

In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt protected an island with nesting pelicans, herons, ibis, and roseate spoonbills in Florida's Indian River from feather collectors decimating their colonies. He established Pelican Island as the nation's first bird sanctuary and went on to establish many other sanctuaries for wildlife during his tenure. This small network of sanctuaries continued to expand, later becoming the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Today, 100 years later, the Souris River Loop Refuges are three of more than 540 National Wildlife Refuges nationwide. The National Wildlife Refuge System is the largest system of lands in the world dedicated primarily for the conservation of wildlife.

In 1997 Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, legislation which provides clear guidance for the management of the Refuge System. The act included a new statutory mission statement and directed the Service to manage the Refuge System as a national system of lands and waters devoted to conserving wildlife and maintaining biological integrity of ecosystems.

This law requires the FWS to develop a comprehensive conservation plan for each refuge. It also stated that certain wildlife-dependent recreational uses are priority public uses on refuges and strengthened the compatibility determination process for assuring that these and other activities do not conflict with refuge management purposes and goals.

### Let Your Voice Be Heard!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is starting work on a *Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)* for the Souris River "Loop" National Wildlife Refuges - Des Lacs, J. Clark Salyer, and Upper Souris. A CCP is a 15-year plan that will provide long-range guidance and management direction for each of the Refuges.

This planning project provides a unique opportunity for the Service to involve individuals and local communities in the long-term management of the refuge. You can play a significant role in the development of a far reaching plan!

The Service is committed to keeping you informed about the development of the CCP, and invites the public to engage in the planning process and share ideas about the Refuges' future.

Come hear presentations about the Refuges' resources and the CCP process, and give us your opinions about the Refuges' qualities, planning issues and opportunities. Meetings will begin promptly according to the schedule shown adjacent.

*If you have special needs and plan to attend one of the public scoping meetings, please call 303/236-4381 so arrangements can be made.*

### Public Scoping Meetings

- **Mohall**  
*March 24, 2003*  
 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
 Community Room  
 Renville County Courthouse  
 205 Main Street East
- **Bowbells**  
*March 25, 2003*  
 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
 City Hall  
 100 Main Street
- **Bottineau**  
*March 26, 2003*  
 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
 Multi-purpose Room  
 Bottineau High School  
 301 Brander Street
- **Kenmare**  
*March 26, 2003*  
 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
 Memorial Hall  
 #5 NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street
- **Towner**  
*March 27, 2003*  
 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
 Multi-purpose Room  
 Towner School  
 302 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE
- **Minot**  
*March 27, 2003*  
 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
 Carnegie Center  
 105 Second Avenue SE

# The Planning Process

## Glossary of Terms

**Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP):** A 15-year plan that will provide long range guidance and management direction for the Refuge. The plan will outline the Refuge vision and desired future conditions and explain the goals, objectives and strategies necessary to achieve the vision and purpose of the Refuge.

**Compatible Wildlife-dependent Recreation:** Recreational activities that are directly tied to wildlife. A recreational use is considered “compatible” if it does not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System or the purposes of the Refuge. The six wildlife-dependent recreation activities identified by Congress as the System’s priority public uses include: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation.

**Vision Statement:** A vision statement is a compelling, future-oriented expression of what the Refuge will be, or what the Service hopes to do, based primarily upon the Refuge System’s mission and Refuge purpose.

**Goals:** Goals are descriptive, open-ended, and often broad statements that direct work toward achieving the vision and purpose of the Refuge.

## What is a CCP?

Congress passed the National Wildlife System Improvement Act of 1997, which provides the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with guidance for managing refuges. Important principles of the act are to maintain biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the refuge, and facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation.

Every refuge is required to have a Comprehensive Conservation Plan completed by 2012. The plan will outline refuge goals, objectives, and management strategies. It is a flexible “living” document that will be updated every 15 years.

The accompanying environmental document (EA or EIS), required by the National Environmental Policy Act, will describe management alternatives considered and their effects on the environment. You will have an opportunity to review and comment on the draft CCP and environmental document.

In summary, the CCP will:

- Outline a vision for the Refuges
- Guide management decisions
- Outline goals, objectives and strategies to achieve the Refuges’ vision and purposes
- Provide other agencies and the public with an understanding of the management strategies to be implemented on the Refuges
- Describe the desired future conditions of the Refuges

## North Dakota’s Souris River Loop Refuges

Three National Wildlife Refuges lie within the Souris River basin of north central North Dakota: Des Lacs NWR (19,554 acres), J. Clark Salyer NWR (58,700 acres), and Upper Souris NWR (32,084 acres). Collectively, these long, narrow riverine refuges include significant examples of major biological communities of the northern Great Plains region - communities that harbor more than 300 species of migratory birds - as well as noteworthy cultural and historical elements.

In addition to sharing many natural resource features within the same river system, the three Souris River Loop Refuges have a fairly common management history and face many similar resource conservation issues and challenges. Thus, a collective perspective from all three refuges was used to conscientiously and efficiently generate a draft vision statement and goals that would equally serve any of the three refuges while accomplishing the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the purpose of the Refuge(s).



Bluebird © Cindie Brunner

## The Planning Schedule

### Planning Stage

### Dates

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Preplanning .....                           | Jun 2002 - Sep 2002        |
| 2. Draft Vision Statement and Goals .....      | Jan 2003 - Jan 2003        |
| 3. <b>Public Involvement and Scoping</b> ..... | <b>Mar 2003 - Aug 2003</b> |
| 4. Data Gathering and Research .....           | Mar 2003 - Mar 2004        |
| 5. Develop and Analyze Alternatives .....      | Mar 2004 - Feb 2005        |
| 6. Prepare Draft CCP and NEPA Document .....   | Mar 2005 - Oct 2005        |
| 7. Final CCP and NEPA Document .....           | Nov 2005 - Feb 2006        |

# Working Toward A Refuge Vision and Goals

## Qualities and Issues

At the public scoping meetings, participants will be asked to comment upon what they feel are important qualities and features of the Refuges and to identify issues of concern related to the Souris River Loop National Wildlife Refuges.

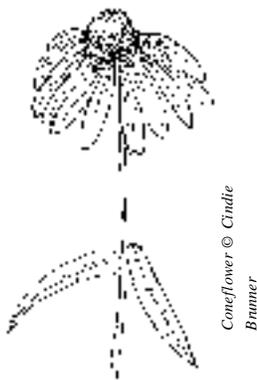
Qualities build upon the Refuges' purposes. They are the characteristics and features of the Refuges which make them special and worthy of refuge status. Issues are defined as management concerns that need to be addressed during the refuge planning process. Here are some examples that we have identified:

### Qualities

- The Refuges represent a comprehensive collection of all North Dakota plant communities
- The Refuges may be the only remaining representatives of the *drift plain prairie* which is considered a threatened resource
- The Refuges are known for their recreational uses and scenic value

### Issues

- The spread of invasive species and woody vegetation is a problem that threatens the integrity of native plant communities on the Refuges and adjacent lands
- Public interest to increase hunting and fishing programs on the Refuges



Coneflower © Cindie Brunner

## A Draft Vision

During a Vision and Goals workshop in January 2003, Service staff and representatives from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, USGS Biological Resources Division, US Army Corps of Engineers and Three Affiliated Tribes developed the following draft vision statement and goals for the Souris River Loop National Wildlife Refuges.

During public scoping meetings, the public will be asked to review the vision statement and goals and offer suggestions for refinements.

### Draft Vision

From Paleo-Indians on the tails of the Ice Age; to the Assiniboine and Chippewa, early fur trappers, explorers, and naturalists; eminent bison herds and astoundingly abundant birdlife; fires stretching for miles to revitalize treeless prairie; determined homesteaders and vanquished farms of the Dust Bowl era...

The Souris River basin figures prominently in the cultural and natural history of mid-continent North America's plains and prairies. Three National Wildlife Refuges of the Souris River "Loop" - Des Lacs, Upper Souris, and J. Clark Salyer - will conserve much of the ecology and natural character of the northern plains region while helping sustain populations of migratory birds and other wildlife native to the landscape. The refuges will create a sense of awe and wonder by providing an array of wildlife-dependent recreational and educational experiences that enhance visitor awareness of the splendid natural and cultural heritage of the northern plains. Functioning as integral parts of the ecosystems and human communities to which they belong, the Souris River Loop Refuges will seek collaborative partnerships to attain common goals. A diverse and passionate refuge workforce will rely on sound science to understand and restore or emulate natural processes essential to the integrity and perpetuation of major biological communities with which the refuges are entrusted.

## The Draft Goals

**1. Ecology** - Provide the array of biotic communities present in the Souris River basin in the mid 1800s by restoring aspects of, or emulating, the greatest extent possible, the dynamic processes (i.e., grazing, fire and drought) under which these communities evolved. The major communities include: drift prairie, sand hills prairie, prairie slopes, woody draws, riparian woodlands, aspen oak woodlands, seeded herbaceous cover, riverine marshes, lakes, prairie ponds, wet meadows, and riparian.

**2. Cultural Resources** - The Refuge will preserve prehistoric, Native American, and historic cultural resources.

**3. Research & Science** - The Refuge will serve as a demonstration area for innovative natural resource management using sound science and applied research to advance the understanding of natural resource function and management within the Northern Great Plains.

**4. Public Use, Education and Interpretation** - The Refuge will develop public appreciation for the National Wildlife Refuge System through an understanding of the Souris River biological communities and cultural resources by providing appropriate and compatible recreational, educational, and interpretive opportunities.

**5. Refuge Operations** - The Refuge will efficiently utilize funding, staffing, partnerships and volunteer programs for the benefit of all natural resources, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and present and future generations.

**6. Partnerships** - The Refuge will work with others on issues of mutual interest including resource conservation and education, compatible public use, wildlife-related research and infrastructure.

## 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 scoping meetings, 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 any of the contacts listed below.

website: <http://uppersouris.fws.gov/>

## Contact Information

We are available to provide additional information about refuge history, goals, and accomplishments to date, and to answer any questions about the planning process. Public comments will be accepted by written letter or e-mail through April 30, 2003 at the following addresses:

**Toni Griffin, Planning Team Leader**  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Region 6 Division of Refuge Planning  
Office  
PO Box 25486  
Denver Federal Center  
Denver, CO 80225-0486  
303/236-4378 phone  
303/236-4792 fax  
[toni\\_griffin@fws.gov](mailto:toni_griffin@fws.gov)

**Bridget McCann, Planning Team Leader**  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Region 6 Division of Refuge Planning  
Office  
PO Box 25486  
Denver Federal Center  
Denver, CO 80225-0486  
303/236-4381 phone  
303/236-4792 fax  
[bridget\\_mccann@fws.gov](mailto:bridget_mccann@fws.gov)

**The Souris River Loop National Wildlife  
Refuges**

**Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge**  
P.O. Box 578  
Kenmare, North Dakota 58746  
701/385 4046  
email: [deslacs@fws.gov](mailto:deslacs@fws.gov)  
website: <http://deslacs.fws.gov/>

**J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge**  
681 Salyer Road  
Upham, North Dakota 58789  
701/768 2548  
email: [jclarksalyer@fws.gov](mailto:jclarksalyer@fws.gov)  
website: <http://jclarksalyer.fws.gov/>

**Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge**  
17705 212th Avenue NW  
Berthold, North Dakota 58718  
701/468 5467  
email: [uppersouris@fws.gov](mailto:uppersouris@fws.gov)

## The Next Steps

The next phases of the CCP process will focus on data gathering, research, and the development of alternative management strategies. After analyzing comments gathered during the public scoping phase, members of the Service staff, partnering agencies and the core production team will focus their efforts on gathering data and conducting research. In March 2004, the core team will reconvene to develop several planning alternatives for the Refuges. 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 core team will again turn to the public for their input. During an Alternatives Workshop, the Service will present the alternatives to the public and will solicit their feedback and ideas for further refinement of the various strategies.

As the planning process unfolds over the next three and half years, the Service will return to the draft vision statement outlined in this document. While the statement today seems like a fair expression of what the Refuges will be like in the future and what it will offer visitors and wildlife, the vision of the Souris River Loop Refuges may continue to evolve over time. Public comments, innovative ideas and new partnerships will continue to shape the refinement of the vision statement and, in turn, guide the development of the CCP.

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“Souris River Loop Refuges  
- your prairie places”

