

Planning Update

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Issue 1, July 2006

The National Wildlife Refuge System

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System).

The Refuge System began in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt established Pelican Island in Florida as the nation's first bird sanctuary and went on to establish many other sanctuaries for wildlife.

This small network of sanctuaries continued to expand and became the National Wildlife Refuge System—the largest system of lands in the world dedicated for the conservation of wildlife.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) administers the Refuge System.



*Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
Wilderness Area*

What is a comprehensive conservation plan?

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Improvement Act). This legislation provides clear guidance for management of the Refuge System including a new mission statement.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

The Improvement Act directs 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.

To support and fulfill this mission, the Improvement Act also requires that, by 2012, the Service will have developed a comprehensive conservation plan for each national wildlife refuge in the Refuge System at the time of the Act.

To meet this requirement, the Service has started work on a comprehensive conservation plan for Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. This 15-year plan will provide long-range guidance and management direction for all the refuge's programs. The plan will outline a vision statement and supporting goals, objectives, and strategies. It is a "living" document that will be updated every 15 years.

The accompanying environmental assessment or environmental impact statement, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), will describe management alternatives considered and their effects on the environment.

In summary, the comprehensive conservation plan will do the following:

1. Outline a vision
2. Guide management decisions
3. Outline goals, objectives, and strategies to achieve the refuge's vision and purposes
4. Provide other agencies and the public with an understanding of the management strategies to be carried out at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge



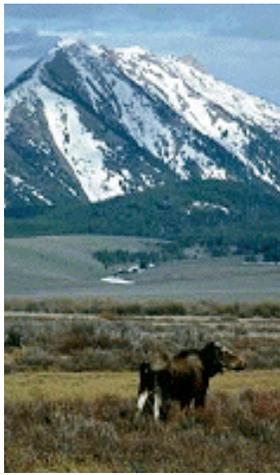
What are the steps and estimated completion dates for this planning process?

1. Preplanning, September 2005–September 2006
2. Public involvement, June–September 2006
3. Finalize vision statement and goals, October 2006
4. Develop and analyze alternatives for addressing issues and achieving goals, January 2007
5. Prepare the draft comprehensive conservation plan and NEPA document, starting February 2007
6. Public review of the draft comprehensive conservation plan and NEPA document, September 2007
7. Finalize the comprehensive conservation plan, February 2008

Why did we send you this update?

We are widely distributing this planning update to generate interest in the planning process and collect ideas and thoughts from the public, state and local governments, organizations, and other partners.

You are receiving this update because you were identified as someone who may want to be kept informed or share ideas about the future management of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.



Moose are frequently seen on the refuge.

How can you participate in this process and provide comments?

We have enclosed a comment form and return envelope for you to share your ideas with the planning team. We will also accept emails and other written formats. All written comments must be postmarked by September 15, 2006 to be considered.

You may also wish to participate in our open houses: August 15 at the Ennis Fire Hall meeting room, and August 16 in Dillon at the county courthouse. Each open house will be from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For directions to these meeting places, please contact the refuge office at 406/276 3536.

Will you be getting future planning updates?

If you would like to continue to receive periodic planning updates, please complete the enclosed "mailing list consent" form and return it in the envelope provided.

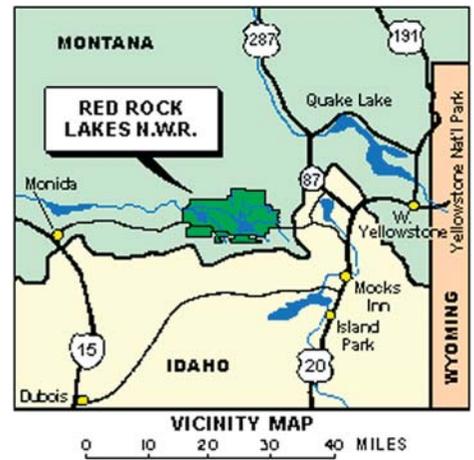
Since this mailing list is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, we need your permission to place your name on the permanent mailing list. If you do not return this form, we will assume you do not wish to receive any further updates.



Trumpeter Swans

Refuge Purposes

1. ...as a refuge and breeding ground for wild birds and animals. (Executive Order 7023; April 22, 1935)
2. ...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds. (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)
3. ...suitable for (a) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (b) the protection of natural resources, (c) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species...the Secretary...may accept and use...real...property. Such acceptance may be accomplished under the terms and conditions of restrictive covenants imposed by donors.... (Refuge Recreation Act)
4. ...the conservation of the wetlands of the Nation in order to maintain the public benefits they provide and to help fulfill international obligations contained in various migratory bird treaties and conventions. (Emergency Wetlands Resources Act)
5. ...for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources...for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude. (Fish and Wildlife Act)
6. ...conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.... (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)



Refuge Facts

- Established 1935
- 62,464 total acres (45,598 acres in fee title; 16,866 acres in conservation easements)
- 32,350 acres of designated wilderness
- 12,000 visitors annually
- Historically managed for migratory birds, trumpeter swan and big game emphasis
- Unique combination of habitats including wetland; rivers; forest; and stable, vegetated sand hills
- Current staff of five
- Public use includes wildlife observation and photography, hunting, fishing, interpretation, and education

Additional Information and Contacts

To learn more about Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, please visit our website: <http://redrocks.fws.gov/>.

For questions or to provide comments by email, please contact Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge at 406/276 3536 or redrocks@fws.gov.

You may fax or mail your written comments to

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