

Planning Update

Comprehensive Conservation Plan National Elk Refuge

Issue 1, January 2011

The National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Elk 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 during his presidency. 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), an agency within the Department of the Interior, administers the Refuge System.

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 this 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 the conservation of wildlife and maintenance of the biological integrity of ecosystems.

National Elk Refuge

The National Elk Refuge is approximately 25,000 acres in size and consists of a number of diverse habitats including grassy meadows, marshes, forest, sagebrush, and rock outcrops.



A variety of waterfowl, including trumpeter swans, can be seen on nearly 1,600 acres of open water and marshland. Nearly 175 species of birds and at least 47 mammal species have been observed on the refuge. Some notable species include bald eagle, peregrine falcon,

moose, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, gray wolf, and mountain lion.

The refuge provides a rich habitat for the world's largest wintering concentration of elk. In addition to the large elk herd, a free-roaming bison herd winters at the refuge. The Bison and Elk Management Plan completed in 2007 provides goals, objectives, and strategies for managing bison and elk on the National Elk Refuge and in Grand Teton National Park for the next 15 years. Therefore, the comprehensive conservation plan will not address bison and elk management on the refuge, but will address all other aspects of refuge management including migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, visitor use, and cultural resources.



What is a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?

To support and fulfill the mission of the Refuge System, the Improvement Act 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,

W. Steve Sherman/USFWS



Trumpeter Swans

the Service has started work on a comprehensive conservation plan for the National Elk Refuge. A draft plan and accompanying environmental document (as required by the National Environmental Policy Act) will describe management alternatives considered and their effects on the environment.

This 15-year plan will provide long-range guidance and management direction for all of the refuge's programs. The plan will outline a vision statement and supporting goals, objectives, and strategies. It will be a "living" document that is updated every 15 years. In summary, the final comprehensive conservation plan will do the following:

1. Outline a vision for the refuge.
2. Guide management decisions.
3. Set goals and specify objectives and strategies to achieve the refuge's vision and purposes.
4. Provide other agencies and the public with an understanding of management to be carried out at the refuge.

Public Involvement and Scoping

A public scoping meeting is scheduled for January 11, 2011. This meeting is essential to developing a list of issues that the comprehensive conservation plan will address. The meeting will be an informal open house. You are invited to drop by anytime from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. to meet with Service personnel, learn more about the planning process, and provide input.

Public comments during the scoping portion of the planning process will be

accepted by written letter or email through February 10, 2011, and can be mailed, emailed, or faxed (refer to Contacts).

Meeting Schedule

January 11, 2011
 Snow King Resort
 Grand Teton Room
 400 East Snow King Avenue
 Jackson, Wyoming
 4 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Why Did You Receive This Update?

The Service is widely distributing this planning update to generate interest in the planning process and to collect ideas and thoughts from the public, State and local governments, organizations, and other partners.

Since the mailing list is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, your permission is needed to place your name on the permanent mailing list. If you do not request to be on the mailing list, the Service will assume that you do not wish to receive further information on this planning process.

If you would like to continue receiving planning updates, please complete the mailing list consent form and return it to the address below. You may also phone, fax, or email Toni Griffin (planning team leader) and request that your name be placed on the mailing list; her contact information follows.

Contacts

Public comments can be sent to the following addresses or by fax:

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Find Out More About the Refuge

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrrefuge
 Phone: 307/733 9212

Information on the Planning Process

www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/ccp.htm

Planning Timeline



