



North Dakota Easement National Wildlife Refuges

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Update Volume One, July 2004

The National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt protected Pelican Island in Florida from feather collectors who were destroying the colonies of nesting pelicans, herons, ibis, and spoonbills. He established Pelican Island 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, later becoming the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System, the largest system of lands in the world dedicated for the conservation of wildlife. This system is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

The "Easement" Refuge Program

In the mid-1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was faced with his own conservation crisis: a massive drought and declining waterfowl populations. Working with states and private landowners, Roosevelt established an easement program for "drought relief, water conservation, and for migratory bird and wildlife conservation." Hundreds of landowners agreed to place their lands under this easement, most perpetual, for these conservation purposes. Dozens of easements agreements were signed by landowners in North Dakota.

The easement refuge program is **not** part of the more well-known *grassland and wetland* easement programs.—

Although most were perpetually protected, a new status was given to these lands in the late 1930s and '40s. Easement lands in close proximity were combined and designated as migratory bird sanctuaries (later changed to national wildlife refuges) under the authorities of executive orders and conservation laws. To this day, most of these lands remain in private ownership making them unique among the more than 550 national wildlife refuges, nationwide. Since that time, these easement refuges have played a vital role in the recovery and protection of water resources and the waterfowl and other wildlife that depend on

these areas.

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Act), legislation which provides clear guidance for the management of the NWR System. The Act included a new statutory mission statement (see below) 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.

"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."

In order to support and fulfill this mission, this Act also required that by 2012, the FWS will have developed a comprehensive conservation plan for each national wildlife refuge in the System at the time of the Act.

Let your voice be heard!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is starting work on a combined Comprehensive Conservation Plan for 39 North Dakota Easement National Wildlife Refuges. A CCP is a 15-year plan that will provide long-range guidance and management direction for the refuges and the easement refuge program.

This planning update has been widely distributed to generate interest in the planning process. However, any participants in this process must remain aware that we are primarily talking about private lands covered by an easement which limits the FWS's range of management capabilities. However, some refuges are interspersed with FWS-owned refuge lands and waterfowl production area's (WPA).

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

If you would like to continue to receive periodic planning updates such as this, please complete the enclosed mailing list consent form and return in the envelope provided. You may also wish to participate in one of our scheduled public meetings.

Public Meetings

- **Silver Lake, Wood Lake, and Pleasant Lake NWRs**
July 20, 2004, 9-11 a.m.
St. James Catholic Church
330 C. Ave. South, Minnewaukan, ND
- **Rose Lake, Lambs Lake, and Little Goose NWRs**
July 20, 2004, 2-4 p.m.
Lakota Community Center
404 Hwy 2 West, Lakota, ND
- **Brumba, Snyder Lake, and Rock Lake NWRs**
July 27, 2004, 9-11 a.m.
Cando Armory
410 5th Ave., Cando, ND
- **Ardoch NWR**
July 27, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
Minto City Hall
along Hwy 81, Minto, ND
- **Appert, Canfield Lake, Hutchinson Lake, Lake George, Springwater, and Sunburst Lake NWRs**
July 27 or 28, 2004, 7-8 p.m.
Wing, ND Senior Center (7/27) or
the Linton, ND Community Center (7/28)
- **Maple River**
July 14, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
Ranch House
39 N. Monroe, Fullerton, ND
- **Bone Hill NWR**
July 19, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
Jud Cafe
Jud, ND

The Planning Process

- **Dakota Lake NWR**
July 22, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
Otter Tail Room, Otter Tail Power Co.
103 S. 5th St, Oakes, ND
- **Hobart Lake, Stoney Slough, Half Way and Tomahawk NWRs**
July 21, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
AmericInn
280 Wintershell Rd., Valley City, ND
- **Johnson Lake and Sibley Lake NWRs**
July 28, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
McHenry Cafe
McHenry, ND
- **Cottonwood Lake, Wintering River, and Buffalo Lake NWRs**
July 20, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
Music Room, Drake School
Drake, ND
- **Lords Lake, Willow Lake, Rabb Lake, and School Section Lake NWRs**
July 22, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
Bottineau High School, multi-purpose rm.
301 Brander St., Bottineau, ND
- **Hiddenwood NWR**
July 21, 2004, 7-9 p.m.
Old Settlers Park
Makoti, ND
- **Camp Lake, Lake Otis, Lake Patricia, Lost Lake, Pretty Rock, and Sheyenne Lake NWRs**
for information on attending meetings related to these refuges, contact the refuge manager @ 701/442-5546 x11.

If you have special needs, please call 303/236-8682 so arrangements can be made.

What is a CCP?

Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge 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 the 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 assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), will describe management alternatives considered and their effects on the environment.

In summary, the CCP will:

- Outline a vision for these 39 easement

refuges and the easement refuge program

- Guide management decisions
- Outline goals, objectives and strategies to achieve the easement refuge programs vision and purpose(s)
- Provide other agencies and the public with an understanding of the management strategies to be implemented on these refuges
- Describe the desired future conditions of these refuges

The North Dakota Easement National Wildlife Refuges

The 39 easement refuges in this CCP project area are located primarily east of the Missouri River and in the counties of Stutsman, Barnes, Eddy, Griggs, McLean, Morton, Grant, Sheridan, Walsh, Towner, Nelson, Grand Forks, Benson, Ramsey, Benson, Pierce, McHenry, Bottineau, Rolette, LaMoure, Dickey, Burleigh, Kidder, and Emmons.

Consisting of 47,908 acres, these refuges range in size from 160 acres (Halfway NWR) to over 5,506 acres (Rock Lake NWR). Their habitat is typical of eastern North Dakota except most contain water impoundments, primarily built during the 1930s and '40s. These refuges are part of a system of over 550 refuges administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Contact Information

We are available to provide additional information about these refuges and the planning process. Public comments will be accepted by written letter, fax, or e-mail through September 1, 2004. Please send to:

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NWRs included in CCP project:

Appert Lake NWR	Lost Lake NWR
Bone Hill NWR	Pleasant Lake NWR
Brumba NWR	Pretty Rock NWR
Buffalo Lake NWR	Rabb Lake NWR
Camp Lake NWR	Rock Lake NWR
Canfield Lake NWR	Rose Lake NWR
Cottonwood Lake NWR	School Section Lake NWR
Dakota Lake NWR	Sheyenne Lake NWR
Half Way Lake NWR	Sibley Lake NWR
Hiddenwood NWR	Silver Lake NWR
Hobart Lake NWR	Snyder Lake NWR
Hutchinson Lake NWR	Springwater NWR
Johnson Lake NWR	Stoney Slough NWR
Lake George NWR	Sunburst Lake NWR
Lake Otis NWR	Tomahawk NWR
Lake Patricia NWR	Willow Lake NWR
Lambs Lake NWR	Wintering River NWR
Little Goose NWR	Wood Lake NWR
Lords Lake NWR	

Planning Stages & Projected Dates

1. Preplanning, December 2003 - May 2004
2. **Public Involvement**, June 2004 - August 2005
3. Draft Vision Statement and Goals, September - November 2004
4. Develop and Analyze Alternatives for addressing issues and achieving goals, December 2004 - March 2005
5. Prepare Draft CCP and NEPA Document, March - August 2005
6. **Public Review of Draft CCP and NEPA Document**, September - October 2005
7. Develop Final CCP and NEPA Document, October - December 2005

