

Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Greetings from the refuge!

We are pleased to announce the release of our final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. We thank everyone who provided comments and input throughout the planning process and on our draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (EA), released in June 2010. The comments provided us with valuable information for preparing our final document.

The CCP is our 15-year management plan for this Refuge. It furthers the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, provides direction to achieve the purposes, vision and goals of the Refuge, and contributes to state and regional conservation plans. Implementing the plan will enable us to fulfill the refuge's important role in conserving and managing wildlife resources.

You may view or download the CCP from our website at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Canaan%20Valley/ccphome.html>.

You may also obtain a print copy or CD-ROM version by contacting the refuge headquarters (see contact information on the other side).



USFWS

Blue headed vireo



Ken Sturm/USFWS

Freeland Tract on refuge.

Public Comment on the Draft Plan

We greatly appreciate the level of public interest and involvement in our planning, and benefited from the discussions during open houses and public meetings. Many responded to our planning update newsletters and notices in the *Federal Register*.

We released the draft CCP/EA for public comment from June 1, 2010 to July 16, 2010. We held public comment meetings on June 15 in Canaan Valley, June 16 in Parsons, June 17 in Elkins, and June 28 in Davis. Approximately 150 people attended the public comment meetings.

We received 312 responses, both written and oral, during the public comment period. These comments covered a variety of topics including wetlands, habitat management, public participation, hunting and other public uses.

We evaluated all comments received during the comment period, and include our responses to them in Appendix J, "Summary of Public Comments and Service Responses on the Draft CCP/EA," in the final CCP. Those comments helped us improve the management objectives and strategies in the CCP.

Highlights of the CCP

The 16,193-acre Canaan Valley NWR was established in 1994 to conserve and protect fish and wildlife resources and the unique wetland and upland habitats of this high elevation valley. Its dominant habitats include wet meadows, peatlands, shrub and forested swamps, beaver ponds and streams, northern hardwood forest, old fields and shrubland, and managed grassland. Refuge visitors engage in wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, interpretation, hunting, and fishing.

The final CCP represents the array of management actions that best work toward achieving our vision and goals.

Under this plan, we will balance the conservation of a mixed forest matrix landscape with the management of early successional habitats and the protection of wetlands. The habitat based objectives in the plan identify focal species whose life and growth requirements will guide management activities in each respective habitat. We will facilitate the removal of more deer from the refuge by increasing access and opening more lands to rifle hunting. We will officially open the refuge to fishing. We will create more

Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge CCP Goals

- Goal 1: Maintain and perpetuate the ecological integrity of the Canaan Valley wetland complex to ensure a healthy and diverse wetland ecosystem providing a full range of natural processes, community types, and native floral and faunal diversity.**
- Goal 2: Perpetuate the ecological integrity of upland northern hardwood and northern hardwood-conifer forests to sustain native wildlife and plant communities including species of conservation concern, to develop late-successional forest characteristics, and to perpetuate the biological diversity and integrity of upland forest ecosystems.**
- Goal 3: Provide and promote through active management a diversity of successional habitats in upland and wetland-edge shrublands, grasslands, old fields, and hardwood communities to sustain early successional and shrubland specialists such as golden-winged warbler, American woodcock, brown thrasher, Eastern towhee, field sparrow, and other species of concern.**
- Goal 4: Enable visitors of all abilities to enjoy opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation and education to enhance public appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of refuge habitats, wildlife, and cultural history.**
- Goal 5: Collaborate with partners to promote the natural resources of Canaan Valley and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.**

trail connections, expand visitor center hours, build an environmental education pavilion, and increase the number of environmental education and interpretation programs.

Changes from Draft to Final Plan

Based on the responses we received during the public comment period, the final plan includes the following important changes from what was presented in Alternative B, the Service-preferred alternative, in the draft CCP/EA:

1. A new map, labeled "Map 4.3, Public Use," and located in Chapter 4 of the final CCP, clarifies our proposal to connect the Swinging Bridge Trail to Cortland Road. This proposed trail connection will require further NEPA analysis and public review before a final route is selected. Therefore, the new map in the final CCP shows the general area within which we hope to build this trail connection, rather than an actual line on a map, as was shown in the draft CCP/EA.

2. We will work with the West Virginia Department of Highways to develop a plan for improving Camp 70/Delta 13 for access by pedestrians, biking, horseback riding, and vehicles (see the final CCP, Chapter 4, objective

4.3). Vehicle access on Camp 70 was proposed in Alternative C of the draft CCP/EA, but not in Alternative B. Due to several factors, including public comment in support of vehicle access on this road, we decided to include this action in the final CCP. Although we discussed some of the potential impacts of this action in the draft CCP/EA, we will need to conduct additional detailed NEPA analysis on this action before it is implemented.

3. In the final CCP, we modified the language in objectives 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 to clarify the strategies for aspen woodland management, northern hardwood forest edge cutting, and alder management. Refer to Chapter 4, "Management Direction and Implementation," goal 3, of the final CCP for those specific changes.

4. We corrected all format and typographical errors that were brought to our attention.

Our Regional Director selected a modified Alternative B, with the changes noted above, for implementation. The rationale for this decision is documented in Appendix K, "Finding of No Significant Impact," of the final CCP.

What's Next?

Implementation of priority projects decided upon by the refuge manager and identified in the CCP can begin immediately. We encourage you to stay involved during the plan's implementation. To be successful, we must continue to develop partnerships, enhance our volunteer program and support our Friends Group.

Contact Information

To learn more about Canaan Valley Refuge, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/canaanvalley/>.

You may also contact the Refuge by mail, email or telephone at:

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