

Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Newsletter

February 2009



David Mentel/USFWS

Cedar waxwing

Alternatives for the CCP

The following four refuge management alternatives are designed to address the issues identified by both the planning team and the public.

Alternative A:

Alternative A describes current management. Under this alternative we would:

- Continue to manage grasslands and shrublands for priority bird species
- Continue to provide quality, safe, compatible hunting opportunities according to state regulations.
- Continue to promote quality fishing opportunities.
- Continue to provide 31 miles of roads and trails.
- Continue to provide 10 miles of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails in the winter.
- Complete a boardwalk loop at the Freeland trail.
- Continue current environmental

Focus on Planning

In 2006, the US Fish & Wildlife Service began the process of developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. This CCP will provide strategic management direction for the next 15 years, and explain the refuge's priorities and plans for wildlife and habitat management, public use, staffing and facilities.

In the past year, the planning team has been working to develop refuge goals, objectives and strategies. The team has also developed four alternatives that aim to achieve the refuge purposes and respond to issues. Refuge management issues include hunting and fishing opportunities, off-trail use, deer management, trail connectivity, land acquisition, and endangered species management.

In this newsletter we would like to share with you our draft goals and some highlights from our preliminary alternatives.

Refuge 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, for the development of late-successional forest characteristics, and to perpetuate the biological diversity and integrity of upland forest ecosystems.

Goal 3: Provide 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: Provide visitors of all abilities with 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.

education and interpretation programs.

- Continue to work with willing sellers to purchase lands within the approved acquisition boundary.
- Continue to monitor and treat invasive plant species on an annual basis.

Alternative B:

This alternative represents the Service’s recommended strategies and actions for best achieving refuge purposes. In addition to Alternative A, we would:

- Reduce forest fragmentation and improve forest structure.
- Create additional early succession habitat where appropriate.
- Increase white-tailed deer harvest by opening additional areas to rifle hunting and assisting hunters with extracting deer from remote areas.
- Create a Research Natural Area.
- Improve and expand opportunities for fishing and non-motorized watercraft.
- Increase trail connectivity on refuge and with adjacent public lands.
- Designate an area for seasonal off-trail use.
- Open the western portion of Brown Mountain Overlook for biking.
- Double the number of students using the refuge by expanding outreach to schools.
- Construct an environmental education pavilion on the Beall Trail.
- Create new interpretive areas and signs for trails and kiosks.
- Open the Visitor Center daily during times of peak visitation.
- Add an additional visitor services professional and a permanent seasonal maintenance worker to our staff.



The boardwalk at Freeland Tract

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A Vision for the Future

Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge showcases the largest contiguous, high elevation wetland complex in West Virginia and harbors a vast assemblage of rare plants and animals normally associated with more northern latitudes. The refuge conserves, protects, and manages a mosaic of wetland, forested and early successional habitat that support migratory birds and threatened and endangered species. As stewards of a significant portion of the headwaters, the Refuge ensures the integrity of the natural resources of the upper Blackwater River watershed. Refuge habitats and wildlife are conserved and managed through research and collaboration with federal, state, and local conservation partners.

As an integral part of the surrounding community, the Refuge provides high quality, safe, wholesome and diverse opportunities for education and recreation, especially hunting and wildlife observation. The refuge experience fosters public interest in the beauty and unique character of Canaan Valley, an appreciation of fish and wildlife ecology, plant ecology and stewardship of the natural world. Visitors develop a greater understanding and appreciation for the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and refuge management programs, and for the importance of protecting lands for wildlife conservation.

Alternative C:

This alternative focuses on expanding priority public uses. Actions would be the same as alternative B except:

- Create a cross-valley trail from Brown Mountain Overlook through the north railroad grade to A-Frame Road.
- Open all of Brown Mountain Overlook Trail for biking.
- Construct an Environmental Education pavilion on the Freeland Tract.
- Open the Visitor Center daily, year round.
- Add a Refuge Operations Specialist, a seasonal biological technician, a seasonal visitor services professional and a permanent full-time maintenance worker.

Alternative D:

This alternative focuses on managing for historic habitats. Actions would be the same as alternative B except:

- Increase emphasis on restoration of red spruce/northern hardwood forest communities
- Remove rail, ring-necked pheasant, Wilson’s snipe, American coot, common moorhen, and rabbit from the list of species hunted.
- Work with State and other partners to stock only native fish species in the Blackwater River in Canaan Valley.
- Do not permit off-trail use.
- Close the Powderline Trail to improve Cheat Mountain

Salamander habitat.

- Add an additional full-time law enforcement officer.
- Further reduce threats of invasive species
- Work with the State and other partners to further reduce the deer population.

For additional information:

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