

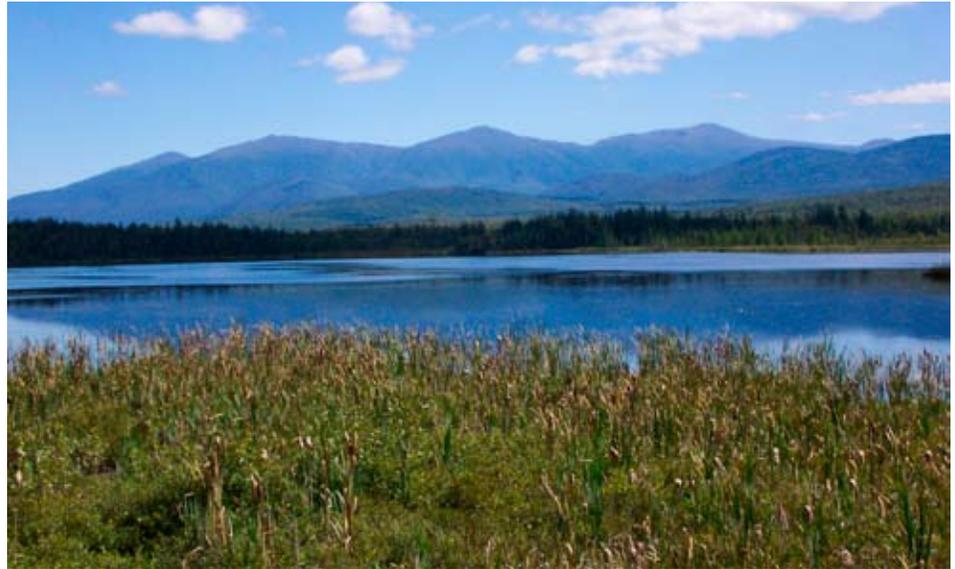
Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Planning Newsletter and Issues Workbook

Comprehensive Conservation Planning

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is starting work on a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The plan will establish management goals and objectives for all refuge programs over the next 15 years. For example, our habitat management, land protection, visitor services and environmental education programs will all be evaluated during the planning process.

This process provides you a unique opportunity to become involved in the long-term management of the Refuge. You can play a significant role in the development of this influential plan. More information about the planning process is available on our website: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Conte/ccphome.html>



Pondicherry Division/USFWS

Who will be involved in developing the plan?

The Refuge staff from the Sunderland, Massachusetts headquarters and the Nulhegan Basin Division in Brunswick, Vermont will lead the effort, with assistance from the Service's Northeast Regional Office. We have representation from the wildlife and forest and parks agencies in the four watershed states (CT, MA, NH, VT) to serve on our core planning team. We will draw on subject matter experts at various times throughout the process.

We intend to engage local residents, non-profit environmental and recreational organizations and community leaders in discussing ways the Refuge can serve the needs of both wildlife and people throughout the Connecticut River watershed. Here are some of the forums we intend to use throughout the planning process:

- evening public meetings
- articles in newspapers
- workshops
- informational newsletters
- technical expert meetings
- one-on-one and small group contacts

If you have suggestions for additional forums or groups, organizations, or individuals you think we should contact, please contact us using the contact information on the back page.

How Can I Get Involved?

- 1) Start by completing and returning this workbook.
- 2) If you have not already signed up at a meeting or returned a yellow postcard, complete the mailing information on the back of the workbook and we will send you updates.
- 3) Spread the word to others that may be interested.
- 4) Contact us anytime



Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Planning Newsletter

Who's Leading this Effort?

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, part of the Department of the Interior, is the principle federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

The Service also manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest network of lands set aside specifically for the protection of fish and wildlife populations and habitats. Refuges provide important habitats for native plants and animals, facilitating the preservation of threatened or endangered species. Refuges also offer a wide variety of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, and many have visitor centers, interpretive trails, and environmental education programs.



Bald eagle/USFWS

What should I know about Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge?

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was established in 1997 to conserve, protect and enhance the abundance and diversity of native plant, fish and wildlife species and the ecosystems on which they depend throughout the 7.2 million-acre Connecticut River watershed.

The watershed covers large areas of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut. It contains a great diversity of habitats, notably: northern forest valuable as nesting habitat for migratory songbirds; rivers and streams used by migratory fish such as shad and salmon; and an internationally significant complex of tidal marshes. It is unique among all other refuges because it is intended to promote conservation activities throughout an entire watershed.

The Refuge works in partnership with a variety of individuals and organizations to deliver environmental education and to encourage and support habitat conservation on public and private lands.

There are three cooperative visitor centers: at the Great North Woods Interpretive Center in Colebrook, New Hampshire (refuge and wildlife exhibits); at the Montshire Museum of Science in Norwich, Vermont (biodiversity exhibits); and Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls, Massachusetts (habitat dioramas and aquariums). The Nulhegan Basin Division headquarters in Brunswick, Vermont has a Visitor Contact Center with displays on the wildlife, habitats and public uses of that division.

Refuge staff also are engaged in a variety of special events, workshops for land managers, and conferences at the centers and other locations in the watershed.

To encourage and support conservation on private lands, refuge staff offers technical assistance to landowners and works with other agencies and organizations. For example, the Refuge leads a partnership to eradicate the aquatic invasive, water chestnut, from the watershed by mobilizing volunteers to search for and remove small infestations before they threaten aquatic resources. The Refuge is a sponsor in the recovery of the federally threatened Puritan tiger beetle in Massachusetts and Connecticut supporting biological studies, recovery and outreach to recreationists.

The Refuge consists of seven small units and two large divisions: 33 acres of wetlands and riverine sand spit in Cromwell, Connecticut; a 4 acre island in Deerfield, Massachusetts; 30 acres at the base of Mt. Toby in Sunderland, Massachusetts; 18 acres of uplands and wetlands in Westfield, Massachusetts; 140 acres on Mt. Tom in Holyoke, Massachusetts; 20 acres along the Connecticut River in Greenfield, Massachusetts; 278 acres which host a federally endangered plant in Putney, Vermont; 5,336 acres of wetlands and northern forests in Whitefield and Jefferson, New Hampshire; and 26,000 acres in the Nulhegan Basin in Essex County, Vermont.

Biological surveys are conducted on Refuge lands for informed management decisions. In conjunction with the CCP process, Nulhegan Basin staff are developing a Habitat Management Plan that will guide future habitat enhancement.

The Nulhegan Basin and Pondicherry divisions are open for certain types of public recreation. Both are available for hunting and fishing. There are accessible trails and interpretive kiosks. The Nulhegan Basin Division has 40 miles of gravel roads open to motor vehicles in the summer and fall. In the winter, roads become snowmobile trails maintained by the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers. All the roads are closed during the spring mud season. The Pondicherry Division also has a snowmobile trail which is part of the state snowmobile network.