



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge

*Spring 2003 - Planning Update*

## NOTICE

Due to reprioritizing and budget constraints, the planning process for Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge has been put on hold until sometime in 2004. We apologize for the inconvenience, and we look forward to working with you in the near future.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) began in fall 2001 the process of developing a long-term management plan for the Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). This plan, called a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), will serve as a guide for managing the Refuge over the next 10-15 years. Due to reprioritizing and budget constraints, the CCP process for the Refuge has been placed on hold until sometime in 2004. The main purpose of this planning update is to summarize comments we have heard so far.

Our first newsletter was mailed in Spring 2002 to more than 600 people. It included a workbook in which readers could express their concerns on important issues affecting the Refuge. Included in the workbook was a list of questions to provide a basis for comparing comments. Once the planning process resumes, your response to these questions will help us focus our planning efforts on those things that matter to you and your community.

Response to the Workbook mailings was great! We received more than 65 responses. We appreciate your taking the time to complete and send in your response. For those of you who were unable to submit your response, you are welcome to submit comments in writing to Beth Goldstein, Team Leader, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035. Or, e-mail comments to [northeastplanning@fws.gov](mailto:northeastplanning@fws.gov).

We recognize that issues and faces change, so we plan to solicit public input again when the planning process resumes. We look forward to working with you in the future.

## Please Remember...

Responses to the Planning Workbooks are not meant to imply statistical significance. Responses represent only the opinions of those people who received and completed Workbooks. Responses do not represent current or future U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policy.

The Delmarva fox squirrel, pictured at right, is a federal-listed species suspected to reside on Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge.



# Planning Workbook Responses

## What is the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System?

*“to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”*

## What are Refuges all about?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, part of the Department of the Interior, is the principal 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 collection 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 variety of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, and many have visitor centers, hiking trails, and environmental education programs.

Most of you received a newsletter and Planning Workbook about a year ago. The Workbooks were designed to give you an opportunity to share your thoughts on issues affecting the Refuge. We received 65 completed Workbooks, and have summarized the responses for your review. Responses to most questions have been categorized in order to avoid redundancy. Other responses are presented numerically.

## Section A Values, Vision, and the Service’s Role

### 1. How many times a year do you visit Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge?

- 3% never visit the refuge
- 64% visit the refuge 1-5 times a year
- 19% visit the refuge 5-25 times a year
- 11% visit the refuge 25-50 times a year
- 3% visit the refuge more than 50 times a year

### 2. What are your favorite activities to engage in while visiting the Refuge?

59% of respondents said they enjoy bird/wildlife observation, while 53% said they enjoy deer hunting and 22% said they enjoy hiking or trail walking. Other activities mentioned included volunteering (mainly at the bookstore), fishing/crabbing, kayaking/canoeing, photography, attending special events, and enjoying the peace and solitude of the outdoors. There was one response each for participating in wetland restoration, monitoring and maintenance for the National Aquarium, picking up trash, gardening/wildflower study, biking, crops, and landings.

### 3. With a larger perspective in mind, what do you value most about the Refuge?

53% of respondents said they value the “undeveloped, well-managed and well-preserved condition” of the habitat (compared to the rest of the overly developed region), its diversity of habitat and its role as “a haven for birds and other wildlife.” 33% value the recreational opportunities offered on the refuge, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, trail walking and the opportunity to enjoy peace and tranquility. 11% appreciate that the refuge is accessible, open to the public and there for present and future generations to enjoy.

### Draft Vision Statement

Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge is part of a nation-wide network of lands and waters belonging to the National Wildlife Refuge System. Located on Maryland's eastern shore, the Refuge lies at the confluence of the Chester River and the Chesapeake Bay. The 2,285-acre Refuge functions as a microcosm of habitats that includes cropland, impoundments, brackish tidal marsh, open water and forest. These varied habitat types sustain large populations of wintering Canada geese as well as other migratory waterfowl and songbirds. The Refuge is also home to the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel and the threatened southern bald eagle.

The Refuge is the only undeveloped island in the Chesapeake Bay that offers public access. The Refuge's proximity to major urban areas such as Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Philadelphia provides a unique opportunity to showcase management practices that benefit natural resources.

Every year thousands of visitors partake in a variety of high-quality, wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation. A new Visitor Center, which is currently under construction, will facilitate environmental education, emphasize the Refuge's long and varied cultural history, and provide a new home for administrative offices.

To serve as a model for other organizations, the Refuge will continue to pursue, with partners, innovative opportunities for implementing and demonstrating renewable, sustainable management techniques.

## Planning Workbook Responses

### 4. What do you consider the most important problem facing the Refuge today?

63% of respondents cited problems with maintaining the natural state of the refuge and protecting endangered species. More specific concerns included erosion, Chesapeake Bay water quality, invasive plants and animals, disturbances from too many visitors, encroachment from development and commercialization. 14% of respondents were concerned about lack of funding and lack of professional staff to help manage and maintain the refuge. 11% of respondents cited a myriad of deer-hunting issues, which included pressure from "radical" anti-hunting groups, hunting while corn is standing, hunting early in the season when mosquitoes are biting, and a need to have more hunting opportunities to control the overpopulation of deer.

### 5. What technical services would you like the Refuge staff to provide to your local community?

*Following is a list of services and the number of respondents (out of 65) that supported each one:*

Management to benefit wildlife	37
Wetlands management	25
Grasslands restoration	21
Management of endangered species	20
Volunteer opportunities	20
Land protection funding	20
Control of invasive plants & animal species	19
Grants for habitat management	18
Other (marsh restoration, stock trapped wild turkeys)	2

### 6. What do you think of our Vision Statement? Any comments or suggestions?

Over 70% of respondents had positive remarks about the Vision Statement. Four respondents criticized it for being too long, and two said the last paragraph says it all. Two respondents suggested adding a statement on where the refuge hopes to be in the future, two asked why we did not mention the tundra swan as one of the resident endangered species, and one suggested posing a limit on hunting and fishing, mentioning the dwindling population of crabs. Three respondents commented on visitation. One suggested more outreach to Baltimore citizens, another feared the danger of "thousands" of visitors developing open space, and another suggested we state in the Vision Statement what we expected of visitors. One respondent said the Vision statement should not focus on methodology, but on the true value added to society, which is what propels donors to give.

# Planning Workbook Responses

## 7. Please indicate here any additional comments you wish to make on values, vision or the Service's role in your community.



**Hail Point Nest.**  
*USFWS photo*

Additional comments urged us to form partnerships with other agencies, especially to help improve Chesapeake Bay water quality; open more walking trails to the public, especially at the southern end of the island; sponsor more educational opportunities, such as field trips for school children; hire more staff; and lower the cost of hunting permits for people over the age of 65. Other respondents commented on the importance of community involvement; the use of the Visitor Center as a facility for gaining community support and recognition for the Refuge, and the concern over public pressure to allow uses incompatible to wildlife objectives. One respondent expressed fears over the use of words like “endangered” and “threatened,” stating “extremist groups” use it to restrict use of the Refuge. Another respondent gave praise for the Refuge staff and volunteers.

## Section B Fish, Wildlife and their Habitats

### 1. Are there specific areas outside the Refuge that, in your opinion, need protection?

Four respondents said the Chesapeake Bay and its associated watershed are both areas in need of protection. Other places mentioned are the area adjacent to the bridge upon approaching the Refuge, adjacent offshore areas targeted for larger scale dredge material placement, farmland adjacent to the Refuge, Chester River grassbeds, the Strong family property (between Bay & Church Creek), the DuPont family property (between Church Creek & Chester River), the Sassafras River and Turners Creek. Three respondents said no further protection efforts are needed.

### 2. Which options should the Service pursue in protecting important habitats that are not currently in a National Wildlife Refuge?

*Following are a list of options and the number of respondents (out of 65) who supported them:*

Land acquisition	38
Partnerships with private landowners	34
Habitat restoration	34
Work with conservation groups	26
Purchasing development rights	22
Environmental education	22
Conservation easements	19
Grants programs	14
No active involvement	2
Large-scale wetland restoration w/dredge spoil	1
Quiet waterways	1

# Planning Workbook Responses



**Tundra Swans.**  
*USFWS photo*

### 3. How do you feel about the Service acquiring land from willing sellers?

All respondents were in favor of the Service acquiring land from willing sellers except one who remained neutral because real estate prices are inflated. Respondents expressed concerns over budgetary matters, pressure on willing sellers, possible conflicts with The Nature Conservancy's efforts, purchase priority given to larger tracts, public access and hunting opportunities, and providing benefits to wildlife.

### 4. Are any of the following issues a concern to you?

*Following are a list of issues and the number of respondents for whom the issue is a concern:*

Over-development of fragile habitats	41
Invasion of exotic plants and animal species	31
Decreased water quality	28
The fragmentation of important habitats	26
Increased recreational use in sensitive habitat areas	26
Lack of active management to improve wildlife habitats	13
** Other issues	4

\*\* Hunting restrictions, public's lack of knowledge of the Refuge and its value, mute swans.

### 5. Please include any additional comments on conserving fish and wildlife habitat.

In additional comments regarding fish and wildlife habitat, respondents urged us to work with the Army Corp of Engineers and other government entities to re-create wetlands on the Chester River side of the island, get the public involved in habitat restoration, eliminate mute swans, and plant crops for wildlife. One respondent suggested banning the catch of female crabs and increasing the minimum catch size. Another respondent said planning should be an on-going process to help offset pressure due to urban sprawl.



**Students visit the refuge to participate in an environmental education program.**  
*USFWS photo*

# Planning Workbook Responses

## Section C Recreation, Education, and Access

*Please contact us if you have any questions or need additional information. Direct inquiries to:*

Martin Kaehny, Refuge Manager  
Eastern Neck NWR  
1730 Eastern Neck Rd.  
Rock Hall, Maryland 21661

phone: (410) 639-7056  
FAX: (410) 639-2516  
E-mail: r5rw\_ennwr@fws.gov

Federal Relay Service  
for the deaf and hard-of-hearing:  
1-800-877-8339

ADA compliant materials will be  
provided upon request

### 1. In your opinion, which of the following wildlife-dependent public uses should be allowed on the Refuge?

*Following is a list of public uses and the number of respondents who supported them:*

Wildlife observation and photography	60
Environmental education and interpretation	56
Hunting	52
Fishing	51
** Other uses	11

\*\* Crabbing, farming, visitor center, hiking, gun safety, boat access and no motorized vehicles.

### 2. Are any of these activities, or the current levels of use, a concern to you? Why?

The main concern of most of the respondents was hunting, and there were various issues concerning it. Issues included the dwindling deer population, too many hunters on the refuge at one time, standing crops and heat interfering with the early hunt season in November, and the one-day hunt in January. One respondent said hunting and fishing should be banned because it contradicts the meaning of the word “refuge,” while one respondent requested increased hunting opportunities. A few respondents commented the wildlife-dependent recreational activities on the refuge were well-managed, while one wanted to ensure the four

measures of “compatibility” were met. One commented that the distance and access from the major populations makes for a long day, and suggested the possibility of an occasional boat trip from Balto, Aberdeen, or the Bay Bridge area, especially for school children on a field trip.



**Hail Creek.** *USFWS photo*

# Planning Workbook Responses



Map of Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge.

## 3. Do our recreational facilities (trails, parking, signs, etc.) meet your needs?

At least 10 respondents said the facilities met their needs, with additional compliments of the handicapped facilities and the readability of the safety and parking signs. Other respondents had the following suggestions and/or concerns:

- With the opening of the lodge/visitor center, There would be more chances for education and community involvement; want more interpretive information on aquatic species.
- Some areas are too far a walk, need more parking areas, more trails.
- No more development on refuge, there are enough trails and parking lots.
- Directions on signs need to be better marked, updated.
- A canoe/kayak launch site suggested for Inglebrook.
- Open Hail Point to hunting.
- Dirt roads need to be surface-treated, trash cans and rest facilities at parking lots, more handicapped facilities.
- Bow hunting in close proximity to other activities is a problem.

## 4. Please indicate any additional comments on recreation, education and public access.

Other concerns/suggestions included concern about a wind tower generator and its negative impact on birds, and required safety orientation before all hunting dates. One respondent suggested a water trail on the refuge, and another suggested installing additional boardwalks for wildlife observation.

### What's Next...

Since the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the refuge has been put on hold, we will remain in the "preplanning" stage. This means we will continue to identify and collect pertinent data that will be used to form objectives and strategies later in the planning process. These data needs may include distribution, migration patterns and abundance of wildlife; water resources including quality and quantity; opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and administrative resource needs, such as staffing, funding and facilities. Once we can devote more time and funding to the plan, we will resume with the public involvement stage by holding additional meetings to solicit your input again. We will share any new information we have with you, and we will ask if you have any new information you would like to share with us. We look forward to working with you again!

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