

Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge

Release of Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan is now available!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pleased to announce the release of the final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge.

We thank everyone who provided comments on our draft CCP/Environmental Assessment (EA) released in October 2010. These comments provided us with valuable information for preparing our final document.

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

How to Access the Final Plan

You may view or download the CCP from our Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/iroquois/ccphome.html>.

You may also request a printed copy or CD-ROM version by contacting refuge staff (see contact information on page 3).



Center Marsh on Iroquois Refuge- USFWS

Public Comments on the Draft Plan

We released the draft CCP/EA for public comment from October 4, 2010 to November 3, 2010. We also held two public meetings on October 20, 2010 at the refuge's headquarters in Basom, New York.

We greatly appreciate the level of public interest and involvement in our planning effort. We received numerous oral comments at the public meetings, as well as 44 written response during the public comment period.

These comments covered a variety of topics including changes to public access, turkey, waterfowl, and deer hunting opportunities, and wildlife habitat management.

We evaluated all of the substantive comments received during the comment period, and include our responses to them as Appendix H, "Summary of Response to Public Comments," in the final CCP. These comments helped us improve the management objectives and strategies in the final CCP.

Refuge Vision Statement

Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, known locally as part of the "Alabama Swamps" will be the ecological "puzzle piece" for western New York by creating and maintaining unsurpassed habitats including wetlands, grasslands, shrublands, and forests for migratory birds and other wildlife. By encouraging compatible wildlife dependent recreation and working with partners, a deep understanding and appreciation for the refuge's ecological integrity will be fostered in its visitors, regardless of generational, economic, or social boundaries. Through these efforts, future generations will cherish Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge's interconnectivity to the much larger National Wildlife Refuge System.



Pied-billed grebe



Green-winged teal

Changes from the Draft to Final Plan

The final CCP is based on alternative B, which we identified as the Service-preferred alternative in the draft CCP/EA.

In response to comments received on the draft CCP/EA, we made the following important changes:

- We decided to allow visitors access off of designated trails October 1 to the end of February. All visitors must wear hunter orange during the firearm deer seasons. Hunter orange must be visible from 360 degrees and must be at least 400 square inches of solid fluorescent orange on the head, chest, and back, such as a hat and vest. To prevent disturbance to waterfowl, off trail access will not be allowed in refuge wetlands. The refuge will continue to restrict public access for hiking and walking to designated trails from March 1 to September 30.
- We modified our turkey hunting proposal. We will have two hunting sessions during May. A first session will run from May 1 – May 15 with 50 permits being available. A second will run from May 16 - May 31 with 25 permits being available. Permits will be allocated by a lottery system with hunters choosing their desired timeframe in order of preference. Hunters may receive a permit for one session only.
- We have decided to also offer a fall turkey hunt on the refuge. We felt that there would be no additional administrative burden on the refuge from offering an fall turkey hunt.

Iroquois Refuge Goals

Goal 1: Provide high quality freshwater wetland migration stopover and breeding habitat for waterfowl, marshbirds, shorebirds, and bald eagles in refuge impoundments through water level control.

Goal 2: Maintain the environmental health and integrity of Oak Orchard Creek and associated bottomland floodplain forests and wetlands as a natural free-flowing habitat with a diverse assemblage of native plants and animals.

Goal 3: Provide a diverse mix of grassland, shrubland, and forested upland habitats arranged to reduce fragmentation and edge effects, and enhance habitat quality for priority species of conservation concern.

Goal 4: Refuge visitors will understand and appreciate fish and wildlife conservation through high quality recreation, education, and interpretive programs.

Goal 5: Hunters and anglers will enjoy and support programs designed to provide high quality hunting and fishing experiences.

Goal 6: Enhance partnerships with local communities and various organizations to garner support and promote refuge programs and resources.

We selected alternative B, with the changes above, for several reasons. We believe it represents the array of management actions that best work towards achieving the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals, Refuge System policies, and the goals of other State and regional conservation plans. We also believe that this alternative most effectively address the key issues raised during the planning process.

The full basis and rationale for our decision is documented in Appendix I, "Finding of No Significant Impact," of the final CCP.



Bald eagle

Highlights of the Final Plan

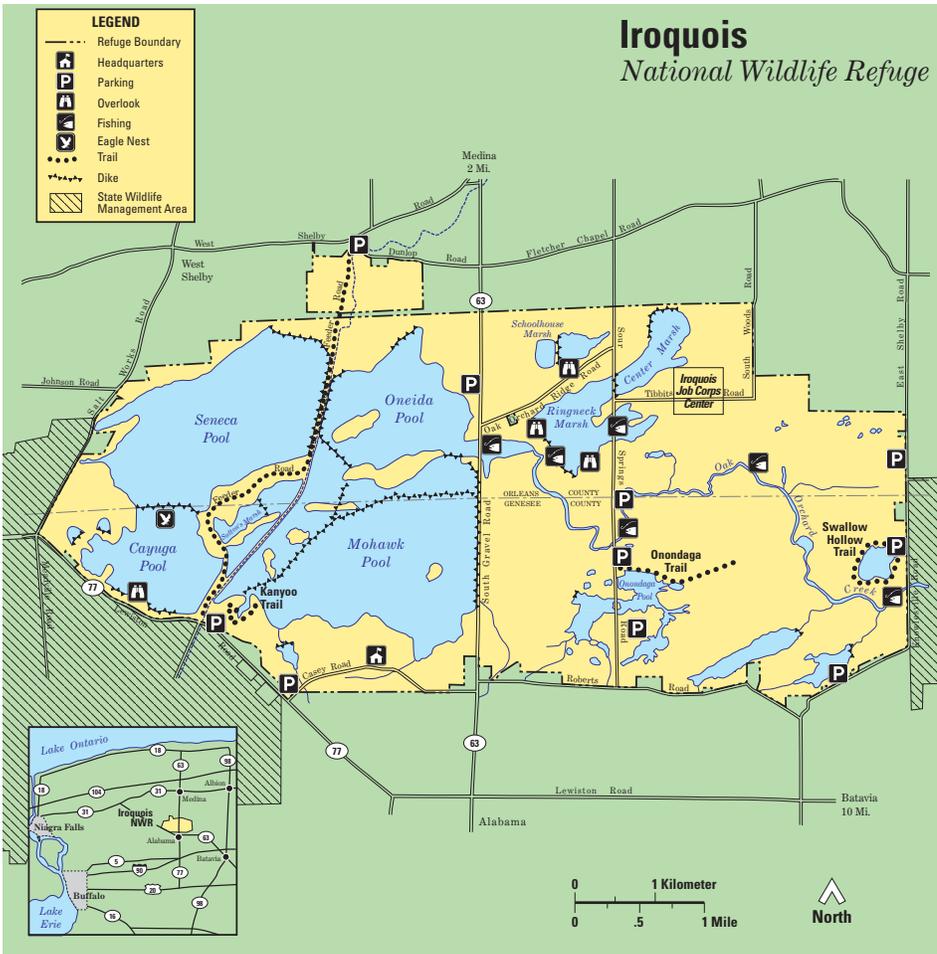
Under the CCP, we will focus on enhancing the conservation of wildlife through habitat management, as well as providing additional visitor opportunities on the refuge. The following is a brief summary of our planned management of the refuge. For more detailed information, please refer to the final CCP.

Habitat Management

The emphasis of our habitat management will be on decreasing habitat fragmentation and restoring native habitats to provide high-quality habitat for breeding and migrating birds and other species of conservation concern. To achieve this, we will improve grassland, shrubland, and forest habitats by removing hedgerows and replacing nonnative conifer plantations with native tree and shrub species.

Monitoring and Inventorying

Our monitoring and inventory program will continue to help us better understand the implications of our management actions and identify ways to improve their effectiveness.



Current Map of Iroquois Refuge

Visitor Services

We will increase and enhance our existing wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities and facilities. For example, we plan to update existing interpretative and outreach materials; construct blinds for wildlife photography and waterfowl hunting; and add a canoe launch along Oak Orchard Creek. We will also implement a permit system for hunting upland game, migratory birds, and big game.

Administration and Staffing

To facilitate greater cross-program collaboration, we will co-locate the Lower Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office with a new visitor contact station and administrative building by adding on to the existing building.

We will plan to expand our existing staff to include a full-time law enforcement officer, maintenance worker, biological technician, and one part-time biological technician.



Ohio DNR

Cerulean warbler

Implementing the Plan

We will immediately begin implementing projects outlined in the CCP. In order to be successful, we must continue to maintain and develop partnerships. We will continue to work with our volunteers, the Friends of Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, and other partners to achieve our vision and goals.

We encourage you to also stay involved during the plan's implementation. We also hope you will come visit us at the refuge!

About the Refuge

Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1958 under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act for "... use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." (16 U.S.C. 715d).

The refuge consists of more than 10,800 acres within the rural townships of Alabama and Shelby, New York, midway between Buffalo and Rochester. Freshwater marshes and hardwood swamps are bounded by forests, grasslands, and wet meadows.

These areas serve the habitat needs of both migratory and resident wildlife, including waterfowl, songbirds, mammals, and amphibians, as well as numerous indigenous plant species.

Contact Information

To learn more about Iroquois Refuge, please visit our Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/iroquois/>.

You may reach refuge staff by:
 Telephone: 585/948-5445
 Email: iroquois@fws.gov

Please send mail to:
 Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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