

# Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge

## *Developing a Conservation Plan for the Future*

USFWS/Randy Lennon



*Great Blue Heron*

### Refuge Information

Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge is one of three refuges comprising the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex (refuge complex), located in Prince William and Fairfax counties, Virginia with headquarters in Woodbridge. The other two refuges are Occoquan Bay, established in 1972 to protect migratory birds, and Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck (Mason Neck), established in 1969, to protect the Federal-listed bald eagle.

The 325-acre Featherstone Refuge, was established in 1970 to protect the natural features of a contiguous wetland area. The refuge is a narrow strip of land bordered on the east by the Potomac River and the mouth of Neabsco Creek, and on the west by an active railroad right-of-way.

The refuge contains 80 acres of forested upland, 220 acres of forested wetland, and 25 acres of open water. The pockets of upland forest scattered throughout the refuge consist mostly of mixed oak species with Virginia and loblolly pine. The forested wetlands of the refuge include red maple, sweetgum, yellow poplar and water willow. These large "bottomland" hardwood trees provide suitable habitat and ample nest cavities for such species as pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers, barred owls and prothonotary warblers. Waterfowl and wading birds enjoy the quiet and secluded waters of Farm Creek for dabbling in the aquatic plant life and fishing for shad and herring. Bald

eagles have maintained a nest within or adjacent to the refuge for a number of years. Some mammals that frequent the area include white-tailed deer, red fox, raccoon, gray squirrel, and beaver.

Currently, there is no legal public access to Featherstone Refuge; consequently, the refuge is closed to all public uses except under special use permit. There are no facilities or other infrastructure on the refuge although it has been suggested we consider it as a possible segment of the Potomac Heritage Natural Scenic Trail.

### A Conservation Plan for the Future

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we, our) has begun developing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP), that includes both Featherstone and Mason Neck Refuges. The CCP will establish management goals and objectives for each refuge's wildlife management, habitat protection, and public use programs for the next 15 years.

The CCP process provides an opportunity for State agencies, conservation and local organizations, communities, and concerned citizens to participate in the development of this far-reaching plan. As the first step in the planning process, we plan to host two open houses near the refuges (see page 2 for details). Participants will have the opportunity at these meetings to learn about existing refuge programs, help our planning team identify key issues, share ideas and concerns, and make recommendations on how the refuge should be managed in the future. The March 27th open house will focus on Featherstone Refuge; the March 28th open house will focus on Mason Neck Refuge. However, we will be prepared to discuss both refuges at either open house date.

Information from the open houses and other public involvement opportunities will guide the planning team as it develops proposed management alternatives. These alternatives will be included in a draft CCP, which we expect to release for public review in April 2008.

Please access our Northeast planning website, [http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/MasonNeck\\_Featherstone/ccphome.html](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/MasonNeck_Featherstone/ccphome.html), for additional information on our planning process.



*Forest uplands on the refuge*

USFWS/Bill Wallen

**Vision and Goals for the Refuge**

Our planning team has developed the following draft vision statement and goals for the refuge. We would appreciate your comments.

**Vision Statement**

*Part of the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, the Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge contains valuable acres of wild woods and wetlands, which are rapidly disappearing in this region of Virginia. We will continue to protect those wetlands, bottomland hardwoods, and wildlife associated with them. Isolated by commercial and residential development, the refuge lacks public access. Nevertheless, given the opportunity, we would provide limited opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation.*

- Refuge Goals**
- Goal 1.** Manage to enhance forest and wetland habitats to support a diversity of native plants and animals.
  - Goal 2.** Provide limited quality, compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities.
  - Goal 3.** Promote awareness, understanding and support of the values of the refuge and the resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



**Public Open Houses**

*Date:* March 27, 2007, 6:00 - 8:30 pm  
*Presentation -* 6:30 - 7:00 pm

*Location:*  
 Potomac Community Library  
 2201 Opitz Boulevard  
 Woodbridge, VA 22191

*Focus on Featherstone Refuge*

*Date:* March 28, 2007, 6:00 - 8:30 pm  
*Presentation -* 6:30 - 7:00 pm

*Location:*  
 Gunston Elementary School  
 10100 Gunston Rd.  
 Lorton, VA 22079

*Focus on Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck Refuge*

***These locations are fully accessible.***



USFWS

*American black duck*

**For more information on the CCP process or to submit comments:**

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 Website: <http://www.fws.gov/northeastplanning>

**For more information on the refuge:**

Potomac River NWR Complex  
 Greg Weiler, Refuge Manager  
 14344 Jefferson Davis Highway  
 Woodbridge, VA 22191  
 Phone: 703-490-4979  
 Email: [fw5rw\\_msnnr@fws.gov](mailto:fw5rw_msnnr@fws.gov)  
 Website: <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=51612>

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

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>

**March 2007**

