

Chapter 5



USFWS

Meeting at Mason Neck Refuge

Consultation and Coordination

- Introduction
- Planning to Protect Refuge Resources
- Partners Involved in Refuge Planning
- Contact Information

Introduction

This chapter describes how we engaged others throughout the development of this draft CCP/EA. It details our efforts to encourage the involvement of the public and conservation partners including other Federal and State agencies, County officials, civic groups, non-government conservation and education organizations, and user groups. It also identifies who contributed in writing the plan or significantly contributed to its contents.

It does not detail the dozens of informal discussions the refuge manager and his staff have had over the last four years where the CCP was a topic of conversation. Those involved a wide range of audiences, including congressional representatives or their staffs, local community leaders and other residents, refuge neighbors, refuge visitors, and other interested individuals. During those discussions, the refuge manager and his staff often would provide an update on our progress and encourage comments and other participation.

A 45-day period for public review follows our release of this draft CCP/EA. We encourage you to respond with your ideas about the plan. During that period, we will host open-house public meetings at locations near the refuge to gather your opinions and answer your questions about our proposals. We will weigh your responses carefully before we write the final CCP.

According to Service policy, we must review and update our final CCP at least once every 15 years. We may need to revise it sooner, either in response to significant new information that would markedly change management direction, or if the Service Director or our Regional Director deem it necessary. If so, we will once again announce our revised planning and encourage your participation.

Planning to Protect Refuge Resources

Our refuge planning began informally in June 2006 at an initial strategy meeting between the refuge staff and regional office staff and culminates with this Draft CCP/EA.

June 2 & 16, 2006: We had initial phone calls between refuge staff and regional office planning staff. We discussed the planning process and distinguished between the responsibilities of the regional office staff, refuge staff, and a potential contractor. Also, we discussed the refuge's resources and the potential issues that would need to be addressed in the plan. A tentative schedule for accomplishing the major steps in the planning process and determining when and how we should involve others was also developed.

September 28 & 29, 2006: We held our first team meeting on the refuge. We drafted a vision statement, identified preliminary issues, determined what additional resource information we needed to collect and summarize, discussed who should participate on the core planning team and what other experts we should consult to help us address planning issues. We also developed our timetable for the planning process.

November 6, 2006: We wrote to the executive director of the VDGIF inviting staff in his agency join our core planning team. His response named four individuals.

- January 18 & 19, 2007:** The planning team leader met with refuge staff and the contractor to discuss aspects of the planning process that have been accomplished and what needed to be initiated. Other state agency and Service participation was discussed, a vision and goals were drafted, information on the Affected Environment was shared, and plans for public scoping meetings were developed.
- March 7, 2007:** We distributed a one page newsletter to over 200 citizens, local and elected officials, organizations and agencies, and it was sent out to the entire Friends of Potomac River Refuges mailing list, to announce formally the beginning of the planning process and ask if they want to stay on our project mailing list. We also announced the two public open houses we would host in later in the month.
- March 27 & 28, 2007:** We hosted two open-house meetings in Woodbridge and Lorton, Virginia, having published notices about the meetings in local and regional newspapers, on radio, in our newsletter and on our regional planning website. Twenty-seven people attended the meetings.
- At both meetings, we presented an overview of current refuge management, described the planning process, and explained how people can get involved. We also shared our preliminary vision and goals for the refuge and the issues we already know we need to address. We asked for feedback, and answered any questions about the planning process.
- March 29, 2007:** We convened the core team for the first time, including VDGIF and Virginia Department of Parks and Recreation members. Topics at the meeting included: the planning process steps, what had been accomplished to date, tentative issues to address, and a draft vision and refuge goals. We also identified other preplanning needs yet to be done, and other information sources there were.
- May 15 & 16, 2007:** Refuge staff hosted a field trip to Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge for the core planning team, including VDGIF and Virginia State Parks representatives, and other state agency and Service experts. The purpose of the field visit on May 15th was to conduct a Visitor Services Review of the refuge, its current program and potential. On May 16th, State agency and Service staff evaluated the refuge's biological program and discussed issues related to bald eagle and waterbird management, and the management of Little Marsh impoundment.

May 18, 2007:	We published a Notice of Intent (to prepare a CCP) in the Federal Register (72 FRN 28066).
October 4 & 5, 2007:	We held a core team meeting to review the status of the planning process, reviewed issues and discussed how to address them, revised the vision and goals, and discussed a framework for three potential alternatives. On October 5, we invited the volunteer coordinator of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District and the Potomac River Watershed Coordinator of the Virginia DEP to discuss water quality monitoring the use of volunteers. Members of the Friends of Potomac River Refuges were also at the meeting to learn about the state's volunteer program.
December 2007:	We distributed a planning update newsletter to everyone on our project mailing list, as well as distributed it from the Refuge Complex office and at refuge events. We also posted the newsletter on our website. The newsletter summarizes what we heard at our public meetings, what we have been working on as a planning team, and it encouraged continued involvement in the planning process.
January 9, 2008:	We met with Mason Neck Area Managers and provided an update on the status of the CCP process. Mason Neck Area Managers include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Bureau of Land Management–Meadowood■ Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority–Pohick Bay Regional Park■ Virginia State Parks–Mason Neck State Park■ Virginia State Historic Site–Gunston Hall Plantation
January 30, 2008:	We participated in the Friends of Potomac River Refuges Annual Meeting with the general membership attending. Comments were made in our presentation on the status of the CCP process and how to get involved in the process.
February 20, 2008:	We met with Prince William County Supervisor Frank Principi. There was general discussion of the CCP process and the National Potomac River Heritage Trail through Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge.
March 12, 2008:	We attended a Friends of Potomac River Refuges board meeting and mentioned the status of the CCP.
April 9, 2008:	We attended a Friends of Potomac River Refuges board meeting and mentioned the status of the CCP.
April 10, 2008:	We discussed the status of the CCP at the Merrimac Farm Dedication with David Whitehurst and Jerry Sims of VDGIF. In particular, we discussed management of Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge.

- April 17, 2008:** We met with Jerry Sims and Rick Busch of VDGIF to discuss further details on the management of Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge.
- April 19, 2008:** We co-hosted the Eagle Festival and had a general discussion with interested individuals attending the festival on the CCP process, the status of planning, and how to get involved.
- April 28, 2008:** We met with Prince William County Supervisor Frank Principi, Prince William County Planner Pat Thomas, and NPS Heritage Trail Superintendent Don Briggs to discuss the CCP planning process and the Potomac River National Heritage Trail routing through Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges.
- May 1, 2008:** During the Crows Nest Property Dedication, we had a general discussion with Rick Bush and Jerry Sims of VDGIF on the CCP process and management of Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge.
- May 3, 2008:** We met with Jerry Sims and Rick Busch of VDGIF to discuss further details on the management of Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge.
- May 30, 2008:** We held a core team meeting to discuss progress on writing CCP chapters. We reviewed what the contractor had done to date and provided edits.
- September 16, 2008:** We held a meeting with Eddie Byrne of Kettler Development Corporation to discuss the new development adjacent to Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge and the refuge's needs for dedicated public parking.
- September 18, 2008:** We met with Jerry Sims of VDGIF about management of Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge.
- October 8, 2008:** We met with Jerry Sims, John Rohm, Ron Hughes, Joe Ferdenanson, and VDGIF for a tour of Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge and led a discussion of management activities.
- October 13, 2008:** We met with the Mason Neck Area Managers and provided a CCP status update.
- December 10, 2008:** We discussed the proposed John Smith Water Trail with other Virginia National Wildlife Refuge managers, Nathan Caldwell from the Service's Headquarters, and National Park Service Trail staff present. There was general discussion on status of trail and a conceptual plan. We provided an update on the status of the CCP.
- January 23, 2009:** We provided a CCP status update at the Friends of Potomac River Refuges annual meeting.

Partners Involved in Refuge Planning

January 29, 2009:

We met with James McGlone, Virginia Department of Forestry, to discuss forest management planning for Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, which included a discussion of the CCP and proposed goals and objectives for forest management.

Refuge programs enjoy a great deal of support from outside the Service in many arenas: conducting biological surveys, enhancing public use and refuge programs, restoring habitat, and protecting land. Our partnerships will continue to expand under the increasing interest in conserving refuge resources. During the past 4 years, we have apprised the following partners, typically in conjunction with other meetings, forums or events, of the planning process and encouraged their involvement.

- Friends of Potomac River Refuges
- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- Virginia Department of Forestry
- Ducks Unlimited
- Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
- Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network
- The Hartwell Foundation
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)
- Potomac River Region members of the Gateways Network
- USDA—Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA—Forest Service, Forest Health
- Mason Neck State Park
- Fairfax County School District
- Virginia Native Plant Society
- College of William and Mary—Center for Conservation Biology
- Audubon Naturalist Society
- Northern Virginia Bird Club
- USDA—Wildlife Services
- Prince William Conservation Alliance
- USDI-Bureau of Land Management
- Gunston Hall Plantation
- Pohick Bay Regional Park—Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

Contact Information

Greg Weiler, Refuge Manager

Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex

14344 Jefferson Davis Highway

Woodbridge, Virginia 22191

Phone: 703-490-5521

http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/MasonNeck_Featherstone/ccphome.html

Nancy McGarigal, Natural Resource Planner

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (NWRS)

300 Westgate Center Drive

Hadley, Massachusetts 01035-9589

413-253-8562 telephone

413-253-8468 facsimile

<http://northeast.fws.gov/planning>



Bill Wallen

Occoquan Bay refuge in the fog