

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Update #2

Progress to Date

Since our last planning update in April 2010, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) has made considerable progress in developing the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). We recently concluded our public scoping period. This included holding public meetings and an interagency workshop to gather input from the public and our conservation partners. We reviewed scoping responses and we formulated a draft vision statement and draft goals for the CCP.

Summary of Public Scoping

Public Involvement Process

We conducted a public scoping period from May 7 through June 30, 2010 to gather public input and identify key issues and concerns to consider during the CCP process.

Coinciding with the release of our Notice of Intent to prepare a CCP/EA in the Federal Register, we invited the public to submit comments through direct mailings (newsletters and Issues Workbooks), news releases, the refuge website, and flyers made available at the refuge.



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Impoundment on the Refuge

As part of the scoping process, we also held two public meetings on May 18, 2010 at the refuge Visitor Center. Twenty-four participants attended and provided comments.

On June 23, 2010, we conducted an interagency scoping workshop at the Montezuma Audubon Center in Savannah, New York. A variety of local, State, and Federal agency representatives participated and provided information and comments during the workshop.

Summary of Comments, Issues, and Ideas Collected

We are grateful to all those who participated in the discussion at the meetings and workshop, submitted written and email responses, and sent in completed Issues Workbooks. We received over 175 comments and these responses have been constructive in helping us identify issues to consider throughout the CCP process.

We reviewed and organized all the comments into five broad categories summarized below.

Regional/Ecosystem-wide Issues

- Soil and water contamination
- Fragmentation due to utility and transportation corridors, including altered hydrology due to the New York State Thruway (I-90)
- Assess whether newly acquired lands are best suited to conversion to impounded wetlands
- Better understand the function of wetlands with regard to water quality, carbon storage, etc.
- Consider climate change in future refuge planning efforts
- Consider effects on the local community during land acquisition efforts

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Refuge Manager giving presentation at public scoping meeting

Bob Walker



Lesser Yellowlegs

Biological Program Issues

- Maintaining and restoring wetlands should be the highest priority
- Waterfowl and marshbirds management should be priority
- Increase management for other species, including bats, reptiles and furbearers
- Expand shorebird habitat
- Increase grasslands
- Convert grassland to shrublands
- Manage more actively for forest
- Cattail stands have declined over the past 6-7 years

Community Relations and the Local Economy

- Increase and improve efforts to boost area ecotourism
- Increase and improve outreach efforts and partnerships
- Evaluate linking the refuge to Howland's Island and the Montezuma Audubon Center

Public Use Program Issues

- Increase and expand public use opportunities including environmental education, fishing, and wildlife observation
- Expand hunting program to increase waterfowl hunting and allow a spring and fall turkey hunt
- Prohibit hunting and other consumptive uses, wildlife observation and hunting are incompatible
- Allow other types of public use such as guided tours, boat tours and camping
- Limit public access, with the exception of staff-guided tours
- Increase volunteer base and reduce volunteer turnover
- Encourage use of the refuge by private industry
- Build interpretive rest stop along the NYS Thruway



Baltimore Oriole



Refuge Visitor Survey

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), in collaboration with the Service, is conducting visitor surveys for selected refuges nationwide. We are pleased to announce that Montezuma NWR is among those chosen. Between October 23 and November 6, with help from our volunteers, the refuge will request contact information from visitors. The USGS will then contact and interview participants. The information collected will be presented in a report made available to the public. This effort will allow for a better understanding of visitors' recreational, educational and informational experiences, and will measure satisfaction with current services, access, and facilities. We hope that you can assist us in this endeavor!

Refuge Facilities, Infrastructure and Staffing

- Staffing is insufficient to meet refuge needs
- Increase directional signs on area roads and improve unpaved refuge roads
- Upgrade/replace current Visitor Center and connect the refuge with the Montezuma Wetlands Complex

Draft Vision Statement

“Amid the clamor of thousands of birds, huge flocks of migrating waterfowl alight on freshwater marshes while bald eagles soar overhead. Sweeping vistas of expansive wetlands, interspersed with cattail-stands and forest, invite a closer look at areas teeming with a diversity of migratory birds and other wildlife. These are some of the images that reward and inspire visitors of Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Nestled in the heart of New York State’s pastoral Finger Lakes Region, the refuge is an essential link in an international network of wetlands and conservation lands. The refuge belongs to a coalition of partners which make up the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, part of what was historically a 50,000-acre swamp and marshland where the sky is often “black with ducks”. Through the collaboration with current and newly forged partnerships, the refuge continues to demonstrate and promote wise and responsible resource stewardship and showcase wetland restoration management practices applied on a landscape level to benefit both wildlife and people.

Visitors of all ages and abilities feel welcome at the refuge and enjoy spectacular wildlife viewing opportunities. The refuge continues to be an important component of the local economy and community, and provides a full complement of quality wildlife-dependent recreation, education and interpretation programs, and other public uses. We work closely with our friends, local citizens, and partners to enhance and improve nature-based tourism through community outreach, education, and advocacy.

We hope all refuge visitors from everywhere continue to value Montezuma NWR for enhancing their quality of life. Within the National Wildlife Refuge System, Montezuma NWR is treasured for conserving wetlands and wildlife and providing inspirational outdoor experiences for present and future generations of Americans.”

The full summary of issues from the public scoping process is available on the planning website:
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Montezuma/ccp/home.html>

Drafting a Vision Statement & Goals

The Planning Team recently completed a draft vision statement and goals for the refuge (see inset boxes on previous and current page).

Draft Vision Statement

The vision statement looks forward to the refuge's future and tries to give a sense of purpose to our efforts. We developed Montezuma refuge's draft vision statement to broadly reflect the refuge's purposes and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission.

Draft Refuge Goals

Refuge goals create a framework for making refuge management decisions. They are descriptive, open-ended, broad statements of the desired future conditions. We drafted our goals to help direct our management efforts toward achieving the refuge's purposes and vision and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission. We used the refuge's existing Habitat Management and Visitor Services Plans as starting points.



Visitor Center Wildflowers

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Goals for the Refuge

Goal 1: Provide, enhance, and restore where possible, freshwater emergent marsh, open water wetland, and mudflat habitats to benefit native wildlife and plant communities, particularly migrating waterfowl and shorebirds.

Goal 2: Restore and maintain forested wetlands, riparian forests along the Seneca and Clyde Rivers, and upland forests to benefit native species, including songbirds and important plant communities.

Goal 3: Manage grassland and shrubland habitats primarily to benefit bird species of special concern.

Goal 4: Support the conservation of Service trust resources and other species of conservation concern particularly migratory birds and threatened and endangered species.

Goal 5: Visitors of all abilities and varied interests participate in and enjoy the refuge's opportunities for wildlife observation, interpretation and photography and environmental education. They value, support, and contribute to the refuge, Montezuma Wetlands Complex, and National Wildlife Refuge System, increase their understanding of wetlands and wetland functions, and become better environmental stewards.

Goal 6: Hunters and anglers enjoy and support hunting and fishing opportunities on the refuge and increase their understanding of the regional environmental importance of the refuge and the greater Montezuma Wetland Complex.

Goal 7: Partner with state and federal agencies, local communities, environmental organizations, and universities so that visitors to the Finger Lakes region understand and value the role of the refuge and the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, support the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, and contribute to the environmental health of the area.

Next Steps

August - October 2010

Over the next three months, the Planning Team will be developing various draft management alternatives, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Each of these alternatives represents a different way in which the refuge could meet its purposes, draft vision, and draft goals.

After we draft alternatives, we will analyze the environmental effects of each of the proposed alternatives. Proposed management alternatives and their consequences will be available for public review and comment in the Draft CCP/EA. We expect this to be available in the Spring of 2011.

Contact Information

For additional information on Montezuma NWR, please visit the refuge website at <http://www.fws.gov/r5mnwr/>.

You may also reach refuge staff by:
Telephone: 315/568-5987
Fax: 315/568-8835

Please send mail to:
Montezuma National
Wildlife Refuge
3395 US Route 30 East
Seneca Falls, NY 13148

For more information on the planning process please contact:

Lia McLaughlin, Refuge Planner
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035
Phone: 413/253-8575

Email: northeastplanning@fws.gov
Please put "Montezuma NWR" in the subject line.

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



July 2010

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
National Wildlife Refuge System
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035-9589



Refuge News

Montezuma NWR Staff Member Joins the Response to Oil Spill

Currently, there are hundreds of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel actively engaged in the response to the Deepwater Horizon/BP Oil Spill. Andrea VanBeusichem, Montezuma NWR's Visitor Services Manager will be stationed in Venice, Louisiana from July 18 through August 2. She will be performing a variety of public relations functions.



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Dry Marsh Update

Refuge staff have been working hard to improve habitat conditions in the Refuge's Dry Marsh—the cattail marsh between Benning Marsh and Route 89 along the NYS Thruway. To date, four acres have been excavated totaling nearly 10,000 cubic yards of muck! Muskrats, plovers, and yellowlegs are already using the newly created habitat. Work on the Dry Marsh Project will continue into the fall and winter of this year. The Main Pool will be refilled beginning in late August for fall waterfowl migration.

2010 Bald Eagle Nesting Status on the Montezuma Wetlands Complex

In 1976, the refuge began a bald eagle reestablishment program. Since then, the cooperative efforts of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have resulted in a steady increase in eagles nesting on the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. This year at least 12 eaglets fledged from area nests.



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