



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and Carlton Pond Waterfowl Production Area

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

September 2013



Front Cover:

Oak Point at Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge
Danielle D'Auria

Back Cover:

Black Tern (Chlidonias niger) at Carlton Pond Waterfowl Production Area
Kirk Rodgers



This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 150-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 555 national wildlife refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries and 81 ecological services field stations. The Service enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.

Comprehensive Conservation Plans provide long-term guidance for management decisions and set forth goals, objectives, and strategies needed to accomplish refuge purposes and identify the Service's best estimate of future needs. These plans detail program planning levels that are sometimes substantially above current budget allocations and, as such, are primarily for Service strategic planning and program prioritization purposes. The plans do not constitute a commitment for staffing increases, operational and maintenance increases, or funding for future land acquisition.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

**Sunkhaze Meadows National
Wildlife Refuge and Carlton Pond
Waterfowl Production Area**

*Comprehensive Conservation Plan
September 2013*

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8/19/2013
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Vision Statement

Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and Carlton Pond Waterfowl Production Area are a tapestry of natural lands within central Maine.

The Sunkhaze Meadows Unit supports an expansive, intact peat bog system. The free-flowing Sunkhaze Stream and its tributaries meander through diverse habitats including raised peat domes, grassy wet meadows, and floodplain forests before joining the restored Penobscot River. Mature upland forests surround the wetlands, protecting this unspoiled landscape for future generations of plants, animals, and people.

Bobolink and sedge wren sing and woodcock dance in the large contiguous grassland and deer overwinter in the forest mosaic comprising the Benton Unit. Wood turtles and rare mussels are protected by the wide, shaded riparian forests of the Sandy Stream Unit.

Carlton Pond Waterfowl Production Area is a beautiful wetland jewel amidst a pastoral landscape. Rare black terns nest in the emergent marsh, while bald eagles, bitterns, and marsh wrens forage amid the shallow open waters and emergent pickerelweed and wild rice.

Visitors experience wildness and find respite there throughout the year. In spring, birders observe migratory waterfowl and songbirds. Wildlife enthusiasts and anglers enjoy fishing, paddling, and hiking throughout summer. Hunters spend crisp autumn mornings stalking their prey. In winter, people snowshoe and ski through the silent woods. Through our close partnerships and programs, visitors gain further appreciation of conservation and are inspired stewards of nature.



Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and Carlton Pond Waterfowl Production Area

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Summary

Type of Action: Administrative—Development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

Location: Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and
Carlton Pond Waterfowl Production Area
Kennebec and Penobscot Counties, Maine

Administrative Headquarters: Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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This Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the 11,876-acre Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and the 1,068-acre Carlton Pond Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) is the culmination of a planning effort involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Penobscot Indian Nation, the town of Milford, and the local community. This CCP establishes the 15-year management goals and objectives for the refuge and WPA's wildlife and habitats, public use programs, and administration and facilities.

This plan sets forward the management direction that we think best achieves the refuge and WPA's purposes, vision, and goals, and responds to public issues. Under this plan, we will focus on the preservation of the peatland-wetland complex and mature forest within the Sunkhaze Meadows Unit, continue shrubland habitat management at the Sandy Stream Unit, expand grassland management at the Benton Unit, and expand and improve public use opportunities, as resources allow.

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