

Chapter 5

Leigh Osgood, Friends of Sunkhaze Meadows



Bunchberry and pink lady's slipper at the Sunkhaze Meadows Unit.

Consultation and Coordination

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Introduction

We presented in chapter 1, figure 1.1, the steps in the comprehensive conservation planning process and how it integrates NEPA requirements including public involvement. This chapter describes how we engaged others in developing this CCP. In chronological order, it details our efforts to encourage the involvement of the public and conservation partners: other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, county officials, civic groups, non-governmental 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 numerous informal discussions the refuge manager and her staff have had over the last year where the CCP was a topic of conversation. Those involved a wide range of audiences, including local community leaders and other residents, refuge neighbors, refuge visitors, and other interested individuals. During those discussions, the refuge manager and her staff often would provide an update on our progress and encourage comments and other participation.

According to Service policy, we must review and update our final CCP at least once every 15 years. We may update the plan sooner, if we determine that we might need to markedly change management direction or, if the Service's Director or our Regional Director deem it necessary. If so, we will publicly announce our intent to revise the plan encourage your participation.

Planning to Protect Land and Resources

January 2011

On January 26, 2011, a conference call was held between refuge staff, regional office staff, and contractors to identify data needs, obtain input on the contact database, discuss the initial newsletter, review the CCP process, and discuss agenda and logistics for the kick-off meeting.

February 2011

Our pre-planning activities in February included a 2-day kick-off meeting held at the Maine Coastal Islands NWR office on February 8 and 9, 2011.

March 2011

On March 7, 2011, the refuge manager emailed 29 local, county, State, and Federal agency contacts with an invitation to an agency partner scoping meeting. A follow-up reminder email was sent to this same group of contacts on March 17, 2011.

On March 18, 2011, the NOI was published in the *Federal Register*, officially announcing the beginning of public scoping for the Sunhaze Meadows NWR and Carlton Pond WPA CCP. The project planning Web site and the refuge Web site were also updated at this time.

On March 23, 2011, the core team contacted approximately 394 contacts included in the planning contacts database compiled for the CCP. The refuge manager emailed 44 of those contacts and invited them to participate in our scoping process, attend our public open houses in April, and included an electronic copy of the scoping newsletter. The remaining 350 contacts were mailed copies of the scoping newsletter containing a similar invitation to participate.

On March 24, 2011, the core team held our agency scoping workshop at the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Bangor Research Office. The workshop was attended by six representatives from municipal, State, and Federal agencies. Refuge and planning team staff were also in attendance at the meeting.

April 2011

Two public scoping meetings were held on April 12, 2011, in Milford, Maine at the Milford Town Hall from 2 to 4 p.m. and another session at 6 to 8 p.m. A third public scoping meeting was held in Unity, Maine, at the Unity College on April 13, 2011. On April 30, 2011, the official comment period for initial scoping of CCP issues identification ended.

May through December 2011

The core planning team spent the next several months developing alternatives, completing and compiling appendixes, and writing and editing the various chapters included within the draft CCP and EA.

December 2011 through February 2012

In December 2011, we initiated outreach efforts to obtain additional information about public uses of the refuge and public comment on potential wilderness designation at the Sunkhaze Meadows Unit.

In January 2012, we developed a newsletter and sent it to approximately 452 individuals and organizations included in the planning contacts database compiled for the CCP. The refuge manager emailed 112 of those contacts an electronic version of the newsletter which explained what designated wilderness is under the Wilderness Act. The newsletter also invited interested parties to attend a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. on February 9, 2012, in Milford, Maine. We invited the remaining 340 contacts to participate by mailing them copies of the newsletter. On February 9, 2012, we held a public meeting to solicit public input on existing public uses of the refuge and the potential for designating wilderness at the Sunkhaze Meadows Unit.

March 2012 through April 2013

Following the January 2012 meeting, the Service reviewed and considered comments received and determined not to pursue special designations at the Sunkhaze Meadows Unit. In early August 2012, the Service distributed a newsletter updating the public on the Service's decision not to pursue a wilderness area designation as well as update interested contacts on the status of the CCP process. This newsletter was distributed to the same 452 contacts noted in the January 2012 newsletter distribution.

On September 18, 2012, the refuge manager presented an update on the CCP process and status, as well as findings of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Review, to the town of Milford selectmen at their monthly meeting. The Service also prepared another CCP update newsletter that was released in the weeks following this meeting.

Throughout the fall and winter of 2012, the Service finalized alternatives and analyzed impacts for the draft CCP and EA.

April through Fall 2013

We published our Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* announcing the release of the draft CCP and EA, preparing and distributing a newsletter, and by distributing the document for public review. The draft CCP and EA was released for public review and comment on April 23, 2013. Four public meetings were held on April 25 and 26, two in Milford and two in Unity, Maine. The official public review and comment period ended on May 31, 2013. We received 17 sets of comments, including at the meetings and by regular mail and electronic mail. After the comment period ended, we reviewed and summarized all of the comments we received in order to develop our responses, which are included as appendix G.

We compiled the final CCP for review by the Regional Chief of Refuges and Regional Solicitor's Office before submitting it to the Regional Director for review and approval. The Regional Director determined a FONSI is appropriate, and has certified that the final CCP meets agency compliance requirements, achieves refuge purposes, and helps fulfill the mission of the Refuge System. With an affirmative FONSI and other positive findings, the Regional Director has approved the final CCP. Shortly after this plan is finalized, we will distribute a newsletter and publish another NOA in the *Federal Register* to publicly announce the availability of the final plan.

Partners Involved in Refuge and WPA Planning

Refuge programs enjoy a great deal of support from outside the Service in many areas: 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. Since January 2011, we have contacted the following partners to apprise them of the planning process and encourage their involvement.

American Rivers
Aroostook Band of Micmacs
Atlantic Salmon Federation
Country Cousins Snowmobile Club
Ellsworth American
Forest Society of Maine
Friends of Sunhaze Meadows
G and G Trailblazers Snowmobile Club
Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
Kennebec Messalonskee Trails
Maine Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
Maine Department of Conservation
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
Maine Retriever Trial Club, Inc.
Maine Sportsman, The
Marine Audubon
Natural Resources Council of Maine
Northern Research Station - Penobscot Experimental Forest

Northwestern University
Passamaquoddy Tribe Indian Township
Penobscot Experimental Forest
Penobscot Indian Nation
Penobscot River Restoration Trust
Pine Tree Snowmobile Club
Pleasant Point - Passamaquoddy
Sebasticook Regional Land Trust
SERC Institute
State Historic Preservation Commission
State of Maine
The Nature Conservancy
The Wilderness Society
Town of Benton
Town of Milford
Town of Unity
Trout Unlimited
Troy Snow Beaters Snowmobile Club
Unity Snow Dusters Snowmobile Club
University of Maine
USDA - Forest Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Geological Survey

Contact Information

Beth Goettel, Refuge Manager
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Maine Coastal Islands NWR Complex
9 Water Street
P.O. Box 1735
Rockland, ME 04841-1735
Phone: 207-594-0600 ext. 2
Fax: 207-594-0605
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/me/sunkhazemeadows/>

Lia McLaughlin
Natural Resources Planner, Northeast Region
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035-9587
Phone: 413-253-8575
Fax: 413-253-8468
<http://northeast.fws.gov/planning>