

**Appendix H**



*Blackpoll Warbler*  
USFWS

**Finding of No Significant Impact**



## Finding of No Significant Impact

### Wapack National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan

On March 25, 2008, we published a Federal Register Notice (73 FR 58) announcing release of the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (draft CCP/EA) for the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). That draft document evaluated two alternatives for managing the refuge over the next 15 years, and carefully considered their impacts on the environment and their potential contribution to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and refuge purposes and goals. Alternative B was identified as the “Service-preferred alternative.” The draft CCP/EA appendixes provided additional information supporting the assessment. A brief overview of each alternative follows.

Alternative A: The Council of Environmental Quality regulations on implementing the National Environmental Policy Act require this “No Action” alternative. It represents our current management activities, and serves as the baseline against which to compare the other alternative. The Service would continue to manage the refuge in a “wilderness-like” setting, without actively managing habitat, thereby allowing natural succession to continue without human interference. The Service would continue to allow only compatible uses that are consistent with a “wilderness-like” setting and adhere to other deed restrictions. We would not allow hunting, fishing, trapping, driving motor vehicles, or cutting trees (except for maintaining trails) as required by that deed. In addition, we would continue to prohibit camping, mountain biking, horseback riding and dog walking. This alternative would not improve access to the refuge or the visibility of the Service in the area. We would continue our informal relationships with the Friends of the Wapack and the Mountain View Hiking Club to maintain refuge trails. We would also continue to work under a memorandum of agreement with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to resolve inter-jurisdictional issues on the refuge as they arise.

Alternative B (Service-preferred alternative): This alternative includes an array of management actions that, in our professional judgment, work best toward achieving the purpose of the refuge, our vision and goals for those lands, and goals in state and regional conservation plans. We would focus on improving our knowledge of refuge resources and start the development of a baseline biological database. We would inventory populations of plants and wildlife on the refuge in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. That project would also help us identify and monitor threats to the integrity of refuge habitats. Alternative B would also implement projects to enhance visitor services programs by expanding our partnerships with other federal agencies, state agencies, town departments, local

conservation organizations, and individuals. Partners would assist us in maintaining trails, developing and maintaining a new trailhead parking area, and increasing our presence and visibility on the refuge and in the local community. One of our goals is to better communicate refuge opportunities, visitor and contact information, and regulations. We would manage public uses similar to alternative A by allowing only compatible activities that are consistent with a “wilderness-like” setting and adhere to other deed restrictions. The only differences are that we would allow dog-walking only on leash, recreational berry-picking, and the annual Wapack Trail Run, under the stipulations of our determination of its compatibility. We do not propose to expand the refuge. However, we will offer our support in identifying unprotected lands of high wildlife value to partners engaged in regional land conservation. We would also offer our technical assistance in managing those lands.

We distributed the draft CCP/EA for a 37-day period of public review and comment from March 25, 2008 to May 1, 2008. We received 11 letters or electronic mailings (emails) from individuals and various organizations. We also received oral comments from 14 people who attended our public meeting on April 17, 2008 at Shieling State Forest in Peterborough, New Hampshire. Appendix F in the final CCP includes a summary of those comments and our responses to them.

After reviewing the proposed management actions, and considering all public comments and our responses to them, I have determined that the analysis in the EA is sufficient to support my findings. I am selecting Alternative B to implement as the final CCP for several reasons. It helps fulfill the mission of the NWRs; best achieves the refuge purpose, vision and goals; maintains the ecological integrity of the refuge; addresses the key issues identified during the planning process; and is consistent with the principles of sound fish and wildlife management. It will also enhance and expand partnerships to achieve refuge goals, and improve our relationship with the local community.

I find that implementing Alternative B adheres to all legal mandates and Service policies, and will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment, in accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA. Therefore, I have concluded that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and this Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate and warranted.

Acting

  
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Marvin E. Moriarty  
Regional Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Hadley, Massachusetts

10-31-08  
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Date