This planning update describes the progress the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) has made in developing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for John Hay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, the refuge). It also summarizes the different alternatives the planning team considered for managing the refuge and includes information about how to obtain and comment on the draft CCP.

**Draft Plan Available for Public Comment**
We began preparing a CCP for this refuge in 2008. We have now completed a draft plan which we are distributing for public review and comment through March 31, 2010.

An environmental assessment (EA), required by the National Environmental Policy Act, accompanies the draft plan. The EA describes the three alternatives that we evaluated in detail to achieve the refuge purposes, vision and goals (see highlights below). It also provides an analysis of their effects on the environment.

We have identified Alternative B as the Service-preferred alternative.

**How to Obtain a Draft Plan**
You may request a hard copy or CD-ROM of the draft plan from our office at Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Sunderland, MA.

Telephone: 413/548-8002
Email: barry_parrish@fws.gov

You may also view and download the draft CCP/EA online: http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/johnhay/ccphome.html

**How to Provide Comments**
We invite you to share your comments about the draft plan either in writing or in person at our public meetings (see below).

We will accept letters, faxes, and emails. To be considered, all comments must be emailed or postmarked by March 31, 2010.

You may also contact us at:
Email: northeastplanning@fws.gov (Please put “John Hay NWR” in the subject line) or at:
Mail: Carl Melberg
73 Weir Hill Rd.
Sudbury, MA 01776
Phone: 978-443-4661 ext. 32
Fax: 978-443-2898

**Public Meeting**
You may also wish to participate in our public meeting in Newbury, NH. There will be a short presentation on the draft plan and then we will record any comments you would like to provide.

February 24, 2010
7:30pm to 9:00pm
Newbury Town Building
Newbury, NH 03255
Directions: http://www.newbrynh.org/Public_Documents/index
Proposed Management Alternatives

The planning team is grateful to everyone who provided comments and suggestions. The team has carefully considered the information provided to date and has developed the following management alternatives for the refuge.

**Alternative A: Current Management**

This alternative would continue the type and scale of current management activities and programs on the refuge’s 80 acres.

**Alternative B (Service-Preferred): Extended Habitat Management and Visitor Services**

This alternative highlights the importance of the refuge forest character in the local landscape. It would prioritize refuge shoreline and stream quality, while emphasizing species of concern in each habitat.

- **Habitat Management**
  - Conduct forest habitat inventories every 10-15 years.
  - Expand current meadow habitat, if feasible, but not at the expense of mature forest.
  - Initiate vernal pool and stream surveys to identify species of concern and habitat quality.
  - Install a riparian buffer.

- **Visitor Services**
  - Install footbridge(s) at stream crossings.
  - Relocate trail sections away from sensitive stream habitat and/or create trail additions including an ancient access trail, a wetland trail, and a trail extension returning to the gatehouse on refuge property.
  - Hire a seasonal staff person to provide interpretive programs on site.
  - Initiate a fishing program on the refuge.

**Alternative C: Active Habitat Management and Enhanced Visitor Services**

This alternative proposes to conduct more active forest management to encourage white pine regeneration on the refuge. There would be a stronger emphasis on creating and maintaining early successional habitat, but none would be at the expense of mature forest.

- **Habitat Management**
  - Initiate silvicultural practices that encourage white pine and northern hardwood regeneration.
  - Create a second streamside habitat improvement project and install a water quality monitoring station on refuge.
  - Recruit public support and monitor monthly.

- **Visitor Services**
  - Hire a permanent, full-time visitor services staff person.
  - Increase number and type of programs offered and expand interpretive programs on site.
  - Implement CCP (May).
  - Distribute draft CCP/EA for public review and comment; host a public meeting in Newbury, NH (February).

Next Steps for the Future

- **Distribute final recommendation of Alternative B** (at 10-15 years).
- **Submit final recommendation of Alternative C** (at 10-15 years).
- **Evaluate the potential for a limited, temporarily-restricted, archery-only white-tailed deer hunting program on the refuge.**
- **Create a second small meadow stream crossing.**
- **Install footbridge(s) at stream crossings and a viewing platform on the lakeshore.**

Contact Information

To learn more about John Hay National Wildlife Refuge, please visit our website: [http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=55751](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=55751). You may also reach refuge staff by telephone at 413/548-8002.

To learn more about the planning process contact:

Carl Melberg, Refuge Planner
Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex
7A Weir Hill Rd.
Sudbury, MA 01776
Phone: 978-443-4661 ext. 32
Or visit the Refuge Planning website at [http://www.fws.gov/northend/planning/refugeCPs.html](http://www.fws.gov/northend/planning/refugeCPs.html).

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**
[http://www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

February 2010