

Massasoit National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Planning

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The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is starting work on a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and its associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Massasoit National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, refuge). The plan will establish management goals and objectives for refuge programs over the next 15 years. For example, wildlife, habitat, land protection and visitor services programs will all be evaluated during the planning process.

This planning project provides a unique opportunity for the Service to involve all of those interested in the long term management of the refuge. We encourage you to play a significant role in the development of this plan!

You can find more information about Massasoit NWR on the refuge website at www.fws.gov/northeast/massasoit. For information on the CCP process, and similar plans in the northeast go to the Northeast Refuge Planning Web site: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning>.

About the Refuge

This 209 acre refuge is located in the town of Plymouth in Plymouth County, MA. The refuge was



Red-bellied Cooter and Painted Turtle



Crooked Pond at Massasoit NWR

established in 1983 through the Endangered Species Act to conserve the federally endangered Northern red-bellied cooter. Massasoit NWR is made up of three parcels, the Crooked Pond parcel which abuts the Myles Standish State Forest, and smaller parcels located on the shoreline of Island Pond and Hoyts Pond. The refuge also provides habitat for other wildlife and plant species including rare moths and other native pollinators, migratory songbirds, and small mammals.

Due to critical habitat for the Northern red-bellied cooter, the refuge is currently closed to all public access.

CCP Process

The refuge is part of the Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex (complex) (formerly Great Meadows NWR Complex) that consists of eight refuges. Planning for all eight refuges began in 1999. After

completing four CCP/EAs and currently working on three others, the Service is initiating the planning process for Massasoit NWR. Planning begins with preliminary meetings by the core planning team and then with public involvement

How is a CCP developed?

A summary of the major steps in the planning process follows:

- Select the core planning team members and organize the information underlying the plan.
- Initiate public involvement and scoping.
- Develop and analyze alternatives including current management.
- Prepare and write a draft and final plan.
- Monitor and evaluate the plan.

Draft Vision Statement

Massasoit National Wildlife Refuge is an integral component of the landscape's biodiversity and is part of the largest contiguous pitch pine scrub oak habitat area north of the Long Island Sound. This dynamic, fire-dependent ecosystem supports numerous invertebrate and bird species of conservation concern. The kettle-hole ponds in this system also support and contribute to the recovery of the federally endangered Northern red-bellied cooter, a geographically distinct population found only in Massachusetts.

Through public and partner engagement, we will promote ecologically responsible stewardship of the resources on the refuge and in the larger landscape and foster an appreciation and understanding of the intrinsic value of these resources. We will explore opportunities for quality, compatible, wildlife-dependent experiences for the public.

to determine key issues to address in the plan. The CCP process is summarized below.

Core Planning Team

Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex staff are leading the efforts in the planning process along with assistance from the Northeast Regional Office of USFWS, other Service experts, and representatives from the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Myles Standish State Forest, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, and the Massachusetts Natural Heritage program.

Preliminary Issues

The planning team has identified some preliminary issues, concerns, and opportunities to address while developing the CCP. The issues fall within the categories identified below. However, we expect that additional issues may be raised during public scoping.

1. Ecoregional or ecosystem-wide issues such as climate change, land

conservation and landscape level habitat management.

2. Biological program issues such as habitat and species management, protection, restoration, monitoring, inventory, and research for the Northern red-bellied cooter, New England cottontail, and other species of conservation concern.

3. Public use program issues such as the consideration of public access on the refuge and the impact of such use on the refuge natural resources. Access issues include opening parts of the refuge to priority public uses including hunting, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

4. Public outreach to increase awareness about the refuge.

5. Potential land protection acquisition needs and opportunities.

6. Coordination and communication issues and opportunities with State and local agencies and non-profit organizations.

Drafting a Vision Statement & Goals

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

Draft Vision Statement

The vision statement describes what we hope the refuge will look like in the next 10 to 15 years. We developed Massasoit refuge's draft

vision statement to broadly reflect the refuge's purposes and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission. Public comments on the draft vision are welcome!

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.



Eastern Towhee



Plymouth gentian

Public Comments

We hope that you will participate over the next month by providing comments, suggestions, and information on the scope of issues to consider during the planning process. You can either provide written comments or attend a scheduled open house.

You can submit your comments by any of the following methods: Send comments by email to northeastplanning@fws.gov (Please put "Massasoit NWR" in the subject line) or mail your comments to:

Carl Melberg
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
73 Weir Hill Rd.
Sudbury, MA 01776

You may also fax your comments to 978/443-2898.



Tufted titmouse

Bill Thompson/USFWS

Public Scoping Meeting

Date: April 9, 2012

Time: 6-8 pm

Location: Plymouth Public Library
132 South Street
Plymouth, MA 02360

Public Scoping Meetings

You may also wish to participate in our public meeting on April 9, 2012. There will be a short presentation on the planning process and refuge resources, and then we will record any comments you would like to provide.

Contact Information

To learn more about Massasoit National Wildlife Refuge, please visit our website: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/massasoit/>

You may reach refuge planner, Carl Melberg by telephone at 978/443-4661 ext. 32.

To learn more about the planning process contact:



Prescribed Burn at Massasoit

Tom Eagle/USFWS

Carl Melberg, Refuge Planner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
73 Weir Hill Rd.
Sudbury, MA 01776
northeastplanning@fws.gov

Or visit the refuge CCP Web site:
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/massasoit/ccp.html>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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March 2012

Massasoit NWR Draft Goals

Goal 1: *Contribute to the recovery of the federally-endangered Northern red-bellied cooter in south-eastern Massachusetts by protecting and enhancing habitat on Massasoit NWR, and participating in partner-based efforts to increase scientific understanding and strategic management for this species.*

Goal 2: *Protect and enhance the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of kettle-hole ponds and pitch pine scrub oak habitats on and around Massasoit NWR to support native wildlife and plant communities of conservation concern.*

Goal 3: *Promote awareness and stewardship of our natural resources by exploring opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreation on the refuge and surrounding landscape.*

Goal 4: *Perpetuate and enhance long-term conservation and management of priority wildlife and habitat resources by protecting land with public and private landowners.*

Goal 5: *Recognize and promote the archaeological and cultural importance of the refuge.*

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