

Chapter 1

Doug Racine



Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge

Purpose of, and Need for, Action

- Introduction
- The Purpose of, and Need for, Action
- Project Area
- The Service and the Refuge System: Policies and Mandates Guiding Planning
- Conservation Plans and Initiatives Guiding the Proposed Action
- Refuge Operational Plans (“Step-down” Plans)
- Refuge Purposes and Land Acquisition History
- Refuge Vision Statement
- Refuge Goals

Introduction

This comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (Montezuma NWR, refuge) was prepared pursuant to the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Refuge Improvement Act) (Public Law 105-57; 111 Stat. 1253). An environmental assessment (EA), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), was prepared with the draft CCP.

This final CCP presents the combination of management goals, objectives, and strategies that we believe will best achieve our vision and goals for the refuge; contribute to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System); achieve refuge purposes; fulfill legal mandates; address key issues; incorporate sound principles of fish and wildlife management, and serve the American public. This CCP will guide management decisions and actions on the refuge over the next 15 years. The Service will use the CCP to promote understanding of, and support for, refuge management among State agencies in New York, our conservation partners, Tribal governments, local communities, and the public.

This CCP has 6 chapters and 10 appendixes. This first chapter sets the stage for the subsequent chapters. Specifically, Chapter 1, “Purpose of, and Need for, Action”:

- Explains the purpose of, and need for, a CCP for the refuge.
- Defines the project area.
- Presents the mission, policies, and mandates affecting the development of this plan.
- Identifies other conservation plans used as references in the development of this plan.
- Lists the purposes for which the refuge was established and its land acquisition history.
- Describes refuge operational (or “step-down”) plans.
- Presents the vision and goals that drive refuge management.

Chapter 2, “The Planning Process,” describes our planning process, including public and partner involvement, its compliance with NEPA regulations, and identifies public issues or concerns that surfaced during plan development.

Chapter 3, “Existing Environment,” describes the physical, biological, and human environments of the refuge.

Chapter 4, “Management Direction and Implementation,” presents the actions, goals, objectives, and strategies that will guide our decision-making and land management for the refuge. It also outlines the staffing and funding needed to accomplish that management.

Chapter 5, “Consultation and Coordination,” summarizes how the Service involved the public and its partners in the planning process; their involvement is vital for the future management of this refuge and all national wildlife refuges.

Chapter 6, “List of Preparers,” credits Service and non-Service contributors to the CCP.

Ten appendixes, a glossary with acronyms, and a bibliography provide additional documentation and references to support the developed narratives and analysis in the plan.

The Purpose of, and Need for, Action

We developed a CCP for the refuge that we believe best achieves the establishing purpose(s), vision, and goals of the refuge; contributes to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System); adheres to Service policies and other mandates; addresses identified issues of significance; and incorporates sound principles of fish and wildlife science.

The *purpose* of the CCP is to develop a management direction that best achieves the refuge purpose; attains the vision and goals developed for the refuge (see p. 1-22); contributes to the Refuge System mission; addresses key problems, issues, and relevant mandates; and is consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management.

The *need* for a CCP on this refuge is twofold. First, the Refuge Improvement Act requires national wildlife refuges to develop CCPs to help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System. Second, Service policies have been developed since the refuge was first established that provide specific guidance on implementing the Refuge Improvement Act. A CCP incorporates those policies and provides strategic management direction for the refuge for the next 15 years, by:

- Clearly stating the desired future conditions for refuge habitat, wildlife, visitor services, staffing, and facilities.
- Providing state agencies, refuge neighbors, visitors, partners, and other stakeholders a clear explanation of the management actions.
- Ensuring that refuge management conforms to the policies and mission of the Refuge System and legal mandates.
- Ensuring that present and future public uses are appropriate and compatible.
- Providing long-term continuity and consistency in management direction.
- Justifying budget requests for staffing, operating, and maintenance funds.

Project Area

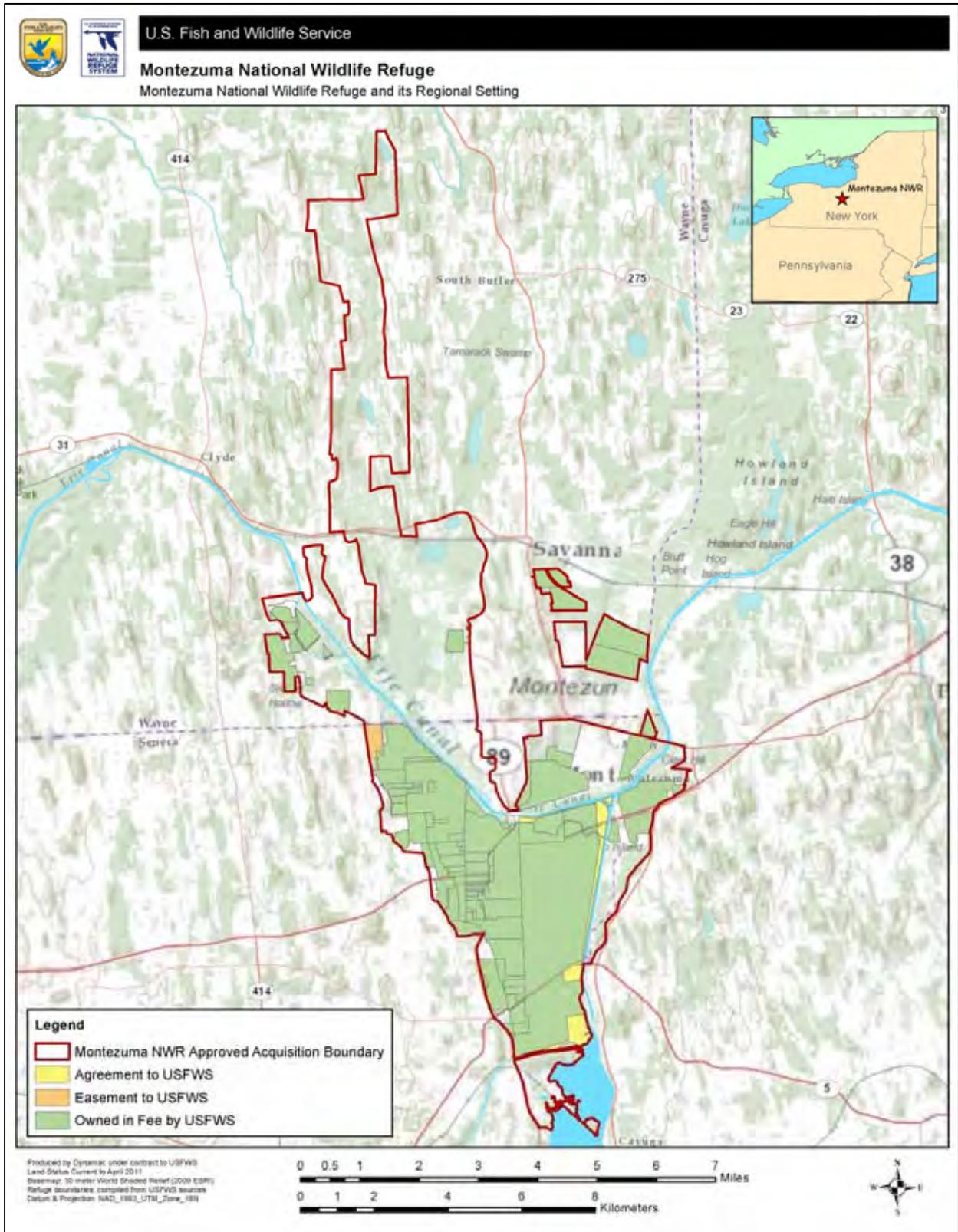
The refuge lies within the drumlin subzone of the Great Lakes Plain physiographic zone of central New York (map 1.1). The project area analyzed in this CCP includes the previously approved acquisition boundary of 19,510 acres, as well as the refuge’s recent authorized expansion of 1,223 acres. The refuge itself is located at the north end of Cayuga Lake in the Finger Lakes region of the State. Situated in Seneca, Wayne, and Cayuga Counties (map 1.1),

and encompasses 9,184 acres¹, including lands owned in fee and easements. Refuge habitats include emergent marshes and shallow-water mudflats, open water, bottomland floodplain forest, old fields and shrublands, croplands, grassland, and successional forest.

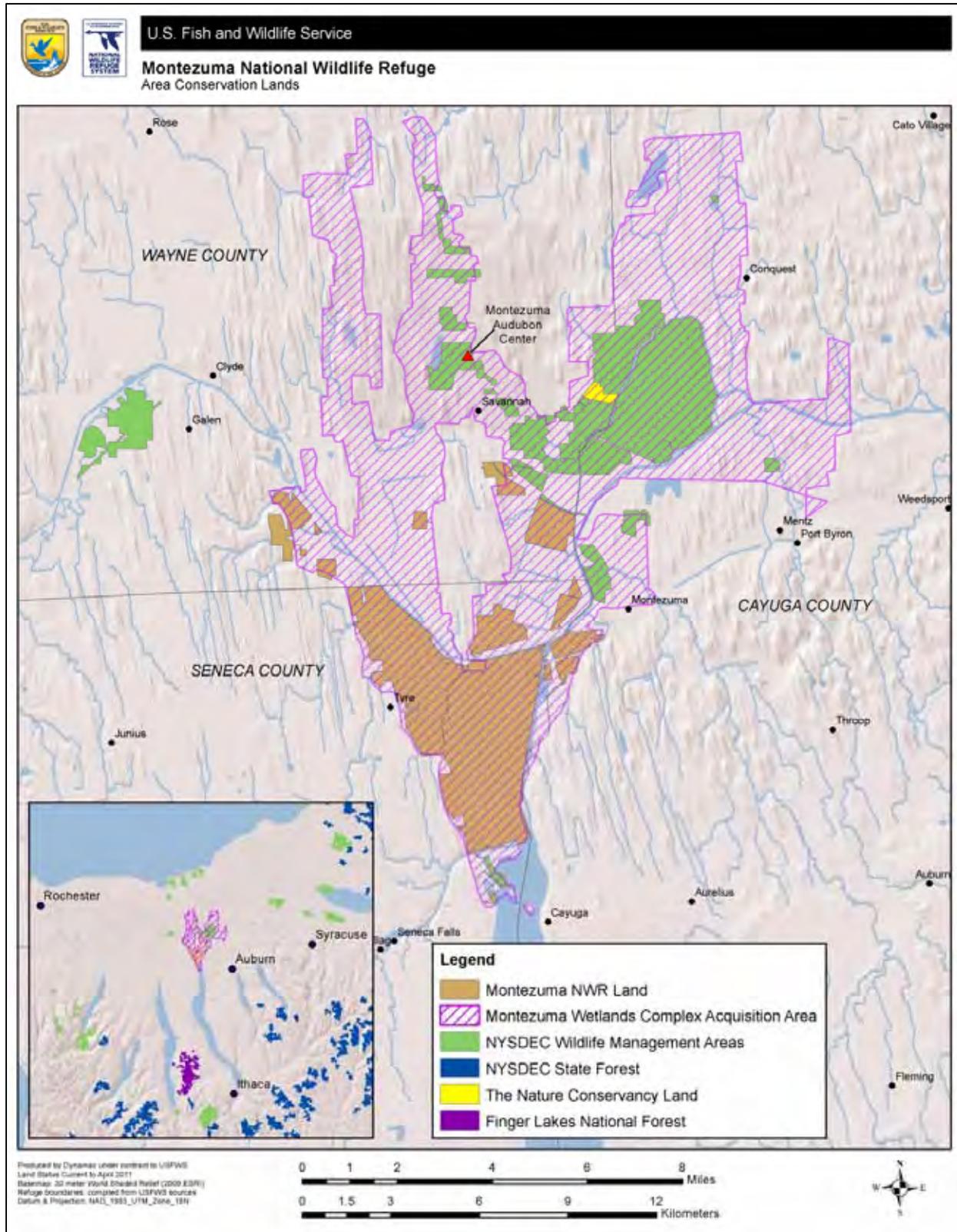
The refuge is part of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex (MWC), an area recognized for its role in the conservation of migratory birds, particularly waterfowl, by the Service, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), and other partners. The mission of the MWC is to protect, restore, enhance, and manage wildlife habitat; to preserve and restore ecological integrity for the long-term benefit of wildlife populations and society; and to serve as a model for landscape-level restoration and ecosystem management. Restoration of the MWC is among the largest and most ambitious wetland restoration and enhancement efforts in North America. The MWC is part of the 5,100-square-mile Oswego River watershed and includes wetlands and adjacent upland areas north of Cayuga Lake, extending up the Black Brook, Crusoe Creek, Butler Creek, Clyde River, and Seneca River drainages, all of which eventually flow into Lake Ontario (see chapter 3, “Existing Environment,” for additional information).

A flagship project under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), the MWC seeks to restore thousands of acres of wetland habitat and associated uplands within a 50,000-acre drainage basin that was once among the premier wetland areas in the eastern United States (U.S.). The MWC provides habitat for over 300 species of fish and wildlife and is situated along the Atlantic Flyway, a spring and fall migration route for millions of birds. The MWC has been recognized as an important bird conservation area by many conservation organizations and has been highlighted in many conservation plans including: North American Bird Conservation Plan- Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 13, Partners in Flight (PIF) Plan, Audubon New York’s Important Bird Area (IBA) Program, and New York State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). Within the Finger Lakes region, the MWC shares a mosaic of conservation lands with New York State Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), State Parks and State Forests, Finger Lakes National Forest, lands managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Finger Lakes Land Trust (map 1.2).

¹ Acreages are current as of October 2012.



Map 1.1. Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and its Regional Setting.



Map 1.2. Area Conservation Lands

The Service and the Refuge System: Policies and Mandates Guiding Planning

This section highlights Service policies, legal mandates and regulations, and existing resource plans and conservation initiatives that influenced the development of this CCP.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its Mission

As part of the Department of the Interior (Department, DOI), the Service administers the Refuge System. The Service's mission is, "Working with others, to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people."

Congress entrusts the conservation and protection of the following national natural resources to the Service: migratory birds and fish, federally listed, endangered or threatened species, interjurisdictional fish, wetlands, certain marine mammals, and national wildlife refuges. The Service also enforces Federal wildlife laws and international treaties on importing and exporting wildlife, assists states with their fish and wildlife programs, and helps other countries develop conservation programs.

The Service Manual (United States Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] 2011) contains the standing and continuing directives on implementing the Service's authorities, responsibilities, and activities. Special directives that affect the rights of citizens or the authorities of other agencies are not contained in the Service Manual; they are published by the Service separately in the Code of Federal Regulations (50 CFR 1-99; GPO 2011).

The National Wildlife Refuge System and its Mission and Policies

The Refuge System is the world's largest collection of lands and waters set aside specifically for conserving wildlife and protecting ecosystems. More than 555 national wildlife refuges exist in the system and encompass more than 150 million acres of lands and waters. The Refuge System has interests in all 50 states and several island territories in the U.S. Each year, more than 35 million visitors hunt, fish, observe and photograph wildlife, or participate in environmental education and interpretation activities on these refuges.

In 1997, President Clinton signed into law the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Public Law 105-57; 111 Stat. 1253), amending the Refuge Administration Act (see "Introduction" of this chapter). The Refuge Improvement Act establishes the following unifying mission for the Refuge System:

"The mission of the [Refuge] System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the U.S. for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans" (National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act; Public Law 105-57).

It also establishes a new process for determining compatibility of public uses on refuges, and requires the Service to prepare a CCP for each refuge. The Refuge Improvement Act states that

the Refuge System must focus on wildlife conservation and that the mission of the Refuge System, coupled with the purpose(s) for which each refuge was established, will provide the principal management direction on that refuge.

The Service Refuge Manual contains policy governing the operation and management of the Refuge System, including technical information on implementing refuge polices and guidelines on enforcing laws. The Service is in the process of updating and transferring the policies and guidance in the Refuge Manual into the Service Manual (<http://www.fws.gov/policy/manuals/>). While many of these policies are in the Service Manual, some have not been transferred yet and are still recorded in the Refuge Manual (USFWS 1989). The Refuge Manual is not available online, but can be viewed at refuge headquarters. In addition, there are a few noteworthy policies in the Service Manual that relate to the Refuge System and were instrumental in the development of this CCP; descriptions of those policies follow.

Policy 601 FW 1 – National Wildlife Refuge System Mission and Goals and Refuge Purposes

Service policy 601 FW 1 sets forth the Refuge System mission noted previously and how it relates to the Service mission, and explains the relationship of the Refuge System mission and goals to the purpose(s) of each refuge in the Refuge System. The policy identifies the following Refuge System goals:

- Conserve a diversity of fish, wildlife, and plants.
- Develop and maintain a network of habitats to meet important life history needs of species.
- Conserve those ecosystems, plant communities, wetlands, landscapes, and seascapes that are unique.
- Provide and enhance opportunities to participate in compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation.
- Foster understanding and instill appreciation of the diversity and interconnectedness of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats.

This policy also establishes the following management priorities for the Refuge System:

1. Conserving fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats.
2. Facilitating compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses.
3. Considering other appropriate and compatible uses.

Policy 602 FW 1, 3, and 4 – Refuge System Planning

Service policies 602 FW 1, 3, and 4 establish the requirements and guidance for Refuge System planning, including the CCP process and step-down management planning. Policy 602 FW 1 states that the Service will manage all refuges in accordance with an approved CCP that, when implemented, will help:

- Achieve refuge purposes.

- Help fulfill the Refuge System mission.
- Maintain and, where appropriate, restore the ecological integrity of each refuge and the Refuge System.
- Help achieve the goals of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- Meet other mandates.

Policy 602 FW 3 provides step-by-step directions and identifies the minimum requirements for developing a CCP. Among these requirements, the Service is to review any existing special designation areas, such as wilderness and wild and scenic rivers; specifically address the potential for any new special designations; and conduct a wilderness review, incorporating a summary of that review into each CCP. As described in policy 602 FW 4, the Service may also develop step-down management plans for a refuge to provide strategies and implementation schedules for meeting the goals and objectives identified in the CCP. Service policies are available at: <http://www.fws.gov/policy/manuals/>.

Policy 603 FW 1 – Appropriate Refuge Uses

Federal law and Service policy provide the direction and planning framework for protecting the Refuge System from inappropriate, incompatible, or harmful human activities and ensuring that visitors can enjoy its lands and waters. Policy 603 FW 1 provides a national framework for determining appropriate refuge uses. It describes the decision process the refuge manager follows when considering whether new or existing uses are appropriate on a refuge. It also clarifies and expands on the compatibility policy (603 FW 2.10D), which describes when refuge managers should deny a proposed use without determining compatibility. This policy applies to all proposed and existing uses in the Refuge System only when we have jurisdiction over the use. It does not apply to refuge management activities or situations where reserved rights or legal mandates require that we must allow certain uses (603 FW 1). Appendix B further describes the Service’s policy on appropriate refuge uses and its relationship to the CCP process.

Policy 603 FW 2 – Compatibility

The Refuge Improvement Act is the key legislation regarding management of public uses and compatibility on refuge lands and waters. The act requires that all existing or proposed public uses of a refuge must be compatible with the refuge’s purpose(s). Service policy 603 FW 2 complements the policy on appropriate refuge uses. It establishes the process the Service uses for determining whether or not a public use is a compatible use, incorporating the compatibility provisions of the Refuge Improvement Act and procedures for documentation and periodic review of existing uses. Specifically, for a use to be compatible it must not “materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the mission of the Refuge System or the purposes of the refuge” (Refuge Improvement Act; Public Law 105-57). The compatibility determinations for Montezuma NWR are presented in appendix B along with additional information on the process.

Policy 605 FW 1-7 – Wildlife-dependent Recreation

The Refuge Improvement Act established six wildlife-dependent priority public uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. The Refuge Improvement Act also specifies that, if compatible, these uses are to receive enhanced consideration over other public uses in refuge planning and management. Service

policy 605 FW 1 explains how we will provide visitors with opportunities for these priority public uses on Refuge System lands and waters. This policy states that development of these programs should be done “in consultation with state fish and wildlife agencies and stakeholder input” and specifies how we will facilitate the priority public uses.

Policy 601 FW 3 – Maintaining Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health

Service policy 601 FW 3 provides guidance on maintaining and restoring the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System, including the protection of a broad spectrum of fish, wildlife, and habitat resources in refuge ecosystems. This policy provides refuge managers with a process for evaluating the best management direction for a refuge to prevent the additional degradation of environmental conditions and restore lost or severely degraded components of the environment. It also provides guidelines for dealing with external threats to the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of a refuge and its ecosystem.

Other Mandates

Although Service and Refuge System policy and the purpose(s) of each refuge provide the foundation for refuge management, other Federal laws, executive orders, treaties, interstate compacts, and regulations on conserving and protecting natural and cultural resources also affect how the Service manages refuges. The “Digest of Federal Resource Laws of Interest to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service” describes many of them (see <http://www.fws.gov/laws/Lawsdigest.html>).

Of particular note are the Federal laws that require the Service to identify and preserve its important historic structures, archaeological sites, and artifacts. NEPA mandates the consideration of cultural resources in planning Federal actions, and the Refuge Improvement Act requires the CCP for each refuge to identify its archaeological and cultural values. Following is a summary of some cultural and historic resource protection laws and other Federal resource laws that relate to the development of CCPs.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979, as amended (Public Law 96–95; 16 U.S.C. 470aa–470ll; 93 Stat. 721), largely replaced the resource protection provisions of the Antiquities Act of 1906 for archaeological items. ARPA establishes detailed requirements for the issuance of permits for any excavation for, or removal of, archaeological resources from Federal or Native American lands. It also establishes civil and criminal penalties for the unauthorized excavation, removal, or damage of those resources; for any trafficking of those resources removed from Federal or Native American land in violation of any provision of Federal law; and for interstate and foreign commerce in such resources acquired, transported, or received in violation of any state or local law.

Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act

The Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, as amended (Public Law 86–523; 16 U.S.C. 469–469c; 74 Stat. 220; Public Law 93–291; 88 Stat. 174), carries out the policy

established by the Historic Sites Act described below. It directs Federal agencies to notify the Secretary of the Interior whenever they find that a Federal or federally assisted, licensed, or permitted project may cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, prehistoric, or archaeological data. This act authorizes the use of appropriated, donated, or transferred funds for the recovery, protection, and preservation of that data.

Historic Sites, Buildings, and Antiquities Act

The Historic Sites, Buildings, and Antiquities Act, popularly known as the Historic Sites Act of 1935, as amended (Public Law 89–249; 16 U.S.C. 461–462, 464–467; 49 Stat. 666; 79 Stat. 971), declares it a national policy to preserve historic sites and objects of national significance (including those located on refuges) and provides procedures for designating, acquiring, administering, and protecting these resources. Among other things, National Historic and Natural Landmarks are designated under the authority of this act.

National Historic Preservation Act

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (Public Law 89–665; 16 U.S.C. 470–470b, 470c–470n; 80 Stat. 915), provides for the preservation of significant historical features (e.g., buildings, objects, and sites) through a program of matching grants-in-aid to the states (i.e., the Historic Preservation Fund) established under the existing National Trust for Historic Preservation (16 U.S.C. 468–468d). The National Historic Preservation Act establishes a National Register of Historic Places and directs Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their actions on items or sites listed or eligible for listing on the National Register. This act also establishes an Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, which became a permanent, independent agency in September of 1976 (Public Law 94–422; 90 Stat. 1319).

411 DM 1, 2, and 3 – Managing Museum Property

Through the DOI Manual Part 411, the Service also has a mandate to care for museum properties it owns in the public trust (411 DM 1, 2, and 3). The most common museum properties are archaeological, zoological, botanical collections, historical photographs, historic objects, and art. Each refuge maintains an inventory of its museum property, and the Service’s regional museum property coordinators guide the refuges in caring for that property and helps them comply with the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act and Federal regulations governing Federal archaeological collections. This Department of the Interior program ensures that these museum collections will remain available to the public for learning and research.

11

Other Federal Resource Laws

This section highlights other Federal resource laws that are also integral to developing a CCP. The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88–577; 16 U.S.C. 1131–1136) establishes a National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) that is composed of federally owned areas designated by Congress as “wilderness areas.” This act directs each agency administering designated wilderness to preserve the wilderness character of areas within the NWPS and to administer the NWPS for the use and enjoyment of the American people, in a way that will leave those areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. The act also directs the Secretary of the Interior, within 10 years, to review every roadless area of 5,000 acres or more and every roadless island (regardless of size) within the Refuge System and National Park System for inclusion in

the NWPS. Service planning policy requires that the potential for wilderness on refuge lands be evaluated, as appropriate, during the CCP planning process.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1271-1287; 82 Stat. 906), selects certain rivers in the nation possessing remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, preserves them in a free-flowing condition, and protects their local environments. Service planning policy requires that the potential for wild and scenic rivers designations on refuge lands also be evaluated, as appropriate, during the CCP planning process.

Conservation Plans and Initiatives Guiding the CCP

The following plans and initiatives were used in identifying the species of concern in appendix A and in developing management objectives and strategies to accomplish the aforementioned refuge goals.

Refuge System Visioning: Fulfilling the Promise, Conserving the Future

The 1999 report, “Fulfilling the Promise, The National Wildlife Refuge System: Visions for Wildlife, Habitat, People and Leadership” (USFWS 1999), was the culmination of a year-long process by teams of Service employees to create a Refuge System vision. This report was a result of the first-ever Refuge System Conference held in Keystone, Colorado, in October 1998. It was attended by every refuge manager in the country, other Service employees, and scores of conservation organizations. The report contains 42 recommendations organized under 3 vision statements relating to wildlife and habitat, people, and leadership. We have often looked to these recommendations while writing this CCP.

The Refuge System’s “Conserving the Future” conference was convened in July 2011 to renew and update the 1999 vision. It began with a draft vision document. Over the course of the conference, the Service collected both online and in-person feedback which was used to revise and finalize the draft vision. The Service finalized the “Conserving the Future” vision document in October 2011 (USFWS 2011). The document has 20 recommendations. Currently, implementation teams are developing strategies to help us accomplish the vision. We will incorporate implementation strategies for this recommendation and the others, as appropriate, in our step-down plans and refuge programs.

Strategic Habitat Conservation

The Service has a goal of establishing and building capacity for science-driven landscape conservation on a continental scale. Our approach, known as Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC), applies adaptive resource management principles to the entire range of species, groups of species, and natural communities of vegetation and wildlife. This approach is founded on an adaptive, iterative process of biological planning, conservation design, conservation delivery, monitoring and research. The Service is refining this approach to conservation in a national geographic framework. We will work with partners to develop national strategies to help at-risk wildlife adapt in a climate-changed world. This geographic frame of reference will also allow us to more precisely explain to partners, Congress, and the American public why, where, and how

we target resources for landscape-scale conservation and how our efforts connect to a greater whole. More information regarding SHC can be found at:

<http://www.fws.gov/science/StrategicHabitatConservation.html>.

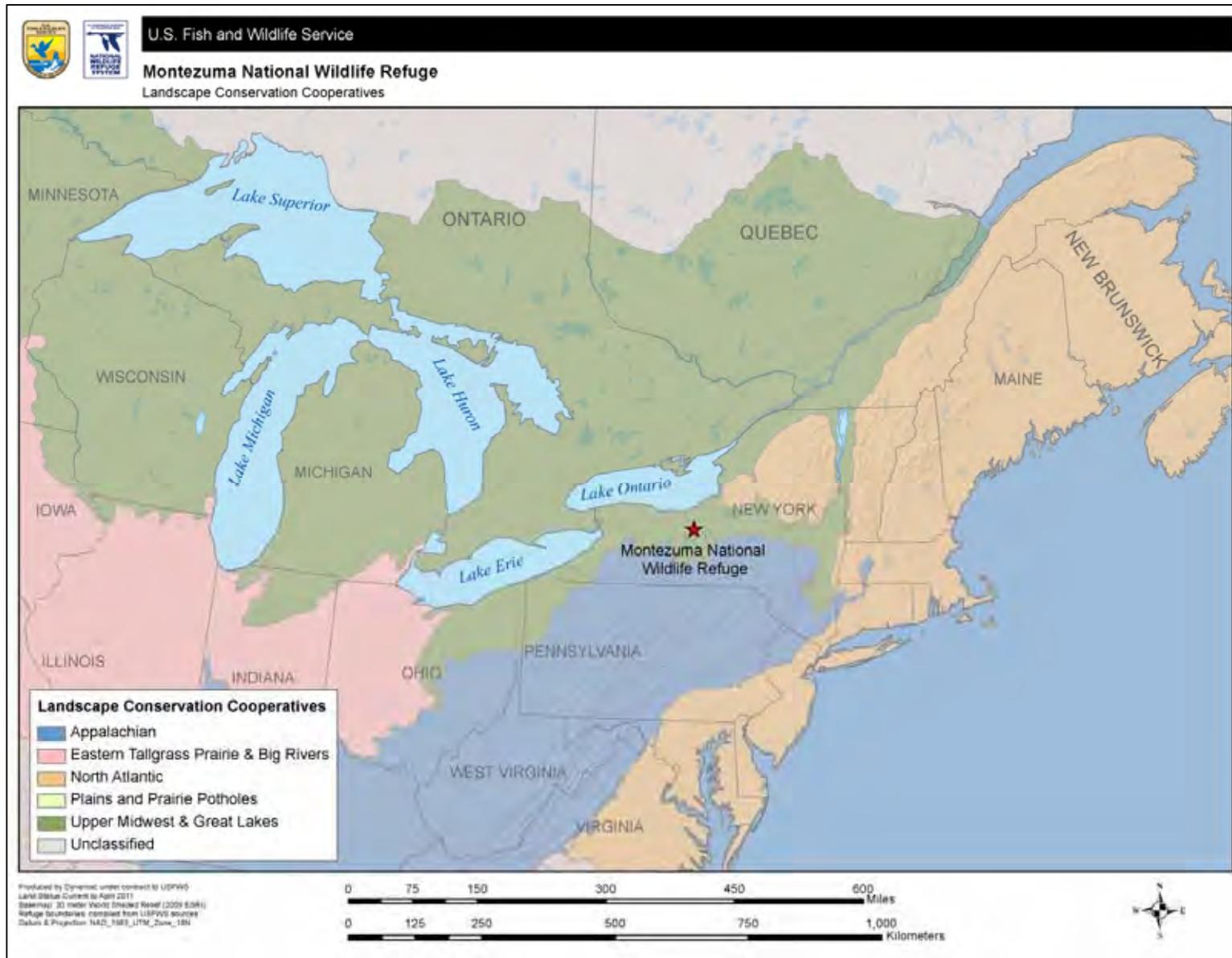
Landscape Conservation Cooperatives

As part of a collaborative effort with U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Service is initiating a new approach to landscape conservation through a national geographic network that will create a spatial frame of reference to build partnerships and connect projects to larger scale biological priorities. These 21 geographic areas are aggregates of Bird Conservation Regions and provide a basis for forming Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) with other Federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, states, tribes, universities, and other stakeholders to accomplish conservation goals.

Just as flyways have provided an effective spatial frame of reference to build capacity and partnerships for international, national, state, and local waterfowl conservation, the national geographic framework will provide a continental platform upon which the Service can work with state and other partners to connect project- and site-specific efforts to larger biological goals and outcomes. By providing visual context for conservation at “landscape” scales—the entire range of a priority species or suite of species—the framework helps ensure that resource managers have the information and decision-making tools they need to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The refuge is located in the Upper Midwest/Great Lakes (UMGL) LCC which combines BCRs 12 (Boreal Hardwood Transition), 13 (Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain, previously described in more detail), and 23 (Prairie Hardwood Transition) (map 1.3). Across the 320-million-acre UMGL LCC, approximately 37 million acres (14 percent of the land area) are in conservation estate (USFWS 2010a). Conservation strategies in this region may focus on acquisition and restoration opportunities, but also highlight the importance of state and Federal conservation policies that support implementation on private lands.

The UMGL LCC area includes deepwater habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, more than 35,000 islands, major river systems, boreal forests, and prairie-hardwood transition zones. These habitats provide for extensive resident and nonresident game populations, fish and many other aquatic resources, waterfowl, colonial waterbirds, marshbirds, and neotropical migrant landbirds.



Map 1.3. Upper Midwest/Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative

Birds of Conservation Concern Report (2008)

The Birds of Conservation Concern Report (BCC) fulfills the mandate of the 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1980 (100 Public Law 100–653, Title VIII) which requires the Secretary of the Interior, through the Service, to “identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.” The Service developed Birds of Conservation Concern 2008 (USFWS 2008a)—an update to their 2002 report—in consultation with the leaders of ongoing bird conservation initiatives; partnerships, such as Partners in Flight (PIF) North American Landbird Conservation Plan (Rich et al. 2004); the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Joint Ventures; the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (Kushlan et al. 2002); and the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (Brown et al. 2001).

The geographic scope of this endeavor is the U.S. in its entirety, including island territories in the Pacific and Caribbean. Species of conservation concern are identified at three distinct geographic scales: national, regional, and landscape. The report includes a national species list, regional lists corresponding to the eight Service Regions, and species lists for the bird conservation regions designated by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). These lists are primarily derived from assessment scores from three major bird conservation plans: the PIF North American Landbird Conservation Plan, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan. Bird species listed in the report include nongame birds; gamebirds without hunting seasons; subsistence-hunted nongame birds in Alaska; and Endangered Species Act candidate, proposed, endangered, threatened, and recently delisted species. Population trends, threats, distribution, abundance, and relative density are all factors considered in listing species in the BCC.

This report is intended to stimulate coordinated and collaborative efforts among Federal, state, tribal, and private partners to conserve and manage these species in most need of conservation actions. By focusing attention on these highest priority species, it is hoped that the report will promote greater study and protection of the habitats and ecological communities upon which these species depend, thereby contributing to healthy avian populations and communities. We used the BCC list in compiling appendix A and to help focus on which species might warrant special management attention.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan Update (2004), Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Waterfowl Implementation Plan (2005), and Black Duck Joint Venture Plan (1993)

Originally written in 1986, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) describes a 15-year strategy promulgated by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to restore and sustain waterfowl populations by protecting, restoring, and enhancing habitat (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service 1986). The plan committee, including representatives from each nation, has modified the 1986 plan twice to account for biological, sociological, and economic changes that influenced the status of waterfowl and the conduct of cooperative habitat conservation. The most recent modification (NAWMP 2004) updates the needs, priorities, and

strategies for the next 15 years, increases stakeholder confidence in the direction of its actions, and guides partners in strengthening the biological foundation of North American waterfowl conservation.

To convey goals, priorities, and strategies more effectively, the NAWMP (2004) is comprised of two separate documents: Strategic Guidance, for agency administrators and policymakers who set the direction and priorities for conservation, and an Implementation Framework that includes supporting technical information for use by biologists and land managers.

The NAWMP is implemented at the regional level in 14 habitat joint ventures and 3 species joint ventures that include the Arctic goose, black duck, and sea duck. Our project area (the refuge) lies in the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV), which includes the Atlantic Flyway states, from Maine to Florida, and Puerto Rico. The waterfowl goal for the ACJV is to, “Protect and manage priority wetland habitats for migration, wintering, and production of waterfowl, with special consideration to black ducks, and to benefit other wildlife in the joint venture area.”

In 2005, a revision to the original ACJV Waterfowl Implementation Plan (ACJV 1988) was completed. The revised waterfowl implementation plan (ACJV 2005) presents habitat conservation goals and population indices for the ACJV consistent with the 2004 NAWMP update, provides status assessments of waterfowl and their habitats in the joint venture, and updates focus area narratives and maps for each state. The implementation plan is intended as a blueprint for conserving the valuable breeding, migration, and wintering waterfowl habitat present within the ACJV boundary, based on the best available information and the expert opinion of waterfowl biologists from throughout the flyway.

The Black Duck Joint Venture Strategic Plan (Black Duck Joint Venture 2008) is also relevant to our project area. It identifies the goals and objectives of the joint venture and describes implementation plans for population monitoring, research, communications, and evaluation. Black ducks use the refuge year-round and are most plentiful during fall migration.

Bird Conservation Plan for the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region (BCR 13; 2007)

The bird conservation regions designated by the NABCI are ecologically based units for planning, implementing, and evaluating bird conservation efforts. The refuge lies in the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region (BCR 13) (ACJV 2007). BCR 13 provides important habitat resources for migratory birds with ranges throughout the western hemisphere. The highest bird habitat values are associated with the region’s major aquatic features (i.e., Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence River) and associated wetlands, which provide critical staging areas for migratory waterfowl, waterbirds, and shorebirds, and in some instances, also serve as funnels for migrating landbirds. BCR 13 also provides some of the most important breeding habitat in eastern North America for birds associated with wetlands, grasslands, and shrubs. However, landscapes in the region have been highly modified from their original, natural condition, and are now dominated by agricultural activities or human/industrial development (e.g., large, urban areas and a large proportion of Canada’s total human population). Habitat loss and degradation (e.g., fragmentation, intensive agriculture, pollution, and invasive species) are the greatest threats to bird populations in this region (ACJV 2007).

The BCR 13 Conservation Plan lists birds and habitats of high conservation priority for the region and activities thought to be most useful for addressing those conservation needs (ACJV 2007).

North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (Version 1, 2002) and Mid-Atlantic/New England/Maritime (MANEM) Waterbird Conservation Plan (2006)

The North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (Kushlan et al. 2002) represents a partnership among individuals and institutions with the interest in, and responsibility for, conserving waterbirds and their habitats. The primary goal of the plan is to ensure that the distribution, diversity, and abundance of populations and habitats of breeding, migratory, and nonbreeding waterbirds are sustained or restored throughout the lands and waters of North America, Central America, and the Caribbean. It also provides a framework for conserving and managing colonially nesting, water-dependent birds. In addition, the plan facilitates continentwide planning and monitoring; national, state, and provincial conservation; regional coordination; and local habitat protection and management (Kushlan et al. 2002).

The North American Waterbird Conservation Plan identifies 16 waterbird planning regions to allow for planning at a scale that is practical yet provides a landscape-level perspective. Montezuma NWR falls within the Mid-Atlantic/New England/Maritimes (MANEM) region which extends from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the southern end of Chesapeake Bay. To facilitate waterbird conservation in the MANEM region of the U.S. and Canada, a partnership of organizations and individuals drafted a regional waterbird conservation plan for 2006 to 2010. According to the MANEM Waterbird Conservation Plan, 74 waterbird species utilize habitats in the MANEM region for breeding, migrating, and wintering (MANEM 2007). The plan summarizes information on waterbirds and their habitats, providing a regional perspective for local conservation action. We used this plan to help develop objectives and strategies for goal 1.

U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (2nd Edition, 2001) and Upper Mississippi Valley/Great Lakes Regional Shorebird Conservation Plan (2000)

Concerns about shorebirds led to the creation of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan in 2000; a second edition was published in May 2001 (Brown et al. 2001). The plan was developed in partnership with individuals and organizations throughout the U.S. It presents conservation goals for each U.S. region, identifies important habitat conservation and research needs, and proposes education and outreach programs.

As part of the overall shorebird conservation strategy, regional plans are developed to step-down the goals of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan to a smaller scale. For the area that includes the refuge, the Upper Mississippi Valley/Great Lakes Regional Shorebird Conservation Plan (de Szalay et al. 2000) was drafted to identify priority species, habitat and species goals, and implementation projects within the region.

National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (2007)

The Service developed National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines in May 2007 (USFWS 2007a) to advise landowners, land managers, and others who share public and private lands with bald eagles when and under what circumstances the protective provisions of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d; Eagle Act) may apply to their activities. The guidelines help minimize impacts on bald eagles, particularly where they may constitute a disturbance, which is prohibited under the Eagle Act. The guidelines serve to: (1) publicize the provisions of the Eagle Act; (2) advise landowners, land managers, and the public of the potential for various human activities to disturb bald eagles; and (3) encourage additional, nonbinding land management practices that benefit bald eagles. In July 2007, the Service issued a final ruling to remove the bald eagle from the Federal list of endangered and threatened species (72 FR 37346). The bald eagle remains protected under the Eagle Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712) (MBTA). The Guidelines are intended primarily as a tool for landowners and planners who seek information and recommendations on how to avoid disturbing bald eagles.

Lower Great Lakes Plain Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan (2003)

In 1990, PIF began as a voluntary, international coalition of government agencies, conservation organizations, academic institutions, private industries, and citizens dedicated to reversing the population declines of bird species. The mission of PIF is to help species at risk, keep common birds common, and encourage voluntary partnerships for birds, habitats, and people (PIF 2009). The foundation of PIF's long-term strategy is a series of scientifically based bird conservation plans using physiographic areas as planning units. The goal of each PIF plan is to ensure the long-term maintenance of healthy populations of native birds, primarily nongame species. The plan for each physiographic area ranks bird species according to their conservation priority, describes their desired habitat conditions, develops biological objectives, and recommends conservation measures. The priority ranking factors in habitat loss, population trends, and the vulnerability of a species and its habitats to regional and local threats.

Our project area lies in the Lower Great Lakes Plain and is covered by the Lower Great Lakes Plain (Physiographic Area 15) (Dettmers and Rosenberg 2003).

New York State Wildlife Action Plan (2005)

At the end of 2001, Congress authorized the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Program, which provides Federal dollars to states and territories to support wildlife conservation efforts aimed at preventing wildlife from becoming endangered (Public Law 107-63). The purpose of the program is to help state fish and wildlife agencies conserve fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need. The funds appropriated under the program are allocated to each state according to a formula that takes into account its size and population.

To be eligible for additional Federal grants, and to satisfy the requirements for participating in the SWG program, each state and U.S. territory was charged with developing and submitting a statewide wildlife action plan or "Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy" (CWCS) to the National Advisory Acceptance Team by October 1, 2005. Each plan must address eight required elements, and identify and focus on "species of greatest conservation need," yet address the "full array of wildlife" and wildlife-related issues to "keep common species common." The

New York State CWCS was completed in 2005. It creates a vision for conserving New York's wildlife and stimulates other states, Federal agencies, and conservation partners to think strategically about their individual and coordinated roles in prioritizing conservation.

In addressing the eight elements, the New York State CWCS helps supplement the information the Service gathered on species and habitat occurrences and their distribution. It was also used to help identify conservation threats and management strategies for species and habitats of conservation concern in the CCP. The expertise convened to compile the New York State CWCS and its partner and public involvement process further enhance its benefits (NYSDEC 2005a).

Montezuma Wetlands Complex Management Plan (2000)

In 2000, the Service, NYSDEC, and Ducks Unlimited developed the MWC Management Plan. This 20-year plan details a strategy for protecting, restoring, and managing wetland ecosystem functions for wildlife and people in the MWC (map 1.2). We used this plan to help develop goals and objectives.

Other Information Sources

In addition to the resources described previously, the Service also consulted the plans and resources below as the refuge management objectives and strategies were refined.

Continental or National Plans

- National Wetlands Research Center Strategic Plan: 2010–2015 (USGS 2011)
- National Audubon Society Watch List (Butcher et al. 2007)
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan: A Strategy for Cooperation 1986 (NAWMP 1986)
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Strategic Guide: Strengthening the Biological Foundation 2004 (NAWMP 2004)

Regional Plans

- Ducks Unlimited's International Conservation Plan (Ducks Unlimited 2005)
- Strategic Plan: The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (USFWS 2006 to 2010)
- Confronting Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region (Kling et al. 2003)

State Plans

- 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan (NYSDEC and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) 2009)

Local Plans

- A Greenprint for Seneca County (West 2010)

Individual Species Plans

- American Woodcock: Harvest and Breeding Population Status, 1997 (Bruggink 1997)
- A Management Plan for the Atlantic Population of Canada Geese (Canada Goose Committee 2008)
- Wild Turkey Management Plan (NYSDEC 2005)

Refuge Operational Plans (“Step-down” Plans)

The refuge planning policy in the Service Manual lists more than 25 step-down management plans that may be required on refuges. These plans contain specific strategies and implementation schedules for achieving refuge goals and objectives. Some step-down plans require additional NEPA analysis, public involvement, and compatibility determinations (CD) before they can be implemented, and all plans require revision annually or every 5 to 10 years, as specified.

This CCP incorporates by reference those refuge step-down plans that are up-to-date. Chapter 4 provides more information about the additional step-down plans needed for the refuge and their schedule for completion.

The following step-down plans are currently in place for the refuge:

- Fire Management Plan (2009)
- Public Hunting Plan (1995)
- Public Fishing Plan (1993)
- Public Use Plan (1994)
- Avian Influenza Contingency Plan (2006)
- Chronic Wasting Disease Plan (2005)
- Habitat Management Plan (2008)

The following plans need to be completed:

- Safety Plan (to be completed within 1 year of CCP approval)
- Integrated Pest Management Plan (to be completed within 5 years of CCP approval)
- Inventory and Monitoring Plan (to be completed within 2 years of CCP approval)
- Visitor Services Plan (to be completed within 1 year of CCP approval)
- Law Enforcement Plan (to be completed within 5 years of CCP approval)

Refuge Purposes and Land Acquisition History

Refuges can be established by Congress through special legislation, by the President through Executive Order, or administratively by the Director of the Service (with authority delegated by the Secretary of the Interior). Refuge lands may be acquired under a variety of administrative and legislative authorities as well. The Montezuma NWR was established by Executive Order 7971 on September 12, 1938, “...as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife...” Montezuma NWR has acquired lands under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715-715r), as amended, “...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.”

Since the refuge was established in 1938, the Service has acquired interests in additional lands through a variety of acquisition methods, including fee title acquisition and conservation easements. Since the early 1990s alone, over 2,500 acres of lands have been added to the refuge, and as of October 2012, the Service owned approximately 8,782 acres in fee and 402 acres in

conservation easements. Historically, land acquisition funds for the refuge come from two primary sources: the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), appropriated annually by Congress; and the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF), which is replenished through the sale of Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation stamps (Duck Stamps). LWCF funding sources include revenues from the sale of surplus Federal real property, motorboat fuel taxes, fees for recreation on Federal lands, and receipts from mineral leases on the outer continental shelf.

The red line on map 1.1 depicts the refuge’s approved acquisitions boundary as of 2012. Table 1.1 summarizes the land acquisition history of the refuge by year through October 2012. The dates prior to 1938 represent when some of the refuge lands were first transferred from private ownership to the Federal Government. These properties were owned by different Federal agencies and were eventually transferred to the Service.

Table 1.1. History of Land Acquisition at the Montezuma NWR through October 2012.

Acquisition Date	Acreage	Funding Source ¹
1937	2,564	MBCF ²
1938	2,354	MBCF
1939	544	MBCF
1940	444	MBCF
1941	279	MBCF
1942	34	MBCF
1945	6	None
1959	176	MBCF
1963	27	MBCF
1965	16	MBCF
1993	53	MBCF
1995	397	MBCF
1996	186	MBCF
1997	54	MBCF
1998	608	MBCF
1999	142	MBCF
2000	87	MBCF
2001	387	MBCF, LWCF ³
2002	75	MBCF, LWCF
2004	80	LWCF
2005	106	LWCF
2006	64	MBCF
2007	381	MBCF
2008	26	LWCF

Acquisition Date	Acreage	Funding Source ¹
2009	63	MBCF
2012	31	MBCF
Total	9,184⁴	

¹ Includes some lands that were donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

² MBCF – Migratory Bird Conservation Fund

³ LWCF – Land and Water Conservation Fund

⁴ Acres are rounded to whole numbers; contact the refuge headquarters for precise acreages.

Farmers Home Administration Interests

From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) acquired many properties throughout the country through foreclosure sales. Under the terms of a memorandum of understanding between FmHA and the Service, a review team consisting of their staff, our staff, staff from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service, and staff from USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service evaluated those properties for their conservation value. Based on those evaluations, and before reselling the properties, the FmHA placed permanent conservation easements on most of these properties to protect important habitats. FmHA retained full ownership in a smaller number of the properties. The responsibility for monitoring and enforcing those easements and managing the retained properties rests with the Service, which has usually delegated it to the manager of the closest refuge.

Montezuma NWR currently administers more than 200 FmHA interests, totaling more than 2,100 acres in easements and more than 1,000 acres in fee.

Refuge Vision Statement

Our planning team developed the following vision statement to provide a guiding philosophy and sense of purpose for the comprehensive conservation planning effort:

Amid the clamor of thousands of birds, huge flocks of migrating waterfowl alight on freshwater marshes while bald eagles soar overhead. Sweeping vistas of expansive wetlands, interspersed with cattail stands and forest, invite a closer look at areas teeming with a diversity of migratory birds and other wildlife. These are some of the images that reward and inspire visitors of Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Nestled in the heart of New York State’s pastoral Finger Lakes region, the refuge is an essential link in an international network of wetlands and conservation lands. The refuge belongs to a coalition of partners which make up the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, part of what once was historically a 50,000-acre swamp and marshland where the sky is often “black with ducks.” Through the collaboration of current and newly forged partnerships, the refuge continues to demonstrate and promote wise and responsible resource stewardship and showcase wetland restoration management practices applied on a landscape level to benefit both wildlife and people.

Visitors of all ages and abilities feel welcome at the refuge and enjoy spectacular wildlife viewing opportunities. The refuge continues to be an important component of the local economy and community, and provides a full complement of quality wildlife-dependent recreation, education and interpretation programs, and other public uses. We work closely with our friends, local citizens, and partners to enhance and improve nature-based tourism through community outreach, education, and advocacy.

We hope all refuge visitors from everywhere continue to value Montezuma NWR for enhancing their quality of life. Within the National Wildlife Refuge System, Montezuma NWR is treasured for conserving wetlands and wildlife and providing inspirational outdoor experiences for present and future generations of Americans.

Refuge Goals

Refuge goals were developed after considering: (1) the vision statement, (2) the purposes for establishing the refuge, (3) the missions of the Service and Refuge Systems, and (4) the mandates, plans, and conservation initiatives discussed previously. These goals are intentionally broad, descriptive statements of purpose that highlight elements of the vision statement that will be emphasized in future refuge management. The biological goals take precedence and are presented in priority order.

Goal 1: Provide, enhance, and restore where possible, freshwater emergent marsh, open water wetland, and mudflat habitats to benefit native wildlife and plant communities, particularly migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, and breeding marshbirds.

Goal 2: Restore and maintain forested wetlands, riparian forests along the Seneca and Clyde Rivers, and upland forests to benefit priority native species, including songbirds, bats, and important plant communities.

Goal 3: Manage grassland and shrubland habitats primarily to benefit bird species of conservation concern.

Goal 4: Ensure visitors of all abilities and varied interests participate in and enjoy the refuge's opportunities for wildlife observation, interpretation, photography and environmental education. Motivate them to value, support, and contribute to the refuge, MWC, and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Increase their understanding of wetlands and wetland functions, and help them become better environmental stewards.

Goal 5: Provide opportunities for hunters and anglers to enjoy and support hunting and fishing on the refuge and increase their understanding of the regional environmental importance of the refuge and of the greater MWC.

Goal 6: Increase awareness and cooperation among State and Federal agencies, local communities, environmental organizations, universities and other partners. Help them understand the role of the refuge and the MWC in the community, and encourage participation in achieving the vision of the complex.