

Appendix C

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Refuge shoreline

Wilderness Review

- Introduction
- Site Description
- Wilderness Inventory
- Wilderness Inventory Conclusions

Introduction

A wilderness review is the process followed to identify and recommend for congressional designation National Wildlife Refuge System (refuge system) lands and waters that merit inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Wilderness reviews are a required element of comprehensive conservation plans (CCPs), and we conduct them in accordance with the refuge planning policy outlined in 602 FW 1 and 3, including interagency and Tribal coordination, public involvement, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance.

The wilderness review process is conducted in three phases: inventory, study, and recommendation. During the inventory phase, we identify refuge lands and waters owned by the Service in fee simple that meet the minimum criteria for wilderness. These areas are called Wilderness Study Areas (WSA). In the study phase, we evaluate WSAs to determine if they are suitable for wilderness designation. The findings of the study phase determine whether we will recommend the area for designation as wilderness in the final CCP. In the recommendation phase, we forward our wilderness recommendations from the Director to the Secretary of Interior (Secretary). The Secretary next forwards the final proposal to the President for consideration. The President is then responsible for formally transmitting to both houses of Congress recommendations for wilderness designation. We will conduct a wilderness review on a given refuge every 15 years through the CCP process, or sooner if significant new information becomes available affecting wilderness potential, or if a major refuge expansion occurs that warrants a re-evaluation.

Site Description

The refuge is approximately 21 acres and is located in the town of Nantucket, in Nantucket County, Massachusetts (MA) (Map 1-2). The refuge is primarily a barrier beach ecosystem, found at the tip of the Coskata-Coatue Peninsula, with sand beaches around the periphery and vegetated dunes in the interior portions of the refuge. As such, it is heavily influenced by maritime processes. It provides habitat for many coastal waterbird species of conservation concern. The refuge is bounded on three sides by ocean waters and to the south by The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) land. The refuge is contiguous except for a small one acre inholding containing an operational lighthouse owned by the U.S. Coast Guard (Map 1-1).

Wilderness Inventory

The wilderness inventory is a broad look at each planning area (Wilderness Inventory Area (WIA)) to identify Wilderness Study Areas. A Wilderness Study Area is required to be a roadless area or a roadless island of any size, meet the size criteria, appear natural, and provide for solitude or primitive recreation. Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act provides the following definition,

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions, and which: (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The wilderness inventory process was conducted by the CCP Planning Team. After evaluating the refuge land base, the surrounding landscape, and transportation corridors, the review team considered it most practicable to inventory and assess the refuge as a whole due to its small size. All of the approximately 21 acres of the refuge were assessed in its present state. The team's first objective was to identify contiguous areas as large as possible that met the roadless criteria. Only lands currently owned by the Service in fee title were evaluated. The review team identified the refuge as a whole unit as one WIA (Map C-1).



Evaluation of the Roadless Criteria

Permanent roads are prohibited in wilderness under Section 4(c) of the Act. A WSA is required to be a roadless area or a roadless island of any size. For the purposes of the wilderness inventory, a “roadless area” is defined as “a reasonably compact area of undeveloped Federal land that possesses the general characteristics of a wilderness and within which there is no improved road that is suitable for public travel by means of four-wheeled, motorized vehicles intended primarily for highway use. A route maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road.” A roadless island is defined as “an area surrounded by permanent waters or that is markedly distinguished from the surrounding lands by topographical or ecological features.” Motorized vehicles and motorized equipment are also prohibited uses in refuge wilderness areas.

The following factors were the primary considerations in evaluating the roadless criteria:

- A. The area does not contain improved roads suitable and maintained for public travel by means of motorized vehicles primarily intended for highway use.
- B. The area is an island, or contains an island, that does not have improved roads suitable and maintained for public travel by means of motorized vehicles primarily intended for highway use.
- C. The area is in Federal fee title ownership.

Evaluation of the Size Criteria

The size criteria can be satisfied if an area has at least 5,000 acres of contiguous roadless public land, or is sufficiently large that its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition is practicable. The following factors were the primary considerations in evaluating the size criteria:

- A. An area of more than 5,000 contiguous Federal acres (State and private lands are not included in making this acreage determination)
- B. A roadless island of any size
- C. An area of less than 5,000 contiguous Federal acres that is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and of a size suitable for wilderness management
- D. An area of less than 5,000 contiguous acres that is contiguous with a designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, or area under wilderness review by another Federal wilderness managing agency such as the Forest Service, National Park Service, or Bureau of Land Management

Evaluation of the Naturalness Criteria

The Wilderness Act, Section 2(c), defines wilderness as an area that “generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of human work substantially unnoticeable.” The area must appear natural to the average visitor, rather than “pristine.” The presence of historic landscape conditions is not required.

An area may include some human impacts provided they are substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole. Significant hazards caused by humans, such as the presence of unexploded ordnance from military activity and the physical impacts of refuge management facilities and activities, are also considered in evaluating the naturalness criteria.

An area may not be considered unnatural in appearance solely on the basis of the sights and sounds of human impacts and activities outside the boundary of the unit. The cumulative effects of these factors, in conjunction with land base size, physiographic and vegetative characteristics, were considered in the evaluation of naturalness.

The following factors were the primary considerations in evaluating naturalness:

- A. The area appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of human work substantially unnoticeable.
- B. The area may include some human impacts, but they are substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole.
- C. Does the area contain significant hazards caused by humans, such as the presence of unexploded ordnance from military activity?

D. Are there the presence of physical impacts of refuge management facilities and activities?

Evaluation of the Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation Criteria

A WSA must provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. The area does not have to possess outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, and does not need to have outstanding opportunities on every acre. Further, an area does not have to be open to public use and access to qualify under this criteria; Congress has designated a number of wilderness areas in the refuge system that are closed to public access to protect resource values.

Opportunities for solitude refer to the ability of a visitor to be alone and secluded from other visitors in the area. Primitive and unconfined recreation means non-motorized, dispersed outdoor recreation activities that are compatible and do not require developed facilities or mechanical transport. These primitive recreation activities may provide opportunities to experience challenge and risk, self reliance, and adventure. These two elements are not well defined by the Wilderness Act, but can be expected to occur together in most cases. However, an outstanding opportunity for solitude may be present in an area offering only limited primitive recreation potential. Conversely, an area may be so attractive for recreation use that experiencing solitude is not an option.

The following factors were the primary considerations in evaluating outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive unconfined recreation:

- A. The area offers the opportunity to avoid the sights, sounds, and evidence of other people. A visitor to the area should be able to feel alone or isolated.
- B. The area offers non-motorized, dispersed outdoor recreation activities that are compatible and do not require developed facilities or mechanical transport.

Evaluation of the Supplemental Values Criteria

The Wilderness Act states that an area of wilderness may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. Supplemental values of the area are optional, but the degree to which their presence enhances the area's suitability for wilderness designation should be considered. The evaluation should be based on an assessment of the estimated abundance or importance of each of the features.

Wilderness Inventory Conclusions

The CCP Planning Team inventoried the lands and waters in fee title ownership within the Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge. We found that no lands met the minimum criteria to be a WSA. The review team identified one WIA (Map C-1), the refuge unit in its entirety, and found that it did not meet the minimum criteria. The team considered refining the WIA by eliminating areas with no obvious wilderness character; however, they determined that further refinement of the WIA would result in much smaller areas with unmanageable boundaries. The refuge is located at the tip of the Coskata-Coatue Peninsula, bounded by ocean waters on three sides and TTOR property to the south. As a result, the team concluded that refining the size of the WIA would not make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and they would not be of a size suitable for wilderness management.

The team determined that the WIA, as identified on Map C-1, does not meet the criteria for a WSA as defined by the Wilderness Act. In conclusion, we do not recommend this WIA be evaluated further as a WSA. A summary of our CCP Planning Team Wilderness Review findings are listed in Table C.1.

Table C.1. Nantucket NWR Wilderness Review Finding Summary.

Refuge unit and acreage	(1) has at least 5,000 acres of land or is of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unconfined condition, or is a roadless island;	(2) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable;	(3a) has outstanding opportunities for solitude;	(3b) has outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation;	(4) contains ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.	Parcel qualifies as a wilderness study area (meets criteria 1, 2, and 3a or 3b)
Nantucket NWR Approximately 21 acres	No. The refuge is approximately 21 acres, located at the tip of the Coskata-Coatue Peninsula. It is bounded on three sides by ocean waters, and to the south by TTOR property.	No. The refuge is at the tip of a long peninsula that requires the use of OSVs to gain access, resulting in OSV tracks and parked vehicles along the beach. OSV tracks can remain evident throughout the refuge after the vehicles are gone. In addition, a one-acre inholding on the refuge contains an operating U.S. Coast Guard lighthouse, and this is a popular destination as well.	No. The refuge is small and does not offer sights and sounds of wilderness. It is also a highly sought-after tourist destination reached by OSV, and with periodic OSV tours.	No. These types of opportunities do not exist on the refuge due to its small size, status as a popular tourist destination, and the need for OSVs to access the refuge.	Yes. The refuge supports beach-nesting birds of conservation concern, including piping plover (federally threatened) and American oystercatcher (regional concern), and staging terns including roseate tern (federally endangered).	No.