

Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge

Release of Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan is Now Available!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we, our) is pleased to announce the release of the final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge (refuge). We thank everyone who provided comments on the draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (EA) released in August 2011.

This CCP represents our 15-year management plan for the refuge. The plan furthers the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System); provides direction to achieve the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals; and contributes to State and regional conservation plans. Implementing the plan will help achieve the refuge's important role in conserving and managing wildlife resources in the town of Nantucket.

How to Access the Final Plan

You may view or download the final CCP from our Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/nantucket/ccphome.html>. You may also request a printed copy or CD-ROM version by contacting refuge staff (see "Contact Information" on page 3).

Public Comments on the Draft Plan

We released the draft CCP/EA for 60 days of public comment from August 1 to October 1, 2011. We also held an afternoon and evening public meeting on September 15 at the Nantucket Inn.



Amanda Boyd/USFWS

Common tern on the refuge



Staging terns on the refuge; Great Point Lighthouse in distance- Amanda Boyd/USFWS

We greatly appreciate the level of public interest and involvement in our planning effort. During the comment period, we received 38 written comments. These comments covered a variety of topics including the seal population and piping plovers; habitat and invasive species management; public access and beach permits; partnerships and outreach; refuge administration; land acquisition; and the CCP process.

We evaluated all of the substantive comments we received during the comment period, and include our responses to them as Appendix J, "Summary and Response to Public Comments," in the final CCP.

Changes from the Draft to Final Plan

The final CCP is based on alternative B, which we identified as the Service-preferred alternative in the draft CCP/EA. In response to the comments we received, we made several minor changes to alternative B for the final plan. These changes include the following:

1. We provided updated information on numbers of seals, common terns, and roseate terns using the refuge.

Refuge Background

The 21-acre Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1973 as a sanctuary for migratory birds. It is part of a larger network of conserved lands on the Coskata-Coatue Peninsula, including The Trustees of Reservations' 1,117-acre Coskata-Coatue Wildlife Refuge and The Nantucket Conservation Foundation's 498-acre Coatue Refuge.

The peninsula's barrier beach dune and intertidal habitats support a variety of shorebirds and seabirds, including the federally threatened piping plover and the federally endangered roseate tern.

Wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities on the refuge include wildlife observation, photography, and fishing.

Nantucket Refuge is one of eight refuges in the Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

2. We changed the dates for staging tern closures to mid- to late-July through mid-September based on new information gathered by refuge staff over the past 2 years.

3. We provided updated information about visitor numbers and activities.

4. After consulting with the National Marine Fisheries Service, we removed the requirement for at least 25 seals before we would impose closures for seal protection.

5. We provided updated socioeconomic information.

We selected alternative B for the final CCP, with the changes above, for several reasons. First, we believe it represents the array of management actions that best work towards achieving the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals, Refuge System policies, and the goals of other State and regional conservation plans.

Second, we feel that this alternative will make an important contribution to conserving Federal trust resources of concern by providing key nesting and staging habitat for piping plovers and roseate terns. The full basis and rationale for our decision is documented in Appendix L, "Finding of No Significant Impact," in the final CCP.

Highlights of the Final Plan

Here is a brief summary of our planned management for the refuge. For more detailed information, please refer to the final CCP.



Savannah sparrow



Greater black-backed gull chick

Habitat and Species Management

Our habitat management program will emphasize habitat and species management both on and off the refuge through partnerships.

Our major habitat management activities will include the following:

- Protecting dynamic coastal beach and dune systems.
- Identifying and symbolically fencing important wildlife habitat.
- Evaluating vehicle and pedestrian access annually by April 1 to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to sensitive beach and dune ecosystems, and tern habitat.
- Implementing predator control measures to increase productivity of nesting birds on the refuge.
- Working closely with the Trustees of Reservations, the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, and other partners to accomplish these management actions with an emphasis on larger landscape-level conservation.
- Working with partners to protect an additional 2,036 acres of biologically significant lands in the town of Nantucket.

Visitor Services Program

We will enhance our existing visitor services program by:

- Expanding existing priority public uses including fishing and interpretation.
- Working with partners to expand the environmental education and interpretation programs.
- Investigating an alternative transportation system to transport more people to the refuge without the use of individual vehicles.
- Establishing a foot trail from the lighthouse to the refuge's eastern beach.
- Improving outreach materials on refuge wildlife and habitats, including brochures and our Web site information.
- Hiring a part-time, year-round visitor services specialist.
- Pursuing establishment of a shared visitor contact facility with the Trustees of Reservations and the Nantucket Conservation Fund to provide refuge staff with office space, housing, and storage.

We also plan to hire a new law enforcement officer who will conduct regular patrols of all of the refuges in the complex, including Nantucket Refuge.

Refuge Goals

Goal 1. Perpetuate and enhance the biological integrity and diversity of coastal habitats on and around Nantucket Island to support and enhance native wildlife and plant communities, with an emphasis on species of conservation concern.

Goal 2. Promote awareness and stewardship of our coastal natural resources by providing compatible wildlife-dependent recreation and education opportunities on the refuge and within the local and visitor community on and around Nantucket Island.

Goal 3. Perpetuate and enhance long-term conservation and management of wildlife resources on and around Nantucket Island through partnerships and land protection with public and private landowners, Federal, State, and local entities.

Implementing the Plan

We will immediately begin implementing projects outlined in the CCP, although full implementation will only occur with adequate funding. In order to successfully achieve our vision and goals, it is critical that we continue to maintain and develop new partnerships and develop a volunteer program.

We encourage you to stay involved during the plan's implementation. Come visit us at Nantucket Refuge!

Contact Information

To learn more about Nantucket Refuge, please visit our Web site at: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/Nantucket/>.

You may reach Refuge Complex staff by telephone at: 978/443-4661.

To learn more about the planning process, contact:

Carl Melberg
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Wildlife Refuge Complex
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Visitors fishing on refuge

Amanda Boyd/USFWS

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

1 800/ 344 WILD
Federal Relay Service for the Deaf
or Hard of Hearing
1 800/877 8339

March 2013



Refuge Vision Statement

Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge, though diminutive in size, is an important part of a larger area aptly named Great Point. It has great value to the wildlife that uses its beaches, from coastal birds including piping plovers and terns, to mammals including gray seals. Situated at the tip of a peninsula, it is surrounded by a diverse assemblage of coastal, intertidal, wetland, and marine habitat, attracting a great diversity of fauna. It will continue to be managed as a special place for breeding, wintering, and migratory wildlife.

We will continue to provide opportunities for quality, compatible, wildlife-dependent experiences for the public. Nantucket NWR is recognized internationally as a premier fishing location, and the presence of its lighthouse provides the public with a destination that offers cultural perspective and panoramic views. Through strong partnerships, we will promote ecologically responsible use of the property, and continue to promote public awareness about the intrinsic value of dynamic coastal ecosystems.



Piping plover

Amanda Boyd/USFWS

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