

Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
Planning Update #1
August 1996

The staff of Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge appreciates your interest in the planning for the future of the Refuge. In light of the recent flood damages, and growing management challenges within the diked area, Refuge staff initiated a planning effort to reevaluate habitat management, including consideration of some form and amount of tidal restoration.

Special thanks to those of you who participated in our preliminary scoping meeting held July 25, 1996 at Lacey City Hall from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. More than 30 people attended and we have received some written comments as well.

The objectives of the scoping meeting were:

- ◆ To inform and to encourage public participation early in the planning process regarding habitat management within the diked area of Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge.
- ◆ To identify key issues of concern and identify information needs that should be addressed in the planning process.
- ◆ To build a mailing list of interested parties.
- ◆ To strengthen ties with the public and potential partners.

Refuge staff reviewed background information relating to: the February 1996 flood, funding, administrative site planning (that is concurrently being conducted), habitat management planning, and refuge system's objectives.

Public comments were taken on two main topics: those relating to public use issues and those relating to biological/natural resource issues. Many comments were received on both topics. Most public use comments focused on areas involving outreach, education, public use impacts, accessibility, zoning, diversity, and relationships to other programs or aspects of planning. A range of biological comments included topics such as exotic vegetation, anadromous fish, salt marsh restoration, flood impacts, habitat/ecosystem impacts, species impacts, historical

information, agency cooperation, habitat diversity, and new wetland acquisitions. All comments were recorded in detail on flipcharts and have been transcribed for use in the planning process.

Since our July meeting, Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge has been chosen by the Regional Office in Portland to undergo "Comprehensive Management Planning". This means we will be evaluating the biological/habitat and public use programs for all of the Refuge's land, not just the land within the dike. Public comments and ideas received at previous meetings will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Management Planning (CMP) process. Although this will significantly increase the scope of our planning process, money has been allocated to hire additional staff to complete this project. It is anticipated this process may take well over a year. Comprehensive Management Planning is a top priority for the Refuge and the staff looks forward to your continued participation and support in the planning process.

Regional Office and Refuge staff have been working in-house on administrative site planning that focuses on facilities damaged by the flood and includes replacement of the office (with visitor facilities), maintenance shop, parking lot, and associated trails. Consideration is currently being given to reversing the office and shop locations, moving the parking lot to the vicinity of the existing shop, and enlarging it to hold 80-100 cars.

We will continue to keep you informed as the planning process evolves at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and notify you of future opportunities for input. Please call the Refuge at 360-753-9467 if you have further questions regarding the July scoping meeting, administrative site planning or the comprehensive management planning. Refuge staff are available Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.