

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Camas National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 1, August 2010



Trumpeter swans on Camas Refuge / USFWS

Help Us Plan for the Future!

At Camas National Wildlife Refuge

Camas National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is initiating a planning process to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) that will guide how the Refuge is managed for a period of 15 years. This is the first in a series of planning updates we will distribute to keep you informed and invite your participation in the planning process.

The purpose of the Refuge will remain the same as when it was established—primarily to provide

habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds. As we work through the two-year CCP process, we have the opportunity to look at the Refuge's management activities from fresh perspectives. Through the planning process, we will review our management of habitats such as wetlands, meadows, agricultural lands, and riparian areas; and each of our public use programs, including wildlife observation and photography, hunting, environmental education, and interpretation.

Your insights and observations are needed to provide us with a more complete and thoughtful process. We invite you to share your ideas with us by attending one of our public meetings August 25, 2010, in Hamer, Idaho, and August 26, 2010, in Idaho Falls, Idaho, or by submitting written comments by September 24, 2010 (for contact information, see page 6). Your thoughts are important to the success of this effort!

*- Brian Wehausen
Refuge Manager*

Public Open House Meetings

Public Open House Meetings will be held August 25, 2010, in Hamer, and August 26, 2010, in Idaho Falls. See page 2 for details.

Your participation is critical to the success of this effort – we want to hear from you!

Camas National Wildlife Refuge Overview

The Refuge is located in southeast Idaho, 36 miles north of Idaho Falls. The Refuge is situated within the Upper Snake River Plain at 4,800 feet and sits at the northern edge of the Snake River Aquifer. It is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to protect and provide resting and feeding habitat for migrating waterfowl.

Historically, the area now known as the Camas Refuge was comprised of a diverse mosaic of wetland and wet meadow habitats, surrounded by an expansive sea of sagebrush, now termed the high desert.

The area's wetlands and wet meadows were fed surface water via the perennial flow of Camas Creek and natural artesian wells which discharged perched groundwater and continually flooded the wetlands during the drier summer and fall months. Members of several native tribes passed through the area on

a regular basis, and sometimes camped for short periods of time to hunt and gather food.

The first Euro-American settlers arrived shortly after the exploration of Lewis and Clark, who passed less than 100 miles north of the Refuge. Trappers, traders, and then missionaries were the first settlers to arrive.

A large influx of settlers came with the discovery of gold in western Montana in the mid-1800s. Around this same time, a wagon and stage road was established between the railhead at Corrine, Utah, across the Snake River Plain to Monida Pass on the Idaho-Montana border, and on to the gold fields in Montana. A short segment of this wagon and stage road passed through what is now Camas Refuge. One of the many overnight stage stops was located at Sandhole Lake in the southeast corner of the Refuge.

In the late 1800s, the area became part of large livestock and ranching operations, and later, the livestock grazing lands were divided into smaller units and crops were cultivated for livestock feed.

Agriculture further developed to support the thousands of people working the mines. By the time mining had played out, railroads had connected farmers and ranchers to markets far beyond rural southeast Idaho. Over the past century, agriculture has continued to grow in the area.

Today, the Refuge supports significant concentrations of migrating waterfowl, as well as resident elk, mule and white-tailed deer, pronghorn, and sage grouse. It provides excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography, and is known in the birding community as a place to spot rare warblers and other migrating landbirds in the spring.

You're Invited to Our Public Open House Meetings

The first public scoping meetings are opportunities for you to help us identify the issues to be addressed in the CCP and to have your questions answered about Refuge management issues.

Hamer

Date: August 25, 2010

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Location:

Hamer Community Center
2087 Old Butte Highway
Hamer, ID 83425

Idaho Falls

Date: August 26, 2010

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Location:

Idaho Falls Public Library
457 W. Broadway
Idaho Falls, ID 83402



Bull elk in sagebrush / USFWS

Preliminary Goals

Goals are broad statements intended to provide direction for future management of the Refuge. They are based on Refuge purposes, the mission and policies of the National Wildlife Refuge System, input received through this planning process, and key issues identified as most significant to the Refuge.

The planning team has developed the following preliminary Refuge goals and would like your input on them.

Goal 1. Native Habitats. Maintain and protect the existing integrity of functional native habitat and restore the natural range of variability and resiliency of altered habitat.

Goal 2. Nonnative Habitats. Provide high quality forage and cover habitat to increase fitness (e.g. physical condition, survival, reproduction) of migratory birds.

Goal 3. Inventory, Monitoring, Adaptive Management, and Research. Gather scientific information (surveys, research and assessments) to support adaptive management decisions.

Goal 4. Water Resource Management. Secure adequate water and ensure efficient use of water to provide viable ecosystem function.

Goal 5. Invasive Species Management. Perpetuate ecological resistance and rapidly respond to the pervasive

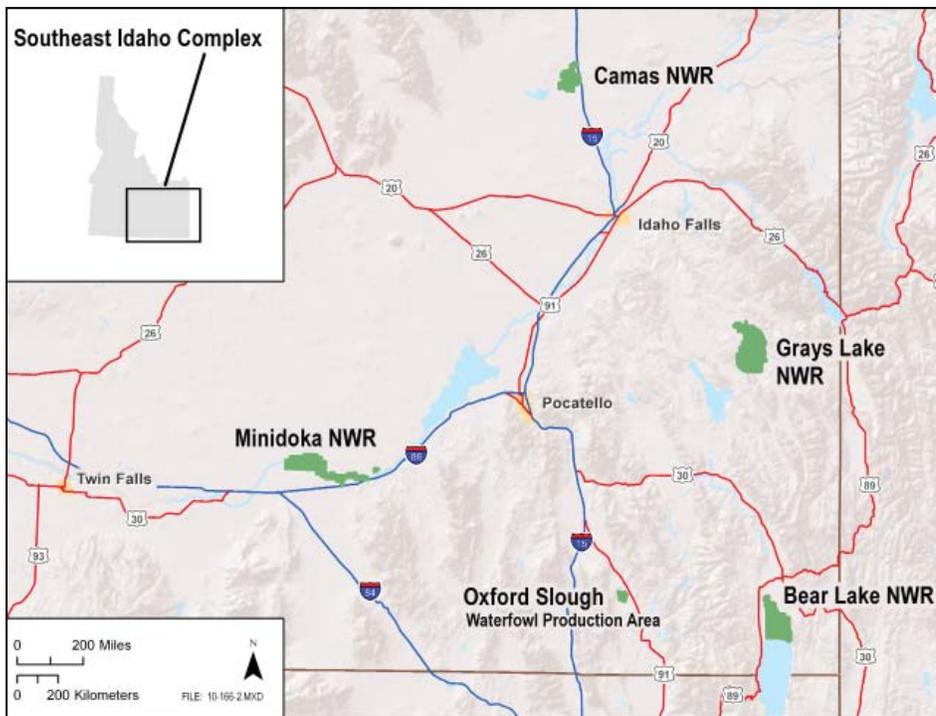
threat of invasive species within refuge habitats by using appropriate Integrated Pest Management techniques.

Goal 6. Historic and Cultural Resources. Protect and manage the Refuge's prehistoric and historic resources to ensure present and future generations recognize the significance of the area's past.

Goal 7. Law Enforcement. Protect the natural resources and maintain the peace and safety of the visitors and employees of Camas Refuge.

Goal 8. Land Protection and Acquisition. Acquire lands that provide water rights and biological important habitat for wildlife species that utilize the Refuge.

Goal 9. Wildlife Dependent Recreation and Public Use. Increase public understanding and appreciation of wildlife, and build support for the Refuge by providing opportunities for all visitors to participate in safe, quality wildlife-dependent recreation and education programs, while minimizing wildlife disturbance or other impacts to wildlife populations or habitats.



Camas Refuge is one of five refuges in the Southeast Idaho National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Planning Schedule Target Dates

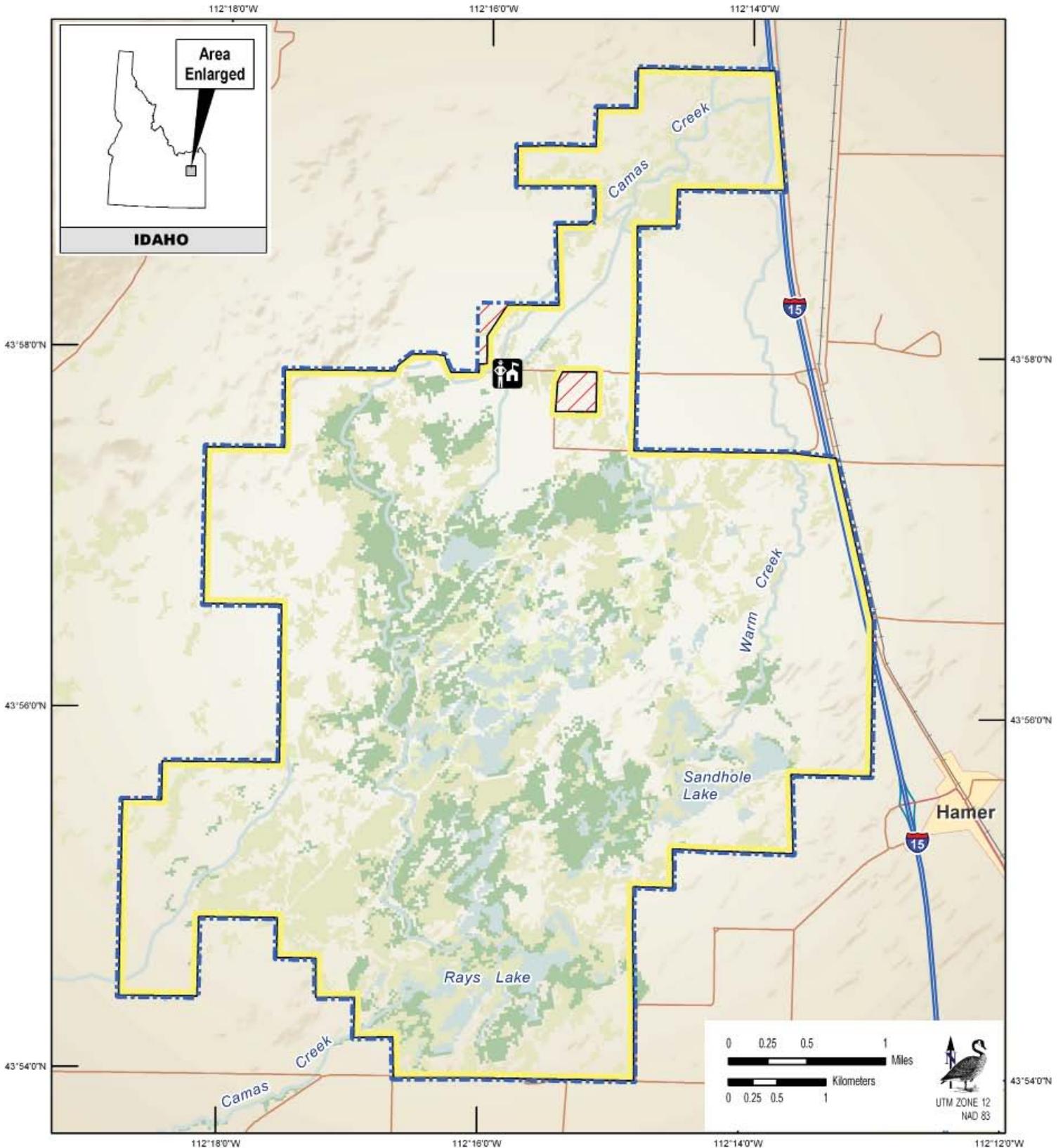
Planning Update 1 Issued	August 2010
Public Meetings	August 2010
Planning Update 2 Issued	September 2010
Planning Update 3 Issued	December 2010
Public Review/Comment on Draft CCP/EIS	Spring/Summer 2011
Final CCP	Summer/Fall 2012

Tentative Planning Schedule
Schedule dates are tentative and subject to change as the planning process progresses.



Camas National Wildlife Refuge

Jefferson County, Idaho



PRODUCED IN THE DIVISION OF REALTY
& REFUGE INFORMATION
PORTLAND, OREGON
LAND STATUS CURRENT TO: 5/1/2010
MAP DATE: 7/27/2010
FILE: 10-199-1.MXD

- Acquired Interest (Owned in Fee & Easement)
- Inholding
- Approved Refuge Boundary
Approved refuge boundaries may contain private inholdings.

- County Roads
- National Landcover Dataset 2001**
- Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands
- Woody Wetlands
- Open Water
- Herbaceous

Refuge Management Issues and Opportunities

As part of the CCP process a range of possible alternative management approaches will be evaluated, including current management practices. The effects of the various alternatives on the biological resources and local communities will be evaluated in the EA, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The CCP planning team has identified some potential issues we may consider in the CCP/EA. We encourage you to provide us with written comments on these and other issues, and to meet us at our public open houses. If you aren't able to attend the meetings, please submit your comments in writing (see page 6 for contact information.)

Habitat Management. Camas Creek was once a perennial creek that overflowed its banks, providing natural processes and water for a diverse array of wetland habitats. These wet areas were also fed from perched artesian wells that flowed groundwater throughout the year.

In the past 25 years the water table in the Refuge area has dropped approximately 20 feet, due to the combination of an 8-year drought cycle, and the amount of irrigation water needed for agriculture. Under current hydrologic conditions, Refuge wetlands must be maintained through continual groundwater pumping to retain surface water through most of the year.

Because the Refuge is encompassed by agricultural lands, there are external threats that may be impacting the water quality and quantity used for Refuge wetlands. There is concern that Refuge wetland basins may be acting as sinks for pesticides and heavy metals received from urban storm water runoff, or adjacent agricultural practices.

Widespread population and habitat declines have been projected for numerous sagebrush associated species. A growing sense of urgency over the outlook for sagebrush-dependent wildlife has spawned sagebrush planning and restoration efforts within Idaho.

Agricultural small grains and short-cover areas at the Refuge provide valuable foraging habitat for key bird species such as cranes, geese, and curlews.

Habitat Management Questions We May Consider in the CCP

- What are the best actions to undertake to attain productive wetland habitats for wildlife?
- How can we protect and improve the Refuge's water for fish and wildlife resources?
- What can we do to prevent the introduction/dispersal of invasive plants and animals, and facilitate their removal from the Refuge?
- What role should the Refuge play in supporting native riparian habitat restoration?
- What are the most appropriate management actions to maximize wet meadow and upland habitat values for key wildlife species (e.g., sandhill cranes, and Canada geese), and provide cover and forage for other native wildlife?
- What is the appropriate role of prescribed fire in habitat management and fuels reduction?
- Should the Refuge pursue cooperative and joint watershed management strategies within the Upper Snake River basin?
- How can we adaptively manage habitats in response to climate change challenges?
- How can the Refuge most appropriately assess the efficacy of management actions with limited funding and staff?

Public Use of the Refuge. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 identified six priority refuge uses: hunting; fishing; wildlife observation and photography; and environmental education and interpretation. These uses receive enhanced consideration over all other general public uses, during refuge planning and management.

We will review the Refuge's priority public uses, as well as other current or proposed uses, as part of the CCP process. Refuges with limited staffing and funding are required to make efforts to obtain additional resources or outside assistance to provide priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses, and to document those efforts before determining that the uses are not compatible.

The Refuge is currently managing increasing visitation and demand for visitor services programs with a very small staff. The visitor services and public hunting program is mostly self serve, with informational kiosks and interpretive displays. To date, the visitor services emphasis is placed on maintaining visitor and hunter facilities, welcoming and orienting visitors, answering information requests, and law enforcement during the hunting season.

Public Use Questions We May Consider in the CCP

- Should existing public uses be continued, reduced, or eliminated?
- Should the Refuge expand its visitor services program?
- What actions should we take to minimize wildlife disturbance caused by public visitation and recreation?



Camas National Wildlife Refuge
2150 East 2350 North
Hamer, ID 83425

In This Issue

Your comments on the Camas National Wildlife Refuge are requested.

What natural resource issues are important to you? Tell us at one of our Public Open House Meetings, scheduled for August 25, 2010, in Hamer, and August 26, 2010, in Idaho Falls.

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How Do I Contact the Service or Provide Comments?

As we plan for the future, we need to hear from you. We're interested in your thoughts and ideas about the Refuge and on the goals and issues described in this planning update. Please write to us at:

Camas National Wildlife Refuge
2150 East 2350 North
Hamer, ID 83425

**Comments
are due to us
by September
24, 2010.**

E-mail:

FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
Please include "Camas NWR CCP" in the subject line.

Find Us On the Web:

<http://www.fws.gov/camas> or
<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning>

We look forward to hearing from you!



Environmental education is a popular public use on the Refuge / USFWS