



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Camas National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 4, January 2014



Yellow-headed blackbird. ©Donn Larsen

The Refuge's Draft CCP/EA is Available for Public Comments

Your comments are important

The draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (dCCP/EA) for Camas National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge, NWR) is available for public review and comment. Between now and February 10, 2014, interested citizens, agencies, and organizations can review and comment on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) dCCP/EA, which includes an analysis of management alternatives for Camas NWR.

We evaluated three draft alternatives and selected Alternative 2 as our Preferred

Alternative. The dCCP/EA also describes management actions that are common to all alternatives, and actions that were considered but dismissed from further consideration.

Your thoughts and comments on the alternatives are important, and we encourage you to share them with us. See options for sending your comments on page 10. The planning team will address substantive comments in the final CCP. When it is completed, the final CCP will guide Refuge management for 15 years, with actions implemented as funding becomes available.

The dCCP/EA was developed to provide reasonable, scientifically grounded guidance for improving the deep marsh, shallow marsh, riparian, instream, sagebrush-steppe, and shelterbelt habitats of Camas NWR for the long-term conservation of migratory birds and native plants and animals. Actions for protecting and sustaining the Refuge's natural resources, habitats, and migratory bird populations are identified in the dCCP/EA. Priority public use programs—wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, interpretation, and hunting—are also evaluated in the dCCP/EA.

Public Open House Meetings

Public open house meetings will be held January 22 and 23, 2014, in Idaho Falls and Hamer, ID.

See page 8 for details. Your participation is critical to the success of this effort - we want to hear from you!

Q&As about the Draft CCP

How would management of the Refuge change under the Preferred Alternative?

In the Preferred Alternative there would be fewer acres of deep wetlands in any given year, but more acres of shallow, seasonal wetlands. We would rotate which basins would receive water from year to year. This would create a greater variety and productivity of wetland habitats than is currently present. We would conduct assessments of wetland and riparian habitat, and we would pilot projects to evaluate the effects of changes in water management upon wildlife habitat and populations.

Using the results of these assessments, we would develop a Wetland and Riparian Restoration Plan (WRRP) and associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document by 2017. The goals of the WRRP include re-establishing dynamic wetlands and sustainable riparian habitat on the Refuge by 2027.

Would public use on the Refuge change under the Preferred Alternative?

All current public uses on the Refuge (wildlife observation and photography, waterfowl and upland game bird hunting, environmental education and interpretation, hiking, dog walking, bicycling, jogging, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing) would continue. The Auto Tour Route would be maintained in its current location; however, it would be designated as a one-way loop. In addition, we propose to issue a limited number of permits (up to 20 annually) for elk hunting on a portion of the Refuge (4,112 acres) during the

Idaho State season. The elk hunt would be in the southern portion of the Refuge, outside the area where most public use occurs (see Map 2, page 6).

There would be some changes to regulations to protect sensitive wildlife and habitat resources. For example, under the Preferred Alternative, free-roam hiking would no longer be allowed. However, there would still be ample public use opportunities year-round on 27 miles of service roads, the 6.3-mile Auto Tour Route, and a 1.3-mile birding trail. Dogs would be required to be on a short leash or have a functional e-collar.

Photographers would be allowed to place portable blinds within 100 feet of all roads that are open to public use, by reservation.

A Special Use Permit would be needed to place blinds in other areas. Opportunities for environmental education would increase due to increased staffing and facilities.

What happens next?

You may provide comments by U.S. mail, phone, or by email, (see page 10 for instructions). Comments are due by February 10, 2014. We will compile all public comments on the draft CCP and respond to all substantive comments. Based on comments, we may correct factual information or modify the alternatives. We will select an alternative for implementation and publish the final CCP.



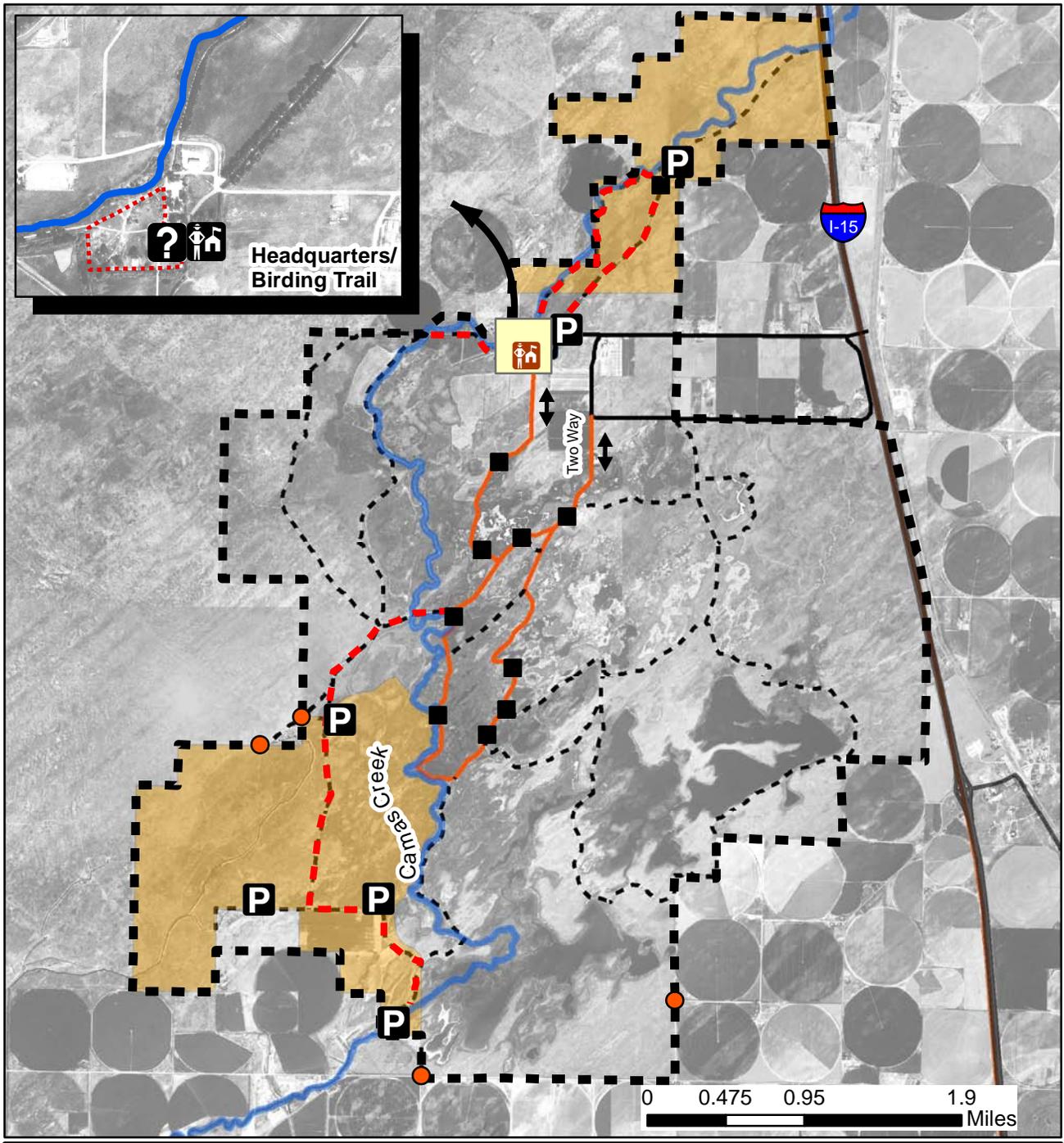
Refuge tour. USFWS

Alternatives Comparison Table

Alternative Number	Alternative 1 (No-Action Alternative)	Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative)	Alternative 3
Habitat Management Emphasis	Provide high quality, deep marsh habitat for breeding waterfowl and waterbirds, and reliable levels of annual waterfowl production	Increase variability of wetland habitats and partially restore Camas Creek function while reducing dependence on pumped groundwater	<i>As in Alternative 2, except:</i> Equal emphasis on upland and wetland/riparian habitat management
Native Wetland and Riparian Habitat Management			
Water Management	Maintain deep wetlands by diverting most of Camas Creek surface waters (58.1 cfs) through 1 point of diversion, with supplemental pumping from 7 wells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 2014 to 2017 conduct assessments of wetland and riparian habitats, and begin pilot projects to evaluate effects of changes in water management to habitat and wildlife By 2017, develop WRRP and associated NEPA document to re-establish dynamic wetlands and sustainable riparian habitat by 2027 	
Wetland Habitats	Over the lifetime of the plan, manage the following acres of habitats annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 780 acres hemi-marsh (deep marsh) in 6 wetland basins 1,213 acres shallow marsh 40–60 acres moist soil wetlands in 2 basins Maintain 1,958 acres of existing wet meadow habitat and enhance 60–70 acres 	Over the next 4 years (2014–2017), until the WRRP is complete, manage the following acres of habitats annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 250–300 acres of hemi-marsh in 3–4 wetland basins; draw down 2–3 basins annually 150–200 acres of moist soil wetlands in 2 basins For the lifetime of the plan, manage the following acres of habitats annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,743–1,803 acres of shallow marsh Maintain 1,958 acres and enhance 80–100 acres of wet meadow habitat 	
Camas Creek and Riparian (Woodland) Habitat	Over the life of the plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 4 miles in-stream habitat (Camas Creek) Maintain 20–40 acres of willow riparian habitat 	Over the next 4 years (2014–2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 8 miles in-stream habitat (Camas Creek) Maintain and enhance 100–150 acres of willow riparian habitat associated with Camas Creek By 2017, implement pilot project to lower banks of Camas Creek in strategic locations	
Native Upland Habitat Management			
Shrub Steppe (Sagebrush)	Maintain 2,623 acres; rehabilitate and restore 113 acres of non-native habitat to sage-steppe	<i>As in Alt 1, but also:</i> Establish test plots to evaluate restoration strategies. Lower priority than wetland/riparian management	Rehabilitate and restore 425 acres of non-native habitat to sage-steppe. Equal priority with wetland/riparian management
Naturalized Habitat Management			
Shelterbelt (Non-Native and Native Trees/Shrubs)	Maintain 34 acres of shelterbelt in current location to support migratory landbirds		Expand to 50 acres along the edges of existing habitat
	Maintain with groundwater flood irrigation using Refuge base funding	Supplement flood irrigation with solar-powered micro-irrigation system; develop supplemental funding	<i>As in Alt 1</i>
Agricultural Habitat Management			
Crops and Acres	160 acres/2 fields farmed using Cooperative Land Management Agreements (CLMAs) with local farmers (20 acres small grain, 140 acres alfalfa)		80 acres/1 field using CLMAs (20 acres small grain, 60 acres alfalfa)
Farming Practices	Well #7 field: Irrigated, Refuge-owned equipment Well #9 field: Irrigated, privately owned equipment	Well #7 Field: <i>As in Alt 1</i> Well #9 field: Dryland farm up to 80 acres if cooperative farmer/equipment lost	Well #7 field: <i>As in Alt 1</i> Well #9 field: No farming; restore to shrub-steppe
Haying	Hay 150 acres and irrigate 330 acres annually	Hay 150 acres and irrigate 150 acres annually	Hay 150 acres annually; no irrigation

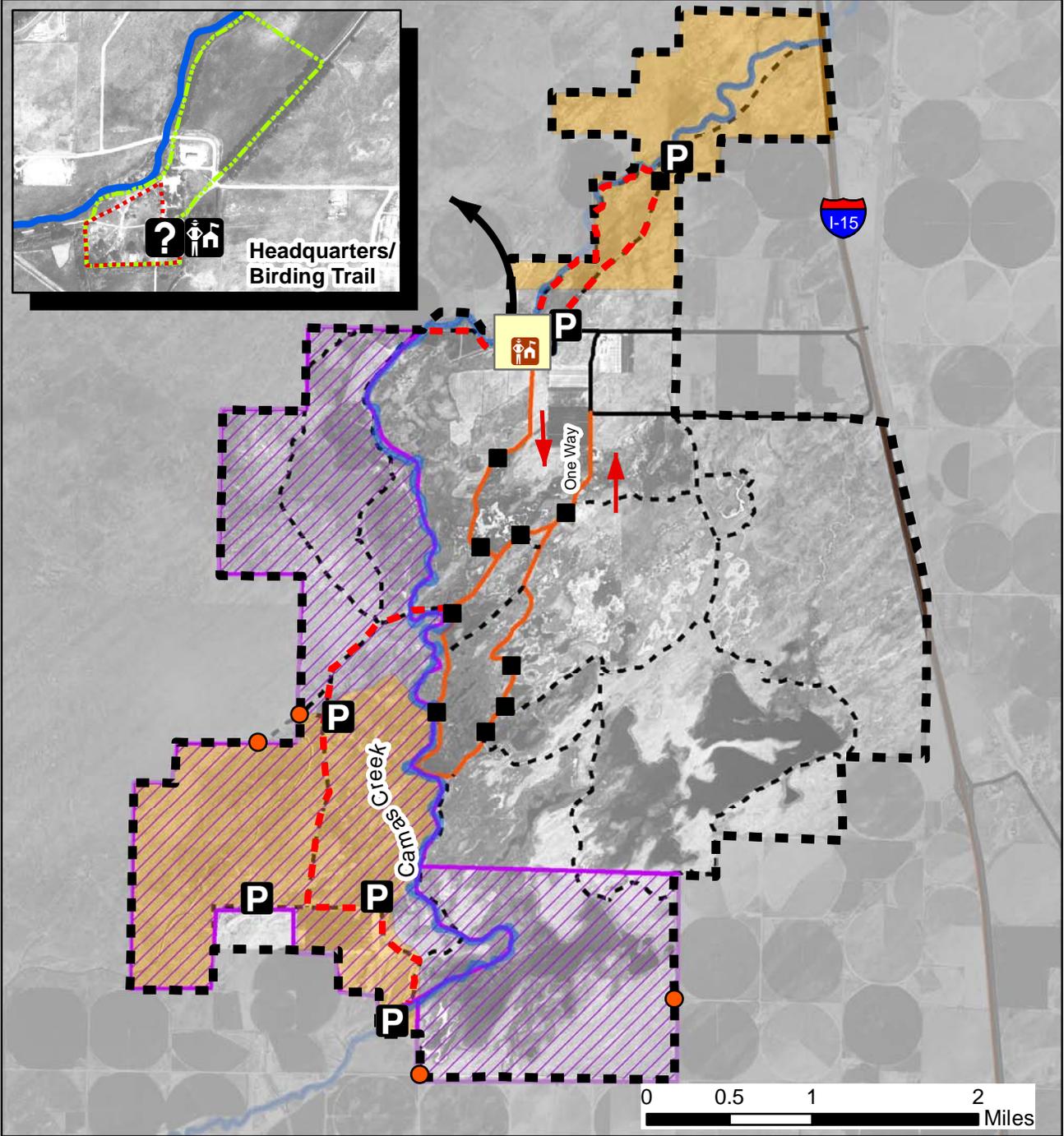
Alternatives Comparison Table.....continued

Visitor Services Program Facilities, Staffing, and Volunteers				
Facilities	Parking area at HQ with self-service orientation facilities, parking lot, and comfort station			
	Small visitor contact area in Refuge office	Construct new visitor contact station and environmental education multipurpose room staffed by Friends of Camas NWR, volunteers, and additional staff.		
Staffing	No Refuge or Complex staff dedicated to visitor services, managing volunteers, or assisting Friends Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 full-time Park Ranger/Visitor Services Manager at Camas NWR to manage visitor services and volunteer programs, coordinate with Friends of Camas NWR • 1 full-time volunteer coordinator position at Southeast Idaho NWR Complex 		
Public Access				
Vehicular Access	6.3-mile, two-way, auto tour route open year round, weather permitting	<i>As in Alt 1</i> , except change auto tour route to one-way		
	6.5 miles of additional hunter access roads open to vehicles during hunting season	<i>As in Alt 1, but also:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.5-mile Sandhole Lake loop road open July 1–Nov 1 (total 14 miles of additional roads open seasonally) 		
Pedestrian/Bicycle Access	6.3-mile auto tour route and 27 miles of dirt/gravel service roads open year-round to walking, jogging, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and dog walking			
	27 miles of service roads un-maintained, un-groomed in winter	17 miles un-maintained 10 miles groomed in winter		
	Off-road hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing permitted July 15–February 28 on 10,806 acres (entire Refuge)	No off-road hiking permitted except by hunters in possession of valid State licenses and tags during the hunting season	Off-road hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing permitted year-round in N. hunt unit (980 acres), Jan 1–July 31 in S. hunt unit (1,530 acres)	
	0.5-mile birding trail open to walking only	1.3-mile birding trail open to walking only		
	Group size not addressed	Organized events for jogging, bicycling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing for groups larger than 10 must apply for Special Use Permit		
Dog Walking	Allowed in all areas open to public use; dogs must be on leash or under close control	Allowed on roads only; dogs must be on maximum 6-foot leash or functional e-collar. Dogs not allowed on 1.3-mile birding trail		
Wildlife Observation and Photography				
Wildlife Viewing Facilities	6.3-mile auto tour route with pullouts and interpretive panels; one wildlife observation platform			
	0.5-mile birding trail	1.3-mile birding trail		
Wildlife Tours	Occasional tours on request	8 wildlife viewing tours annually	12 wildlife viewing tours annually	
Photography blinds	Portable blinds allowed on road shoulders year-round; off roads July 15–Feb 28	Portable blinds allowed within 100 feet of roads; maximum of 5 blinds allowed at same time	<i>As in Alternative 2, but also:</i> 3 semi-permanent photo blinds available by reservation	
Environmental Education and Interpretation				
EE Participation	400–450 annually (250 students, 150–200 from tours)	1,000–1,100 (800 students within 10 years; 200–300 from tours)	2,000–2,400 (2,000 students within 10 years; 400 from tours)	
Wildlife Based Educational Tours	6–10 tours annually, led by Refuge staff	10–15 tours annually, led by Refuge staff, volunteers	20 tours annually, led by Refuge staff, volunteers	
Hunting				
Hunt Type/Acres	Waterfowl and upland game bird hunting allowed on 2,510 acres			
	No big game hunting	Provide a limited elk hunt on 4,112 acres of the Refuge in line with Idaho seasons for GMU 63 (all elk August 1–31; antlerless elk only September 1–December 31). Issue up to 20 elk hunting access permits annually with priority to youth and mobility-impaired hunters		



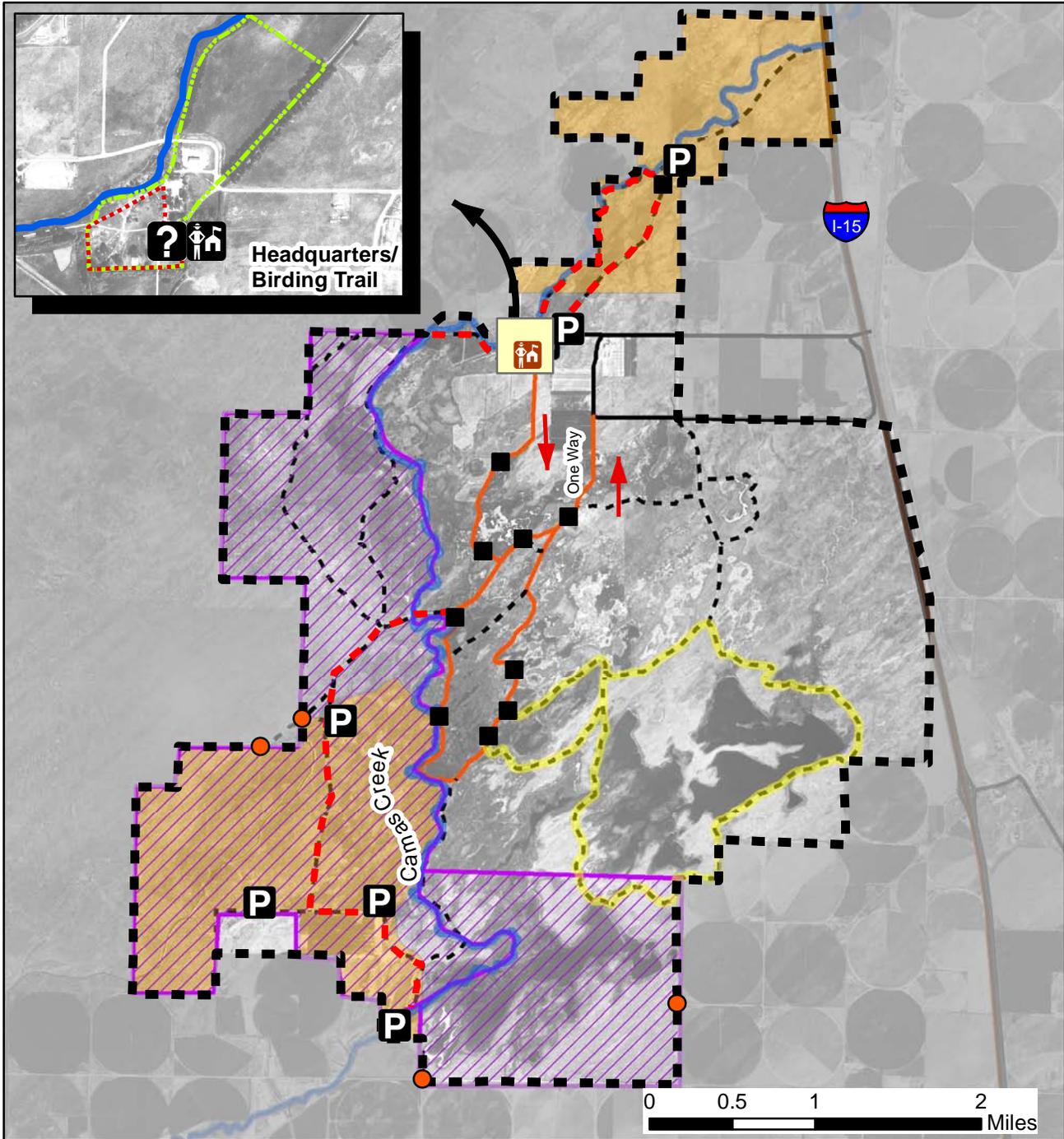
Legend

- - - Service Roads (Closed to vehicle traffic)
- Auto Tour Route
- Roads open to vehicles year-round
- - - Hunting and Wildlife Observation Road
- Birding Trail
- Gate and Access
- ▣ Refuge Boundary
- 🏠 Headquarters and Information
- 🟡 Waterfowl and Upland Bird Hunting Areas
- ❓ Info Kiosk
- Pull-out / Information Sign
- P Parking



Legend

- - - Service Roads (Closed to vehicle traffic)
- Auto Tour Route
- Roads open to vehicles year-round
- - - Hunting and Wildlife Observation Road
- ... Existing Birding Trail (in inset map)
- ... Proposed Birding Trail
- Gate and Access
- Refuge Boundary
- Headquarters and Information
- Elk Hunt Area
- Waterfowl and Upland Bird Hunting Areas
- Info Kiosk
- Pull-out / Information Sign
- Parking



Legend

- Service Roads (Closed to vehicle traffic)
- Auto Tour Route
- Roads open to vehicles year-round
- - - Hunting and Wildlife Observation Road
- Sandhole Lake Loop
- ... Existing Birding Trail (in inset map)
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- ▨ Elk Hunt Area
- ▨ Waterfowl and Upland Bird Hunting Areas
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You are Invited to our Public Open House Meetings

The meetings are opportunities for you to ask questions and provide comments on the draft CCP.

Idaho Falls

Date: January 22, 2014

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

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

Hamer

Date: January 23, 2014

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Location: Hamer Community Center
2087 Old Butte Highway
Hamer, ID 83425



Porcupine baby. ©Donn Larsen;
Student banding a bird. ©Donn Larsen;
Ibis eggs. Pam Johnson/USFWS;
Great horned owlet. ©Donn Larsen

Planning Schedule

Planning Step	Target Date
Planning Update 1 (issued)	August 2010
Public Meetings (completed)	August, 2010
Scoping Public Comment Period	September 17-October 17, 2010
Planning Update 2 (issued)	January 2011
Planning Update 3 (issued)	May 2012
Planning Update 4 (issued)	January 2014
Draft CCP/EA Public Comment Period.....	January 9-February 10, 2014
Final CCP/EA.....	Spring 2014

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

Copies of the dCCP/EA are available as follows:

Copies of the dCCP/EA on CD may be obtained by contacting:

Brian Wehausen
Camas National Wildlife Refuge
2150 East 2350 North
Hamer, ID 83425
Phone (208) 662-5423

A printed copy of the dCCP/EA is available at each of the following libraries:

Hamer Public Library
2450 E. 2100 North
Hamer, ID 83425
Phone: (208) 662-5275

Marshall Public Library
113 S. Garfield
Pocatello, ID 83204
Phone: (208) 232-1263

Review or download the dCCP/EA from the following Internet sites:

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

Idaho Falls Public Library
457 W. Broadway
Idaho Falls, ID 83402
Phone: (208) 612-8460

Your Refuge—Leaner, Greener, and Reaching Out

To promote the availability of the dCCP/EA to a wider audience, and to reduce our use of natural resources, we will post the dCCP/EA on two websites and provide the listed libraries with a printed and CD copy. CDs and limited printed copies are available to the public upon request; please contact us to obtain a copy at our contact information above.



Sunrise on Big Pond with the Teton Range in the background. ©Donn Larsen



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Camas National Wildlife Refuge
2150 East 2350 North
Hamer, ID 83425

In this issue:

Your comments on the Camas National Wildlife Refuge draft CCP are requested. Tell us at one of our public open house meetings scheduled for January 22 in Idaho Falls and January 23 in Hamer.

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We want to hear from you!

Your comments help shape the future of the Refuge. Please send your comments and requests to us by any of the following methods:

U.S. mail:

Brian Wehausen
Camas National Wildlife Refuge
2150 East 2350 North
Hamer, Idaho 83425

Phone: (208) 662-5423

Website: www.fws.gov/camas; select “Contact Us.”

E-mail: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
(Please include “Camas NWR dCCP/EA” in the subject line)

Comments are due by February 10, 2014.

Snow geese and ducks. USFWS

