



Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update 3, September 2009

Flock of geese at Ankeny Refuge / USFWS

A Note from the Project Leader

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (CCP/EA) for Ankeny, Baskett Slough, and William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuges (collectively Willamette Valley Refuges or Refuges) continues to evolve. In our last update we shared our preliminary goals and reported on the public comments we received.

Since then, we have drafted preliminary alternatives, with objectives and strategies that fit the alternative themes. In this planning update, we provide an overview and comparison of each preliminary alternative and invite your feedback. We will address your comments in our Draft CCP/EA. The Draft CCP/EA will include information about the Refuges, their resources, and their purposes. An analysis of effects to key resources will be included for each alternative.

Please feel free to contact the Refuge; see the back page for contact information.

Doug Spencer
Project Leader

The Heart of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan *Preliminary Alternatives, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies*

A CCP describes management actions that help bring a refuge closer to its vision. A vision broadly reflects the refuge purposes, the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) mission and goals, and the role the refuge can play in the community. As we develop the CCP, we identify alternatives, describe goals, and define objectives and strategies.

What is an alternative?

Alternatives are required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Alternatives represent approaches to management options that we could reasonably undertake to achieve refuge purposes and goals, help fulfill the NWRS mission, and resolve issues.

What is a goal?

A Refuge goal is a descriptive, open-ended and often broad statement of desired future conditions that conveys a purpose, but does not define measurable units.

What is an objective?

An objective is a concise statement of what we want to achieve; how, when, and where we want to achieve it; and who is responsible for the work. We derive objectives from goals. Objectives provide the basis for determining strategies, monitoring refuge accomplishments, and evaluating the success of strategies. We strive to write objectives that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and time-fixed).

What is a strategy?

A specific action, tool, technique, or combination of actions, tools, and techniques used to meet unit objectives.



Pintail / USFWS



Canada goose goslings / USFWS

The CCP Preliminary Alternatives

Alternative 1 - Current Management

Alternative 1 represents the “no change” alternative required by NEPA. The Refuges would continue programs at current levels, including cultivating grass fields under a cooperative farming program to provide forage for wintering Canada geese. Other goose management activities, such as managing wetland habitats and providing sanctuary, would also continue. The Refuges would continue to manage and enhance native habitats, including riparian, wetlands, wet prairie, upland prairie/oak savannah, oak woodland, and mixed deciduous forests at current levels without further habitat restoration. Endangered species management would continue.

Existing public uses, including wildlife observation, interpretation, and a small amount of environmental education, wildlife photography, deer hunting, and fishing, would continue with the current facilities and programs in place. No new public use facilities would be developed. The current areas closed to public access would remain closed during the winter to provide wildlife sanctuary for wintering waterfowl. The Refuges would not pursue any additional land protection measures under the no change alternative.

Alternative 2 - Improved Balanced Approach (The Service’s Preferred Alternative)

This alternative represents a balanced approach among the Refuges’ many competing needs. Overall, habitat and public use programs would continue as currently managed but with many targeted improvements and additions.

An emphasis on providing habitat for wintering geese would remain. Goose habitat management would continue, primarily through cooperative farming, to provide green forage crops. Historically, the Refuges have utilized cooperative farming, whereby local area farmers grow crops on the Refuges to provide food for wintering geese. These farmers plant and care for the food crops and then harvest the seed during the summer to cover their costs.

In recent years, farming costs have increased and goose use on the Refuges has increased significantly, thereby reducing farmers’ yield and profit potential. To help address this, the Refuges would pursue additional measures to help retain farming services. These measures could include providing enhanced irrigation capabilities, providing additional lure crops such as corn or other grains, the Refuges taking over farming on certain high goose use fields, and the Service offsetting a portion of the costs to cooperative farmers. Wetland habitat management and restoration activities would also be intensified to improve habitat for geese and other wildlife.

Management and enhancement would continue in remnant native habitats and recently restored areas. In addition, approximately 400 acres on the three Refuges would be restored to wetland, wet prairie, riparian, or upland prairie/oak savannah habitats over the next 15 years.

Threatened and endangered species management would continue to be a priority, guided by recovery plans where applicable. Existing populations of several threatened and endangered species could increase through habitat management activities, and several new populations would be established on the Refuges.



Red-legged frog / USFWS



North prairie at William L. Finley Refuge / USFWS

Additional interpretive signs and materials, including on-line materials, would be developed. Major events would be planned three to four times per year, and monthly interpretive programs would be developed.

We would focus on providing more wildlife-dependent uses, including environmental education, hunting, and fishing. Environmental education efforts would be expanded to reach more students and schools, particularly at William L. Finley Refuge. Outdoor shelters would be added for environmental education classrooms, and funding would be sought to construct an environmental education center, including indoor classroom facilities and a small exhibit area.

Expanded opportunities would be provided for the public to experience quality deer and waterfowl hunting. The deer hunting season at William L. Finley Refuge would be extended into the first 9 days of November on parts of the Refuge. Waterfowl hunting, through the full season, would be provided at the Snag Boat Bend Unit, subject to land status negotiations with the Division of State Lands. A youth waterfowl hunt prior to the main season and a September goose hunt would be provided at Baskett Slough Refuge. Fishing would be promoted on the Willamette River by providing a canoe launch site at the Snag Boat Bend Unit.

The current areas closed to public access on the Refuges would remain closed during the winter to provide wildlife sanctuary for wintering waterfowl. The Refuges would develop an elk management plan with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife after completion of the CCP. Cultural resources would be

proactively managed by repairing and maintaining the historic structures on William L. Finley Refuge and by adding associated interpretive facilities.

Protection, conservation, and management of additional lands would be proposed. Lands within the Willamette Valley would be identified that contribute to Refuge purposes and goals by providing wintering habitat for Canada geese; protection, enhancement, and restoration of native habitats and rare Willamette

Alternative 3 - Alternative Means of Providing for Canada Geese and Limited Expansion of Public Use Programs

Alternative 3 represents a major shift in the manner in which the Refuges manage wintering Canada geese. In this alternative, we recognize that cooperative farming may be increasingly infeasible and propose other methods to accomplish goose management, such as contract farming—paying farmers to grow crops on the Refuges—and/or Refuge staff doing the farming. The Refuges would farm only fields that have been receiving moderate to high goose use. To reduce costs, fertilization and weed control activities would decrease. Overall, Refuge farming program costs would increase and goose use would likely decrease.

Alternative 3 would also emphasize native habitat management and would actually create the opportunity to restore approximately 1,200 acres of cropland to native habitat over the next 15 years as staff, time, and funding are available.

Continued on page 4



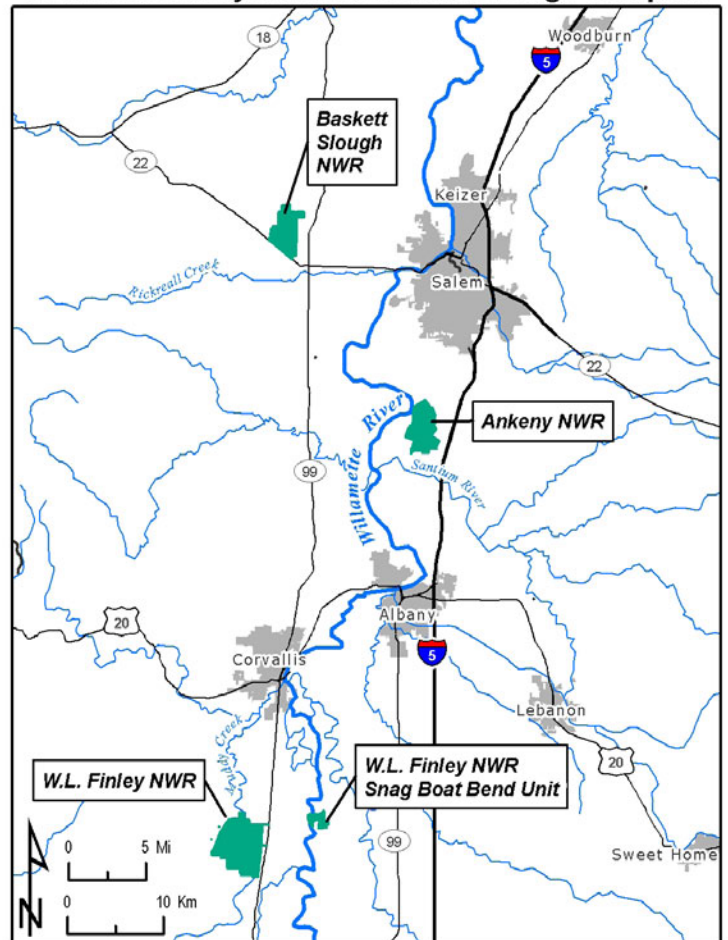
Snag Boat Bend at flood stage / USFWS

The Refuges would continue to emphasize wildlife observation and interpretation as the cornerstone of the public use program, but this alternative does little to expand these programs. Existing viewing, photography, and interpretive facilities such as observation points, trails, and blinds would be maintained, but very few new facilities would be added. Interpretive signs would be developed or updated for existing facilities where needed, and other simple, relatively low-intensity and low-cost interpretive strategies would be implemented; however, major new developments and new interpretive methods would generally not occur. One or two special events would be held each year on the Refuges.

Expanded opportunities would be provided for the public to experience quality deer hunting. Waterfowl hunting through the full season would be provided at the Snag Boat Bend Unit, subject to land status negotiations with the Division of State Lands. Fishing would be promoted on the Willamette River by providing a canoe launch site at the Snag Boat Bend Unit.

The current areas closed to public access on all three Refuges would remain closed to provide sanctuary during the wintering waterfowl season. Threatened and endangered species management, environmental education, fishing, elk management, cultural resources, subsequent land protection planning, and conservation partnerships would occur as under Alternative 2.

Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex



The maps on page 5 represent current Refuge habitats and facilities. For more information about the Refuges and the planning process, please visit our websites:

Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex Planning Process

<http://www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/ccp/>

Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge

<http://www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/ankeney/>

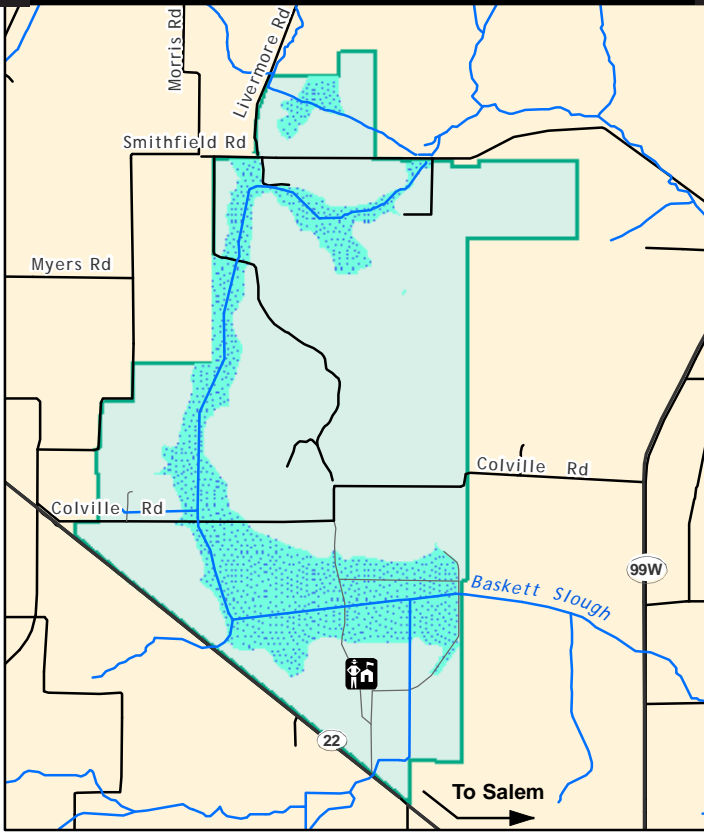
Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge

<http://www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/baskett/>

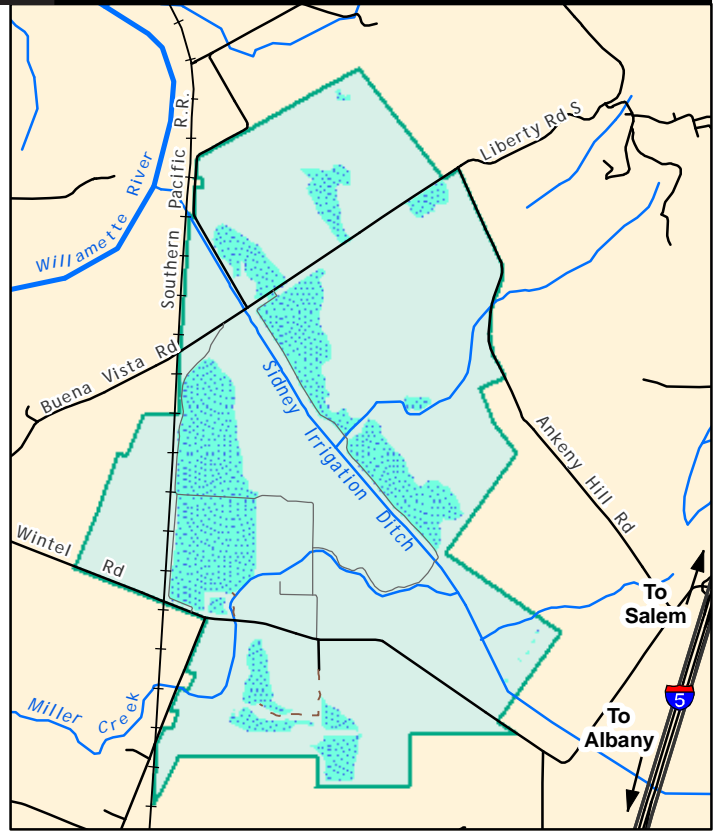
William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge

<http://www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/finley/>

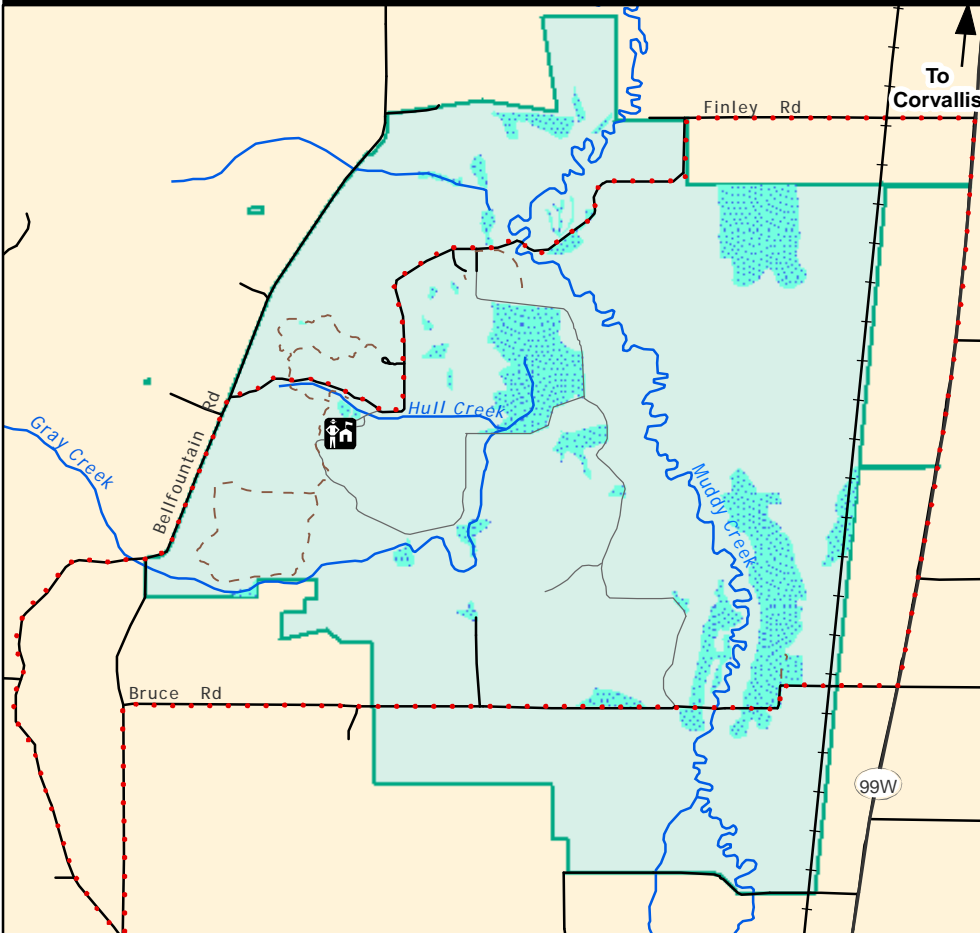
BASKETT SLOUGH NWR



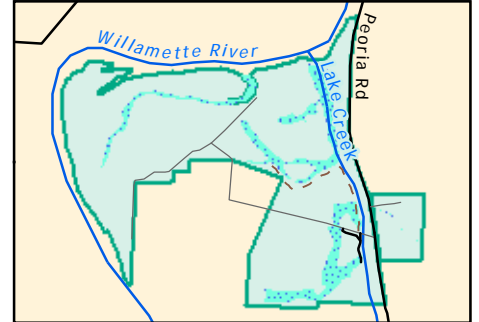
ANKENY NWR



WILLIAM L. FINLEY NWR

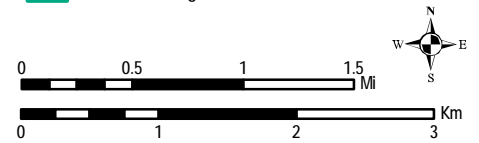


SNAG BOAT BEND UNIT



LEGEND

- Refuge Office
- Year-round Use Trail
- Auto Tour Route
- Public Use Road
- Refuge-Authorized Personnel
- Wetland
- USFWS Refuge



Prepared by:
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Please visit our website at <http://www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/ccp>

Have you moved? If so, please send us updated address information.

Questions? Concerns? Contact us!

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***Your feedback is important to the
success of this effort!***

Email: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov.

Please include “Willamette Valley Refuges CCP” in the subject line of your message.

Website: <http://www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/ccp>

CCP Planning Schedule Next Steps

August-October 2009: Review comments on preliminary alternatives and prepare Draft CCP/EA

Winter 2009-Spring 2010: Release Draft CCP/EA

Spring 2010: Modify Draft CCP/EA as needed

Summer 2010: Release Final CCP



Boardwalk at Ankeny NWR / USFWS