

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update Number 4, May 2011



A Northern pintail comes to rest at Baskett Slough NWR/George Gentry/USFWS

The Refuges' Draft CCP/EA is Available for Public Comments

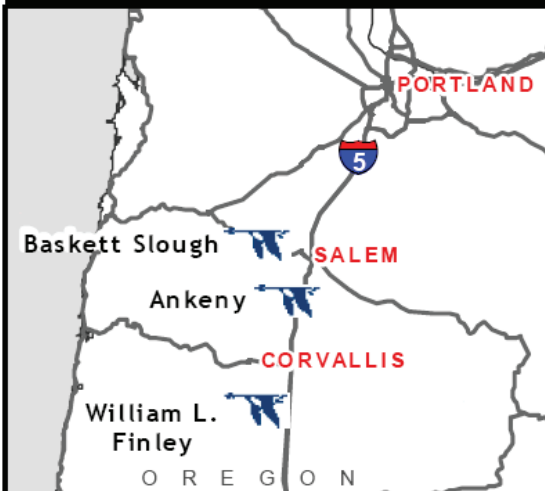
Your comments are important!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

(Draft CCP/EA) for the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges (Refuges) (Ankeny, Baskett Slough, and William L. Finley) is available for public review and comment between now and June 30, 2011. We welcome your review and comments on the Draft CCP and invite you to submit written comments using the enclosed form or email us at FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov.

We developed the Draft CCP/EA to provide reasonable, scientifically grounded guidance for maintaining and improving the refuges' wetlands, grasslands, riparian and floodplain forests, instream habitat, and oak savannas/woodlands for the long-term conservation of migratory birds and native plants and animals. The CCP will help guide refuge management actions for the next 15 years. It also provides future direction for the refuges' public use programs

REGION MAP



After we receive public comments, we will analyze and address your comments, finalize the CCP, and then publish it.

Alternative 2 is our preferred alternative. Two additional alternatives were developed and analyzed in the Draft CCP. See Pages 2-4 for a description of each alternative. Actions will be implemented as funding becomes available.

Overview of the Draft CCP/EA Alternatives

Alternative 1 (No Change Alternative)

This alternative represents the “no-change” alternative required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The refuges would continue programs at current levels. Specifically, the refuges would continue to emphasize goose management by maintaining cultivated 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 wetlands, wet prairie, upland prairie/oak savanna, oak woodland, mixed deciduous forests, and riparian) at current levels. No further habitat restoration work would occur. Endangered species management would continue.

Existing public uses, including wildlife observation, interpretation, 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 in effect to provide sanctuary during the wintering waterfowl season.

The refuges would not pursue any additional land protection measures under the no-change alternative.

Alternative 2 (Service Preferred) – Improved Balanced Approach

This alternative represents a balanced approach among the many competing needs at the refuges. 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. Green forage for geese would continue to be provided primarily through cooperative farming. To help retain the services of cooperative farmers, the refuges would pursue measures such as providing enhanced irrigation capabilities (helping the farmers to better establish green forage crops and perhaps grow other cash crops); providing additional lure crops such as corn or other grains; the refuges taking over farming on certain high goose use fields; the Service possibly offsetting a portion of the costs to cooperative farmers; etc.

Wetland habitat management and restoration activities would 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 845 additional acres on the three refuges would be restored to wetland, wet prairie, riparian, oak woodland, or upland prairie/oak savanna 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 would be strengthened through habitat management activities, and several new populations would be established on each refuge.



Children participate in a native planting restoration effort at William L. Finley Refuge/ Sharon Selvaggio/ USFWS

The refuges would continue to emphasize wildlife observation and interpretation as the cornerstones of the public use program. Several new trails and observation facilities would be added. Additional interpretive signs and materials, including online materials, would be developed. Major special events would occur at a frequency of about 3 to 4 per year, and monthly weekend interpretive programs would be developed.



Musicians play at Fiechter House during the annual Barns and Bluegrass event at William L. Finley NWR/ Sharon Selvaggio/USFWS

Environmental education efforts would be expanded with an objective of reaching more students and schools, particularly at W.L. Finley Refuge. Outdoor classroom shelters would be added. Funding would be sought to construct an Environmental Education Center, indoor classroom facilities, and an exhibit area on W.L. Finley Refuge.

A new option to hunt deer of either sex would be added. New upland locations would be available for

hunting during a portion of the shotgun deer season; this would require the closure of two hiking trails for a week in November. The shotgun season would be shortened and shifted to later in the State season. A youth waterfowl hunt and a September goose hunt would be provided at Baskett Slough Refuge.

Fishing would be promoted at the Willamette River by developing safe fishing access and a canoe launch at Snag Boat Bend. The current areas closed to public access would remain in effect to provide sanctuary during the wintering waterfowl season.

The refuges would develop an elk management plan cooperatively with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) after

completion of the CCP (within 1 to 2 years of CCP implementation). The refuges would continue to expand conservation partnerships, volunteer programs, and outreach to local communities. Proactive cultural resource management would take place by repairing/maintaining the historic structures on W.L. Finley Refuge and by adding associated interpretive facilities.

This alternative also proposes protection, conservation, and management of additional lands within the Willamette Valley that could contribute to refuge purposes and goals by providing wintering habitat and forage for Canada geese; providing protection, enhancement, and restoration of native habitats and rare Willamette Valley species; and providing opportunities for additional wildlife-dependent public uses. The refuges would undertake a subsequent land protection planning process to identify specific tracts of lands for these purposes.

Alternative 3 – Restore Low Goose Use Fields to Native Habitats as Resources Permit; Provide Targeted Improvements in Public Use Programs

This alternative involves a major shift in management for wintering Canada geese. This alternative recognizes that cooperative farming may be increasingly infeasible and proposes other methods to accomplish goose management: either contract farming (paying farmers to grow crops on the refuges) and/or force account farming (refuge staff doing the farming). The refuges would focus on farming fields that have been receiving moderate-to-high goose use. Fields that have received low goose use (on average over the last

15 years) would be converted to native habitats, as budgets and staff time allow. To reduce the costs on contract-farmed or force-account-farmed fields, lowered levels of fertilization and

Continued on page 4



Cabell Overlook at William L. Finley NWR/USFWS



Bald top oak savanna at William L. Finley NWR/George Gentry/USFWS

weed control activities would occur. 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 1,564 acres of cropland to native habitat over the next 15 years since the amount of farmland would be reduced. However, the fields to be restored would likely lie fallow and could

Conservation Planning Subsequent to the CCP

In Objective 12b of the Draft CCP, the Service proposes to work in collaboration with partners and local communities to develop a Willamette Valley Conservation Study Area (WVCSA) plan to protect, restore, and maintain lands in the Willamette Valley outside the existing refuges. Such WVCSA planning would be a separate process from the current CCP planning which focuses on management of the three existing refuges.

The WVCSA plan will identify the National Wildlife Refuge System's role in future conservation efforts in the Willamette Valley. The focus will include wet prairies and upland prairies, oak savanna

and woodlands, and riparian, riverine, and wetland habitats. The Service would also work with local agriculture interests to identify ways to reduce crop depredation on private lands while helping to achieve flyway objectives for the Canada goose. The goal of the WVCSA will be to assist in the recovery of threatened and endangered species and prevent future endangered species listings, to maintain working landscapes and the benefits that they provide to wildlife, and to identify additional opportunities where wildlife-dependent recreation may be suitable.

Through this collaborative process, the Service would identify a

become weedy while awaiting staff time and funding for restoration.

Wildlife observation and interpretation would continue to be emphasized as the cornerstones of the public use program. About half as many new observation facilities (trails, viewing overlooks, etc.) would be added as under Alternative 2. Two or three special events would be held each year on the refuges. The current areas closed to public access on all three refuges would remain in effect to provide sanctuary during the wintering waterfowl season.

Deer hunting, threatened and endangered species management, environmental education, fishing, elk management, cultural resources, subsequent land protection planning, and conservation partnership activity would occur as under Alternative 2.

range of options for conservation and land protection, including acquisition, easements, and cooperative agreements. The Service will provide more details on the WVCSA and its planning process in the coming months.

In addition, the CCP identifies three other subsequent step-down plans to be developed for the refuges. The first will tackle elk management and will occur over the next year. The other plans that will be developed include a fishing plan (focused on providing enhanced fishing opportunities at the Snag Boat Bend Unit), and an Inventory and Monitoring Plan, which will expand upon inventory and monitoring efforts outlined in Goal 13 of the CCP.

Alternatives Comparison, Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges (Ankeny, Baskett Slough, and W.L. Finley Refuges)

| | Alternative 1 | Alternative 2 | Alternative 3 |
|--|--|--|--|
| Key Indicators of Comparison | No Change | Improved Balanced Management | Restoration of Low Goose Use Fields to Native Habitats; Targeted Visitor Improvements |
| Wintering Geese and Waterfowl Management | | | |
| Acres grass forage or grain crops | 4,570 | 4,175 | 3,465 |
| Acres cooperatively farmed | 3,470 | 2,881 | 0 |
| Acres under refuge farming or contract farming | 1,101 | 356 | 3,465 |
| Acres cooperatively or refuge farmed | 0 | 938 | 0 |
| Acres irrigated cereal grains | Varies, up to 80 | Up to 417 | Up to 346 |
| Acres wetlands | 1,697 | 1,710 | 1,803 |
| Acres wintering sanctuary | No change - 87% of Complex | | |
| Number of wintering geese expected | 60,000 - 100,000 | | |
| Criteria for restoration to native habitats | Low goose use fields (based on 15-year use history); habitat suitability; low quality areas for farming due to hydrology and other factors; aesthetics | Same as Alt 1, plus no significant adverse impact to cooperative farming | Same as Alt 1. Once refuge or contract farming operations have been secured, restoration on surplus areas will occur |
| Native Habitats | | | |
| Acres seasonal wetlands | 1,343-1,529 | 1,317-1,504 | 1,309-1,497 |
| Acres permanent wetlands | 168 | 205 | 205 |
| Acres wet prairie | 652 | 885 | 1,123 |
| Acres upland prairie/oak savanna | 572 | 1,016 | 1,203 |
| Acres oak woodlands | 758 | 765 | 764 |
| Acres mixed deciduous-coniferous forests | 371 | 361 | 370 |
| Acres riparian habitat | 1,807 | 1,965 | 2,259 |
| Miles of rivers and creeks protected and maintained | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Threatened and Endangered Species Management | | | |
| Populations of Bradshaw's lomatium | 2 (Corvallis East and West), per Recovery Plan | | |
| Populations of Fender's blue butterfly | One functioning network (Baskett-Salem), one independent population (Finley-Corvallis), per Recovery Plan | | |
| Populations of Kincaid's lupine, Willamette daisy, and Golden paintbrush | 6 (Corvallis West, Salem West) | | |
| Populations of Nelson's checkermallow | 3 (Corvallis West, Salem East and West), per Recovery Plan | | |
| Number of wetlands maintained for Oregon chub | 5 | 5-6 | 5-6 |

| | Alternative 1 | Alternative 2 | Alternative 3 |
|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| Elk Management | | | |
| Refuge herd size objective | Not established | To be established via elk management plan developed in cooperation with ODFW | |
| Elk control measures | None | To be established via elk management plan developed in cooperation with ODFW | |
| Wildlife Observation and Photography | | | |
| Observation structures (does not include vehicle pullouts) | 15 | 19 | 17 |
| Miles auto tour routes | 6.1 (including portions on County roads) | | |
| Miles year-round trails | 6.8 | 11.4 | 9.8 |
| Miles seasonal trails | 16.9 | 19.5 | 17.2 |
| Designated reservation photo blinds | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Interpretation | | | |
| General program | Signs, brochure, and website primarily | More diverse use of media; aimed at broader audience. | |
| Number special events annually | 2-3 | 3-4 | 2-3 |
| Number interpretive walks | Sporadic | Monthly | Quarterly |
| Signs | Same as now; some updates to occur | New signage at key sites on each refuge | New signage mainly at Baskett Slough |
| Environmental Education | | | |
| Number of students served annually | 300-1,000 | 2,500-5,000 | |
| Outdoor shelters | None | 10 | 10 |
| Environmental Education Center/Indoor classroom sites | None | Included, with 2 classrooms | Included, with 2 classrooms |
| Fishing | | | |
| Fishing opportunities | Low quality opportunity at Muddy Creek. | High quality fishing opportunity and access promoted at Snag Boat Bend Unit within 5 years of the CCP completion. | |
| Hunting | | | |
| Deer hunting – W.L. Finley Refuge | Archery available; 1 month shotgun season available in portion of refuge; no antlerless harvest | Archery available; antlerless harvest allowed; shotgun season shorter overall but extended into November and allowed in upland areas now closed. No other public uses allowed in hunt areas during first week of November. | |
| Youth waterfowl hunt | None | Provided at Baskett Slough | None |
| September goose hunt | None | Provided at Baskett Slough | None |
| Partners Program, Volunteers, Outreach | | | |
| Partners Program | Continue implementation of Partners Program Strategic Plan; deliver technical and financial assistance to landowners for conservation | | |
| Volunteers | Volunteers assist regularly. Volunteer management plan to be developed | Increased use and enhanced management of volunteers and interns; volunteer management plan to be developed | |
| Cultural Resources | | | |
| Cultural resource management | Management occurs but needs additional resources. Historic structures deteriorating | Cultural resources management strengthened; NHPA compliance strengthened; prioritized list of maintenance and restoration will guide work for historic structures. | |
| Cultural resources interpretation | Little available | New interpretive materials developed; potential for utilizing and promoting the historic area on W.L. Finley evaluated; curricula developed for use in EE program; historic structures reused where feasible. | |

*Greater yellowlegs at Baskett Slough NWR
/Donna Dewhurst/USFWS*



Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges CCP Goals

The following goals were developed by the Planning Team and apply to all three alternatives. These goals are the foundation for which all subsequent management objectives and strategies were developed (see Chapter 2 in the Draft CCP).

- Goal 1.** Provide agricultural crops for Canada geese, especially the dusky Canada goose, together with wetland management and sanctuary, to ensure a healthy, viable wintering goose population in support of Pacific Flyway management and depredation control plans.
- Goal 2.** Maintain, enhance, and restore a diversity of wetland habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.
- Goal 3.** Protect, maintain, and restore native Willamette Valley wet prairie habitats, with an emphasis on management for rare and listed plant species, native species diversity, and functional attributes for declining grassland birds.
- Goal 4.** Protect, maintain, enhance, and restore the native upland prairie/oak savanna habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley, with an emphasis on management for rare and listed plant species, native species diversity, and functional attributes for declining grassland birds.
- Goal 5.** Maintain oak woodland habitats representative of the historic Willamette Valley.
- Goal 6.** Maintain mixed deciduous/coniferous forests characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.
- Goal 7.** Protect, maintain, and restore a diversity of native riparian floodplain habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.
- Goal 8.** Protect and maintain riverine habitats representative of the historic Willamette Valley.
- Goal 9.** Contribute to the protection and recovery of federally threatened and endangered species and their habitats within the Willamette Valley.
- Goal 10.** Provide compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities for visitors, fostering appreciation and understanding of the refuges' fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats.
- Goal 11.** Protect, preserve, evaluate and interpret the cultural heritage and resources of the refuges while consulting with appropriate Native American groups and preservation organizations and complying with historic preservation legislation.
- Goal 12.** Protect, restore, and maintain off-refuge habitats to achieve conservation goals at the landscape level throughout the Willamette Valley.
- Goal 13.** Collect scientific information (inventories, monitoring, research, or scientific assessments) necessary to support refuge management.



**Willamette Valley
National Wildlife Refuge Complex
26028 Finley Refuge Road
Corvallis, OR 97333**

Copies of the Draft CCP/EA are available as follows:

Review or download the Draft Plan from the following Internet site:

<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/main/docs/OR/docswillamettevalley.htm>

Copies on CD-ROM may be obtained by contacting:

Doug Spencer, Project Leader
Willamette Valley
National Wildlife Refuge Complex
26028 Finley Refuge Road
Corvallis, Oregon 97333
Phone: (541) 757-7236

Your Refuge Leaner, Greener, and Reaching Out

To promote the availability of the Draft CCP/EA to a wider audience, and to reduce our use of paper, we are emphasizing electronic distribution of the document. Limited printed and CD-ROM copies are available. Please use your library or contact us (address and phone above) if you need to obtain a CD or printed copy.

A printed copy of the Draft Plan is available at each of the following libraries:

Dallas Public Library
950 Main Street
Dallas, OR 97338
503-623-2633

Jefferson Public Library
128 South Main Street
Jefferson, OR 97352
541-327-3826

Salem Public Library
585 Liberty Street SE
Salem, OR 07301
503-588-6315

Corvallis-Benton County
Public Library
645 NW Monroe Avenue
Corvallis, OR 97330
541-766-6926

Albany Public Library
2450 14th Avenue SE
Albany, OR 97231
541-917-7580

Monroe Community
Library
668 Commercial Street
Monroe, OR 97456
541-847-5174

Public Comment Form

Willamette Valley Refuges Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

Please provide your comments regarding public use, wildlife and habitat management, or other topics for the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Draft Alternatives in the boxes provided. If you prefer a particular alternative, please indicate which, and your reasons for supporting it, in the appropriate box below. See the back page for more boxes.

Alternative 1:

Alternative 2:

If you would like to receive future updates, please provide your contact information below.

Name _____ Organization _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
 Email _____ Preferred? Yes _____ No _____

Thank you for your time!

Please return this form to us at the Refuge Complex Office or add postage and mail it to the Refuge Complex. You may also e-mail comments to FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov (please use *Willamette Valley NWRs CCP* in the subject line of your e-mail).

All comments received from individuals, including names and addresses, become part of the official public record and may be released. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations [40CFR1506.6(f)] and other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Department of the Interior policies and procedures.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

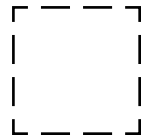
*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use this information to better serve the public.
 There is no requirement to provide a response or to use this form.
 Response is voluntary, and providing your name, organization, and address is optional.*

Alternative 3:

General comments:

Please fold on the dotted line, tape, affix stamp, and mail.

Return address:



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish and Wildlife Service
Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex
26028 Finley Refuge Road
Corvallis, OR 97333