



American kestrel young / USFWS

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges

www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/ccp

Planning Update 2, September 2008

Thanks for Participating!

We thank you for your interest in the Ankeny, Baskett Slough, and William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuges' Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). The CCP will guide management of the refuges for the next 15 years.

We received 121 letters, comment forms, or emails. Twenty people or more participated in each of our public open houses. We appreciate the community's care for and interest in these refuges.

Your Comments Covered Many Issues

Thank you for engaging in our refuge planning process. A sampling of the comments we received follows.

"I have been involved in developing interpretive materials for parks in other states, and feel that many public natural areas (NWRs and others) underutilize their potential as resources for educating the public about natural history and science."

"It is my wish to encourage you to allow the refuges to open to public hunting. I have two grandsons and this would give us the opportunity to share the hunting experience. At this time we have very few areas that are available."

"Keep focus on the needs of native plant and animal species rather than on the human demands. We already have plenty of space that has been changed into 'human habitat.' We need places that preserve the original conditions of the Valley."

"Increase visitor facility enhancements such as boardwalks, towers, and blinds. These create a quality experience for visitors."

"My main issue is that they are refuges and not hunting preserves. Hunting would destroy the fine balance for all species and force migratory waterfowl onto private lands which will increase depredation and public ire for the damage caused. My main issue is for the refuges to be maintained as refuges. This has led to less depredation and having the valley become a haven for migratory birds."

"The 3 NWR's were established to provide wintering grounds for ~20,000 dusky Canada geese. This has been so successful that you are now tending ~200,000 (to 250,000?) Canada geese of 7 varieties. You are "bursting at the seams" with Canada geese who are spilling over to adjacent agricultural areas and thus arousing some ill will from your neighbors, which you describe as a significant problem. You are dealing with an order of magnitude more geese than the NWRs were expected to host. The solution is fewer geese or more land in the Willamette Valley refuge system. I strongly urge you to consider expansion of the NWRs."

"Manage actively for other types of birds: for example, create mudflats for shorebirds, particularly during shorebird migration. Also, by replacing the agricultural areas with native habitat, the refuge will benefit native birds, plants, and animals that currently cannot use the agricultural fields."

continued from page 1

"I have a special interest in seeing that these three beautiful refuges are maintained primarily for conservation and wildlife habitat preservation and for assurance of the greatest possible access to the public for wildlife observation."

"I think you are managing the dusky wrong. The first month (November) the geese stay on the refuge. After that, it is fed out to a point that they use the refuge ponds at night to roost and return to farmer's fields to feed during the day. I contend that if you managed the grass crop to be at peak goose food during the spring and used hunters to disperse the birds in the fall and winter, there would be less crop damage."

What Were Your Concerns?



*Elk at W.L. Finley NWR
Photo by
Joe Staff*

Hunting. Hunting generated more commentary than any other topic. More than half of all respondents mentioned it. Many people urged us to expand hunting programs at the refuges, particularly for waterfowl or elk. The most common reason cited was that since duck stamp fees support refuges, refuges should provide hunting opportunities.

Other reasons mentioned included: hunting access to other lands is limited, hunting might disperse birds more through the Valley, and hunting would benefit youth. One person expressed concern that geese concentrated on refuge wetlands could spread disease.

Many others expressed dislike of the idea of hunting on the refuges and felt that the special role the refuges play in providing sanctuary and disturbance-free areas for wildlife should be respected.

Some people suggested that in case of conflict, non-consumptive uses should prevail over consumptive uses. Others expressed concern that hunting on the refuges could worsen off-refuge depredation by dispersing geese onto private lands.

Elk damage on nearby lands was mentioned as a concern by

several respondents and hunting was suggested as a tool to limit populations. Another person suggested that elk hunting should rarely be used because viewing elk is a popular refuge activity. Others suggested non-hunting population control methods, including limiting field sizes, developing cropping systems, and predators.

Facilities. A number of respondents suggested improvements to refuge facilities, especially trails. The condition, placement and availability of restroom facilities, viewing sites, interpretive materials, blinds and other facilities also generated several suggestions.

Habitat Management. Many people urged the Service to maintain, expand and improve native habitats. Invasive species were also mentioned as a problem by several. Other suggestions were made in the area of wetlands management and water quality. Several people urged attention to climate change.

Public Uses. A number of respondents urged us to discourage certain uses. Many felt hunting should be discouraged. Others suggested that boating, bicycling, driving, dog-walking, fishing, jogging

trapping, and teenage drinking and drag-racing be banned and laws prohibiting illegal activities be enforced more effectively (many of these uses are banned already). Others asked the refuges to provide more access for canoeing and dog-walking. A few people urged greater emphasis on environmental education.

Planning, Collaboration, and Outreach.

Several people made suggestions regarding the planning process and analysis or information to be included in the CCP. A number of people urged us to continue collaboration and outreach with others, specifically Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon State University, conservation organizations, birding groups, tribal governments, and the general public. Several people offered volunteer assistance or ideas for better utilizing volunteers.

Refuge Boundary Expansion.

Several comments were made regarding expanding the refuges' boundaries and acquiring more land to better accommodate wintering geese and assist native habitat conservation.

For a comprehensive look at all the comments we received, go to our website at www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/ccp.

Why People Value the Refuges

A comment form with five questions was distributed with Planning Update 1 and posted on the refuges' website. The questions, and answers we received follow.

1. Why are Ankeny, Baskett Slough or William L. Finley Refuges special to you? In the 81 responses we received, the following reasons were identified. Many commenters identified more than one reason.

Why People Value the Willamette Valley Refuges	Number of Answers
Birding or Viewing Wildlife	43
Conservation of Wildlife or Nature	10
Enjoying Nature	14
Live-Nearby	10
Native Habitats	7
Exercise	6
Quiet	5
Views/Scenery	5
Trails	4
Miscellaneous	11

2. Which activities would you like to enjoy at the Refuges over the next 15 years? We received 84 responses to this question. Most people checked multiple activities. The table below summarizes the number of times an activity was identified as one commenters would enjoy.

Activities People Would Like to Enjoy at the Refuges	Number of Answers
Wildlife Observation	72
Wildlife Photography	41
Environmental Education	34
Interpretation	28
Hunting	27
Fishing	19
Hiking	56
Driving	16
Bicycling	11
Kayaking or Canoeing	8



Wildlife observers using one of the Refuges' overlooks / USFWS

Draft Refuge Goals

The planning team drafted the following 12 goals and is now developing objectives and strategies for addressing issues identified during scoping.

Goal 1. Provide agricultural crops for all Canada geese, especially dusks, that--together with appropriate wetland management and sanctuary--ensures a healthy viable goose population and minimizes use of private agricultural lands in the Willamette Valley.

Goal 2. Provide, manage, and enhance a diversity of wetland habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.

Goal 3. 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. Restore and enhance native upland prairie/oak savannah characteristic of historic Willamette Valley.

Goal 5. Restore and enhance oak woodland habitats representative of the historic Willamette Valley.

Goal 6. Maintain and enhance mixed deciduous habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.

Goal 7. Restore and enhance a natural diversity of native riparian floodplain habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.

Goal 8. Protect and enhance natural riverine habitats representative of the historic Willamette Valley.

Goal 9. Provide visitors compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities fostering appreciation and understanding of the refuges' wildlife and plant communities.

Goal 10. Contribute to the recovery of endangered, threatened, and sensitive species populations.

Goal 11. Collect scientific information (inventories, monitoring, research) necessary to support adaptive management decisions on the Refuge complex.

Goal 12. Provide leadership for conservation efforts in the Willamette Valley, focusing partner efforts on recovering, enhancing, and protecting Service trust species and their habitats.

Next Steps for the CCP

The next steps in the CCP process include:

Developing Alternatives: A preliminary set of alternatives, with detailed objectives and strategies by goal, is under development by the planning team and will be reviewed internally by October 2008.

Reviewing Preliminary Alternatives with the Public: A planning update will be distributed that includes summaries of the preliminary alternatives by December 2008.

Preparing a Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment: A draft CCP with accompanying environmental analysis will be released for public review by August 2009.

A young refuge visitor enjoying wildlife observation / USFWS



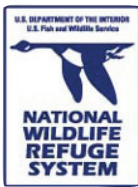
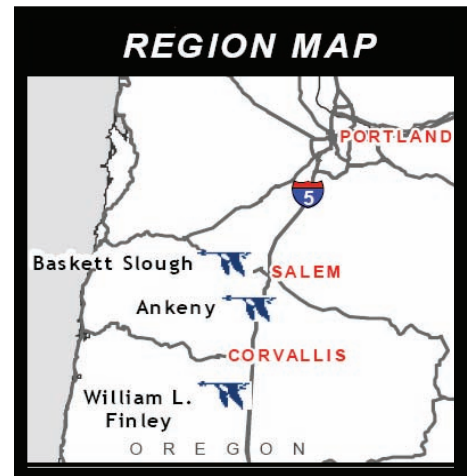
Any Questions or Concerns?

Contact Us!

Doug Spencer, Project Leader

Phone: (541) 757-7236

Email: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov



U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex
26208 Finley Refuge Road
Corvallis, Oregon 97333

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

*Have you moved? If so, please send us your updated address information.
Thank You*

In this issue:

A summary of the comments we received is provided.