

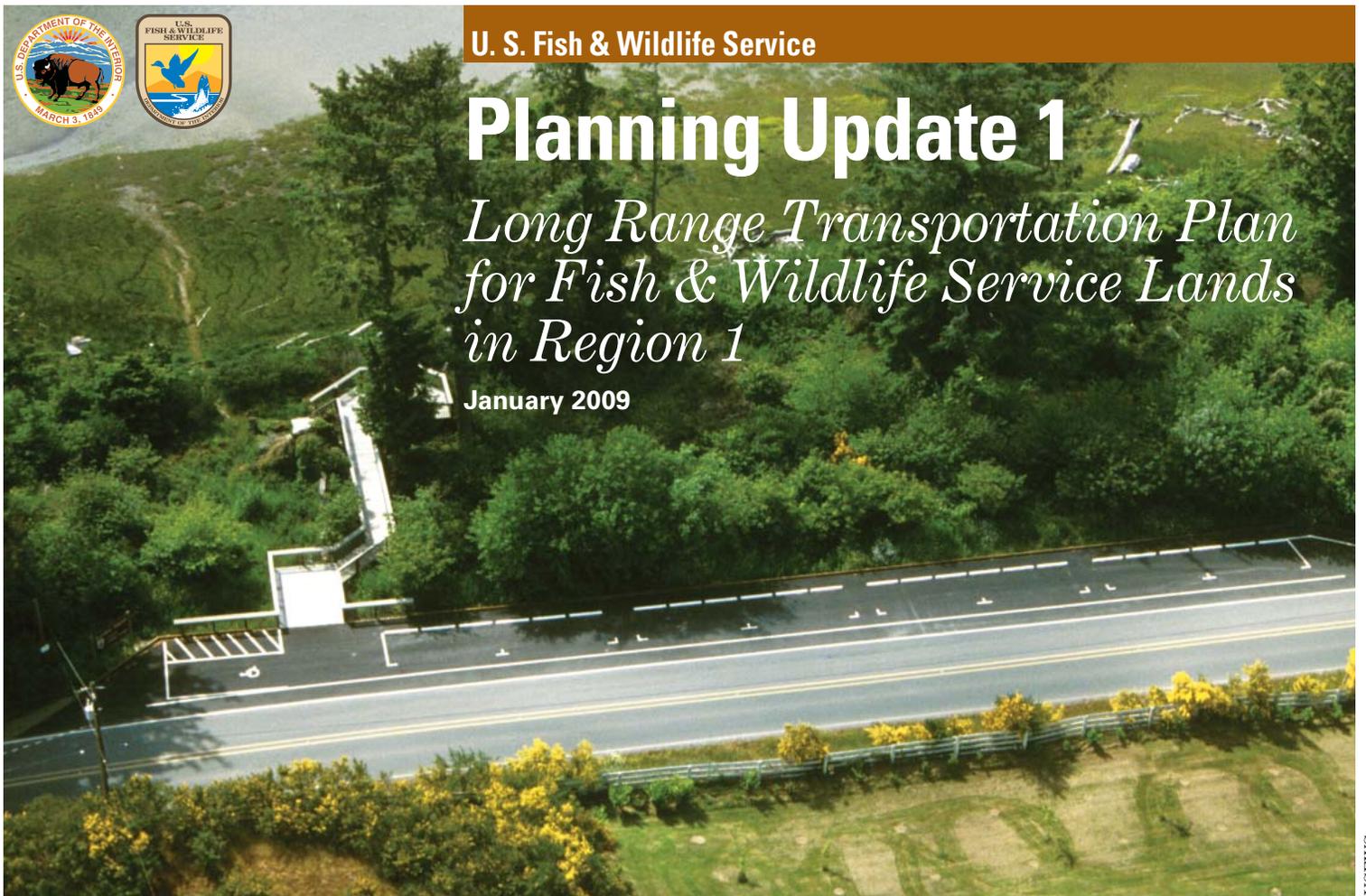


U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Planning Update 1

## *Long Range Transportation Plan for Fish & Wildlife Service Lands in Region 1*

January 2009



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## Pioneering Planning Effort

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 1 (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Hawaii) is undertaking a pioneering effort to develop a long range transportation plan (LRTP) for its wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries. This plan will help the Service identify and prioritize needed transportation improvements demonstrated through documented Department of Interior databases highlighting unmet mission critical needs.

The purpose of this pilot project is to serve as a model for region-level transportation planning within the Service, seek alternative funding sources, implement coordinated and cooperative transportation partnerships in an effort to improve the Service's transportation infrastructure, bring the Service into compliance with Federal legislation requiring all Federal Land Management Agencies to conduct long range transportation planning consistent with State and Metropolitan plans, and establish a defensible structure for sound transportation planning and decision-making.

Although often overlooked, transportation infrastructure supports Department of Interior initiatives by

connecting people with nature, improving the condition of parking areas, public and service roads and trails assets all while resulting in meeting the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Understanding the connection between transportation and conservation, the Service has established a transportation mission and goals to serve as benchmarks for evaluating improvements to the transportation system within Region 1 as part of this LRTP. Together with an understanding of existing transportation infrastructure deficiencies in the region, this plan will enable the region to make better decisions regarding its most critical transportation needs.

At a time when resource and infrastructure funding is scarce, this LRTP will also arm leaders with a toolkit to use in working with gateway communities, counties, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, other Federal land management agencies, and stakeholder agencies outside Service boundaries, many of whom could potentially contribute funding or in kind services to advance priority projects.

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### Mission of Long Range Transportation Plan

To support the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s mission by connecting people to fish, wildlife, and their habitats through strategic implementation of transportation programs.

#### Goals:

- Ensure that the transportation program helps to preserve and enhance fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitat(s).
- Ensure that the transportation program provides safe access and circulation while enhancing visitor experiences.
- Integrate appropriate transportation components into internal FWS plans and processes.
- Optimize partnering to maximize resources and develop integrated transportation solutions.
- Adopt and promote sustainable transportation practices that address climate change.

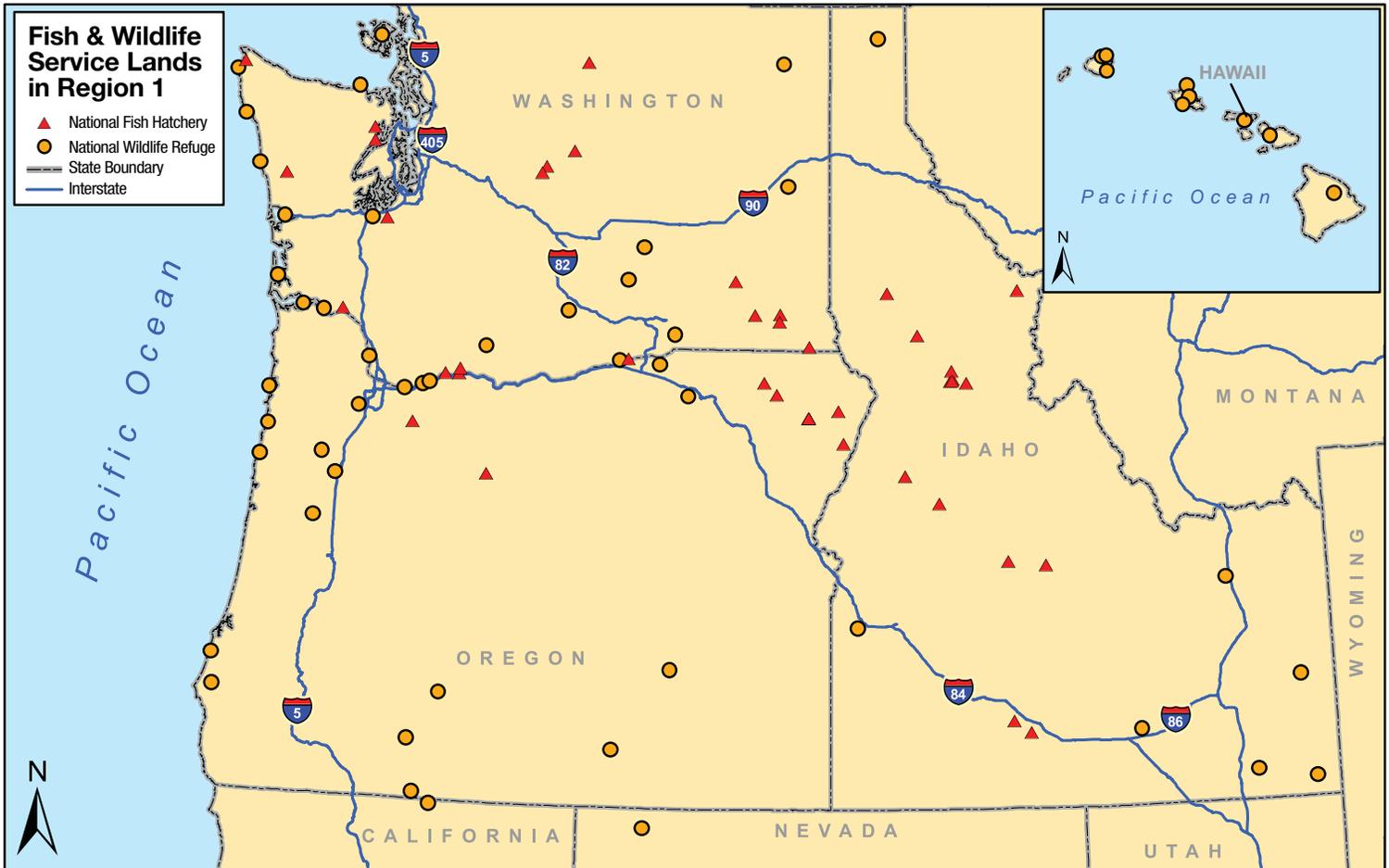
## Pioneering Planning Effort

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### L RTP Benefits to FWS

In addition to those mentioned above, the LRTP brings multiple benefits to the Service.

- Enables leaders to make informed decisions based on long term transportation and mission, goals.
- Provides the Service with a better picture of future transportation needs and information for discussion regarding transportation reauthorization.
- Provides a long-term view of transportation in relation to core operations and Service priorities.
- Enables leaders to direct funding to the most beneficial and highest priority transportation projects.
- Enables leaders to find alternative funding from Federal sources that are administered by states or Metropolitan Planning Organizations.
- Enables leaders to synchronize transportation planning with refuge and hatchery efforts such as refuge comprehensive conservation plans (CCPs), comprehensive hatchery management plans (CHMPs) and other regional planning efforts outside Service boundaries.
- Provides current data on multimodal transportation issues and needs across the region.
- Provides an opportunity for Region 1 and individual refuges and hatcheries to partner and discuss areas of mutual interest with the public and regional entities such as minimizing carbon footprint, alternative transportation systems, and transportation systems linkages.



# Refuge Roads Program

The Refuge Roads Program has been in existence since 1998, with approximately \$2 million allocated each year in Region 1. These funds can be applied to improvements on existing public use refuge roads, parking lots, and trails on national wildlife refuges. Across the region, the Service maintains over 500 road miles, 138 parking lots, and 158 trail miles. Through the Refuge Roads Program, the Service is working to improve public access to refuges and provide a better overall visitor experience for those who wish to experience wildlife-oriented outdoor recreation.



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In Region 1, the Refuge Roads Program already has an informal project selection process in place. However, this process lacks the formal structure or quantifiable evaluation criteria for project prioritization typically associated with long range transportation planning. This LRTP will improve project selection by integrating defensibility and justification for why certain projects are selected for advancement and implementation.

Beyond project selection, this LRTP will also make better use of refuge road funding by promoting partnerships with other agencies. Partnering will support reaching the Service’s goal of facilitating cooperation and identifying opportunities to work together to help conserve wildlife habitats.

# Fisheries Resources

The Region 1 Fisheries program is a unique program funded by resource management and reimbursable funds to mitigate for fish losses due to hydroelectric dams, provide subsistence and ceremonial salmon to Native American tribes, and provide sport and commercial fisheries in the Columbia River and its tributaries. Rivers in the Pacific Northwest support some of the largest populations of iconic fish such as steelhead and salmon that are declining in numbers. Responding to the great need for fish habitat conservation and restoration,

Region 1 supports a network of 37 field offices including 17 fish hatcheries and various other field stations.

Transportation plays a key role in mission critical activities for Fisheries, such as transporting fish from hatcheries to acclimation ponds and tributaries each spring for release to develop sustainable populations in specific waterways. However, the Fisheries program does not currently receive transportation specific funding as part of the current Surface Transportation Act. Instead, transportation improvements or new facilities must be constructed

from deferred maintenance funds that are already stretched thin.

By participating in the regional transportation planning process, the Fisheries program is demonstrating a strategic need for transportation infrastructure improvements by influencing policy and planning level decisions that will affect project prioritization once Federal funding becomes available. Currently, the Fisheries program has \$2.7 million in proposed mission critical transportation projects in need of funding.



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# Public Involvement

In order to meet its mission to connect people with natural resources at Region 1 wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries, it is essential for the Service to coordinate and develop partnerships with local, county, and state departments of transportation to leverage available funds to implement transportation projects.

Because wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries are accessed by local, county, and state road networks, it is important for the Service to coordinate with the corresponding jurisdictions to identify their transportation priorities and leverage funds where common interests exist. This is especially important for projects that could not be initiated or completed through sole source funding.

Public involvement strategies for this LRTP will include:

- Providing updates on planning milestones on the Service website
- Distributing planning update newsletters to select stakeholders at key milestones



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- Distributing e-blasts with update information on the planning process at key milestones
- Conducting outreach meetings with select stakeholders via face-to-face meetings and web-conferences
- Providing portions of the draft document for key stakeholder review and comment
- Collecting comments on the planning process and document via the Service website

Due to the nature of multi-agency agreements and the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of Region 1’s programs, stakeholder input will be sought to capitalize on institutional knowledge and expertise in order to achieve goals outlined in the Region’s LRTP. Stakeholders for this planning effort will include State Departments of Transportation, metropolitan and rural planning regions, and local Friends groups. The Service will also seek to make a larger number of interested groups aware that the planning activities are taking place.

**For more information contact:**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

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