



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Columbia National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update Number 1, June 2009



Northern Shovelers / All photographs courtesy of Chuck & Grace Bartlett Photography

Comprehensive Conservation Plan Begins at Columbia National Wildlife Refuge

Greetings! Columbia National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR) is initiating a process to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) that will guide how the refuge is managed over the next 15 years. This is the first in a series of planning updates we will distribute to keep you informed and invite your participation in the planning process.

Over the next two years, we

will have the opportunity to look at CNWR's management from fresh perspectives. The purposes of CNWR will remain the same as when it was established—to provide a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. CNWR will continue to protect sensitive species and provide wildlife oriented recreational opportunities for the public. Through the planning

process, however, we will review CNWR's wildlife, habitat, public use, and infrastructure needs and management. Your insights and observations are needed to provide us with a more complete and thoughtful process.

We invite you to share your ideas with us by attending an upcoming open house in Othello, or by submitting written comments (see page 4 for more information).

Public Open House

A public open house will be held June 16, 2009, in Othello (see page 4 for details).

Your participation is critical to the success of this effort – we want to hear from you!

Refuge Overview

CNWR was formed of fire and ice, floods and drought, volcanoes and dams. Located in central eastern Washington, near the town of Othello, CNWR is still a land of extremes. Natural waterways are augmented by irrigation seepage and return flows from the Bureau of Reclamation's Columbia Basin Project. All this water is a magnet for resident wildlife and creates an important stopover for migratory birds of all species—an oasis in the desert.

In addition to supporting thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds, CNWR is famous for the flocks of lesser sandhill cranes that migrate through

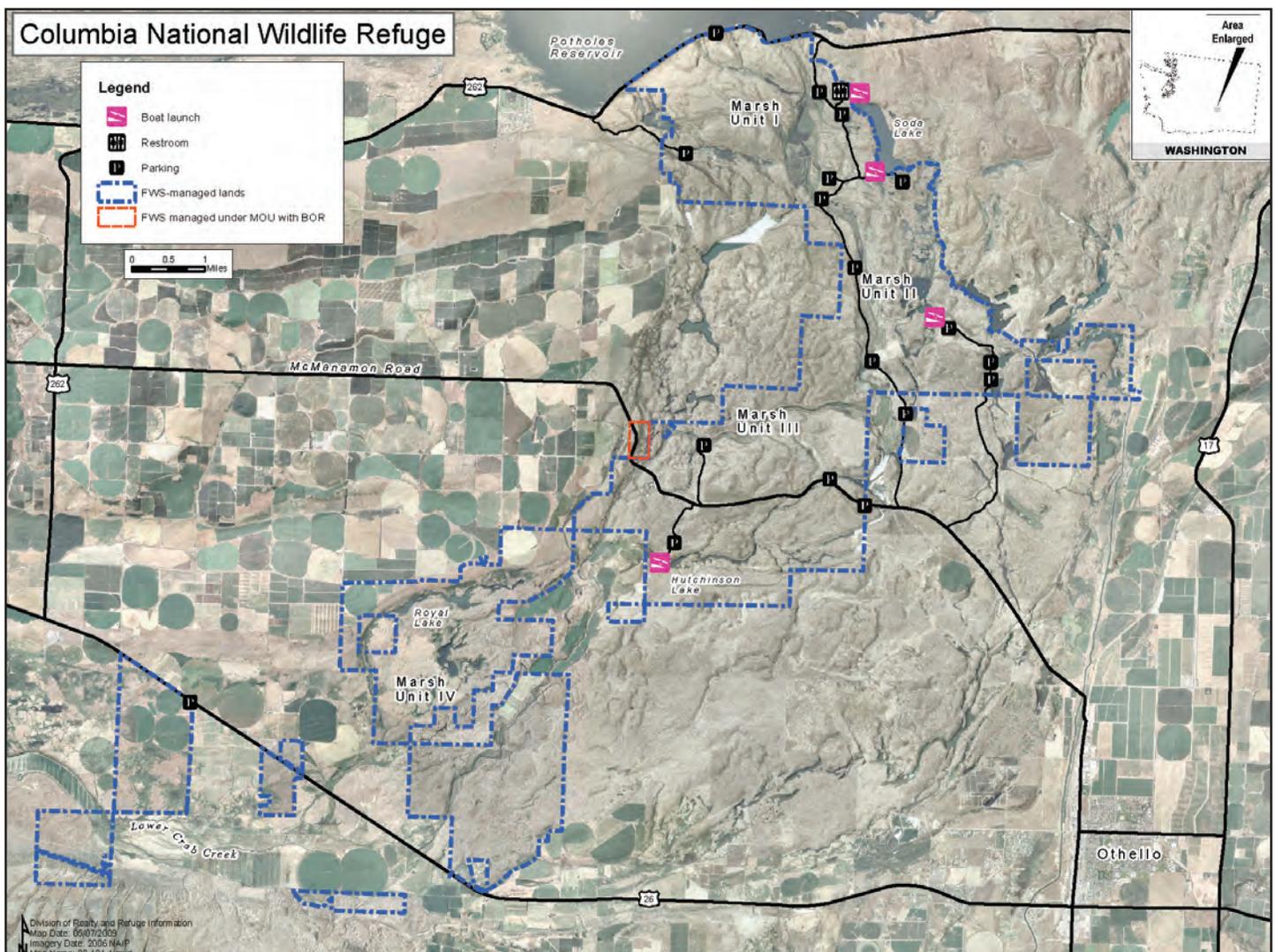
on their way to breeding grounds in northern Canada. The cranes are drawn by the water and by grain leftover in farmers' fields, as well as fields on CNWR. These cranes have spawned an annual Sandhill Crane Festival held each spring in Othello and attract visitors from across the country.

Apart from waterfowl, CNWR supports dozens of resident and migratory songbirds, a healthy mule deer population, game birds such as pheasants and quail, coyotes, beaver, dozens of rodent species, and a large variety of reptiles and amphibians. This diversity is the result of the different habitat types found at



*American Avocet (left)
Black-necked Stilt (right)*

CNWR—wetlands, open lakes, shrub-steppe, talus slopes, cliff faces, riverine, and shortgrass areas. All of this can be found on approximately 30,000 acres scattered among the farm fields made possible by the Columbia Basin Project.



Preliminary Issues that May Be Addressed

A range of alternative management approaches and their effects will be evaluated in the CCP and associated environmental effects analysis, including current management practices. The planning team has identified potential issues to consider during CCP development. We would like to hear your comments on these and any other topics or issues of interest to you.



Washington Ground Squirrel

Wildlife and Habitat Resources

- What are the management priorities for CNWR?
 - Should changes be made to wetland, upland, and/or riparian habitat management?
 - What actions should be considered to deal with invasive plant species?
 - What should be CNWR's role in protection and management of federally listed threatened and endangered, or other rare species?
 - Should we consider acquiring additional land?
 - What type of programs or projects should we consider in working with conservation partners?
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Visitor Services

- How can CNWR manage public access to ensure minimal impacts to wildlife?
 - What public access improvements are needed to support visitor use?
 - To what extent should camping be considered at CNWR?
 - What compatible public recreational activities should be continued, expanded, or changed at CNWR?
 - What activities should be considered for environmental education?
 - Should CNWR have a role in the Ice Age Flood Trail?
 - What considerations should be addressed between the waterfowl hunting program and other activities?
 - What is the quality of experience in public use programs (hunting, fishing, etc.)?
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What is a National Wildlife Refuge?

Columbia is one of more than 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for wildlife. National Wildlife Refuges, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are the only Federal public lands where the conservation of wildlife has priority over other land uses. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is: "To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."



American Goldfinch



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Columbia National Wildlife Refuge
64 Maple Street
Burbank, WA 99323

Change of address requested.

For more information, or to follow the planning process, please visit our web site at: www.fws.gov/columbiarefuge/

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How Do I Contact the Service or Provide Comments?

Your comments are important and will help shape the future of Columbia National Wildlife Refuge.

Mail Comments to:
Columbia NWR Comments
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
64 Maple Street
Burbank, WA 99323

Fax Comments to:
509/546-8303

Email Comment to:
mcriver@fws.gov

Submit Comments via the Web at: www.fws.gov/columbiarefuge/contact.html

You Are Invited to Our Public Open House

Date: June 16, 2009

Time: 5:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.

Location:
City of Othello Municipal Building
Council Room
500 E Main Street
Othello, WA 99344



*Black-tailed
Jackrabbit*

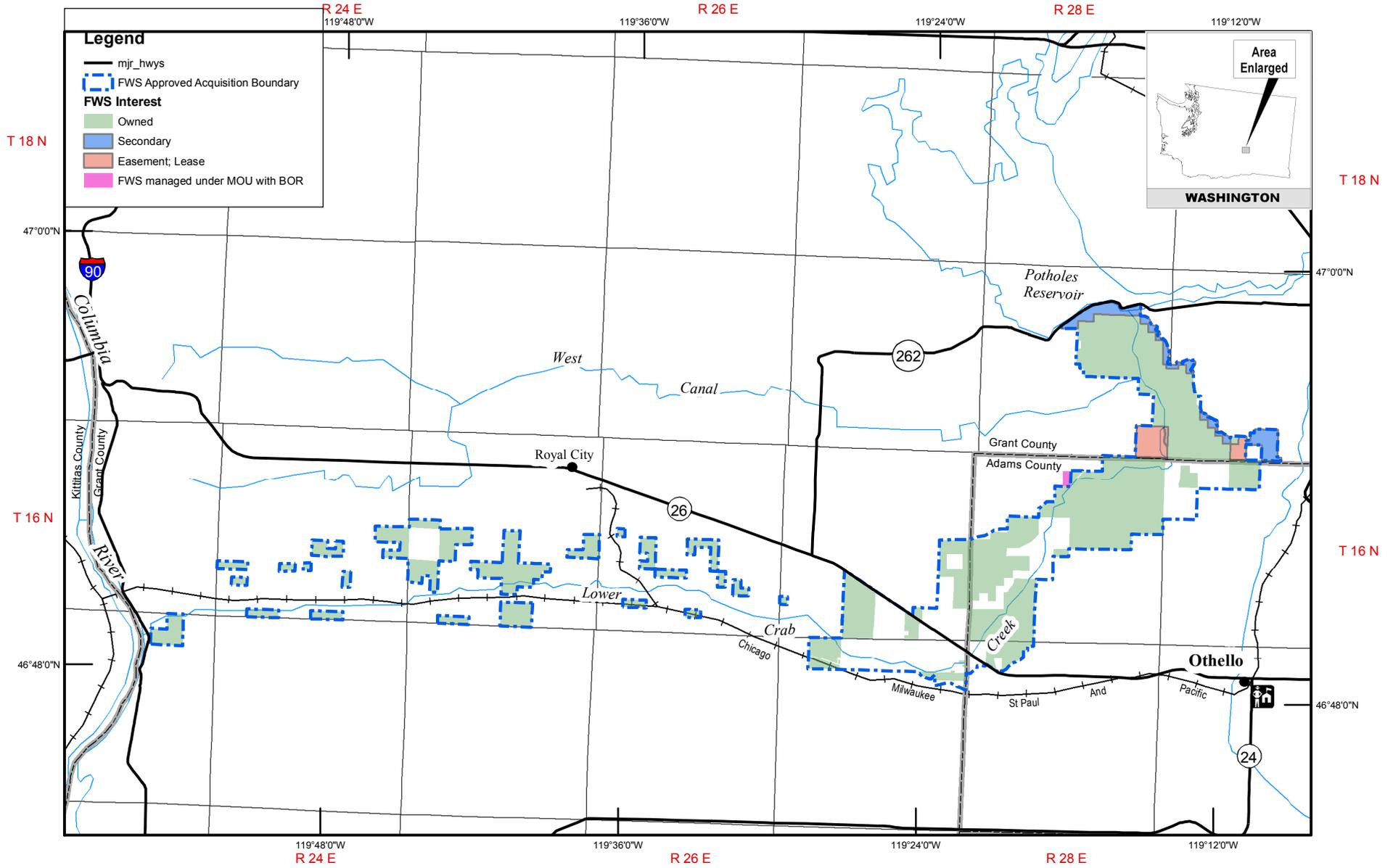


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Columbia National Wildlife Refuge

Adams and Grant Counties, Washington

Service Managed Lands with
Approved Acquisition Boundary



PRODUCED IN THE DIVISION OF REALTY & REFUGE INFORMATION
 PORTLAND, OREGON
 LAND STATUS CURRENT TO: 06/01/2008
 MAP DATE: 05/06/2009
 BASEMAP: N/A
 MERIDIAN: WILLAMETTE
 FILE: 09-121-3.MXD

