

**Dungeness NWR**  
**Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment**  
**Scoping Report**  
**January 3, 2012**

**Introduction**

This report summarizes initial outreach activities and public comments gathered for the preparation of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document for Dungeness NWR. The purposes of scoping are to notify the affected public of the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the CCP and encourage them to: comment on preliminary refuge vision and goals; help identify potential issues, management actions and concerns, significant problems or impacts; and opportunities or alternatives to resolve them (602 FW 3, 3.4(2b)). While public scoping will continue as we prepare a draft CCP/NEPA document, the outreach and public comments in this report represent initial CCP public scoping.

After public scoping the planning team reviewed and evaluated all potential issues, management concerns, and problems and the opportunities to resolve them that the planning team, other Service personnel, partners, and the public have identified in order to determine significant issues. The Service defines an issue as: “Any unsettled matter that requires a management decision, e.g., an initiative, opportunity, resource management problem, threat to the resources of the unit, conflict in uses, public concern, or the presence of an undesirable resource condition (602 FW 1 1.6 K).” Significant issues typically are those that are: within our jurisdiction, suggest different actions or alternatives, and will influence our decision (602 FW 3 sec. 3.4(3b)). The final section of this scoping report documents the selection of major issues to be addressed in the CCP.

**Scoping Efforts**

Public involvement strategies included face-to-face meetings with community organizations, local, state and federal agencies, elected officials (or their aides), tribal governments, and Refuge users. For the broader public, the planning team provided newsletters intended to inform, invite discussion and solicit feedback. The Refuge also maintains a website where CCP information can be found and where the public can print out comment forms or submit emails during the scoping phase. Below is a brief summary of the events, meetings, and outreach tools that were used in our scoping public involvement efforts.

***Meetings with Congressional Representatives and Senators or their Aides:***

- Judith Morris, legislative aide for Congressman Norm Dicks, December 12, 2011.

***Meetings with Federal Agency Representatives:***

- Karen Gustin, Superintendent Olympic National Park, December 12, 2011.

***Meetings with Tribal Representatives:***

- Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, December 8, 2011. 6 participants.

***Meetings with Non-government Organizations:***

- Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, October 31, 2011. 9 participants.

**Workshops / Field Review:**

- February 7-8, 2011. Wildlife and Habitat Management Field Review on Refuge. 11 participants, including representatives from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Forest Service, and University of Washington.

**Press Coverage:**

- Fall 2011. Refuge staff sent a news release to local media and made follow up contacts. Various notices of CCP scoping period were printed in the Peninsula Daily News, News Tribune, Bellingham Herald, and Port Angeles Daily News.

**Planning Updates:**

- October 2011. Hardcopies of Planning Update 1 mailed to approximately 320 persons, organizations, and officials on the mailing list and additional updates were hand delivered to R1 FWS staff. Throughout scoping, Planning Update 1 was provided to refuge office visitors and partners and mailed to interested parties. Planning Update 1 included background information on the Refuge, refuge purposes, preliminary issues, vision, goals, land status map, and a mail-in comment form with the following questions:
  - What do you see as the primary issues that need to be addressed in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan?
  - What are your thoughts on the visions and goals for Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge?
  - Do you have additional comments at this time?

**Other Tools:**

- November 2011. Website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/main/docs/WA/Dungeness/> featuring CCP information and scoping forms.

**Federal Register Notices:**

- October 4, 2011. *Federal Register* published Notice of Intent to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment, and included background information on the Refuge and preliminary issues with request for scoping comments.

## Summary of Responses

Comments were received via email, letters, and planning update forms. Ten contacts provided comments. The majority of comments were received from Washington; however comments were received from as far away as Colorado and Washington D.C. Comments fell into 17 themes and 37 subthemes; the number of comments received within each theme/subtheme combination is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of comments received within each theme/subtheme combination.

| Theme                                    | Subtheme   |
|--|--|
| <b>Planning Process</b>                  |  |
| Planning Process                         | General Planning Process                                   |
|  | Interested in Participating and/or Being Informed          |
| <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>   |  |
| Cultural Resources                       | Preserve Historic Structures/Sites                         |
| <b>Wildlife Dependent Recreation</b>     |  |
| Environmental Education/Interpretation   | General Environmental Education/Interpretation Suggestions |
| Hunting                                  | Anti-Hunting   |
| Wildlife Observation/Photography         | General Wildlife Observation/Photography                   |
| <b>Other Recreational Topics</b>         |  |
| Horseback Riding                         | Prohibit Horses on the Refuge                              |
|  | Supports Existing Use Area                                 |
| Jogging                                  | Prohibit Jogging on the Refuge                             |
|  | Supports Existing Use Area                                 |
|  | Supports Modified Use Area                                 |
| Law Enforcement                          | General Law Enforcement                                    |
|  | Regulatory Signs   |
| Public Access, Roads, and Transportation | Access Designations (Open/Closed)                          |
|  | General Access   |
|  | Group Size   |
| Visitor Experience                       | Aesthetic/Spiritual Value of Nature                        |
| Visitor Facilities                       | General Visitor Facilities                                 |
|  | Signage  |
| <b>Wildlife and Habitat Management</b>   |  |
| Wildlife/Habitat Management              | Fire Ecology and Management                                |
|  | Forest Management  |
|  | Freshwater Wetland Management                              |
|  | Invasive/Non-native Species                                |

| Theme                                     | Subtheme  |
|---|---|
| Wildlife/Habitat Management               | Inventory, Monitoring, Research, and Assessments              |
|   | Native Species Specific                                       |
|   | Tidal Wetland/Eelgrass Bed Management                         |
|   | Wildlife/Habitat Protection                                   |
| <b>Other</b>                              |   |
| Land Acquisition and Inholding Management | General Land Acquisition and Inholding Management             |
| Off-refuge Issues                         | General Off-refuge Issues                                     |
| Partnerships                              | General Partnerships  |
| Refuge Administration                     | Staff and Volunteers  |
| Threats to Refuge Resources               | Active Shoreline Erosion Control and Bank Protection Measures |
|   | Climate Change  |
|   | Human Disturbances to Wildlife                                |
|   | Marine Debris and Contaminants                                |
|   | Spit and Bluff Erosion  |
|   | Water Quantity  |

### **Comment Content Summaries**

Themes that received comments are summarized below, with subthemes included in the applicable theme. Each bullet represents one or more individual comments.

#### ***Planning Process***

- Interview, request comment, or otherwise involve the National Marine Sanctuary’s Educational Committee in the planning process.
- Consider climate change in several sections of the CCP including: refuge vision statement; legal and policy guidance; planning issues; geographic/ecosystem setting; refuge resources; and in the goals, objectives, and strategies related to inventory and monitoring, environmental threats, habitat connectivity, and environmental education.
- General support expressed for the preliminary issues, concerns, opportunities, and goals identified in Planning Update 1.

#### ***Cultural Resources***

- Identify and protect historic sites such as the signal tower station on Graveyard Spit and Tribal burial sites.

#### ***Environmental Education/Interpretation***

- Comments included the following: increasing the amount of interpretation, docent talks, and interpretive programs focused on Refuge natural history and wildlife; increasing interpretive materials that differentiate the Refuge from recreational beaches or state parks; including climate change information in environmental education and interpretive programs; encouraging

additional collaboration with the Refuge Friends group to enhance the Refuge's education programs; and adding plant identification signs along Refuge trails.

### ***Hunting***

- Support for current prohibition on hunting at the refuge.

### ***Wildlife Observation/Photography***

- Support for "low-impact recreation, such as bird watching and hiking."

### ***Horseback Riding***

- Does not favor horses on the refuge.
- Enjoys being out in nature on horseback.
- Support for the current horseback riding policy and use areas with no further changes.

### ***Jogging***

- "Higher-impact recreation, such as jogging" on the refuge is discouraged.
- Support for the current jogging policy and use areas with no further changes.
- Supports for jogging on the trails through the forested areas and on the beach heading west but not at all on Dungeness Spit (i.e., the elimination of jogging on the first 0.5 miles).

### ***Law Enforcement***

- Support for improved enforcement of refuge regulations, including more patrols and ticketing.
- Volunteers should be regularly stationed to improve regulations compliance.
- Additional signage at the entrance that explains refuge regulations and purposes is needed.

### ***Public Access, Roads and Transportation***

- Continue the current access designations with no changes.
- Continue allowing access to the closed areas of the refuge, including the Dawley Unit, for volunteer surveys.
- Support for Dawley Unit site visits.
- Support for a 10 person maximum group size limit on the Dungeness Unit.

### ***Visitor Experience***

- Enjoys a feeling of aesthetic or spiritual visitor experience at the Refuge, particularly via horseback riding.

### ***Visitor Facilities***

- Support for a porta-potty within the first 0.25 miles of the spit.
- Support for more signage within the first 0.25 miles of the spit.

### ***Fire Ecology and Management***

- The use of fire suppression within the forested units is discouraged.

### ***Forest Management***

- Support for the management of the forested units towards old growth characteristics.
- Within the time frame of the CCP, it "may not be practicable to expect resulting habitat for species dependent on old growth."

- Exercise caution against actively managing refuge lands towards old growth characteristics because: “spotted owls need a much larger, intact forest base and marbled murrelets do not generally nest immediately adjacent to saltwater.”

#### ***Freshwater Wetland Management***

- The Dawley Unit impoundment should not be managed as a deep water pond. Instead, maintain wetland characteristics for native amphibians (e.g., fluctuating water levels).

#### ***Invasive/Non-native Species***

- Support for invasive species management.

#### ***Inventory, Monitoring, Research, and Assessments***

- Support for a robust monitoring program at the Refuge.
- Continue or expand collaboration with partners such as the National Marine Sanctuary in Port Angeles, Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS).
- Continue current monitoring programs such as the green crab survey, black brant survey, mid-winter waterfowl survey, Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) seabird survey, Backyard Bird Count, Christmas Bird Count, Project Feeder Watch, and OPAS May bird census.
- Survey data should be publicly released and accessible.
- Other identified inventory, monitoring, research, or assessment needs mentioned included: eelgrass and kelp bed delineation and measurement; lichen research in Graveyard Spit; and climate change related variables and trends.

#### ***Native Species Specific***

- Partner with the University of Washington to create a seed bank.
- Continue to manage Graveyard Spit as a Research Natural Area and monitor for native vegetation and invasive species.

#### ***Tidal Wetland/Eelgrass Bed Management***

- Support for active eelgrass management.
- Support for active management of tidelands in Dungeness Bay, including the continued elimination of uses that do not promote Refuge purposes.

#### ***Wildlife/Habitat Protection***

- Protect eelgrass and mudflats particularly for use by brant and shorebirds.
- Protect upland/shoreline roosting and nesting areas for migratory birds and haulout areas for pinnipeds.
- Protect dune/strand habitat.

#### ***Land Acquisition and Inholding Management***

- The USFWS should engage in additional acquisition of tidelands, shorelines, and adjacent wetlands in Dungeness Bay.
- The CCP should outline a strategy for improving habitat connectivity, maximizing ecosystem resiliency to climate change, and engaging in landscape-level conservation partnerships to

ensure that climate change adaptation actions are developed and implemented at the appropriate scale.

### ***Off-refuge Issues***

- Off-refuge issues mentioned in the comments included: maintaining sport recreation access to the Dungeness NWR (the commenter may have confused the NWR with the county park); supporting Clallam County's plan to prohibit the release and hunting of introduced Ring Necked Pheasants in the Dungeness Recreation Area; and increased USFWS engagement in issues such as Nippon's planned biomass plant.

### ***Partnerships***

- Partner with the Port Townsend Marine Science Center and the Puget Sound Partnership Strait Action Area.

### ***Refuge Administration***

- Add an Education Coordinator position to Refuge staff.
- Volunteers do good outreach but have limited capacity to reach all visitors.

### ***Active Shoreline Erosion Control and Bank Protection Measures***

- Opposed to active shoreline erosion control and bank protection measures such as groins, rip-rap, walls, barriers, or any other artificial features.

### ***Climate Change***

- The Refuge will be affected by climate change impacts, particularly sea level rise.
- Manage for climate change impacts by participating in monitoring and research.

### ***Human Disturbance to Wildlife***

- Refuge resources are vulnerable to human disturbance.
- Support for current management strategies intended to address human disturbance to wildlife.

### ***Marine Debris and Contaminants***

- Address the vulnerability of Refuge resources to contaminants and working with partners to ensure an adequate response.
- Partner with the Northwest Straits Commission, industry and oil spill prevention and response teams, other state and federal agencies, and the Coastal Currents Monitoring program.

### ***Spit and Bluff Erosion***

- Work with Clallam County to reduce or delay cliff erosion to preserve existing trails, perhaps through vegetation planting.
- Identify areas of the spit most susceptible to breaching and studying the influence of large woody debris on spit stability.

### ***Water Quantity***

- Inventory Refuge water rights and their quantity and quality, document the types and uses of the rights, determine whether those rights are sufficient to meet Refuge purposes, and describe threats to water quantity and quality within the CCP.

## Management Issues to be Addressed in the CCP/EA

Major issues within the scope of the CCP/EA, and to be addressed in the CCP/EA, are listed below:

- Forest Habitats: Should we actively manage forested habitats of the Dawley Unit for old growth characteristics and if so how should they be managed? How should the road into the Dawley property be managed to provide access while minimizing erosion potential? What management actions should be considered for the freshwater impoundments on the Dawley Unit?
- Eelgrass beds: Should eelgrass beds within the refuge be surveyed regularly? Is there a need to enhance eelgrass beds on the Refuge? Is there anything the Service can do to mitigate anticipated impacts to eelgrass beds from climate change?
- Marine debris and derelict fishing gear: What role can the Service play in reducing the presence of marine debris and derelict fishing gear from the refuge and adjacent marine areas?
- Oil spills and other contaminants: What can the Service do to reduce the risk of oil and other contaminant spills? What can be done about local contaminants affecting refuge resources (i.e. rogue creosote logs)?
- Endangered Species: Are there any listed salmon stocks within the reach of Dean Creek on the refuge? If so, are there any considerations for salmon habitat enhancement that should be considered (e.g. log jams, large woody debris, bank vegetation, road decommissioning etc.)?
- Invasive Species: What invasive species should be priority species for control or monitoring to protect existing wildlife and habitat from damaging effects of non-natives? What can the Service do to prevent the introduction and dispersal of invasive plants and animals and facilitate their removal from the Refuge?
- Climate change: What if anything should the Service do about anticipated impact of sea level rise? What aspects of climate change should be studied at the Refuge, and how can this information be incorporated into wildlife and habitat management on the Refuge? Should there be changes to the public use program if the spit is breached or the size reduced?
- Research and Monitoring: What research or monitoring studies would assist in answering refuge management questions? How can impacts to wildlife and habitats from research or monitoring activities be minimized? What research or studies if any, should be encouraged for Graveyard Spit Research Natural Area?
- Human-caused wildlife disturbance: How do we reduce the incidences of human-caused wildlife disturbance on and adjacent to the Refuge? How do we improve compliance with refuge regulations including: closed areas and times, boat landing restrictions, shoreline buffers, and no pets; which serve to minimize wildlife disturbance. How can we discourage aircraft from flying low over the refuge?
- Visitor orientation: How do we help visitors understand they are on a National Wildlife Refuge (not a County recreation area), what that is, and why it is important and different from other public lands, and that Dungeness NWR is one refuge in the Washington Maritime NWR Complex? How can we help visitors understand what activities are appropriate for a wildlife refuge and which areas are, and aren't open to visitation. How can we better convey that entrance fee dollars fund the public use program (e.g. trails, restrooms, education and interpretation)? How do we help visitors understand the fee structure, what passes are valid, and where to purchase passes? How do we enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to experience refuge resources?
- Wildlife-dependent uses: How do we educate Refuge visitors and the community about the Refuge and the natural and cultural resources of the Salish Sea? How do we help visitors understand that Dungeness NWR is just one part of a larger flyway for migrating species? How

can we help visitors understand and appreciate Dungeness spit's unique geology which results in a culturally important and biologically rich site? How can we enhance visitor opportunities to observe wildlife? How can we enhance visitor's cultural appreciation for and experience of the New Dungeness Light Station?

- Non-Wildlife dependent uses: Are all existing non-wildlife dependent uses appropriate and compatible with refuge purposes and the refuge system mission (e.g. jogging)?
- Community outreach: How can we enhance our community outreach efforts to advance Salish Sea conservation? How can we better utilize partnerships to achieve Refuge and regional conservation and education goals?