

News Release



Pacific Region

Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge

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12-004

www.fws.gov/washingtonmaritime/dungeness

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Public Comment Period Extended for Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge Draft Conservation Plan *Comments accepted until January 28, 2013*

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is extending the public comment period until January 28, 2013 to give the public more time to review and comment on the Dungeness Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (draft plan).

“Feedback from the public is important to us. The planning process is a way for the Service and the public to evaluate management goals and strategies that will provide opportunities for the public to safely enjoy wildlife-dependent recreation at the Refuge while ensuring that wildlife and habitat conservation comes first,” said Kevin Ryan, Project Leader of the Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

The draft plan was developed to provide scientifically grounded guidance for improving the Refuge’s habitats for the long-term conservation of migratory birds and native plants and animals. Three alternatives for management over the next 15 years were analyzed. The Service’s preferred alternative includes more active habitat management projects, such as invasive species removal; projects in forests to manage for old growth characteristics, remove unneeded roads, and increase species diversity; enhancement of freshwater impoundment on the Dawley Unit; and research studies that answer refuge management questions.

Public uses currently occurring on the Refuge were evaluated as to their impacts on wildlife, public safety, user conflicts, and feasibility of management within available budget and staff. Proposed public use changes include new limits on boat landing hours. The existing uses of jogging and horseback riding were evaluated in accordance with the Appropriateness Policy (<http://www.fws.gov/policy/603fw1.html>) and the draft analysis has found that jogging is not appropriate due to wildlife disturbance and therefore would no longer be allowed. The Service has also preliminarily determined that horseback riding should no longer be allowed due to safety concerns and user conflicts. There would be more emphasis on enhancing the public’s understanding and appreciation of the refuge’s natural and cultural resources through both on- and off-refuge interpretation and education programs. There would also be more emphasis on working with existing partners and developing new partnerships to accomplish objectives.

The full draft plan and the latest planning update may be accessed online at <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning>.

Printed copies are available for review at the following libraries: North Olympic Library System (Port Angeles Public Library and Sequim Public Library), Port Townsend Public Library, Jefferson County Central Library, University of Washington Library, Washington State University Library, Western Washington University Library, Peninsula College Library, and Washington State Library. Printed or CD-ROM copies can be requested from the Refuge Office at (360) 457-8451.

Comments on the draft plan should be mailed, faxed or e-mailed by January 28, 2013, to: Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 715 Holgerson Road, Sequim, WA 98382; fax number (360) 457-9778; or e-mail FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov. Please include Dungeness in the e-mail subject line. Public comments will be addressed in the final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, scheduled to be completed in winter 2013. The final plan will guide the Refuge's management for 15 years, and actions will be implemented as funding becomes available.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is the world's premiere system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife and plants. Since President Theodore Roosevelt designated Florida's Pelican Island as the first wildlife refuge in 1903, the System has grown to more than 96 million acres, 548 refuges and 37 wetland management districts nationwide.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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