



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Protection Island and San Juan Islands National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update 2, August 2008

Thanks for Participating!

We thank you for your interest in the Protection Island and San Juan Islands National Wildlife Refuges located on Washington's north coast, in Jefferson, Island, San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), that when completed, will guide the refuges' management for 15 years.

We received a large volume of comments between October 2007 and March 2008 at 22 scoping and outreach meetings with State, Federal, and county agencies; and non-government and research organizations. We also received 28 letters, comment forms, e-mails, and phone calls during this time period. The Planning Team reviewed and categorized comments under the 8 planning issues described below. A detailed scoping report is available at <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning>.

Your Comments Covered Many Issues

Threats to Refuge Resources: Many people expressed concern about threats which impact refuge wildlife and habitats and urged the Service to address them. Human-caused disturbance to wildlife; deer impacts to seabird nesting habitat on Protection Island; invasive species; climate change effects to refuge environments; as well as oil spills, other contaminants,

and marine debris were the most frequently mentioned threats. Other threats that were mentioned included Canada geese impacts to native plant communities; fisheries bycatch of seabirds and marine mammals; and tidal energy development.

Refuge Buffers and Nearshore Management: Many people offered support and suggestions for maintaining and/or establishing refuge buffers as a means of

preventing disturbance to refuge wildlife and protecting important marine resources. A variety of nearshore management tools, including withdrawals, leases, aquatic reserves, marine protected areas, and marine stewardship areas, were suggested to provide refuge buffers. Others questioned what refuge buffers would accomplish, how they would impact recreational activities, or if they would be enforceable.

continued on next page



Rhinoceros auklet / USFWS



Deer are trampling fragile habitat used by burrowing seabirds / USFWS



Matia Island / USFWS



Turn Island / USFWS

Habitat Restoration: A number of people provided habitat restoration suggestions including restoration of former freshwater/brackish wetland and/or shoreline areas of Protection Island; restoring native plant communities; providing rare plant refugia; or habitat manipulation and introduction of rare or endangered butterflies.

Wildlife Management: The importance of these two refuges to nesting seabirds, especially rhinoceros auklets, tufted puffins, pigeon guillemots, pelagic cormorants, and glaucous winged-gulls; and to marine mammals including elephant and harbor seals and Steller sea lions, was mentioned repeatedly.

Other species that were mentioned include harlequin ducks, long-tailed ducks, and marbled murrelets. Fish and marine invertebrates were also mentioned because they are found adjacent to refuge islands and are important food sources for seabirds and marine mammals.

Wilderness Management and Refuge Signs: There was support for having signs on wilderness islands asking boaters to stay away, to give wildlife some “breathing room” and to reduce the incidences of trespassing. One respondent requested the Service assess current and potential future wilderness designations. Another encouraged increased education about wilderness islands and their management purposes.

Research: There was a lot of support for conducting research studies on or adjacent to the refuges; however multiple concerns were raised that proposed research be evaluated carefully and determined to be worth the potential disturbance to wildlife. A few people recommended as little research as possible. A number of suggestions were made for

Public Uses: There was a lot of support for continuing to prohibit public access to Protection Island and San Juan Islands Refuges’ units that are currently closed. Others wanted to see some limited increase in visitation to allow education, observation, and enjoyment of refuge wildlife and plants. Instances of people trespassing and camping on closed refuge islands were mentioned. One respondent asked if kayakers could be allowed to stop and rest on Smith Island while crossing the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Refuge Administration: There was both support for and concerns regarding extending Protection Island NWR management to include the Zella Schultz Seabird Sanctuary. There was a request to provide at least one refuge staff position for the San Juan Islands NWR to conduct island patrols and outreach, and there were many suggestions for partnerships. There was support for continuing to have a refuge caretaker on Protection Island. Suggestions to remove structures to improve habitat conditions on both refuges, and opportunities to upgrade facilities on Protection Island to enhance management were identified.



A young wildlife enthusiast enjoying refuge wildlife / USFWS



Bull elephant seal near Protection Island / USFWS

If you have any additional comments, send them to me as soon as possible.

Thank You,
Kevin Ryan

Project Leader
Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex
33 S. Barr Road
Port Angeles, WA 98362
(360) 457-8451 (360) 457-9778 fax

Or send me an email: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
Please include Protection Island and San Juan Islands Refuges in the subject line of the message.

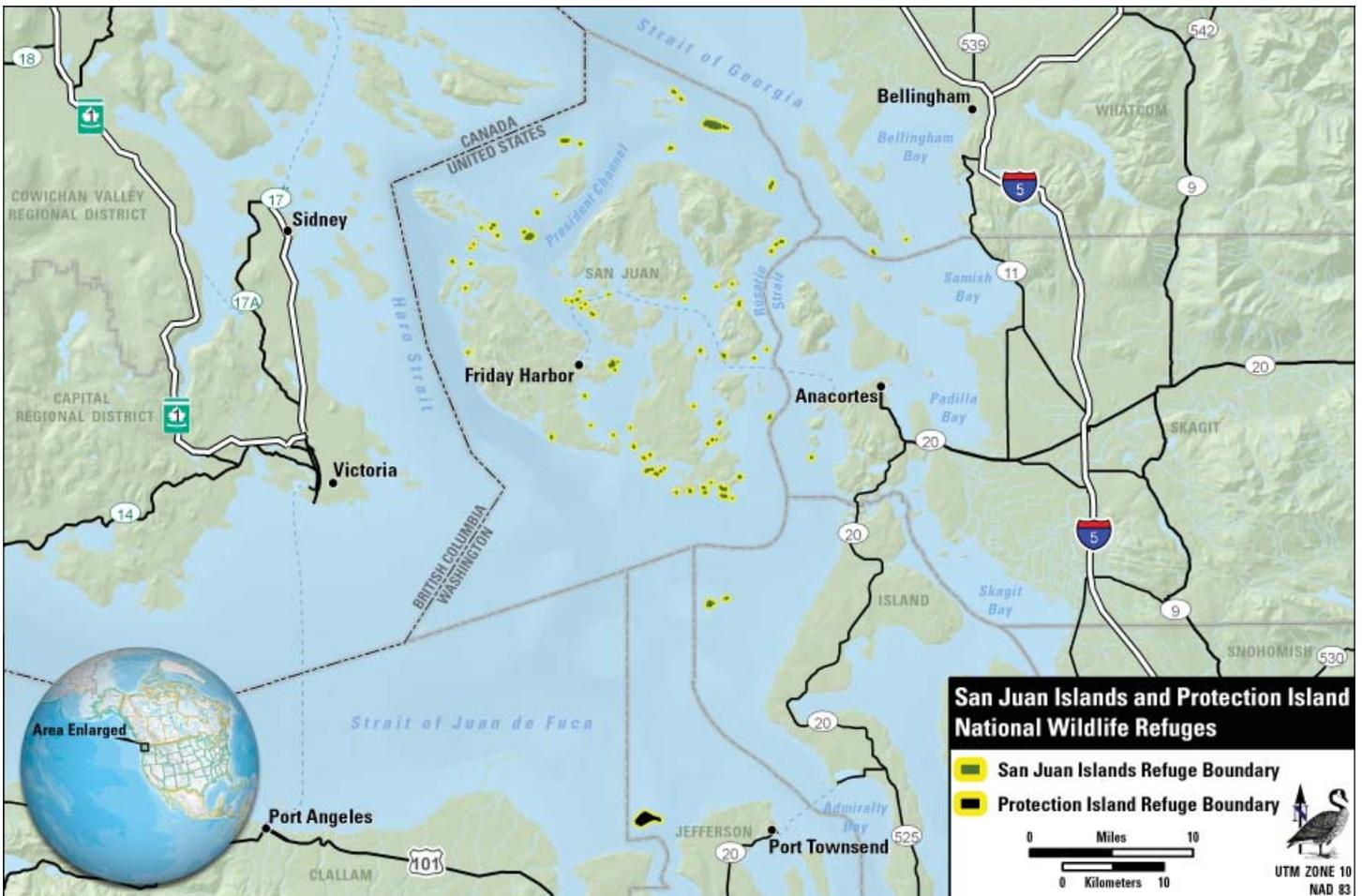


Table 1. Summary of Current and Potential Management (PI = Protection Island Refuge and SJ = San Juan Islands Refuge)

Key Themes/Issues	Current Management	Other Potential Management Concepts and Strategies
THREATS TO REFUGE RESOURCES		
Refuge signs to reduce human-caused wildlife disturbance	Standard text and size (11"x 14") refuge boundary/closure signs used on most islands. Large (5'x 5') "stay away 200 yards" signs on ~15 islands.	Increase size and improve boundary/closure signs' text on most islands. Use larger version on some islands. Very large "stay away 200 yds" signs on select islands (5-10).
Boater education to reduce human-caused wildlife disturbance	PI- Direct boater education. SJ- Poster at marinas and limited coordination with partners to provide boater education on human-caused disturbance to wildlife.	PI - Continue direct boater education. SJ- Increase educational materials, working with partners, and direct contacts with boaters to improve education regarding human-caused disturbance to wildlife.
Contaminant reduction and spill preparedness	Refuge staff participates in oil spill prevention and preparedness planning and activities in the vicinity of PI and attend hazmat, shoreline assessment, and incident command training.	Same as current management plus participate in oil spill prevention and preparedness planning and activities in the vicinity of SJ. Replace creosote pilings on PI and work with others to conduct regular rogue creosote log removal projects on PI and SJ.
Marine debris removal	Infrequent and opportunistic shoreline clean-up activities with volunteers and partners.	Regularly work with partners and volunteers to conduct yearly shoreline clean up activities on all refuge islands.
Invasive plant and animal control	Survey for invasive species and use mechanical removal as appropriate.	Survey for invasive species and use appropriate integrated pest management control strategies including prescribed burning. Monitor for and if necessary remove rats, raccoons, and rabbits.
Deer removal from PI to stop rhinoceros auklet burrow damage.	No deer control actions occurring on the refuges.	Remove deer from PI. Possible techniques include: Capture and translocate deer. Conduct one-time (plus as-needed) PI deer hunt to remove deer. Government cull and other techniques if needed to eliminate all deer.
ADJACENT AQUATIC LANDS (REFUGE BUFFERS)		
FWS "stay away" from refuge islands advisory	200 yards around PI and all SJ islands except Turn and Matia Islands.	Same as current management or 200 yards around PI, Smith and select SJ islands and 100 yards around all other SJ islands
Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) withdrawal from conflicting uses	Extends 600 feet from extreme low tide on Protection Island.	Add 600 ft (or 200 yards) withdrawal from mean high tide around all SJ units. If possible include cooperative agreement for Service to be manager. Or, same as current management plus 200 yards from mean high tide for Smith/Minor Islands, Bird Rocks, Williamson Rocks, and Viti; and 100 yards from mean high tide around all other SJ units.
WDNR conservation lease (\$)	none	200 yards from mean high tide around PI and all SJ units or 200 yards from mean high tide around PI, Smith/Minor Islands, Bird/William-son Rocks, and Viti. 100 yards from mean high tide around all other SJ units.
WDNR aquatic reserves	The Service supports aquatic reserve proposals for PI and Smith/Minor Islands.	Same as current management plus FWS to propose aquatic reserves for Bird Rocks (San Juan Co.); and Williamson Rocks (Skagit Co.), and Viti Rocks (Whatcom Co).
HABITAT RESTORATION		
Rhinoceros auklet nesting habitat	None	Improve vegetation and other habitat conditions on up to 20 acres to improve nesting success.
Spits	structures, debris, and contaminants removed	Restore up to 15 acres on PI, Smith, and Minor Islands.
Wetlands	structures, debris, and contaminants removed	If necessary restore hydrological processes at PI and Smith. If feasible restore part of historic wetland on PI.
Grassland/savanna	structures, debris, and contaminants removed	Restore 20- 60 acres on PI and 10- 20 or more acres on SJ. Increase native species composition to benefit a variety of wildlife.
RESEARCH		
Wildlife and Habitats	Long-term monitoring of rhinoceros auklets, pigeon guillemots, glaucous-winged gulls, and marine mammals. Glaucous-winged gull behavior studies.	Continue long-term monitoring of seabirds and marine mammals under current management plus baseline inventory of plants and wildlife. Support and monitoring of habitat restoration projects and other topics that answer refuge management questions.
Cultural Resources Research Priorities	Cultural resource surveys of project specific locations.	Current management plus complete prioritized systematic surveys of all refuge lands and resurvey known sites at least every 5 years.
Social Research Priorities	None	Studies measuring the public awareness and appreciation of the refuges and their resources.
Researchers facilities on PI	2 old buildings in separate locations.	Relocate and replace with a single bunkhouse to serve all researchers.
ON-REFUGE VISITOR SERVICES AND FACILITIES		
Access to PI	No public access.	
Access to SJ	Year-round 24 hours/day public access to Turn and Matia Islands. All other refuge areas closed.	Year- round, day-use only to Turn and Matia Islands. Allow night access to Matia only Allow night access to Turn and/or Matia for human-powered boaters only
Shoreline access locations on Turn and Matia Islands	Turn - West and SW beaches Matia - Rolfe Cove only, all other beaches closed.	Open additional pocket beaches on Matia
Pets	Turn - pets allowed on ≤ 8 ft leash Matia - pets allowed on ≤ 8 ft leash within 5-acre picnic/ campground area only.	No pets allowed on refuge lands.
Seasonal dock	Dock on Matia Island at Rolfe Cove April – Oct.	Seasonal dock open or closed at night Eliminate seasonal dock
Camping	Turn - 13 campsites Matia - 6 campsites	Phase out camping on both Turn and Matia. Allow camping on Matia but not Turn Allow camping on both Matia and Turn but with more associated interpretation. Allow day use for motor boats but camping for human-powered boats only
Campfires	Matia - Liquid fuel camp stoves only. Turn - Charcoal fires allowed in fire rings with grills. No wood collecting on Turn and Matia.	Liquid fuel camp stoves only on both Turn and Matia. Remove rings with grills from Turn. No wood collecting on Turn and Matia.
Trails	Turn - 0.9 mi loop trail around perimeter. Matia - 1.2 mi loop trail.	Reevaluate trail locations for impacts to cultural resources and small meadow. Reroute if necessary but continue to provide a loop trail on both Turn and Matia Islands.
Wildlife Observation, photography, and interpretation	Unstructured opportunities. No interpretive signs. Infrequent interpretive walks conducted.	Wildlife and plant lists provided for Turn and Matia Islands. Design and install signs at Turn and Matia. Local experts and/or trained volunteers provide short "ranger" programs during busy summer weekends. Incorporate natural and cultural resources into interpretive products and programs.
Environmental Education – scientific studies	College students given opportunities to do scientific studies on PI and SJ.	At least 3 college students/5 years given opportunities to do scientific studies on PI and SJ.
Environmental Education – stewardship projects	PI - 1 per year SJ - <1 per year	PI - 1+ projects per year SJ - 1+ projects per year
Commercial outfitters	Allowed for camping and day-use on Turn and Matia with State Parks special use permit.	Allowed for day-use only on Turn and Matia with special use permit. Allowed for day-use and camping on Matia and/or Turn with special use permit.
Law enforcement for public safety/resource protection	State Parks enforces regulations on Turn Island and 5 acres of Matia Island.	State Parks and/or Service staff members enforce refuge regulations and seek partners for assistance.
OFF-REFUGE VISITOR SERVICES		
Wildlife Observation and photography	Minimal staff coordination with Port Townsend Marina Science Center (PI) and SoundWatch (SJ) to facilitate wildlife observation and minimize human-caused wildlife disturbance.	Refuge staff and volunteers facilitate and educate many individuals, organizations, and ecotourism businesses to enhance wildlife observation and appreciation of refuge wildlife and minimize human-caused wildlife disturbance.
Natural and Cultural Resource Interpretation	PI - 1 panel at John Wayne Marina PI and SJ – few interpretive activities.	PI – 1 more panel (Port Townsend area) and 2 additional interpretive venues SJ – Panels at 5 marina locations to be determined and 2 additional interpretive venues.
Environmental Education materials	SJ - Refuge Poster at marinas	Prepare natural and cultural resource educational materials for use by local teachers. Provide information at local community events, tourist agencies, etc.

Refuge Management Questions

Some of the important refuge management questions you asked in your comments, with background information, follows. Options for addressing management issues are displayed in Table 1 (see page 4); it provides a comparison of current refuge management with some different options for potential future management.

How can deer impacts to seabirds be eliminated on Protection Island? One of the world's largest rhinoceros auklet colonies resides on Protection Island. This is due to its location, lack of predators, and soils that are ideal for these burrow-nesting seabirds. Since the early 1990s, deer numbers have increased from zero to approximately 60. Deer hoofs collapse auklet and tufted puffin burrows, and the presence of deer trails reduces the area available for nesting. Protection Island also has a large ground-nesting glaucous-winged gull colony that is impacted by deer as well.

How can human-caused disturbance to refuge wildlife be minimized? Refuge islands represent a fraction of the

islands in the San Juan Archipelago and Puget Sound. The few undeveloped refuge islands provide resting, feeding, and breeding areas for seabirds, marine mammals, and other species dependent on island habitats. Areas with little human-caused disturbance are very important to wildlife. Minimizing disturbance to wildlife utilizing the scattered refuge rocks and islands is challenging in this large area that is also important for many commercial and recreational activities.

What research activities will provide the most benefits to the refuges' natural and cultural resources?

Scientific research is one of the purposes of Protection Island Refuge, and we currently administer an active research program on the island. Research activities are also conducted on and near islands within the San Juan Islands Refuge. Research can play an important role in answering refuge management questions and evaluating management actions. Identification of research priorities is needed to facilitate the permitting process and minimize research related

disturbance to refuge resources.

What public uses are appropriate and compatible with the Refuge System mission and the refuges' purposes?

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-57) identified a strong and singular wildlife conservation mission for the Refuge System and required the Secretary of the Interior to maintain the biological integrity, diversity and environmental health of the Refuge System.

The Act also identified six wildlife-dependent recreational uses—hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation—as priority public uses of the Refuge System. These six uses are given priority consideration in refuge planning and management.

During the CCP planning process we will review and evaluate all existing and proposed public uses including wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation, boating, camping, and the presence of pets.



To protect wildlife, this sign advises boaters to stay away / USFWS

What are Appropriate Refuge Uses and Compatible Refuge Uses?

In order for general public use (e.g. camping, pets, boating) to be permitted on a refuge, the use must first be found to be appropriate in accordance with the Service's Appropriate Refuge Uses Policy. Provisions of this policy include determining if the use contributes to the public's understanding and appreciation of the refuge's natural or cultural resources.

The complete text of the Appropriate Refuge Uses Policy is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/policy/603fw1.html>

All existing and proposed public uses must also be evaluated to determine if the use is compatible with refuge purposes and the Refuge System mission in accordance with the Service's

Compatibility Policy. This determination includes identification and description of reasonably anticipated impacts of the use.

A use may include stipulations (terms or conditions) necessary to ensure its compatibility. The complete text of the Compatibility Policy is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/policy/603fw2.html>



Do You Have Any Questions or Comments?

If you have any feedback for us please attend an upcoming public open house or send us your comments as soon as possible to:

Kevin Ryan, Project Leader
 Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex
 33 S. Barr Road
 Port Angeles, WA 98362
 (360) 457-8451 (360) 457-9778 fax

Email: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov.
 Please include Protection Island and/or San Juan Islands Refuges in the subject line of the message.

See page 8
 for details about
 the Refuges' Open
 Houses

Come to Our Public Open House Meetings and Learn About the CCP

We are holding two Public Open House Meetings to provide you opportunities to learn more about the CCP. Talk directly to refuge staff members, and comment on refuge management options. Maps and other supporting materials will be available. We hope you can make it, details follow!

Friday Harbor

Date: September 23, 2008

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Address: Mullis Community Senior Center
589 Nash Street
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Directions: From Friday Harbor Ferry go straight (west) on Spring Street, left on Caines Street, and right on Nash Street.

Port Townsend

Date: September 24, 2008

Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Address: Fort Worden State Park and Conference Center
Building 210 Commons
Port Townsend, WA

Directions: SR 20 to Port Townsend, left on Kearney Street, right on Blaine Street, left on Cherry Street, follow signs into Fort Worden State Park.



U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232

Change of address requested.

Refuge Open Houses September 23 and 24.