

Appendix I. Public Scoping Report for the Draft CCP/EIS

This scoping report summarizes the issues, concerns, and opportunities identified by the Comprehensive Conservation Planning team, their partners, and the public during the public scoping phase for the Lewis and Clark and Julia Butler Hansen Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and the associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Early in the planning process, the planning team developed a list of preliminary issues and concerns for the CCP. These planning issues were presented at public scoping meetings on October 17, 19, 23 and 24, 2006, as well as in a Planning Update and Federal Register Notice. Information gathered through the meetings and other sources is reflected in this public scoping report.

I.1 Public Outreach

On September 21, 2006, the Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and associated Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register. Planning Update 1 was published, with a comment form, and was distributed in September 2006 to a mailing list of approximately 105 recipients. Press releases notifying the public of the open house public meetings were published in the Longview Daily News, Wahkiakum Eagle and the Clatskanie Chief newspapers. Radio station KMNU broadcasting out of Astoria, Oregon, made several announcements regarding the meeting times and locations.

The Service held four CCP open house public meetings, in Longview and Cathlamet, Washington, and Astoria and Clatskanie, Oregon. Four people attended the event in Longview and 20 people attended the event in Cathlamet, five people attended the meeting in Astoria and 10 attended the meeting in Clatskanie.

A comment form was provided in both the Planning Update and at the public meetings which had boxes for the commenter to check asking why they primarily visit the refuge as well as spaces for responses to various questions such as; which activities are the most important to you and appropriate for the refuges and what strategies would you suggest to address or solve these issues, concerns, and opportunities?

During scoping a total of 51 responses were received from individuals or organizations in writing. A total of 39 private citizens and representatives from various organizations attended the open house public meetings providing verbal comments on the issues and opportunities presented.

I.2 Summary of Oral and Written Comments Received During Public Scoping

Issues within the Scope of the Draft CCP/EIS

Wildlife and Habitat

Population Management of Predators to Protect Columbia White-tailed Deer Fawns

The Service received a wide range of comments regarding predator control on Julia Butler Hansen Refuge. One local citizen noted the population of coyotes as being too high in the area and they need to be controlled and that the refuge should provide a more aggressive approach to the problem. Others requested that we consider not using any lethal control on coyotes. Some members of the public specifically noted that the Service should complete a thorough assessment of all alternatives to lethal control. Some comments offered suggested alternatives such as coyote sterilization and exploring avoidance training of coyote/deer as a possible consideration in the planning process. One comment noted that coyote control was needed to maintain a healthy population of Columbian white-tail deer (CWT deer). Other members of the public asked about the impacts of cougars and dogs on the CWT deer population.

Response: The Draft CCP/EIS will address this issue in detail, including analysis of the feasible lethal and nonlethal coyote population control methods.

Columbian White-tail Deer Population and Federal Status as a Listed Species

The endangered Columbian white-tail deer population and the potential to down-list this species on the endangered species list to threatened status drew public comment and interest. Some individuals stated that the refuge should coordinate closely with the states of Washington and Oregon on this issue. Comments were received regarding the CWT deer Recovery Plan and that the planning team should address the limiting factors identified in this document including; habitat quality, elk competition and coyote depredation on fawns. Comments were expressed regarding the status of the 1992 Westport Agreement for CWT deer. One commenter asked if eminent domain might be considered in creating a viable third population of CWT deer as needed to recover the species. Another asked how large the deer population needed to be so that predators were no longer a problem for the deer population.

Response: The planning team will integrate all habitat management and recovery goal needs of the CWT deer into the Draft CCP/EIS in detail. The issue of down-listing the CWT deer from endangered status to threatened status is outside the scope of this Draft CCP/EIS.

Dredge Spoils within the Refuge

A number of comments were received pertaining to dredge spoil management within the approved refuge boundary. Some members of the public felt that the Service should work with

other agencies and find better options for managing dredge spoils. Others were concerned that the refuge would allow further dredge spoil disposal on refuge lands.

Response: Although there are dredge spoil lands within the approved refuge boundary, these lands are not owned or controlled by the Service. In the CCP, the Service will explore options for managing dredge spoils lands in support of wildlife.

Healthy Native Habitats for Wildlife

A majority of the comments were in regards to the refuges maintaining healthy native habitats for wildlife. A number of comments referred to the Service's primary goal specifying that "wildlife comes first" and that this should be the Service's priority in guiding any and all management decisions. Several respondents expressed that the refuges provided them with an opportunity to be out in nature, enjoy a peaceful experience in nature away from humans and human development. Many citizens responded that they are interested in preserving a healthy Columbia River Estuary for all wildlife. One organization stated that the refuges should serve as sanctuaries for wildlife and native ecosystem preserves. Some stated that the Service should control invasive species. Several stated that cattle should be removed from the refuge.

Response: Providing healthy native habitats for all wildlife through a variety of habitat management tools will be addressed in the development of the CCP/EIS. The planning team will integrate tools for managing wildlife habitats as necessary and appropriate for habitat improvement.

Oregon State Lands inside the Approved Refuge Boundary

One organization and several individuals recommend that the Refuge System once again manage the State Lands within the Refuge acquisition boundary of Lewis and Clark Refuge for continuity of management and to reduce bureaucratic redundancy.

Response: The Service will coordinate with Oregon Department of State Lands to address this issue as part of the CCP/EIS process.

Wilderness

A large majority of the respondents requested that the Service propose wilderness designation for the lands within the refuge boundaries that qualify.

Response: As part of the CCP process, under the guidelines of the Wilderness Act, the Service will evaluate the suitability of refuge lands for wilderness designation and a possible proposal to Congress.

Recreation and Other Public Uses

Wildlife Observation and Public Access

A majority of the comments received during scoping noted that bird-watching and observation of wildlife were the primary purpose for visiting these refuges. Some stated that human disturbance to wildlife should be minimized by restricting further development and access on the refuge. One organization stated that the current development and activities were appropriate as is. Others recommended that the Service consider building additional trails for hiking and bicycling. Others commented that improved access on the current Center Road should be provided for interpretation of wildlife and that hiking/bicycling trails should be developed for people to view and interpret wildlife on the refuge. One recommended the Service provide restrooms at the highway observation deck. One organization requested that an evaluation be prepared of all public uses and their adverse affects on wildlife populations. Several comments were noted that the visibility of elk on the refuge should be increased. One requested that the Service provide a biological assessment and inventory of all habitats flora and fauna prior to developing wildlife dependent recreational uses.

Response: The Service completed an Elk Management Plan and Environmental Assessment in 2004; this plan will be integrated into the Draft CCP/EIS as necessary throughout the process. The CCP/EIS will review all current and proposed public use activities and access for appropriateness and if found appropriate, will be reviewed for compatibility.

Camping and Kayaking

A number of individuals and one business responded that they kayak around the refuges to watch birds and experience nature along the waterways. One commenter suggested the refuge consider allowing camping on the islands in either a formal or informal manner. Others suggested that the refuge not allow camping on the refuge.

Response: The Draft CCP/EIS will review all existing and proposed public use activities and access (including by boat or kayak) for appropriateness and if found appropriate, will be reviewed for compatibility.

Hunting and Fishing

The Service received a few comments which stated that the Service was doing a good job at managing hunting activities at the current levels. Other comments were anti-hunting and stated the refuges should not continue to allow hunting or fishing. Another comment suggested that if guided and non-guided waterfowl hunts are allowed on Lewis and Clark Refuge, geese and other waterfowl would be flushed to private lands/ ranches. It was also noted that the Service should provide a cost/benefit analysis associated with any consumptive use activities on the refuge. Some stated that elk hunting should be strictly managed and only used as a management tool to control overgrazing. Others opposed elk hunting on Julia Butler Hansen Refuge.

Response: The CCP/EIS will review all existing and proposed public use activities for appropriateness and if found appropriate, will be reviewed for compatibility. The Service completed an Environmental Assessment, Elk Management Plan in 2004. This plan will be integrated into the CCP/EIS as necessary throughout the planning process.

Environmental Education and Interpretation

Respondents identified and made recommendations about the content of interpretive and educational messages. Many respondents advocated for more educational/interpretation messages to bring about a better understanding of the wildlife and habitat and help visitors have a deeper understanding of the needs of wildlife and their habitat. One recommended the Service provide summer education programs for students and families. A respondent recommended that specific educational materials/maps about the refuge resources be provided to kayakers and boaters.

Response: The CCP/EIS will review all public use activities for appropriateness and, if found appropriate, will be reviewed for compatibility.

Commercial Guiding

One comment suggested that if commercial guiding was found compatible the refuge should review and monitor the effects frequently. Others said they oppose commercial uses on the refuges.

Response: The CCP/EIS will review all proposed commercial public use activities for appropriateness and compatibility.

Issues Outside the Scope of the CCP

The topic of most concern is the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas Plant near Bradford, Oregon which is outside the scope of the planning effort. Public concerns of the proposed construction and long term industrial influence/impacts on the adjacent refuge resources included: The need for communication between the Service's Ecological Services and Refuges programs regarding various potential negative impacts to refuge resources; dredging impacts (river current changes, erosion concerns, dredge spoil disposal), potential mitigation on refuge lands, water usage, wildlife habitat and travel corridor concerns, and lighting and noise pollution affects on wildlife.

The Refuge staff will coordinate and communicate with the Ecological Services program on all issues regarding potential negative impacts to refuge resources due to industrial developments adjacent to refuge lands as appropriate. This topic is outside the scope of the Draft CCP/EIS because it is outside the jurisdiction of the refuge.

