



Ellicott Slough National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 3 - February 2011

Greetings from the Refuge Manager

We are pleased to announce that the Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (CCP/EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Ellicott Slough NWR was signed on September 29, 2010. The signing of the FONSI signifies the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's approval of the CCP and the adoption of Alternative B (analyzed in the July 2010 Draft CCP/EA and highlighted in Planning Update 2).

The Final CCP outlines the management direction and strategies for Ellicott Slough NWR for the next 15 years. Management activities will focus on the conservation of the Refuge's resources, particularly wildlife species that are federally-listed as threatened or endangered, and their habitats. Management of Ellicott Slough NWR will also provide opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife observation photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

The planning team and I wish to thank you for your comments and suggestions throughout the CCP process.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me. Thanks for your help and your time.

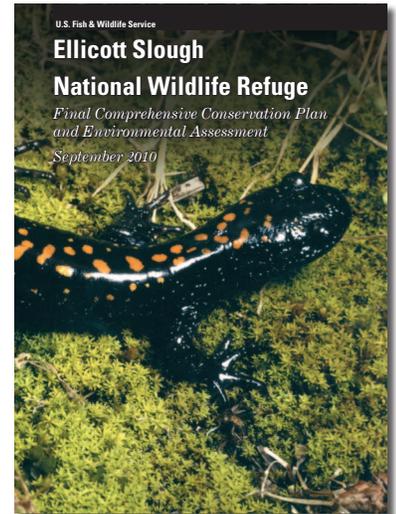
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Final CCP/EA and FONSI Available!

The planning process for Ellicott Slough National Wildlife Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is now complete. The Final CCP/EA and FONSI are available online for downloading at www.fws.gov/sfbayrefuges/Ellicott/Ellicott_CCP.htm. Printed documents are also available for viewing at the Watsonville Main Public Library and the San Francisco Bay NWR Complex.

A CD copy of the Final CCP/EA and FONSI may be requested by writing to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: Sandy Osborn, Refuge Planning, 2800 Cottage Way, W-1832, Sacramento, CA 95825, or you can send an e-mail to fw8plancomments@fws.gov. Please include "Ellicott CCP" in the subject line.



*Santa Cruz long-toed salamander.
Photo: S. Ruth and E.F. Katibah*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Southwest Region
2800 Cottage Way, W-1832
Sacramento, CA 95825

Alternative B Selected



Santa Cruz long-toed salamander juveniles.
Photo: USFWS

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ellicott Slough NWR outlines how the Refuge will fulfill its legal purposes and contribute to the National Wildlife Refuge System's wildlife, habitat and visitor service goals. Implementation of the CCP will occur incrementally, as funding allows, for the next 15 years.

Ellicott Slough NWR is located in Santa Cruz County near Watsonville, California. The Refuge protects habitat for endangered and threatened amphibians and plants.

The nearly 300-acre Ellicott Slough NWR consists of three contiguous units within the Watsonville Slough System.



Robust spineflower. Photo: Sandra Baron



California tiger salamander juvenile. Photo: Steve Miller

The Refuge was established to protect the endangered Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, and currently supports two of the 20 known breeding populations of the salamander.

During the 30-day public review period last year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received 10 comment letters and e-mails on the Draft CCP/EA. The CCP planning team reviewed each of these letters and found 32 comments. The comments were incorporated into the CCP, when possible, and the Service's responses to the comments are provided in Appendix J of the Final CCP.

In the FONSI, Alternative B was selected for implementation and is the basis for the CCP. The FONSI documents the decision of the Service and is based on the information and analysis contained in the EA.

Under the selected alternative, the Refuge would achieve an optimal balance of biological resource objectives and visitor services opportunities. Habitat management and associated biological resource monitoring would be improved.

On Ellicott Slough NWR's Harkins Slough Unit, visitor service opportunities will focus on quality wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education and interpretation. Prior to opening the Harkins Slough Unit to public use, the Service must address the existing safety hazards. On the Ellicott Unit of the Refuge, we will provide Service-led environmental education programs and guided interpretive walks.

In addition, the CCP outlines strategies to:

- standardize the wildlife monitoring and surveying program
- develop a Habitat Management Plan with adaptive vegetation management
- assess contaminants and disease issues on the Refuge
- pursue climate change modeling
- identify additional habitat for potential boundary expansion
- continue planning and redesign of an amphibian breeding pond
- assess the need and plan for new breeding ponds
- develop mosquito and water management plans, and a visitor services plan for the Refuge
- improve the energy efficiency of Refuge operations
- develop a walking trail system at Harkins Slough Unit
- expand the in-class environmental education program to more schools, and
- expand the on-site restoration education program.



California tiger salamander. Gerald and Buff Corsi © California Academy of Sciences