



Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 1 - February 2010

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Begins in the Winter



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is embarking on an important process to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). This plan will help to guide overall Refuge management for the next 15 years. Your ideas and comments will be an important part of the process, so I encourage you to participate.

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This first “Planning Update” describes the beginning of the planning process and provides information about the Refuge. We will refer to information provided in this planning update throughout the CCP process. We held initial public meetings at the end of October and beginning of November around the South Bay to inform the public and stakeholders about the process. If you missed these meetings, we’d like to hear from you. Please share your comments, suggestions, and questions about the CCP. Comments may be submitted to Winnie Chan, the Refuge Planner, or myself at (510)792-0222 or sfbaynwrc@fws.gov. We will consider holding additional meetings once alternatives have been formulated.

Eric Mruz
Refuge Manager

Some of the issues we heard at the public meetings:

Wildlife Management

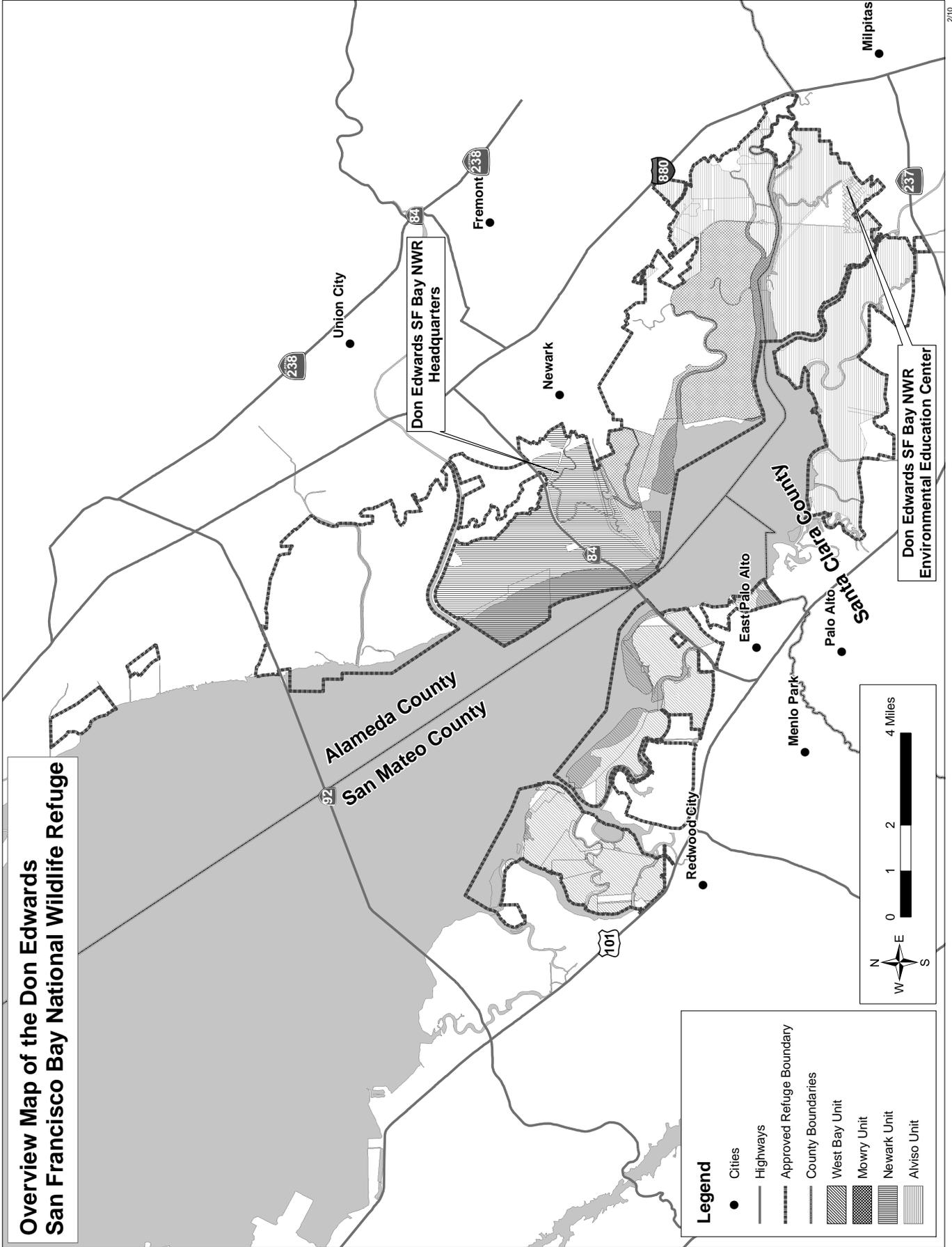
- Reduce predation of special status species by gulls, feral cats.
- Expand and enhance habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, consider acquisition.
- Assess public use impact on species and other refuge resources.
- Develop a management plan for high priority species, collaborating with experts.
- Monitor invasive species, develop control and prevention protocols.

Habitat Management

- Address climate change on refuge resources.
- Improve hydrology to reduce mosquito production, improve access for mosquito control.
- Assess contaminants, trash, and stormwater; determine control actions.

Public Uses and Environmental Education

- Improve outreach and visibility through website, brochures, signage.
- Improve outreach to K-6.
- Increase interpretation and environmental education.
- Assess cultural resources and develop a plan.
- Educate about contaminants, use of pesticides, and trash in the environment.



The Refuge Location and Description

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is located in Alameda, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Counties in the south end of San Francisco Bay. The 30,000-acre Refuge, consists of several non-contiguous parcels that surround the southern edge of the San Francisco Bay. For the purposes of the CCP the Refuge is divided into four units: Newark, Mowry, Alviso, and West Bay (see previous page). The Refuge was established to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, protect migratory birds, protect threatened and endangered species, as well as provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation and environmental education.

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is part of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which consists of seven refuges within the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas. The headquarters office for the complex is located on the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay Refuge in Fremont, California.

Refuge Biology

A variety of habitats occur on the Refuge, including vernal pools, tidal wetland, diked wetland, grassland, sub-tidal areas, and most notably, salt ponds. These habitats support a variety of federally-listed species including the:

- Contra Costa goldfield
- vernal pool tadpole shrimp
- California tiger salamander
- California clapper rail
- California least tern
- Western snowy plover
- salt marsh harvest mouse

Several other state-listed and other species of concern are also present on the Refuge.

Refuge Establishment and Purpose

The Refuge was created by Congress under Public Law 92-330 in 1972, but first lands were not acquired until 1974. The Refuge was established for several purposes including:

“... for the preservation and enhancement of highly significant wildlife habitat ... for the protection of migratory waterfowl and other wildlife, including species known to be threatened

with extinction, and to provide an opportunity for wildlife-oriented recreation and nature study ...” 86 Stat. 399, dated June 30, 1972.

“... particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program.” 16 U.S.C. § 667b (An Act Authorizing the Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife, or other purposes)

“... to conserve (A) fish or wildlife which are listed as endangered species or threatened species or (B) plants ...” 16 U.S.C. § 1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)

“... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources ...” 16 U.S.C. § 742f(a)(4) *“... for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude ...”* 16 U.S.C. § 742f(b)(1) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

What is a CCP?

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 defined the mission for the Refuge System and requires refuges to have a CCP in place by 2012. These plans provide a 15-year guide, using the best available scientific knowledge, to help managers achieve the purposes for which each refuge was established, and to contribute to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Act provides the Service with guidance for managing refuges in a way that ensures the long-term conservation of fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats. Maintenance of biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health along with facilitating compatible wildlife-dependent recreation in the Refuge System are two of the important guiding principles laid out in the Act.

The CCP for the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge will outline goals, objectives and management strategies for the Refuge for the 15-year life of the CCP. The accompanying Environmental Assessment will describe the alternatives considered and analyze the environmental effects of each proposed alternative. The Service is preparing this CCP for the following reasons:

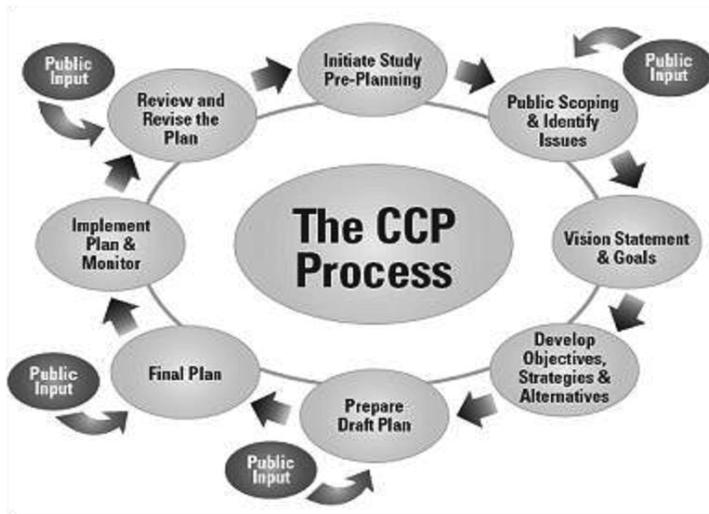
- To provide a vision statement for the Refuge.
- To ensure that management of the Refuge reflects Refuge purposes and the mission, policies, and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- To provide the public with information about the Refuge and opportunities to help shape

management actions planned for the Refuge.

- To ensure the compatibility of current and future uses of the Refuge with Refuge purposes.
- To provide long-term continuity in Refuge management.
- To provide budget justification for operations, maintenance and facilities requests.

The CCP will be a flexible “living document.” It will be reviewed periodically to ensure that its goals, objectives, implementation strategies, and timetables are still appropriate.

The key planning steps are described in the flow chart below. Currently, we are in the pre-planning phase gathering data and beginning public scoping with the release of this update.



About the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Service manages the 150-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses more than 550 units in all 50 states and several U.S. territories. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices, and 81 ecological services field stations.

The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores migratory bird populations, restores

nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their wildlife and habitat conservation efforts. The Service also oversees the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

About the National Wildlife Refuge System

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt protected an island in Florida’s Indian River with nesting pelicans, herons, ibis, and roseate spoonbills from feather collectors decimating their colonies. He established Pelican Island as the nation’s first bird sanctuary and went on to establish many other sanctuaries for wildlife during his tenure. This small network of sanctuaries continued to expand, eventually becoming the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the largest system of lands in the world dedicated primarily for the conservation of wildlife. The system is spread across 50 states, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Johnston Atoll, Midway Atoll, and several other Pacific Islands. About 21 million acres on 65 refuges in the Refuge System are managed as wilderness (undeveloped Federal lands that have had limited human influence) under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

What is the mission of the Refuge System?

Refuges are places where wildlife comes first.

“The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.” (National Wildlife Refuge Systems Improvement Act of 1997)

The Service is a “primary use agency.” This means that units of the Refuge System are managed first and foremost for the benefit of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. Our mission differs from other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service, which focuses on forest stewardship and sustainable forest uses; the Bureau of Land Management, which deals with the productivity and multiple use of the land; and the National Park Service, which conserves scenery, wildlife, and historic objects for people’s enjoyment.

What's in a name?

The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which coordinates with California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) on a variety of management issues, including management of lands within the refuge boundary.

Many people confuse federal and state fish and wildlife agencies because their names are similar. The Service is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The CDFG is a department within the State of California's Resources Agency.

Our names are similar and so are our missions: both agencies are dedicated to wildlife conservation for the benefit of present and future generations, but our jurisdictions are different. The Service is the lead agency responsible for federally-listed endangered species and migratory birds, whether they are located on federal, state, or private lands. The CDFG has primary responsibility for resident fish and wildlife on state and private lands, and oversees state-listed endangered species and stream alteration issues throughout California.

How the CCP Process is Different from the South Bay Salt Pond Project

The South Bay Salt Pond Project (SBSP) is currently implementing a long-term plan to restore 15,000 acres of former salt ponds that became part of the Refuge in 2003. The landowners and land managers of these former salt ponds are the California Department of Fish and Game (5,500 acres) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (9,600 acres). Through a collaborative process, a final plan was adopted in 2008 and the first phase of restoration is occurring.

The CCP will not alter the plan objectives developed through the SBSP process. The CCP will act as a programmatic document, deferring to the SBSP final plan for actions taking place on the 9,600 acres of former salt ponds the Service manages. The goal of the CCP is to identify management needs for those refuge lands not included in the SBSP Project. These properties (managed or owned by the Refuge) include habitat such as upland grassland, vernal pools, other managed salt ponds and other wetland areas.

Help Us Plan the Future

This first update kicks off our first 60-day public comment period as announced in the Federal Register, which closes on April 26, 2010. Over the next year, interested individuals, agencies, and organizations are invited to express their concerns and share their visions for the Refuge. We will be sending these planning updates periodically to local constituents, government agencies, private organizations, and others in the community who express interest.

We invite you to provide comments and concerns about the Refuge by communicating with us through email, mail, fax, phone, or by attending future public meetings. We would also be happy to talk or meet with you individually. Your review and comment on the draft CCP and Environmental Assessment will be critical to ensuring comprehensive and informed management plan.

Please feel free to contact us

We are available to provide additional information regarding the Refuge and the planning process. Feel free to call, write, or e-mail us at sfbaynwrc@fws.gov.

If you did not receive this update through the mail and would like to be on our mailing list, or if you would like to be removed from the list, please contact us.

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