



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge

*Environmental Assessment  
and Draft Comprehensive  
Conservation Plan*

*August 2011*



*Front cover:*

*Terns staging with the Great Point*

*Lighthouse as a backdrop*

Amanda Boyd/USFWS

*Short-billed dowitcher*

USFWS

*Piping plover*

Amanda Boyd/USFWS

*American oystercatcher*

Amanda Boyd/USFWS

*Gray seal*

Amanda Boyd/USFWS

*Back cover:*

*Terns at Great Point*

Amanda Boyd/USFWS



*This blue goose, designed by J.N. “Ding” Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97 million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 553 national wildlife refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance Program which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.

Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) provide long-term guidance for management decisions on a refuge and set forth goals, objectives, and strategies needed to accomplish refuge purposes. CCPs also identify the Service's best estimate of future needs. These plans detail program levels that are sometimes substantially above current budget allocations and, as such, are primarily for Service strategic planning and program prioritization purposes. CCPs do not constitute a commitment for staffing increases, operational and maintenance increases, or funding for future land acquisition.



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### **Refuge Vision Statement**

Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), though diminutive in size, is an important part of a larger area aptly named Great Point. It has great value to the wildlife that uses its beaches, from coastal birds including piping plovers and terns, to mammals including gray seals. Situated at the tip of a peninsula, it is surrounded by a diverse assemblage of coastal, intertidal, wetland, and marine habitat, attracting a great diversity of fauna. It will continue to be managed as a special place for breeding, wintering, and migratory wildlife.

We will continue to provide opportunities for quality, compatible, wildlife-dependent experiences for the public. Nantucket NWR is recognized internationally as a premier fishing location, and the presence of its lighthouse provides the public with a destination that offers cultural perspective and panoramic views. Through strong partnerships, we will promote ecologically responsible use of the property, and continue to promote public awareness about the intrinsic value of dynamic coastal ecosystems.



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### Summary

<b>Type of Action:</b>	Administrative—Development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan
<b>Lead Agency:</b>	U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
<b>Location:</b>	Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge Nantucket, MA
<b>Administrative Headquarters</b>	Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex Sudbury, MA
<b>Responsible Official:</b>	Marvin Moriarty, Regional Director, Region 5
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This Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan analyzes three alternatives for managing the approximately 21 acres that comprise Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) over the next 15 years. This document also contains nine appendices that provide additional information supporting our analysis. The following is a brief overview of each alternative.

**Alternative A:** This alternative is referred to as our “No Action” or “Current Management” alternative, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. This alternative would maintain the status quo in managing this refuge for the next 15 years. No major changes would be made to current management practices.

**Alternative B:** This alternative is titled, “Enhanced Wildlife Management and Visitor Services” and is the Service-preferred alternative. It represents the planning team’s recommended strategies and actions for achieving refuge purposes, vision and goals, and responding to public issues. Here we strive for a balance between increased habitat protection for avian and mammal species dependent upon refuge beaches, and recreational uses and programs. This would be facilitated through seasonal onsite staff and strong collaborative partnerships. Addressing land protection across all of the islands under the jurisdiction of the town of Nantucket is also a priority in this alternative.

**Alternative C:** This alternative, “Wildlife and Natural Processes Emphasis” emphasizes refuge habitat protection through seasonal closures to the refuge. Visitor services on the refuge would be increased from current levels. As in Alternative B, strengthening partnerships is a refuge priority. Land protection efforts would be pursued only as opportunities are presented.

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