



Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Notice of Cooperative Agriculture Opportunity

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Agricultural Producers for Cooperative Agriculture Program

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking proposals from agricultural producers to enter into a Cooperative Agriculture Agreement (Agreement) at the Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in Cloverdale, Oregon. The producer may have use of up to 84 acres of lowland pastures on the Bay Unit of the Refuge for up to five years as a cooperator with the Service. The selected cooperator(s) will be required to manage the lowland pastures by grazing, mowing, haying, and/or green chopping annually between April 15 to October 31. Prospective applicants must fill out applicable portions of FWS Form 3-1383-C and FWS Form 3-1384 Bid Sheet. The applicants must address in their application how they will meet the criteria outlined in this announcement.

Background

The Service established the Refuge in 1991, in part, to protect and enhance habitat on agricultural lands for wintering Canada geese and other migratory birds. The Refuge currently consists of 1,203 acres, of which 346 acres are actively managed as green forage habitat for geese and other birds. Carefully managed pastures provide a significant source of protein for wintering geese and other waterfowl on the Refuge. Up to 11,000 Canada and cackling geese winter on the Refuge and adjacent lands, including the delisted Aleutian cackling goose and up to 18% of the world's population of the dusky Canada goose (a federal species of special concern) (Blake and Stephensen 2023, Stephensen and Nelson 2017). In all, six sub-species of these geese use the Refuge each winter.

The pastures on the Refuge are cooperatively managed with agricultural producers under Agreements with the Service. Under the agreements, techniques such as mowing, grazing, haying, or greenchopping (ensilage or cutting silage for dairy cattle), combined with seeding and vegetation management, may be used to achieve the desired objectives for wintering geese and other migratory birds. The objectives for the Refuge's pastures, and the effects of the various management activities, are explored in depth in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) (USFWS 2013).

The first goal stated in the CCP (Chapter 2, Section 2.4.1, Page 2-12) calls for the protection and maintenance of agricultural lands that support wintering migratory birds. The singular objective

more specifically identifies the need to protect and maintain 346 acres of lowland pastures on the Refuge.

The following management and monitoring strategies are identified in the CCP, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and may be conducted by the Service, Cooperator, or both partners cooperatively. Details of permitted activities are outlined in the Plan of Operations and the Annual Work Plan once a cooperator is selected.

- Maintain drainage ditches, dikes, and water control structures using heavy equipment to provide adequate drainage and flood protection,
- Mow, green chop (silage), and graze livestock to provide desirable vegetation height,
- Use commercial fertilizers and manure to enhance vegetation productivity and apply with buffers to protect water quality,
- Rehabilitate pastures as needed using standard agricultural practices (e.g., seeding with appropriate pasture mix, fertilizing, liming) to maintain optimum productivity and plant species mix,
- Utilize appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques, including mechanical/physical, chemical, biological, and cultural means,
- Control nuisance mammals (e.g., nutria, beaver), where necessary, to protect dikes and ditches using appropriate lethal and non-lethal methods, and
- Maintain fencing to support cattle grazing and containment.
- Monitor water quality on the Refuge to ensure contaminant levels are not exceeded and aquatic resources are protected,
- Conduct periodic soil testing to maintain optimal pH levels and soil condition,
- Monitor lowland pasture vegetation height and species composition to achieve desired parameters,
- Monitor populations six subspecies of Canada and cackling geese (western, dusky, lesser, Taverner's, Aleutian, cackling) to determine distribution and abundance,
- Monitor waterfowl populations to determine distribution and abundance,
- Monitor nuisance mammals (e.g., nutria, beaver) populations to determine distribution and abundance, and
- Monitor invasive plant species (e.g., reed canary grass, Himalayan blackberry, *Juncus* spp.) to determine infestation percent and location.

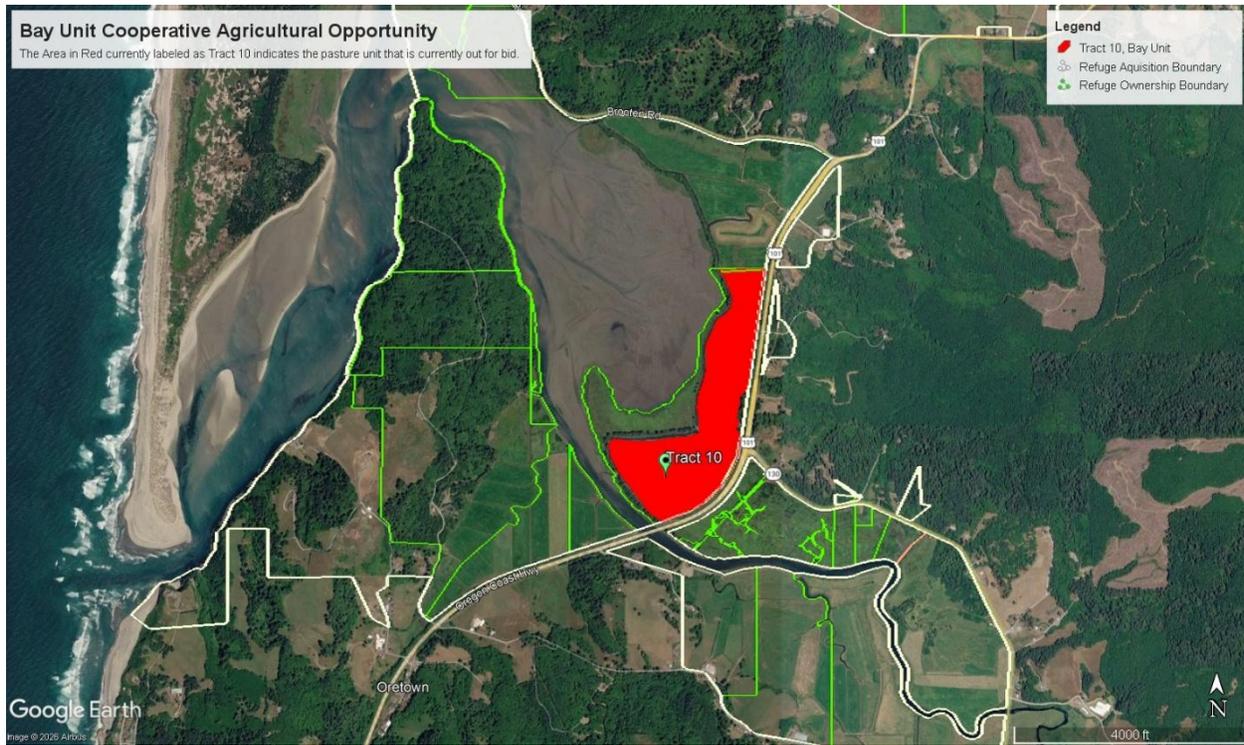
Using a cooperative approach with an agricultural producer, the Service intends maintain and monitor lowland pastures characterized by the following:

- Pasture vegetation mix (e.g., orchard grass, annual rye, white clover, *etc.*) that is a maximum of 2" to 4" in height by the end of October each year,
- Naturally saturated to shallowly flooded pastures from approximately October to May,
- Less than 10% plant cover of invasive/undesirable plants (e.g., reed canary grass, Himalayan blackberry, *Juncus* spp. *etc.*),

- Minimal human disturbance while geese are present (approximately November 1 to April 14).

Proposed Area for Cooperative Agriculture

The Bay Unit (Tract 10) is located on Hwy 101 between the Little Nestucca River and Brooten Road.



Map 1. Bay Unit, Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Cloverdale, Oregon.

The Bay Unit is a series of lowland pastures totaling 84 acres along Hwy 101 north of the Little Nestucca River. The unit is bordered by natural wetlands, Hwy 101, and private property to the north. The tide gate for the unit is a muted tidal regulator, installed in 2022. There are twelve individual pastures within the unit that are divided into two sections, the middle pastures, and the north pastures, with a drivable access between these two areas. Two large culverts connect the north and middle pastures so that channel flow can be restricted if needed. Pasture management is an important element for meeting goose habitat management objectives on the Refuge.

There are no freshwater sources to provide livestock water. The Cooperator will be required to bring in fresh water or plan for an off-site water source if grazing is conducted.

Proposed Types of Cooperative Agriculture

The following is a list of agricultural activities that may be conducted on Refuge pastures by the selected Cooperator. All activities must receive prior written approval from the Project Leader (or designee) and must be implemented in coordination with the Service representative assigned to administer the Agreement.

- Cutting - mowing, grazing, haying and greenchopping,
- Planting and seeding - enhance the quality (*e.g.*, crude protein content) and quantity (*e.g.*, tons per acre) of green forage by seeding a desirable grass/forb pasture mix suitable for the local climate, soil, pH, *etc.* Various type and varieties of orchard grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), annual rye (*Lolium multiflorum*), and white clover (*Trifolium repens*) may be appropriate,
- Fertilizer applications - manure application 2-3 times annually during the dry season and application of commercial fertilizer on non-organic fields may enhance the quality and quantity of the green forage. The required setback of natural and commercial fertilizer applications would be 20 feet from all ditches (as recommended by the Oregon State University Agricultural Extension Service),
- Invasive plant control - invasive plants species shall be controlled to less than 10% plant cover using mechanical/physical, chemical, and biological, including pasture rush (*Juncus effusus*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), tansy ragwort (*Tanacetum vulgare*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), and others, as necessary. **Cooperators must be licensed by the State of Oregon to apply herbicides on public land.** See below for information regarding licensing requirements,
- Structure maintenance – The Cooperator would be responsible for maintenance of existing fences, culverts, ditches, and other infrastructure to ensure proper drainage of all pastures. The Refuge would be responsible for infrastructure replacement. The Cooperator would also be responsible for installing, repairing, and maintaining all livestock infrastructure.
- Additional activities and restrictions would be documented in a Plan of Operations that would be made as part of the Agreement.

Restrictions on Cooperative Agriculture

- **The Cooperator must be licensed by the State of Oregon to apply herbicides on public land ([State of Oregon: Licensing - Explore Licensing Requirements](#)).** Once a cooperator is selected, a copy of the Applicator's License must be provided to the Project Leader (or designee). Application of pesticides or bio-controls on the Refuge must be approved in writing and in advance through the Service's Pesticide Use Proposal process. All chemical applications must be done in accordance with the Oregon Department of

Agriculture, Service regulations and policies, and manufacturer's label. Chemical applications must also be coordinated with the Project Leader (or designee), prior to application, and documented in a detailed post-application report. No restricted use chemicals would be permitted for use on the Refuge.

- **The Cooperator must have or acquire liability insurance.** Once a cooperator is selected, a copy of the Certificate of Liability insurance form (Acord 25) must be provided to the Project Leader (or designee). The Certificate of Liability insurance form must name the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, as “additionally insured.”
- The required setback of natural and commercial fertilizer applications would be 20 feet from all ditches,
- Livestock shall be removed from all Refuge pastures no later than October 31st of each year,
- Limited access to the cooperator will be allowed in or near Refuge pastures from November 1 to April 14 each year.

Proposed cost-sharing information or bids for payment in compliance with the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act.

As part of their bid proposal, prospective Cooperators are required to submit detailed information about cost-sharing, including but not limited to, material and labor costs for activities such as installing, repairing, and maintaining fences, gates, ditches, culverts, tide gates, seeding, fertilizing, implementing weed treatments, etc. Cost sharing information may also include crop yield information.

Objective criteria under which the Service will evaluate applications.

The producer(s) will be selected through an open and competitive process where applications will be scored and ranked by a panel, including Service, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, and Oregon State University Agricultural Extension staff using the answers to the questions on the bid sheet and the following criteria:

- Experience in managing lowland pastures, especially personal experience on Refuge lands or comparable conservation lands, including intimate knowledge of soil composition, chemistry, moisture, fertility, water needs, pest problems, *etc.*,
- Demonstrated ability to successfully manage lowland pastures that produce the quality and quantity of green forage necessary to support wintering migratory Canada and cackling geese and other migratory birds,
- Ownership or access to the proper equipment, materials, labor, or other resources needed to competently participate in the cost-sharing nature of the Agreement,

- Other objective criteria including, but not limited to, cost sharing details, record keeping and reporting, effective communication, and response time to address issues (*e.g.*, unauthorized grazing, beaver dams, fence repair, *etc.*) necessary to ensure the specified objectives prescribed for the Refuge are met.

Application Process and Deadline

To apply, please complete and submit FWS Form 3-1383-C (Commercial Activities Special Use Permit Application) and the FWS Form 3-1384 Bid Sheet. Forms and more information regarding this opportunity can be downloaded at www.fws.gov/refuge/nestucca_bay. Hard copies can be requested by contacting Kate Iaquinto, Project Leader by phone at 541-270-3191.

Completed applications may be emailed to kate_iaquinto@fws.gov with the subject line, “Cooperative Agriculture Agreement Application” or mailed to the Service using this address: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Attn: Kate Iaquinto, 2127 SE Marine Science Drive, Newport, OR 97365. **The deadline for submittal is 4:00 pm on March 16, 2026.**

All individuals will be notified of the selection outcome by 4:00 pm on April 3, 2026. Individual(s) that are not selected will be notified regarding why they were unsuccessful and of their right to appeal any adverse decision in accordance with 50 CFR 25.45. Once awarded, the Service will work with selected cooperator to develop the terms and conditions of the Agreement.

Site Visits

A site visit is available by request. Contact Kate Iaquinto 541-270-3191 for more information.

Literature Cited

Blake, K. and S.W. Stephensen. 2023. Canada geese surveys at Nestucca Bay, Oregon Winter 2022-23. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Unpublished Report, Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Newport, Oregon 97365. 25 pp.

Stephensen, S.W. and J.E. Nelson. 2017. Canada geese surveys at Tillamook County, Oregon Winter 2016-17. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Unpublished Report, Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Newport, Oregon 97365. 34 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 2013. Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan. USFWS, Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Newport, Oregon, Pacific Northwest Planning Team, Portland, Oregon.