



Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek and Blue Ridge National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update #4 – March 2011

Greetings from the Hopper Mountain NWR Complex

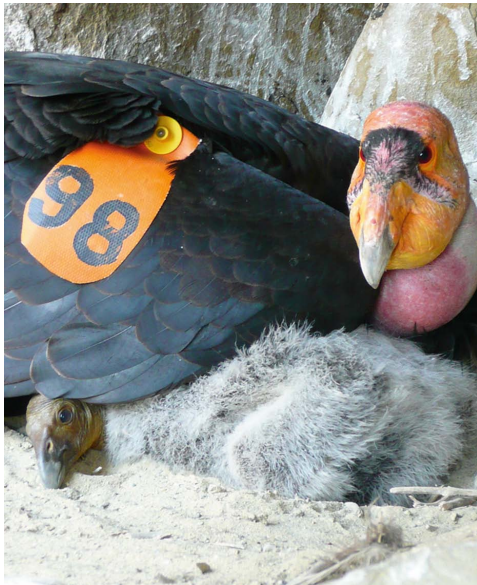
Thank you for your interest in the Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek and Blue Ridge National Wildlife Refuges' Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

After careful consideration of all the information received during our initial public scoping period, we are now developing the draft planning document. As we prepare the draft for public review, we would like to share our work with you to help keep you engaged and informed. Our draft vision statements and goals for each refuge are presented in this update. We hope you will take this opportunity to share with us your thoughts on the visions and management goals for these three refuges.

We also invite you to join us this spring for one of our guided tours of Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Similar guided tours can be scheduled for any of the refuges by contacting the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Tour and contact information are provided on page 4.

There will continue to be opportunities for you to learn more about the refuges and provide your input throughout the CCP process as we work on developing this 15-year management plan for the refuges. Thank you for your support and participation in this valuable planning process.

Chris Barr, Acting Project Leader
Hopper Mountain NWR Complex



California condor and chick. Photo: USFWS

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A pair of condors at Hopper Mountain NWR. Photo: USFWS, Michael Woodbridge

CCP progress

- Pre-planning
- Public Scoping and Identify Issues
- Develop Draft Vision Statement and Draft Goals
- Develop Draft Alternatives; Objectives and Strategies
- Prepare Draft CCP/EA
- Public Review of Draft CCP/EA
- Prepare Final CCP/EA
- Public Notice of Decision

An update on CCP progress

The previous planning update presented some of the highlights from the public scoping period for the Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek, and Blue Ridge National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs). This planning update presents draft vision statements and draft goals for each of the three refuges in the CCP. These vision statements and goals were developed using information gained from the public comment period during the scoping phase. Our next steps are to develop CCP objectives and strategies to meet the goals, with consideration of the issues identified during the public and internal scoping processes last year.

A summary of scoping highlights is available on our website (www.fws.gov/hoppermountain/). We are considering this information in developing draft management alternatives and evaluating the environmental consequences of these alternatives. There continue to be opportunities for input into the planning process, including tours of Bitter Creek NWR. For details, see page 4 of this update.

Draft Visions and Goals for the Refuges

Hopper Mountain NWR - Revised Vision Statement

A high mountain valley encircled by deep canyons, steep ridgelines and rocky pinnacles, Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge is the gateway into California condor country. On the southern border of the Sespe Condor Sanctuary, the Refuge is an outpost on the edge of an unforgiving terrain where California condors safely forage, nest and roost. Under the wing of these majestic birds, the Refuge supports healthy examples of oak woodlands, grasslands, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, seasonal wetlands, riparian areas and some of the last remaining intact stands of California black walnut. Decorating the rock spires where condors now perch, preserved Chumash rock art symbolizes the connection these indigenous people have to the land and sacred bird. Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge emanates a sense of stewardship and conservation to neighboring lands. The Refuge exemplifies productive relationships with neighboring landowners and partners. Refuge facilities serve as resources for the scientific community and academic institutions to conduct research supporting Refuge purposes.

Hopper Mountain NWR - Draft Goals

Goal 1: Contribute to sustainable population levels of California condors in California.

Goal 2: Provide high quality foraging, roosting and nesting habitat for the California condor in the southern California coastal mountain range.

Goal 3: Protect and restore Refuge grasslands to healthy ecological conditions to support an abundance and diversity of grassland-dependent species, such as burrowing owls and wintering raptors.

Goal 4: Restore and maintain optimum health and function of the riparian habitat on Hopper Mountain Refuge to support an abundance and diversity of neotropical migratory birds, such as yellow warbler and warbling vireo.

Goal 5: Restore and perpetuate viable populations of native black walnut and oak woodlands to support wintering raptors, Nuttall's woodpecker, and neotropical migratory birds.

Goal 6: Provide quality information and education to increase the public's appreciation and understanding of the California Condor Recovery Program, as well as Hopper Mountain Refuge and its wildlife, habitats, and cultural resources.

Bitter Creek NWR - Revised Vision Statement

California condors circle the skies above, while below, the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge landscapes showcase conservation in action. As a hub of condor activity and research opportunities, Bitter Creek National



California condor at Bitter Creek NWR. Photo: USFWS, Michael Woodbridge



Juniper woodland at Bitter Creek NWR. Photo: USFWS, Justin Epting

Wildlife Refuge is a unique keystone at the nexus of two mountain ranges encompassing much of the historical California condor range and serving as an important wildlife corridor. The Refuge protects habitat within an important east/west running mountain range and provides movement corridors for populations of native ungulates, raptors and other wildlife. Condor and other wildlife movements extend beyond Refuge boundaries and exemplify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's contribution to a much larger conservation initiative as we partner with public and private land owners. Alongside these charismatic animals, so too can lesser known and rare wildlife and plant species thrive within this intact and functioning ecosystem. Also protected on the Refuge are Native American cultural resources and remnants of 19th century homesteads.

Bitter Creek NWR - Draft Goals

Goal 1: Contribute to sustainable population levels of California condors in California.

Goal 2: Provide high quality foraging and roosting habitat for the California condor in the Transverse Range.

Goal 3: Protect and restore Refuge grasslands to healthy ecological conditions to support abundance and diversity of special status species such as short-eared and burrowing owls.

Goal 4: Protect and restore oak woodlands to healthy ecological conditions to support abundance and diversity of special status species such as Nuttall's woodpecker.

Goal 5: Provide quality information and education to increase the public's appreciation and understanding of the

refuge and its wildlife, habitats, and cultural resources.

Goal 6: Restore and maintain riparian areas to support native plants and wildlife, such as tricolored blackbirds.

Goal 7: Promote ecosystem function by promoting landscape-level connectivity within the Transverse Range through coordinated management.

Goal 8: Preserve and protect the integrity of the Refuge's cultural heritage and resources for future generations.

Blue Ridge NWR - Revised Vision Statement

Set atop a dramatic ridge high above the San Joaquin Valley, Blue Ridge National Wildlife Refuge provides important roosting habitat in the pristine foothills of the southern Sierra Nevada mountain range, overlooking foraging habitat for the endangered California condor. The Refuge showcases the Sierra foothill plant communities including coniferous forests, woodland/savannas, and chaparral. Inspiring an appreciation for diverse, rugged, and remote natural areas, Blue Ridge National Wildlife Refuge models land stewardship by protecting wildlife corridors, ecological processes, and mixed habitats. The Refuge partners with adjacent land agencies and owners, local communities, and conservation organizations to accomplish mutual goals for the region.

Blue Ridge NWR - Draft Goals

Goal 1: Contribute to sustainable population levels of California condors in California.

Goal 2: Provide high quality foraging and roosting habitat for the California condor in the Sierra foothills.

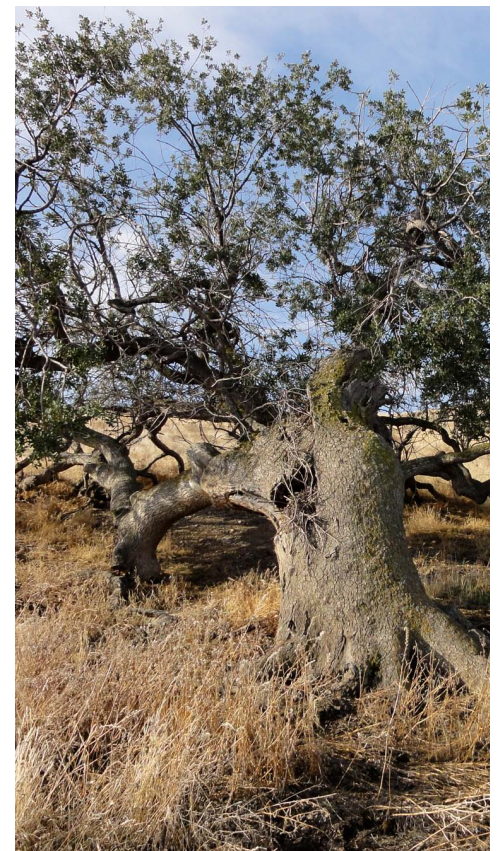
Goal 3: Maintain healthy and representative examples of Sierra foothill plant communities, such as coniferous forests, woodland/savanna, and chaparral.

Goal 4: Provide quality interpretive and wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for refuge visitors and the community to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of the refuge and the California condor.

Goal 5: Maintain and enhance landscape connectivity within the southern Sierra to support natural ecological processes.

Comings and goings

This year, the former Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex Project Leader, Marc Weitzel, accepted a position with the Department of the Interior's Office of International Affairs. Marc served as Project Leader for twenty years. We wish him well in his new position. During this time of transition, the staff at the Complex's headquarters office will continue to respond to your inquiries as quickly as possible.



Blue oak at Bitter Creek NWR. Photo: USFWS, Justin Epting

Visit Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge!

Please join us this spring on a Service-guided tour of the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

April 16: California condor management and the CCP

April 30: General refuge tour, Bitter Creek NWR

May 4: General refuge tour, Bitter Creek NWR (repeat of April 30)

All tours will start at 10:00 a.m.

Please call (805) 644-5185 or e-mail Mike_Stockton@fws.gov to reserve a space and for directions to the tour meeting location.

For tours of Hopper Mountain NWR, please contact Dan Tappe at (805) 644-5185 or send an e-mail to Dan_Tappe@fws.gov.

Information available

Previous Planning Updates about the CCP process, scoping comments received, and general information about the refuges are available on our website. We are available to provide additional information regarding the Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek, and/or Blue Ridge National Wildlife Refuges and the planning process. Please feel free to call, fax, write or e-mail us at the address listed on this page. We welcome the opportunity to talk or meet with you or your group.

Please feel free to contact us

We distribute updates periodically throughout the CCP process when new information is available, but please check our website for updates, refuge tour dates and previously released documents:

www.fws.gov/hoppermountain/

If you did not receive this newsletter through the mail or email and would

like to be on our mailing list, please contact us.

If you would like to be removed from the mailing list, prefer a copy via e-mail, or are receiving multiple copies of these notices, please let us know.

Sandy Osborn, Refuge Planner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Southwest Region
2800 Cottage Way, W-1832
Sacramento, CA 95825
FAX: (916) 414-6497
E-mail: fw8plancomments@fws.gov

Michael Woodbridge, Public Affairs
Hopper Mountain National Wildlife
Refuge Complex
Phone: (805) 644-5185

