Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Prepared by:
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Northwest Planning Team
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May 2013

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January 2013

Approved: Robyn Thorson Jan. 24, 2013
Regional Director, Pacific Region — Date
Portland, Oregon

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Approval Submission

In accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The purpose of this CCP is to specify a management direction for the Refuge for the next 15 years. The goals, objectives, and strategies for improving Refuge conditions—including the types of habitat we will provide, partnership opportunities, and management actions needed to achieve desired future conditions—are described in the CCP. The Service's preferred alternative for managing the Refuge is described in this CCP and the effects on the human environment were described in the Draft CCP and Environmental Impact Statement.

This CCP is submitted for the Regional Director's approval by:

Tim Bodeen, Project Leader
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

1/24/13
Date

Concur: _____
Refuge Supervisor

1/24/13
Date

Concur: _____
Acting Regional Chief
National Wildlife Refuge System

1/24/13
Date

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Foreword

Not many years ago it was hard to imagine that the process of developing a long-term management plan for Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) would result in a broad spectrum of interests, including the local community, conservation organizations, and other government agencies, all working collaboratively together to craft the future direction of the Refuge. Today, after a three-year collaborative effort by dozens of stakeholders working closely with each other and with Refuge staff and experts, there is broad agreement on a comprehensive planning process that will restore the Refuge's aquatic health, enhance wildlife habitat, and revitalize relationships with stakeholders and the community. This process is laid out in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and the upcoming Inventory and Monitoring Plan, which describe priorities for the Refuge and how decisions will be made over the next 15 years.

The Refuge is a cherished place, widely embraced by all kinds of people for its ability to provide for wildlife, recreation, and support of local communities. However, it has also been a flashpoint for conflict and controversy over the past few decades. This controversy has created deep divisions and distrust between the Refuge and stakeholders as well as between the stakeholders themselves. In the meantime, the ecological health of the Refuge's waterways and wetlands—long recognized as some of North America's most important habitat for migratory birds—was in steep decline as common carp came to dominate most wet areas while other invasive non-native species spread throughout the Refuge.

This non-traditional and innovative collaborative planning process has helped rebuild the relationships and communication necessary to produce a remarkable consensus around the core principles embedded in the Refuge's 15-year CCP:

- Ongoing collaborative approach to implementation, built around partnerships and a shared commitment to the long-term sustainability of the Refuge and the larger Harney Basin's wildlife, habitats, and human communities;
- Commitment to science-based, active adaptive management, driven by monitoring and evaluation of results, with Refuge decision making that is transparent and informed by stakeholder involvement;
- Focus on aquatic ecosystem health and the subsequent benefits to waterways, wetlands, and upland habitats.

At many different levels the challenges moving forward will be great, although the stakeholder consensus achieved in developing this plan represents a significant achievement. We hope you will join us, the Malheur Refuge staff and the many participating stakeholders, to turn this vision into reality.

Colby Marshall, Bruce Taylor, and Matt Little
On behalf of the Collaborative Group

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