

# Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge

## *Planning for the Future*

### **A vision for the future**

Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge is an essential link in the network of conservation lands in the Northern Forest. The refuge, located in northeastern New Hampshire and western Maine, was established in 1992 to conserve one of the largest wetland complexes in northern New England and an important migratory bird breeding area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the States of New Hampshire and Maine at this time collectively manage nearly 75 percent of the shoreline of Umbagog Lake as well as large marshes, bogs and fens, and hardwood and boreal forests in the area.

We will manage the refuge as a part of a working forest landscape and as a center for applied research and management. Using a science-based, adaptive management approach, we will perpetuate the diversity and integrity of habitats on the refuge for the continued health of native fish and wildlife populations. Visitors to the refuge will have the opportunity to participate in wildlife-related recreational activities compatible with refuge purposes.

We look forward to our continued involvement with State agencies, conservation organizations, land managers, and neighboring communities as we work in partnership to develop a comprehensive conservation plan to realize this vision for the refuge.

*- Paul F. Casey, Refuge Manager*



*Umbagog Lake*

Carolina Vasconcelos/USFWS

### **A conservation plan for the refuge**

We are in the process of developing a comprehensive conservation plan that will guide natural resource management and public use programs at the refuge for the next 15 years.

The Service established a core planning team consisting of regional planners, biologists, refuge staff, and resource specialists from the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and Umbagog Lake State Park. The planning team has consulted with ecologists and other scientific experts to learn as much as possible about the natural resources in the region.

Eight initial public scoping meetings were held in communities near the refuge as well as in Concord, N.H., and Augusta, Maine, to gather public comments. The Service contracted the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct a citizen survey in 2004 to learn more about public attitudes regarding existing and proposed refuge

management. The 214 responses were summarized and an evaluation of the results is expected soon.

The planning team is grateful to everyone who provided comments and suggestions. The team has carefully considered the information provided to date and continues to develop the following management alternatives for the refuge.

*Alternative A* - Continue the type and scale of current management activities and programs

*Alternative B* - Manage specific refuge habitats to support representative species, such as Blackburnian warbler, Cape May warbler, black-throated blue warbler, woodcock, and American black duck, whose habitat needs benefit other species of conservation concern in the Northern Forest

*Alternative C* - Manage to maintain and/or restore the natural processes that help provide the native diversity of habitats and species of the northern forest



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Cape May warbler

Under Alternatives B and C, the refuge will engage in active management of wetland and upland habitats, including forest management. Under all three alternatives, the refuge will continue to provide wildlife-related recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography.

This winter, the planning team expects to publish for public review the proposed comprehensive conservation plan, which will include an environmental impact statement. Public meetings will be held during a 60-day open comment period on the management alternatives in the plan. The team will then prepare a final plan.

The refuge is addressing research and facility needs that have been identified during the planning process. A study is underway to determine the feasibility of conserving and managing additional undeveloped land surrounding the refuge for wildlife. In addition, the refuge began a cooperative multi-year study last spring with the Audubon Society of New Hampshire to assess the health of the refuge ecosystem.

Construction of a maintenance shop off Mountain Pond Road began last summer and is nearing completion. Work will begin this fall on a new canoe launch, parking area, restroom facility, and floating dock in Wentworth Location.

### Comprehensive Conservation Planning Goals for the Refuge

- To manage open water and wetland habitats, floodplain and lakeshore forests, and upland forests to benefit federal trust species and other species of conservation concern
- To provide high quality education and interpretive programs to promote an understanding and appreciation for the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats, as well as the role of the refuge in the Northern Forest
- To provide high quality wildlife-dependent activities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography where compatible with the refuge's purposes
- To enhance the conservation and management of fish and wildlife resources in the Northern Forest region through partnerships with public and private conservation groups, private landowners, and State and local entities
- To develop Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge as an outstanding center for research and development of applied management practices to sustain and enhance the natural resources in the Northern Forest with the Service's Land Management Research Demonstration program



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Canoeing the Magalloway River

#### For further information

Paul F. Casey, Refuge Manager  
Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge  
PO. Box 240  
Route 16, North  
Errol, N.H. 03579  
603/482 3415  
fw5rw\_lunwr@fws.gov  
<https://lakeumbagog.fws.gov>

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August 2005

