

Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Vision for the Future

“We envision Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge as an essential link in the network of conservation lands in the Northern Forests. We will showcase science-based, adaptive management in a working forest landscape and provide an outstanding center for research. We will achieve this through strong partnerships with State agencies, conservation organizations, land managers, and neighboring communities.”

“Our management will perpetuate the diversity and integrity of upland spruce-fir and northern hardwood forests, boreal and riverine wetlands, and lake habitats for the continued health of native fish and wildlife populations. These habitats will provide an important regional breeding area for migratory land birds, waterfowl, and other species of regional significance, such as the common loon and bald eagle.”

“Visitors of all ages will feel welcome to enjoy the full complement of priority wildlife-dependent public uses. We will foster their knowledge of and support for conserving northern forest habitats through exceptional outreach and visitor programs. We want all our visitors to return home filled with enthusiasm for promoting and practicing resource stewardship in their own communities.”

“We hope residents of neighboring communities in Maine and New Hampshire will value the refuge for enhancing their quality of life. Within the National Wildlife Refuge System, the refuge will be treasured for conserving Federal trust resources and providing inspirational outdoor experiences for present and future generations of Americans.”

Refuge Setting

Spanning the border of northern New Hampshire and western Maine, Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge protects 20,919 acres of significant wildlife habitats in Coos County, New Hampshire, and Oxford County, Maine. The refuge was established in 1992 to provide long-term protection for unique wetlands, threatened and endangered species, and migratory birds of conservation concern. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the States of Maine and New Hampshire collectively manage three-quarters of the shoreline of the lake, as well as nearby marshes, bogs and fens, and hardwood and boreal forests.



USFWS

Androscoggin River Backwater

Status of our Conservation Plan

As you may recall, we have been engaged over the last 5 years in developing a comprehensive conservation plan for the refuge. Once final, that plan will guide wildlife and habitat management, land conservation, and public use programs on the refuge for the next 15 years. We are proud to announce that we now have available a draft plan for public review and comment.

Details of the Draft Plan

Our draft plan, developed by a team of specialists, presents three fully developed, distinct management alternatives. The team consists of regional planners, biologists, refuge staff, and resource specialists from the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game, New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Our team also consulted with ecologists and other scientific experts to learn as much as possible about the natural resources in the region. We also carefully considered public input from eight scoping meetings and a citizen survey.

The three alternatives share some actions in common. Those may be required by law or policy, or already have gone through public review and agency review and approval. Or, they may be administrative actions that do not require public review, but deserve calling to your attention in this public

document. We believe they are all crucial in achieving the refuge’s purposes, vision, and goals. Some of them are:

- constructing a new administrative and visitor contact facility
- increasing the protection of rare, exemplary habitats, including the Floating Island National Natural Landmark
- focusing on partnerships, including the creation of an Umbagog Lake Working Group, consisting of federal and state agencies with management authority on the lake, to collaborate in managing the lake to reduce threats to its resources and promote responsible public use
- restoring degraded or unnecessary developed sites as soon as practicable
- changing the name of the refuge to Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge to convey its broad geographic context and management emphasis.

Description of the Alternatives

We based our three alternatives on the purposes for establishing the refuge, its vision and goals, and the issues and concerns the public, state agencies, and the Service identified during the planning process. Among those are the amount of forest to manage, other priority habitats to conserve and protect, and ways to improve opportunities for public use while ensuring resource protection.

Alternative A. Current Management

This “no action” alternative, required by regulations under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, would simply extend the way we now manage the refuge over the next 15 years. It also provides a baseline for comparing the two “action” alternatives. We would continue to protect the refuge from external threats, monitor its key resources, and conduct baseline inventories to improve our knowledge of its ecosystem. We would continue our public use programs for hunting, fishing, and observing wildlife, allow snowmobiling and camping at their present capacities in designated areas, and offer limited environmental education and interpretation. We would continue to acquire from willing sellers the remaining 6,392 acres within the approved refuge boundary.

Alternative B. Focal Species Habitat Management (Service-preferred alternative)

We recommend this alternative for approval. Its highest priority is to protect the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of Umbagog Lake and its associated rivers and tributaries. Its second priority is to manage the upland mixed forest and associated species. Management will focus on enhancing habitats for selected refuge focal species: species of regional conservation concern whose habitat needs generally represent the needs of many other federal trust resources.

Alternative B would also improve the quality of our wildlife-dependent recreation programs, and strengthen our partnerships with state and local entities offering similar programs in the area. Another partnership would focus on developing a Land Management Research Demonstration (LMRD) program for applying the best available science in management decisions that affect wildlife resources in the Northern Forest.

This alternative includes expanding the refuge as part of a network of conservation lands by acquiring 49,718 acres from willing sellers: 65 percent in fee simple and 35 percent in easements. Those habitats are important for conserving refuge focal species and other federal trust resources. Alternative B also proposes a new refuge headquarters and visitor contact facility. Refuge staffing and budgets would increase commensurately.

Alternative C. Natural Landscape, Composition, Patterns, and Processes Management

This alternative focuses not so much on benefiting selected species, but rather, on passively or actively manipulating vegetation to create or hasten the development of natural communities, landscape patterns and processes.

As in alternative B, alternative C improves wildlife-dependent recreation, strengthens our partnerships, and develops the LMRD program. It expands the refuge by 76,304 acres, which we will purchase in fee simple from willing sellers. Our target is to create contiguous blocks of hydrologically connected conservation habitat greater than 25,000 acres: our estimate of the minimum size necessary to facilitate the natural progression of ecological processes in the Northern Forest conservation network.

Public Review and Comment on the Plan

Public involvement is crucial in the planning process, and we encourage your participation. Your comments will help shape the final plan.

We are releasing the draft plan for a period of public review and comment. We ask that you submit your comments by August 24, 2007, by regular mail, email, or fax. Please send your comments to Nancy McGarigal, Planning Team Leader, at the address below. You can also submit comments at our open houses and public hearings (see next column for dates and locations).

How to Obtain a Copy of the CCP

The draft CCP and EIS is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Lake%20Umbagog/ccphome.html>. To request the document in print or on CD, contact:

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(Please put “Lake Umbagog” in the subject line)



Canada Warbler

Charles Warren/ NBI

Open Houses and Public Hearings

Date	Location
Monday Jul 30, 2007	Errol Town Hall Main Street Errol, NH 03579
Tuesday Jul 31, 2007	Newry Town Hall 422 Bear River Road Newry, ME 04261
Wednesday Aug 1, 2007	NH Community Technical College - Berlin Cafeteria 2020 Riverside Drive Berlin, NH 03570
Monday Aug 6, 2007	NH Fish and Game Dept. East & West Conference Rooms - 1st Floor 11 Hazen Drive Concord, NH 03301
Tuesday Aug 7, 2007	Holiday Inn Civic Center York Room 110 Community Drive Augusta, ME 04330

Meeting Format:

6:00 - 7:30 pm - Open House

7:30 - 9:30 pm - Public Hearing

All locations are fully accessible.

For Further Information

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

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