



Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 4, October 2012



Pacific tree frog. ©Margaret Tusko

The Draft CCP/EA is Ready for Public Review and Comment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (Draft CCP/EA) for the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, refuge) is available for public review and comment. In our last update, we summarized three preliminary alternatives that we considered for managing the refuge over the next 15 years. Using your original input, our draft goals and objectives, expertise gathered

by our planning team, and sound research, we have prepared a Draft CCP/EA. In addition to the management alternatives, the Draft includes information and background on the refuge; its physical, biological, and human environments; and an analysis of each alternative's effects on key environmental, community, and socio-economic resources.

We welcome your review and comments between now and November 22, 2012. There are

several ways for you to participate. See page 8 for a list of ways to obtain a copy of the Draft CCP/EA. Your feedback is important to us and you can provide it in a variety of ways. You may complete and mail in the enclosed comment form, email your comments to tualatinccp@fws.gov, and attend our open houses November 13 and 15, 2012.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Erin Holmes
Refuge Manager
Tualatin River
National Wildlife Refuge

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Just joining us? Go to www.fws.gov/tualatinriver/refugeplanning.htm for copies of Planning Updates 1-3.

Summary of Draft Alternatives

Alternative 1: “No-Action” Alternative

Alternative 1 describes continued implementation of the refuge’s current management program.

Habitat and Wildlife

The refuge would continue efforts to acquire, restore, and conserve wetlands and other habitats to benefit native fish and wildlife resources. Migratory birds, including wintering waterfowl, would remain a focus.

A large percentage of active management would be on wetland habitats where levees, water diversions, water control structures, pumps, and ditches would be used to manage water levels. Wetland basins would be periodically mowed, disked, and/or selectively treated with herbicides

to mimic natural disturbance cycles, limit plant succession, and suppress invasive plant species.

The refuge would continue to monitor, protect, and restore selected wildlife and plant species. Refuge habitats, such as prairies, oak savannas, wetlands, and forests, would be restored using a suite of techniques. Wildfire suppression would remain the only element of the refuge’s fire management program. A cooperative farming program would continue as an interim measure prior to restoration.

Visitor Services

The refuge would continue to offer quality wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, and interpretation programs with an emphasis on serving the local urban population.

There would remain no hunting or fishing opportunities. Programs would be supported by existing facilities with no visitor activities or facilities offered at other refuge locations.

Administration

Existing staffing levels would remain the same with six full-time permanent employees. Additional seasonal employees and other positions would continue to be filled as funds are available from the Service’s discretionary budgets or from grants and partners.

Alternative 2: Preferred Alternative

Our preferred Alternative 2 represents a balanced approach among the many competing needs and issues that the refuge currently faces and is likely to experience in the next 15 years.

Our preferred alternative would combine the existing mosaic of fragmented habitats into larger contiguous blocks of native habitat types, as well as restore relic or disappearing habitat types. Prescribed fire would be added as a habitat management technique. Additional visitor service opportunities would be offered both within the existing public use areas and at other units of the refuge.

Habitat and Wildlife

Alternative 2 is largely driven by the typical hydrologic flows in the Tualatin River with limited water control manipulation on the refuge.

Within the Sherwood Units, a high percentage of the habitats will largely remain the same. However, in order to reduce habitat fragmentation and promote habitat continuity, some parcels will be converted from one habitat type to another. Techniques to accomplish this may include updating and/or moving water control structures, recontouring topography, and restoring historic stream channels. Cooperative farming would be phased out in favor of native habitats and prescribed fire would be implemented.



Environmental education. USFWS

Management of the Wapato Lake Unit would include a mixture of free-flowing hydrology and intensive water control with the intention of restoring more natural hydrology. Actual management activities of the lakebed will be determined based upon the completion of the Wapato Lake water management planning study. Other actions included for the Wapato Lake Unit would restore fragmented wetlands, riparian forests, oak savannas, prairies, and streams.

Summary of Draft Alternatives

Visitor Services

At the Sherwood Units, existing visitor service programs would be expanded and new opportunities, including hunting and fishing, would be offered.

At the Wapato Lake Unit, opportunities such as hunting and other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation and interpretation would be explored as adequate land and

access are acquired and habitat restoration decisions are made.

Administration

To accommodate increases in habitat management and visitor services, the refuge would require six additional full-time permanent employees. The refuge would continue to pursue additional staff over the life of the CCP.

Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, the refuge would be managed with very little water manipulation, instead relying on natural hydrology. Habitat restoration and management would favor large patches of contiguous riparian forest and mixed forest, with smaller areas of scrub-shrub wetlands. Visitor services would focus less on expansion of opportunities and more on improving the quality of the existing programs.

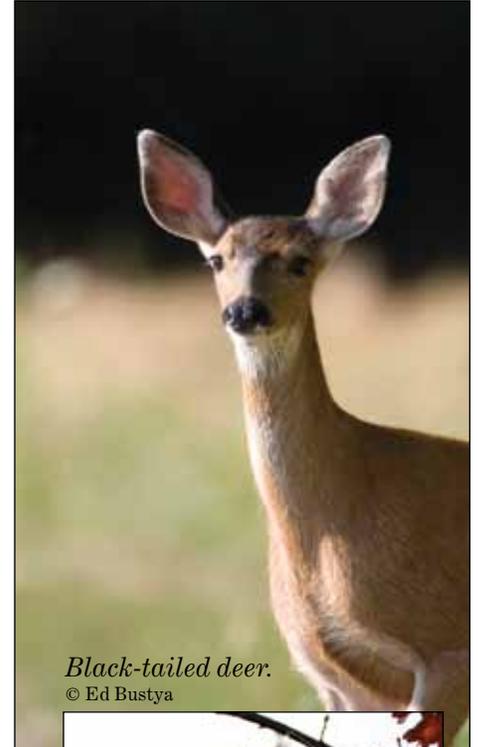
Habitat and Wildlife

Much of the existing riparian forest and mixed forest habitats would be expanded, replacing significant portions of the current seasonal emergent wetlands. Some scrub-shrub, wet prairie, and oak savanna would remain. Water control would be minimized, cooperative farming would be discontinued, and prescribed fire would be implemented.

Visitor Services

More emphasis would be placed on improving the quality of public use through evaluation of existing programs. Limited expansion of

the environmental education and recreation programs would occur on the Sherwood Units. Opportunities for public use at the Wapato Lake Unit would be explored as adequate land and access are acquired and habitat restoration decisions are made.



Black-tailed deer.
© Ed Bustya



Spider web.
© Jeppesen Corey



Great blue heron. ©Louann Goodrich

Alternatives Comparison Table

Would you like to look at our Alternatives maps?
Go to www.fws.gov/tualatinriver/refugeplanning.htm

Key Indicators of Comparison	Alternative 1 Current Management (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 3 (Alternative Action)
Acres of Each Habitat Type Under Various Alternatives*			
Bottomland riparian forest	388	413	657
Mixed coniferous/deciduous forest	49	126	178
Oak savanna	149	194	109
Wet prairie	27	129	45
Herbaceous wetland	294	187	64
Scrub-shrub wetland	20	200	196
Crops and improved pastures	942	0	0
Ruderal uplands	181	0	0
Ruderal wetlands	68	0	0
Developed land (buildings, etc.)	62	60	60
Water (river)	24	24	24
Restored acres of undetermined native habitat types at Wapato Lake Unit	0	871	871
Total acres*	2,204	2,204	2,204
Miles of Each Habitat Type Under Various Alternatives			
River frontage	7.2	7.2	7.2
Streams—maintain	4.0	1.4	1.4
Streams—restore	0	2.7	2.7
Backwater slough—maintain	0.9	0.9	0.9
Backwater slough—restore	0	1.6	1.6
Species Posing Management Challenges			
Nonnative, invasive, and pest plants	Continue Integrated Pest Management (IPM) without prescribed fire. Immediate early detection and rapid response actions to eliminate purple loosestrife, giant hogweed, garlic mustard, and Japanese knotweed if found.	Same as Alternative 1 and use prescribed fire.	Same as Alternative 2.
Nonnative, invasive, and pest animals	Continue IPM plus eliminate problem beavers, feral cats, and nutria. Immediate action to eliminate New Zealand mud snail, snapping turtle, and zebra mussel if found.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.
Mosquitoes	Continue to allow mosquito populations on the refuge to fluctuate and function unimpeded unless they pose a threat to human health. Mosquito treatments would be in accordance with IPM principles.	Same as Alternative 1, and develop mosquito component of disease contingency plan in cooperation with State and/or local vector control agencies.	Same as Alternative 2.

Continued on page 5

Alternatives Comparison Table — *continued from page 4*

Key Indicators of Comparison	Alternative 1 Current Management (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 3 (Alternative Action)
Canada geese	Continue to provide wintering sanctuary.	Same as Alternative 1, and work with partner agencies to implement regional plans and agreements.	Same as Alternative 2.
Roosevelt elk	Continue to take no management actions.	Work with partner agencies to develop elk management plan.	Same as Alternative 2.
Management of Special-Status Species			
Wetland, riparian, and upland habitats and species	Continue to support recovery of Nelson's checker-mallow.	Continue to support recovery of Nelson's checker-mallow and explore options to assist recovery of other listed species.	Same as Alternative 2.
Aquatic habitats and species	Continue to maintain and operate weirs, fish passage, and fish screening structures.	Same as Alternative 1, and where appropriate, remove culverts and other passage barriers during restoration efforts.	Same as Alternative 2.
Wapato Lake Management			
	Existing lake bed infrastructure would be maintained. Lake water levels and downstream discharges would continue as in the past.	Interim management same as Alternative 1. Long-term management would include more natural, free-flowing hydrology.	Same as Alternative 2.
Public Information and Outreach			
General program	Continue to maintain signs, brochures, websites, and limited media exposure.	Expand information and outreach materials to use broader range of techniques and more diverse use of social media aimed at a broader audience.	
Facilities and Access			
Facilities—Sherwood Units	Continue to maintain existing public use facilities.	Expand facilities to include 1-3 additional wildlife photography blinds, 1 off-trail nature explore/play area, 1 off-trail environmental education study area.	Continue to maintain existing public use facilities.
Facilities—Wapato Lake Unit	Continue to have no facilities.	As habitat restoration proceeds, explore opportunities for hunting and other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation and interpretive facilities.	
Access—Sherwood Units	Continue to provide existing access to and within the	Expand access to trails, blinds, and	Explore connecting the refuge to existing

Alternatives Comparison Table

Key Indicators of Comparison	Alternative 1 Current Management (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 3 (Alternative Action)
	Atfálat'i Unit.	study/explore areas. Explore connecting the refuge to existing regional trail systems. Conduct transportation and safety studies for new and existing access points.	regional trail systems. Conduct transportation and safety studies for new and existing access points.
Access—Wapato Lake Unit	No public access.	As habitat restoration proceeds, explore opportunities for public access to portions of the unit in support of compatible wildlife-dependent recreation and education.	
Refuge entrance and user fees	Refuge continues to have no entrance or user fees, but would continue to explore desirability of establishing an entrance fee.	Same as Alternative 1, plus explore desirability of user fees in support of waterfowl hunting, photo blind use, and special events and activities.	
Environmental Education			
Number of students served annually on refuge	1,900	5,000	1,900
Number of students served annually off-site	700	1,750	700
Number of youth served in informal (non-classroom-based) education programs	800	2,000	800
Number of teacher workshops offered annually	2	2	2
Outreach to schools	Predominately schools within a 10-mile radius of Sherwood.	Expand to include schools within a 10-mile radius of Sherwood and Gaston.	
Number of volunteer naturalists trained annually in support of the education program	10	25	25
Education opportunities offered near the Wapato Lake Unit	None	Plan to offer teacher training and education materials to be housed at local schools, and education programs/events at locations within the community (e.g., schools, parks).	
Hunting and Fishing			
Hunting—Sherwood Units	Refuge would remain closed to hunting.	Junior hunt program would be developed on the Riverboat Unit. Includes 2 to 5 hunting blinds.	Refuge would remain closed to hunting.
Hunting—Wapato Lake Unit	Refuge would remain closed to hunting.	Explore opportunities for waterfowl hunting in concurrence with habitat restoration planning and implementation.	

Alternatives Comparison Table

Key Indicators of Comparison	Alternative 1 Current Management (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 3 (Alternative Action)
Fishing	Refuge would remain closed to fishing.	Fishing program would be developed at the existing River Overlook on the Atfálat'i Unit.	Refuge would remain closed to fishing.
Urban Refuge Initiative			
Information clearinghouse for natural resources management		Provide information exchange on natural resource issues to encourage collaborative sharing within communities and organizations, agencies, businesses, and others.	
Information clearinghouse for environmental education		Provide information exchange and materials to educators, schools, and communities, including social science research supporting the benefits of nature-based education to people, with a focus on children.	
Bring more urban citizens to the refuge to experience nature.		Identify barriers to connecting urban people to natural areas; hire youth in natural resource jobs; develop a transportation strategy to bring urban audiences to the refuge.	
Increase relevance of natural resources to urban citizens		Provide outreach that supports the value of natural resources for communities—for human health, economic health, watershed health; provide education materials that address conservation and community issues such as invasive species, pollinators, urban wildlife, and climate change.	

You are invited to our open houses to learn about and provide comments on the Draft CCP/EA.

Sherwood

Tuesday, November 13, 2012
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Tualatin River
National Wildlife Refuge
19255 SW Pacific Highway
Sherwood, OR

Forest Grove

Thursday, November 15, 2012
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Forest Grove Senior and
Community Center
2037 Douglas Street
Forest Grove, OR



Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge
19255 SW Pacific Highway
Sherwood, OR 97140

**You are invited to
learn more at our open
houses on November
13 and 15. See page 7
for details.**

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How to View or Acquire the Draft CCP/EA

The Draft CCP/EA are available in the following formats:



Electronic PDF

Download the document at www.fws.gov/tualatinriver/refugeplanning.htm



Compact Disk

Copies on CD may be obtained by contacting Erin Holmes, Refuge Manager, Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, 19255 SW Pacific Hwy, Sherwood, OR 97140, 503-625-5944, tualatinccp@fws.gov



Printed Copy

A printed “desk copy” may be reviewed at the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters Office and at the public libraries in Sherwood, Tualatin, Tigard, Forest Grove, and Beaverton.

To promote availability of the Draft CCP/EA to a wider audience, and to reduce our use of paper, we are emphasizing electronic distribution of the document. Limited printed and CD-ROM copies are available.

