



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Chincoteague and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges

*Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan  
and Environmental Impact Statement*

*August 2015*



*Front cover:*

*Sunrise at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge*  
Steve Hillebrand/USFWS



*This blue goose, designed by  
J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become  
the symbol of the National Wildlife  
Refuge System.*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of over 150 million acres including over 555 national wildlife refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas. The Service also operates 70 national fish hatcheries and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.

Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) provide long-term guidance for management decisions on a refuge and set forth goals, objectives, and strategies needed to accomplish refuge purposes. CCPs also identify the Service's best estimate of future needs. These plans detail program levels that are sometimes substantially above current budget allocations and, as such, are primarily for Service strategic planning and program prioritization purposes. CCPs do not constitute a commitment for staffing increases, operational and maintenance increases, or funding for future land acquisition.



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### **Refuge Vision Statement**

Our vision statement for the refuges is a synthesis of the refuges' purposes, the National Wildlife Refuge System mission and goals, and other biological, legal, and social concerns in which the refuge has a role. It is intended to be an expression of what the refuge will be like in the future in terms of natural resources and visitor experience. Our vision for the refuge, developed to help provide the core component of management strategies hereafter, is as follows:

*Chincoteague and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges encompass extraordinary and ever-changing lands at the edge of the sea, a place where unique habitats and wildlife flourish. In partnership with others, the refuges are a vital part of a larger system of protected lands and waters on the Delmarva Peninsula critical to migratory birds. People from around the world can visit the refuges to learn, recreate, refresh themselves, be inspired by wildlife and wild lands, and renew their connection with nature.*

# Chincoteague and Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges

## *Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*

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**Type of Action:** Administrative – Development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan

**Lead Agency:** U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

**Location:** Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge  
Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuge  
Chincoteague, Virginia

**Administrative  
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This Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement analyzes three alternatives to managing the 14,032-acre Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and 373-acre Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuge over the next 15 years. This document also contains 18 appendices that provide additional information supporting our analysis. Following is a brief overview of each alternative:

**Alternative A** is the status quo and current management alternative as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. This alternative continues current management strategies as established by the Master Plan approved in 1992, and is referred to as our “No Action” alternative.

**Alternative B** would continue established habitat and wildlife management strategies but focus them in light of the new goals and vision established by the Comprehensive Conservation Plan. This alternative balances habitat management, public use and access, and administration of the refuge. Alternative B is our preferred alternative, and the action that we recommend for final selection.

**Alternative C** would direct staffing and funding towards maximizing habitat and wildlife management strategies. As a result of prioritizing habitat and wildlife management, public use activities and access may be reduced.

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