

# Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge



## *Release of Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan May 2014*



Great Swamp NWR - William Lynch

### **Greetings from Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge!**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pleased to announce the release of a draft comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental assessment (EA) for Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The draft CCP/EA is now available for public review and comment until June 27, 2014.

In this newsletter, we summarize the four different management alternatives we evaluated for the refuge. We also explain how you can obtain and comment on the draft

### **What's a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?**

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act requiring the Service to prepare CCPs for each national wildlife refuge. A CCP is a 15-year strategic plan guiding management for all refuge programs. CCPs will be revised at least every 15 years, or sooner if significant new information becomes available or conditions change.

Service staff began preparing a CCP for Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in July 2010.

CCP/EA and provide details about upcoming public meetings.

### **The Refuge**

The 7,768-acre Great Swamp NWR was established by an act of Congress in November 1960. It was formally dedicated in 1964, primarily under the authorities of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 "...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

The refuge is located approximately 26 miles from New York City in a heavily suburbanized area. It provides vital brooding, nesting, feeding, and resting habitat for a variety of migratory bird species, including waterfowl. Although established primarily for migratory birds, the refuge's mosaic of forested wetlands, emergent wetlands, and various successional stages of upland vegetation provides habitats for a diversity of wildlife species.



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Each alternative in the draft CCP/EA aims to achieve the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals. Brief descriptions of the four alternatives are included below. Complete descriptions of each alternative are provided in chapter 3 of the draft CCP/EA. A detailed analysis of the potential impacts resulting from implementation of each alternative is provided in chapter 4 of the draft CCP/EA.

### Alternative A - Current Management

This alternative describes our current management priorities and activities at the refuge. It serves as a baseline for comparing alternatives B, C, and D.

**Habitat Management:** Under alternative A, we would continue to:

- Maintain a diversity of habitats, including wetlands, impoundments, grasslands, scrub-shrub and forest.

**Visitor Services:** The refuge would continue to:

- Support environmental education, interpretation, and wildlife observation, hunting, and photography.
- Offer appropriate, compatible non-wildlife-dependent uses including horseback riding, jogging, cross-country skiing, showshoeing, virtual geocaching, and dog walking.

### Alternative B - Enhance Biological Diversity and Public Use Opportunities (*Service-preferred*)

Alternative B is the Service-preferred alternative because it combines the actions we believe would best achieve the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals; respond to key issues; support species of conservation concern, and offer unique visitor opportunities.

#### **Habitat Management:**

- Maintain a diversity of forest, non-forested, open water, grassland, and scrub-shrub habitats.

- Reconfigure and maintain habitats to create fewer, larger (greater than 50 acres) contiguous patches to promote wildlife use, increase connectivity, decrease fragmentation, increase maintenance efficiency, and reduce associated costs.
- Emphasize habitat for priority bird species and Federal trust species, including the bog turtle and Indiana bat.

#### **Visitor Services:**

- Expand opportunities to reach nearby urban populations.
- Expand the hunt program by permitting archery for deer and opening the refuge to turkey hunting.
- Improve wildlife viewing and photography opportunities by creating trails, providing more parking, and constructing observation towers.
- Expand visitor center hours.
- Increase the number of environmental education and interpretation programs.

### Alternative C - Emphasis on Maximizing Natural Regeneration

#### **Habitat Management:**

- Allow natural succession or regeneration to occur to maximum extent practical.
- Maintain large patches of consolidated grasslands and managed brushlands along Pleasant Plains Road.

- Continue active management in areas known to support priority refuge species.
- Actively work with regional partners to address climate change, habitat loss, and water and air quality impacts.

**Visitor Services:** Public use opportunities would be the same as under alternative A, except:

- Eliminate less used or dead end trails in wilderness area.

### Alternative D - Focus on Expansion of Priority Public Uses

**Habitat Management:** Habitat management would be the same as under alternative B, except:

- Emphasize managing for open habitats.
- Maintain open water habitat within impoundments.
- Aggressively expand partnerships for conservation initiatives.

#### **Visitor Services:**

- Allow fishing in select areas of the refuge.
- Expand hunting as described under alternative B.
- Provide a greater variety of wildlife-dependent public use opportunities.
- Increase outreach and publicity to promote the refuge.
- Expand infrastructure, including new trails, observation towers, parking lots, and new signage.



Great Swamp NWR

### Public Meetings

Please consider attending one of the upcoming public meetings about the draft CCP/EA for Great Swamp NWR.

At each meeting, we will give a short presentation on the draft CCP/EA, followed by an open house. Attendees will have opportunities to speak directly with the planning team and ask questions about the plan. We will provide comment forms for individuals to write their comments.

#### June 11, 2014

10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Chatham Municipal Building  
58 Meyersville Road,  
Chatham, NJ 07928

#### June 12, 2014

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Long Hill Township Municipal Building  
915 Valley Road  
Gillette, NJ 07933

The Service is committed to providing access to these meetings for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, close captioning, or other accommodation needs to refuge staff at 973/425-1222 or the Federal Relay Service

at 1-800-877-8339. Requests for accommodations should be made at least 5 days in advance.

### How to Obtain a Draft Plan and Provide Comments

You may view and download the draft CCP/EA online:  
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/greatswamp/ccphome.html>.

To request a hard copy or CD-ROM see the contact information below.

We invite you to share your comments about the draft plan in writing or at our public meetings. We will accept letters, faxes, phone calls, and emails. To be considered, all comments must be received or postmarked by June 27, 2014.

### Contact Information

Email: [northeastplanning@fws.gov](mailto:northeastplanning@fws.gov)  
(Please put "Great Swamp CCP" in subject line)

Mail: Bill Perry  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Refuge Planner  
300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035

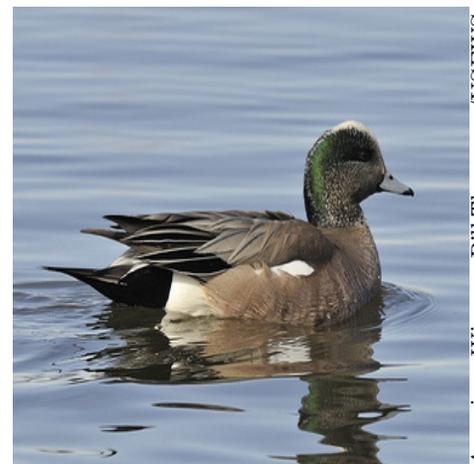
Phone: 413/253-8688

Fax: 413/253-8468

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>  
**1 800/ 344 WILD**



Wood Turtle - John J. Mosesso, Jr./NBI



American Wigeon - Bill Thompson/USFWS

**Federal Relay Service for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing**  
**1 800/877 8339**

## Great Swamp NWR Draft Goals

**Goal 1:** Provide high-quality, diverse freshwater emergent wetlands with naturally varying hydric regimes, including wet meadows, freshwater emergent marsh, and open water wetland habitats dominated by native plants for migratory birds, endangered and threatened species, and priority conservation species.

**Goal 2:** Create and maintain an interspersed mosaic of scrub-shrub, grassland and successional wet meadows comprised of native vegetation at various successional stages to enhance breeding and foraging habitat for priority species of conservation concern.

**Goal 3:** Maintain a mosaic of wetland and upland forest, consisting of native understory species of varying densities and structure, to maximize the potential utilization by priority resources of concern.

**Goal 4:** Provide opportunities for visitors of all ages and abilities to enjoy wildlife-dependent recreation, appreciate the cultural and natural resources of Great Swamp NWR, and increase their understanding and support of the refuge's mission.

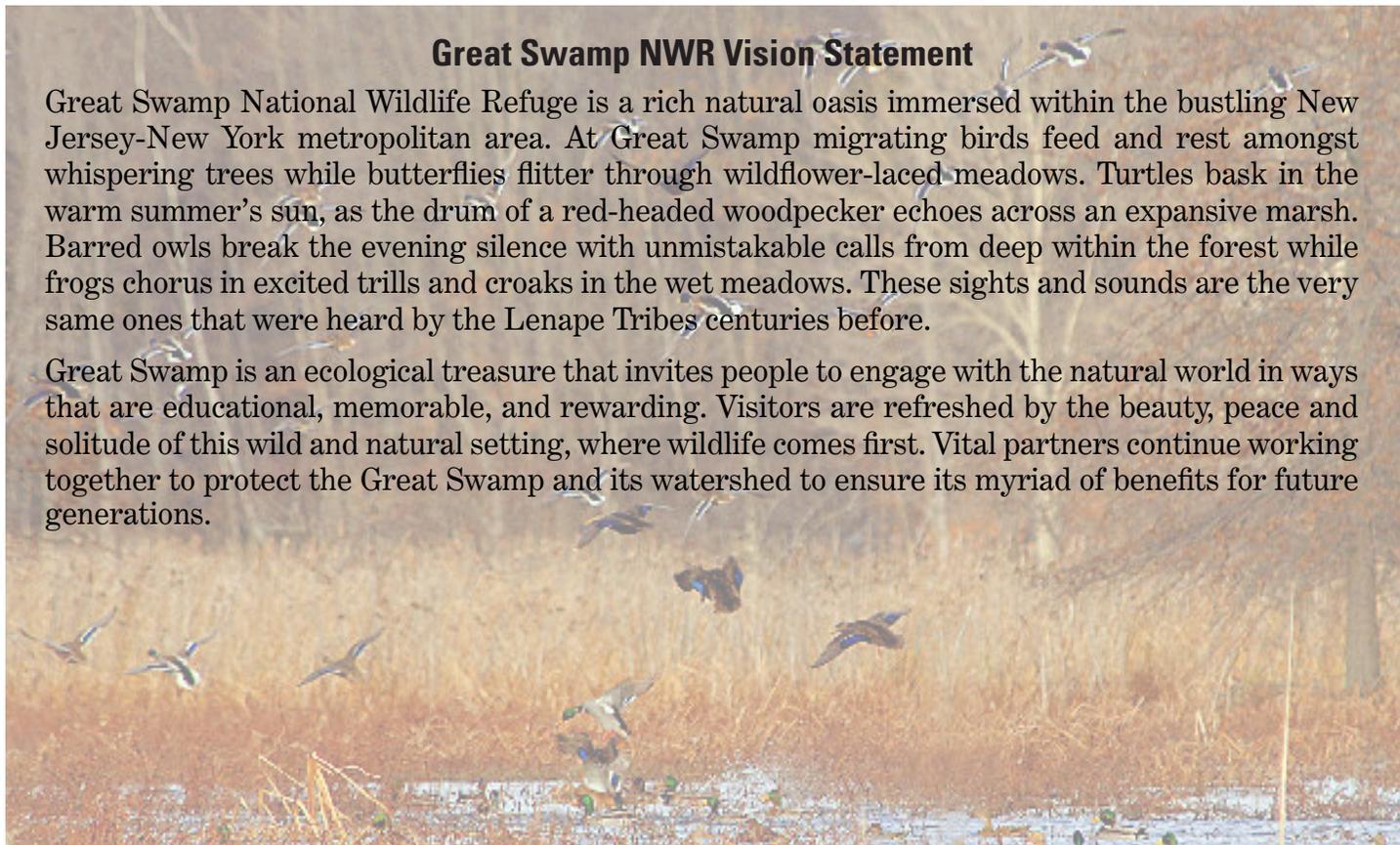
**Goal 5:** Collaborate with the local community and partners to complement biological and visitor services programs on the refuge and throughout the watershed.

## Great Swamp NWR Vision Statement

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is a rich natural oasis immersed within the bustling New Jersey-New York metropolitan area. At Great Swamp migrating birds feed and rest amongst whispering trees while butterflies flitter through wildflower-laced meadows. Turtles bask in the warm summer's sun, as the drum of a red-headed woodpecker echoes across an expansive marsh. Barred owls break the evening silence with unmistakable calls from deep within the forest while frogs chorus in excited trills and croaks in the wet meadows. These sights and sounds are the very same ones that were heard by the Lenape Tribes centuries before.

Great Swamp is an ecological treasure that invites people to engage with the natural world in ways that are educational, memorable, and rewarding. Visitors are refreshed by the beauty, peace and solitude of this wild and natural setting, where wildlife comes first. Vital partners continue working together to protect the Great Swamp and its watershed to ensure its myriad of benefits for future generations.

Deborah Lewinson



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