

Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge

Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement Release

The Final CCP/EIS is Now Available

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the release of the final comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental impact statement (EIS) for Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). This final CCP/EIS plan is being released for a 30-day review through November 2015.

We released the draft CCP/EIS for 6 months of public comment last year. Based on the comments we received on the draft, we have developed a final CCP/EIS. The final CCP/EIS presents three alternatives for managing the refuge over the next 15 years to achieve the Service's wildlife conservation mission and to support public use on the refuge.

Unlike the comment period on the draft CCP/EIS, we will not be holding any public meetings during the review period. This review period offers individuals and organizations that commented on the draft CCP/EIS the opportunity to review our responses to their comments and the changes we made to the final plan (see "Updates Made to the Final CCP/EIS" and the table on page 2). It also allows Federal and State agencies, and Tribal governments, with jurisdiction or expertise to review the final plan.

After the review ends, we will evaluate and incorporate any new substantive information and complete the process to approve the final CCP (see box on right and "Next Steps" on page 2).



Freshwater ponds on South Monomoy Island.

USFWS

Where to Get a Copy of Final CCP/EIS

You can download a copy of the final CCP/EIS from our website at: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Monomoy/what_we_do/conservation.html.

Public Comments on the Draft Plan

The public comment period on the draft CCP/EIS ran from April 10 to October 10, 2014. During this period, we held one public hearing and four open house meetings. In total, we received 39 oral comments and over 250 separate written comments. We also received two petitions with 1,576 and 650 individual signatures, respectively.

The comments received covered a range of subjects, from public use to habitat management and socioeconomic considerations. A summary of all the substantive comments we received and our responses to them is provided in appendix K in the final CCP/EIS.

The topics we received the most comments on were the refuge boundary, the Service's jurisdiction in open waters and submerged lands, shellfishing and fin fishing, kite-boarding, several other public uses, and coordination with the Town of

Where are we in the planning process?

- Preplanning
- Public Scoping
- Develop and Analyze Alternatives
- Release Public Draft CCP/EIS for Public Comment
- Review Public Comments and Update Final CCP/EIS
- We are here** **Release Final CCP/EIS for Review Period**
- Regional Director Selects Alternative and Writes Record of Decision (ROD)
- Release Final CCP and Start Implementing the Plan

Mark Vance/Flickr-Creative Commons



American oystercatcher

Chatham (Town). The table below explains how we addressed these major topics. We recognize this planning process has been protracted and we thank everyone for their patience and for staying engaged over the years. We were very impressed with the volume and quality of comments we received. We read every comment and were moved that so many people wrote and spoke passionately about their love of Monomoy NWR, its wildlife and habitats, recreational opportunities, and importance to the local community. Public involvement and input was invaluable as we developed the final CCP/EIS.

Changes Made to the Final CCP/EIS

Like the draft CCP/EIS, the final CCP/EIS evaluates three alternatives for managing Monomoy NWR over the next 15 years. However, based on new information in the comments we received, and subsequent conversations with local experts, we made several important changes to alternative B, the Service’s preferred alternative. We fully describe these changes in appendix K in the final CCP/EIS, as

well as in Chapter 3-Alternatives. The table below summarizes the major changes between the draft and final plans.

The most significant change relates to the refuge’s eastern boundary at Nauset/South Beach. We have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Town which administratively determined a management boundary line (see map on page 4). The Town will manage to the east of the management boundary line and the refuge will manage to the west of this line. This means that the Town will continue to manage much of Nauset/South Beach. None of the lands that will be managed by the Town are part of the Monomoy Wilderness.

The modified Alternative B is the Service’s preferred alternative in the final CCP/EIS. We feel this alternative combines the actions that would most effectively achieve the refuge purposes, vision, and goals.

Next Steps

At the close of the 30-day review, the

Service’s Northeast Regional Director will determine if the final CCP/EIS is adequate to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Our Regional Director will then select an alternative to implement as the final CCP and document this decision in a Record of Decision (ROD). We will announce the ROD’s availability in the *Federal Register*.

With the signing and release of the ROD, we can begin implementing the CCP. We look forward to working with the Town, our neighbors, conservation partners, and other Federal and State agencies to implement our CCP.

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Highlights of Proposals under the Service-preferred Alternative B in Draft and Final CCP/EIS by Major Issue		
Major Issue	Proposal under Alternative B in Draft CCP/EIS	Proposal under Alternative B in Final CCP/EIS
Refuge’s eastern boundary – Nauset/South Beach	Refuge boundary would include 717 acres of Nauset/South Beach. The refuge would manage this area as part of the Monomoy Wilderness Area.	Change: Most of Nauset/South Beach would continue to be managed by the Town. The refuge and Town have signed a MOU (Final CCP/EIS appendix L) which administratively determined a management boundary line. The Service will manage lands west of this line, and the Town will manage lands east. None of the lands that will be managed by the Town are part of the Monomoy Wilderness (see map page 4).
Refuge jurisdiction over open waters and submerged lands within 1944 Declaration of Taking	Refuge’s western boundary extends beyond mean low water (MLW) out to the 1944 Declaration of Taking line.	<i>No change:</i> We still claim management authority over the submerged lands and open waters in the Declaration of Taking.
Fin fishing	Prohibit any fishing activity using techniques or gear that disturbs the bottom. Allow fishing in the open waters, above submerged lands, under State and Federal regulations.	Change: We determined that existing State and Federal fishing regulations adequately protect eelgrass beds so we do not propose to further regulate fin fishing at this time.
Fish Weirs	Prohibit fish weirs.	Change: We determined that existing State and Town regulations adequately regulate fish weirs so we do not propose to further regulate fish weirs at this time.
Shellfishing – Softshell clams, razor clams, and quahogs	Prohibit mechanized equipment for harvesting quahogs. Allow non-mechanized harvest of subterranean shellfish (softshell clams, razor clams, and quahogs).	Change: We determined that existing State and Town shellfishing regulations adequately protect eelgrass beds so we do not propose to further regulate shellfishing for these species below the MLW line at this time. Continue to allow only non-mechanized hand harvest of subterranean shellfish across the refuge above MLW.

Highlights of Proposals under the Service-preferred Alternative B in Draft and Final CCP/EIS by Major Issue

Major Issue	Proposal under Alternative B in Draft CCP/EIS	Proposal under Alternative B in Final CCP/EIS
Salting for razor clam and sea clam harvesting	Prohibit salting for shellfish harvesting.	<i>No change:</i> We still propose to prohibit salting above MLW based on the potential for negative impacts to non-target species and undersized razor clams.
Shellfishing – Scallop harvesting	Prohibit non-hand harvest of scallops.	Change: We now propose to allow scalloping according to Town regulations. We believe that existing regulations are sufficient to protect eelgrass beds at this time.
Shellfishing – Sea clams	Sea clams were not addressed in the draft CCP/EIS as there is no current fishery on the refuge. However, several commenters included sea clams in their comments on the draft CCP/EIS.	Change: Currently, there is not a viable sea clam fishery on the refuge. However, if in the future there is, we propose to allow sea clamming in accordance with Town regulations except for salting above MLW, and will allow the hand harvest of sea clams on tidal flats.
Shellfishing – Wheeled carts in Monomoy Wilderness Area	Prohibit wheeled carts in Monomoy Wilderness Area.	<i>No change:</i> We still propose to prohibit wheeled carts in the wilderness area because they violate the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136) and Service wilderness policies (610 FW 1).
Mussel harvesting	Prohibit mussel harvesting.	<i>No change:</i> We still propose to prohibit mussel harvesting because mussels are an important food for federally threatened red knots, as well as common eiders, other sea ducks, and American oystercatchers.
Moorings	Prohibit moorings.	Change: We now propose to evaluate the installation of conservation boat moorings on a case-by-case basis, and allow if found appropriate and compatible.
Kiteboarding	Prohibit kiteboarding.	<i>No change:</i> We still propose to prohibit kiteboarding on the refuge due to concerns about impacts on nesting and staging birds, including common terns, least terns, federally endangered roseate terns, and federally threatened red knots and piping plovers.
Dog walking	Prohibit dog walking.	Change: We now propose to allow leashed dogs on Morris Island from September 16 to April 30. A seasonal closure from May 1 to September 15 is consistent with Town regulations and will minimize impacts to wildlife and conflicts between visitors. Dogs and other pets would not be allowed elsewhere on the refuge at any time. We would require that pets be on a 6-foot leash and that owners remove pet waste from the refuge.



Peter Paton

Common tern on Monomoy NWR

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov>

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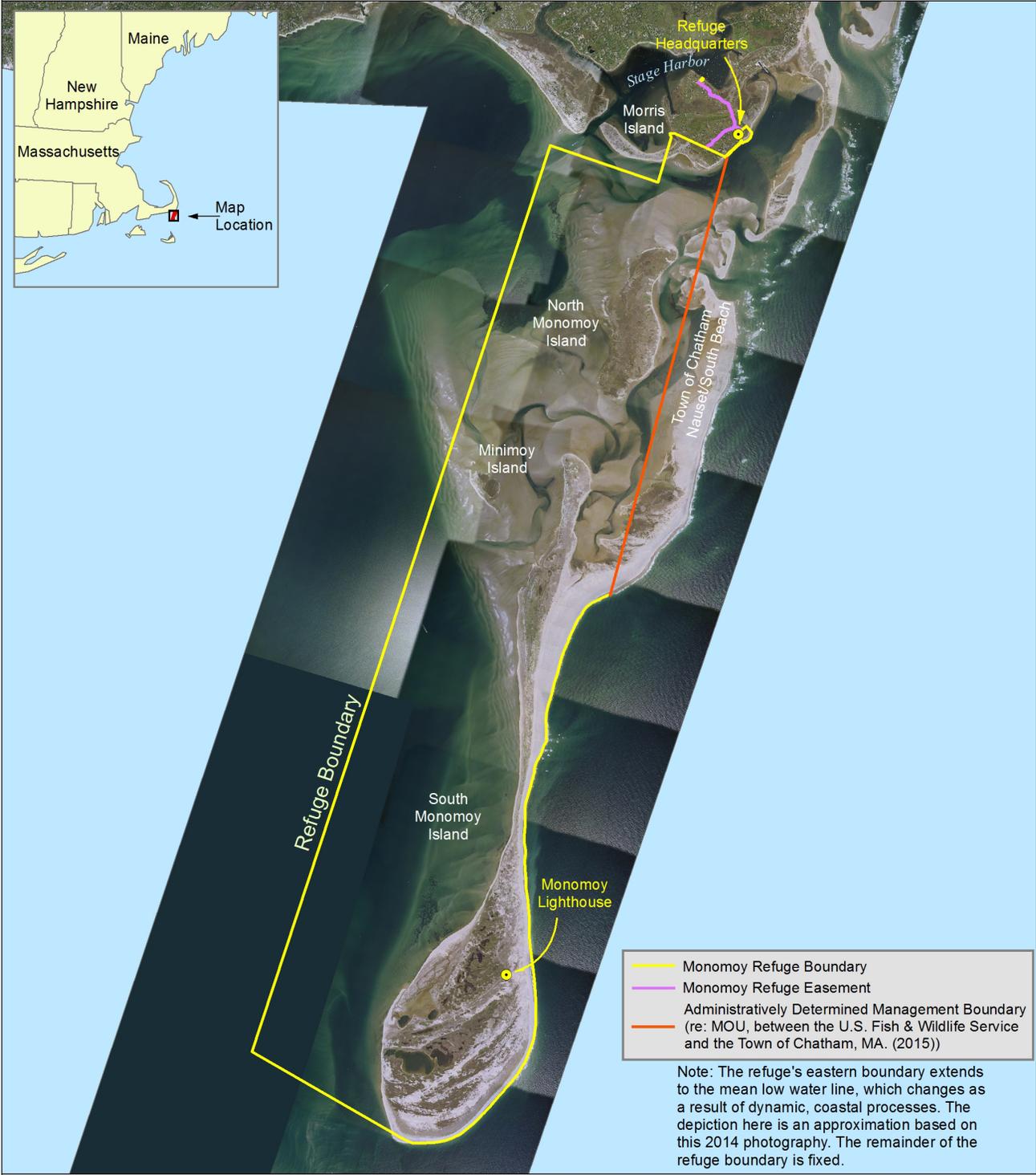
October 2015





Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge - Comprehensive Conservation Plan

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Sources:
 Refuge boundaries from USFWS.
 Background photo from
 Town of Chatham, Massachusetts (2014)



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