



Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update Newsletter #4

Greetings from the refuge!

Refuge staff and core planning team partners continue to work on the draft comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental assessment (EA) for Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge. The CCP/EA is a 15-year strategic plan that will guide management for all refuge programs, including habitat management and outdoor recreation.

The planning process began in 2012 when we first held scoping meetings to gather public input and identify key issues and concerns. Developing the CCP for Plum Tree Island NWR is a major collaborative effort between several State and Federal agencies to develop goals and strategies that best protect natural resources and provide appropriate wildlife-dependent recreational activities.

We appreciate your patience as we continue to develop the best possible plan for the refuge.



USFWS

American oystercatcher

Our timeline

We intend to complete our draft CCP/EA for the refuge in the summer of 2015. When it is released, we will provide opportunities for public review and comment for 30 days. Information about public meeting dates, times, and locations will be distributed at that time.

We will address comments that we receive during the public comment period in the final plan. With your involvement, we will develop a CCP that will ensure that the refuge remains a special place for wildlife and people.

Why has the CCP schedule changed?

Our interagency planning team has been working to further refine the goals and objectives for wildlife and public uses at the refuge. Refuge staff have the additional challenge of preparing a separate CCP for the nearby James River NWR, as well as managing daily activities at all four of the refuges in the Eastern Virginia Rivers NWR Complex: Rappahannock River Valley, Presquile, James River, and Plum Tree Island NWRs.

Considering these and various other factors, additional time has been needed in our planning process.

What will be in the draft CCP/EA?

The draft CCP/EA will describe and evaluate alternative ways of managing the refuge, including the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives.

The alternatives all meet the refuge's purposes. One of the alternatives represents our current management approach and will serve as a baseline for comparison.

Next Steps

We look forward to discussing the draft CCP/EA with you. Public input on the draft CCP/EA is invaluable and will help us to refine our management proposal to best achieve our shared vision for the refuge. Once the draft CCP is complete, it will be available for review on our website. A limited number of hard-copies and CD-ROM versions will be available upon request from refuge staff.

Latest news from the refuge

Over the past several months, refuge staff have conducted a variety of biological surveys and monitoring efforts on the refuge.

Salt Marsh Integrity

Salt marsh integrity is an assessment measuring the health of salt marshes. These assessments are being conducted at coastal wildlife refuges from Maine to Virginia to quantify birds, vegetation, fish, elevation, and tidal flooding; elevation and tidal flooding were not completed at Plum Tree Island NWR because of the presence of unexploded ordnance. Salt marshes are extremely important to both wildlife and humans by serving as nursery for a wide variety of species, protecting coastal areas from erosion, and filtering nutrients and sediments from the water column.

Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetles
 Refuge staff conducted a population count of the federally threatened Northeastern beach tiger beetle. Adult beetles typically arrive in June where they feed, mate, and lounge in the fine sandy area along the water's edge. They feed on lice, fleas, flies, and dead crabs and fish. While adults migrate in the fall, the larvae (young) stay higher up on the beach and are not considered adults until 2 years after they hatch. Human impact is the main reason for their threatened status. Development, beach alteration, shoreline stabilization, and recreation activities harm developing larvae.



Adult Northeastern beach tiger beetle

USFWS

Access Restrictions

The entirety of Plum Tree Island NWR remains closed to all public uses except waterfowl hunting on Cow Island, when hunters have acquired a refuge-issued permit in advance.

Migratory Shorebird Surveys
 Surveys of migratory shorebirds will be conducted by mid-October, to estimate populations using the the area. This survey is a result of world-wide concern over the potential decline of shorebirds. Expected species include black-bellied and piping plovers, sanderlings, American oystercatcher, willet, red knot, ruddy turnstone, killdeer, black-neck stilt, dunlins, and yellow-legs. Many of these birds use Plum Tree Island as a feeding stopover during migration from their summering grounds in the Arctic to their wintering grounds in Central and South America.

Contact information

For additional information about this planning process, please visit our refuge website at:
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/plum_tree_island.

Or contact:

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Please put "Plum Tree Island CCP" in the subject line.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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

<http://www.fws.gov>

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