



Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update Newsletter 3, December 2013

As part of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process for Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we, our) is working with other agencies to help develop reasonable and implementable management goals and objectives for the refuge.

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. The focus of this newsletter is to highlight the roles of the agencies involved in drafting the CCP for Plum Tree Island NWR and provide you with a planning schedule update.



Jeff Brewer / USACE

Interagency Coordination

Plum Tree Island NWR was a former bombing range and unexploded ordnance remains on refuge lands and waterways. In addition to refuge and other Service staff, we are coordinating closely with the following agencies to develop a CCP for the refuge: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Service’s Ecological Services Office in Virginia (ES Office), Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ), and Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF).

Representatives from each of these agencies bring special expertise to our CCP discussions. The USACE is the lead agency responsible for characterizing the hazards associated with unexploded ordnance and developing feasible strategies that support both the refuge’s purposes and the State’s management of coastal resources and public activities on the waters and lands. The VDEQ represents the State’s interests regarding the clean-up of contaminated sites at current and former military installations. Contaminants biologists at the ES Office help refuge staff consider ecological risks for wildlife associated with unexploded ordnance when proposing refuge management actions. The VDGIF helps us ensure that our habitat and wildlife population management dovetails with the State’s priorities.

By working in collaboration with other agencies, we can further our mission to conserve, protect, and enhance the nation’s fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

| Updated Planning Schedule | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Fall 2012 | Initiate scoping and compile comments |
| Winter 2012 - Summer 2014 | Develop alternatives, evaluate impacts, and draft the CCP |
| Winter 2014 - 2015 | Release draft CCP and EA for 30-day public review |
| Spring 2015 | Release final CCP |

Stay informed throughout the planning process by visiting our refuge Web site at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/plum_tree_island

Plum Tree Island NWR

We received a variety of questions from you, your neighbors, and other parties interested in the future management of Plum Tree Island NWR. Here are three of the most commonly asked questions.

1. What can I do on Plum Tree Island NWR?

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.

At any time, the Refuge Manager may evaluate other public uses to determine if they are appropriate and compatible with the refuge purpose, goals, and objectives. Typically when a refuge is developing its CCP, the Refuge Manager generates the *Finding of Appropriateness* and *Compatibility Determinations* documents for inclusion in the Draft CCP and EA.

2. Why has the CCP schedule changed?

Our interagency planning team has been working diligently to consider all the comments received during the scoping phase of CCP development. We have been sharing information and working together to address the critical questions you asked, as well as developing mutually agreeable goals and objectives for wildlife and public uses. 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 NWR, Presquile NWR, James River NWR, and Plum Tree Island NWR. Considering these and various other factors, additional time is needed to incorporate new information in to our planning process and draft CCP content.

3. How does the CCP process relate to the USACE process to investigate and remedy the unexploded ordnance on Plum Tree Island?

Development of a CCP for Plum Tree Island NWR is occurring at the same time as the USACE is conducting its investigations and developing its plans for the unexploded ordnance concerns associated with the Plum Tree Range Formerly Used Defense Site. We recognize that

it is easy to be confused about which plan best addresses your questions and concerns.

The CCP for Plum Tree Island NWR is a refuge-specific management plan. It takes in to consideration all information about the natural and human environments that are relevant to managing the refuge for the next 15 years and beyond. We develop refuge CCPs with input from a wide variety of stakeholders including other government agencies, Tribal representatives, academic institutions, organizations, and the general public. Our CCP will focus on management of refuge habitats, wildlife, and public uses.

The USACE is preparing a variety of documents that characterize unexploded ordnance occurring on the Plum Tree Island Range FUDS, and propose remedies to reduce or eliminate risks to human and ecological systems on the site. The USACE develops their documents in consultation with technical experts, other government agencies, and the general public. Questions related to the boundaries and prohibited activities within the USACE Danger Zone, relationship between the USACE's Danger Zone and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's (VMRC) Restricted Area, and the progress of their site investigations and documents are being addressed by the USACE.

Contact for CCP progress questions:

Meghan (Carfioli) Powell

Natural Resource Planner

Phone: (804) 333-1470 x158

Email: EasternVirginiaRiversNWRC@fws.gov
with "Plum Tree Island CCP" in the subject line

Contact for USACE and ordnance questions:

George C. Follett

CENAB-EN-EES

Phone: (410) 320-8157

Email: George.C.Follett@usace.army.mil