



United States Department of the Interior

MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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The Need to Improve Malheur National Wildlife Refuge's Aquatic Health

DATE: April 30, 2010

SUMMARY

- The detrimental impacts of invasive common carp have seriously handicapped the Refuge to fulfill its mission to provide feeding, nesting, and rearing habitat for migratory birds, especially colonial nesting waterbirds.

BACKGROUND

- Historically, Malheur Lake was utilized by up to 35% of the Pacific Flyway's canvasback population, was the second most important redhead production site in the West, and at its peak produced, over 100,000 ducklings annually.
- In the 1950s, the common carp became firmly established in Refuge waters. Since then the infesting carp continue to severely deplete migratory food resources and diminish water quality. The Refuge currently averages about 2-7% of its former waterfowl production capability.
- Efforts have been made to control the carp by chemical treatment, barriers and traps, and water management; which resulted in very short term habitat improvements.

CURRENT STATUS

- The Refuge has hired a full time fish biologist to develop a carp control plan, build partnerships to assist with carp research and control, provide direction for fisheries issues in Comprehensive Conservation Plan, and to improve aquatic health for the other native fish and mussel species.
- The Refuge hosted 64 participants at a three day invasive carp control workshop to build partnerships and develop program direction for carp research/control at the Refuge. The product of this workshop was the establishment of assessment, control, and funding/partnership workgroups. The workgroups include federal, state, NGO's, private citizens, and Tribal participants.
- The Refuge created the Carp Coalition listserv <https://www.fws.gov/lists/listinfo/malheurnwrcarpcoalition> to coordinate and communicate with over 150 participants from around the country interested improving the Refuge's aquatic health.
- The Refuge was awarded over \$50,000 to conduct carp control research and outreach/educational activities. Several research activities are planned to aid us in understanding our native and invasive fish species population dynamics and distribution.

GOAL

- Restoration of the Refuge's aquatic health in order to fulfill its mission of provide feeding, nesting, and rearing habitat for migratory birds, especially colonial nesting waterbirds by collaborating with partners to put place an efficient and sustainable carp control program using the best available science.

SUPPORT

- The Refuge has support and participation for carp research/control from the local community, USGS-FRESC and Co-Op units at Oregon State University, BLM, USFS, USACE, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Intermountain Joint Venture, Oregon Joint Venture, Oregon Natural Desert Association, the High Desert Partnership, Harney County Watershed Council, Soil Water and Conservation District, Defenders of Wildlife, University of Minnesota, Iowa State University, St Croix Institute of Sustainability at University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Oregon State University, local landowners, Audubon Society, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, Malheur Wildlife Associates, commercial fishing interests, and the Burns Paiute Tribe.

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