

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

May 6, 2011

Conservation Planning Begins at Grays Harbor and Nisqually National Wildlife Refuges

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Contacts: Jean Takekawa, 360-753-9467

Public comments accepted until June 10, 2011

The Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Complex is initiating a planning process to develop Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP) for Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge or NWR) and the Black River Unit (Unit) of Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (collectively Refuges). The CCPs will guide management of these Refuges over the next 15 years. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking input from the public regarding their interests, concerns, and viewpoints about important refuge management issues to be used in development of the CCPs.

This planning process provides new opportunities to evaluate habitat management and public programs from fresh perspectives. The purposes of the Refuges will remain the same as when the areas were set aside: to protect wildlife and to provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation consistent with wildlife needs. Public open house meetings will provide one of several ways that people can participate in the planning process and provide their input.

Grays Harbor NWR is located in the northeast corner of the shallow, 94-square mile Grays Harbor estuary on the southwestern Washington coast near Hoquiam. It encompasses an area known as Bowerman Basin and consists of approximately 1,500 acres of tidal water, intertidal mudflats, tidal salt and brackish marshes, and upland forest. Grays Harbor estuary is one of four major staging areas for migrating shorebirds in North America and hosts one of the largest concentrations of shorebirds on the Pacific coast, south of Alaska.

The Black River Unit is located five miles southwest of Olympia, Washington, and is managed as part of Nisqually NWR. The Black River

Unit consists of a large, complex mosaic of wetland, riparian, and some upland habitats surrounding the low-lying, slow moving river. The Unit's diverse habitats include bog, emergent marsh, wet meadow, shrub swamps, riparian forest, fir hemlock forest, and dry meadow. The Unit contains spawning and important rearing habitat and migration corridors for steelhead and cutthroat trout and coho and Chinook salmon. At least 150 species of migratory birds, including waterfowl and neotropical songbirds, use the wetland and riparian habitats. A federal candidate species, the Oregon spotted frog (which is also state-listed as endangered), is found within the Black River Unit. The Oregon spotted frog is only known to occur at eight sites in Washington, three of which fall within the boundary of the Black River Unit.

The public is encouraged to attend one of the following public open house meetings to help identify issues to be addressed in the CCPs and to learn more about Grays Harbor NWR and the Black River Unit and the planning process. Both meetings will include the same information about both Refuges. Public comments will be accepted until June 10, 2011 and can be provided at the meetings, or by regular mail to Jean Takekawa, Nisqually NWR Complex, 100 Brown Farm Rd, Olympia, WA, 98516 or by email to FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov. For more information, including the first planning update for this project, see the Service's website at: <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning>.

The meetings are scheduled at two different locations:

Aberdeen, WA
Date: Wednesday, May 18, 2011
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Location: Port of Grays Harbor Building
Commission Chambers
111 South Wooding Street
Aberdeen, WA 98520

Olympia, WA (near Littlerock)
Date: Thursday, May 19, 2011
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Location: Littlerock Elementary School
12710 Littlerock Road Southwest
Olympia, WA 98512-0990

For more information, please contact Nisqually NWR at 360-753-9467.

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