

# Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge

## *Release of Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan*

### **Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan is Now Available!**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we, our) is pleased to announce the release of the final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (Montezuma NWR, the refuge). We thank everyone who provided comments on our draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (EA) released in May 2012. These comments provided us with valuable information for preparing our final document.

This CCP represents our 15-year management plan for the refuge. The plan furthers the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System); provides direction to achieve the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals; and contributes to State and regional conservation plans. Implementing the plan will help us to fulfill the refuge's important role in conserving and managing wildlife resources.

### **How to Access the Final Plan**

You may view or download the final CCP from our Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Montezuma/ccphome.html>.



*Waterfowl at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge*

Dave Menke/USFWS

You may also request a printed copy or CD-ROM version by contacting refuge staff (see "Contact Information" below).

### **Public Comments on the Draft Plan**

We released the draft CCP and EA for public comment from May 22, 2012 to June 21, 2012. We also held two public meetings on June 4 at the refuge.

We greatly appreciate the level of public interest and involvement in our planning effort. We received written comments from 35 individuals and organizations on the draft CCP and EA during the comment period. These comments covered a variety of topics including bird habitat restoration; conservation of endangered and threatened species; hunting; flood control issues; grassland and shrubland management; and comments on alternatives A and B. These comments helped us improve the management objectives and strategies in the final CCP.

We evaluated all of the substantive comments we received during the comment period, and included our responses to them as Appendix K, "Summary and Response to Public Comments," in the final CCP.

### **Changes from the Draft to Final Plan**

The final CCP is based on alternative B, which we identified as the Service-preferred alternative in the draft CCP and EA. In response to the comments we received on the draft CCP and EA, we made several minor changes to alternative B. These changes included the following:

1. We added a spring youth turkey hunt and a fall turkey hunt.
2. We expect to increase shrubland acres to about 400 acres, about equal to alternative A and 100 acres more than presented under alternative B.
3. We added information to the Land Protection Plan (appendix F) to better address strategic habitat conservation and climate change.



*Public meeting at the refuge, June 4, 2012*

Lia McLaughlin/USFWS

## Montezuma NWR Goals

Goal 1: Provide, enhance, and restore where possible, freshwater emergent marsh, open water wetland, and mudflat habitats to benefit native wildlife and plant communities, particularly migrating waterfowl and shorebirds and breeding marshbirds.

Goal 2: Restore and maintain forested wetlands, riparian forests along the Seneca and Clyde Rivers, and upland forests to benefit priority native species, including songbirds, bats, and important plant communities.

Goal 3: Manage grassland and shrubland habitats primarily to benefit bird species of conservation concern.

Goal 4: Ensure visitors of all abilities and varied interests participate in and enjoy the refuge's opportunities for wildlife observation, interpretation, photography and environmental education. Motivate them to value, support, and contribute to the refuge, Montezuma Wetlands Complex, and National Wildlife Refuge System. Increase their understanding of wetlands and wetland functions, and help them become better environmental stewards.

Goal 5: Provide opportunities for hunters and anglers to enjoy and support hunting and fishing on the refuge and increase their understanding of the regional environmental importance of the refuge and of the greater Montezuma Wetlands Complex.

Goal 6: Increase awareness and cooperation among state and federal agencies, local communities, environmental organizations, universities and other partners. Help them understand the role of the refuge and the Montezuma Wetlands Complex in the community, and encourage participation in achieving the vision of the complex.

4. We corrected the final fire management plan EA to show that alternative B is both the current management (the no action alternative) and the preferred alternative.
5. We responded to public concerns regarding flooding in Appendix K, "Summary and Response to Public Comments."

We selected alternative B for the final CCP, with the changes above, for several reasons. First, we believe it represents the array of management actions that best work towards achieving the refuge's purposes, vision, and goals, Refuge System policies, and the goals of other State and regional conservation plans. Second, we feel that this alternative most effectively addresses the key issues raised during the planning process.

The full basis and rationale for our decision is documented in Appendix L, "Finding of No Significant Impact," of the final CCP.

### Highlights of the Final Plan

Here is a brief summary of our planned management for Montezuma NWR. For more detailed information, please refer to the final CCP.

Our habitat management program on Montezuma NWR will emphasize habitat restoration. Our major habitat management activities include the following:

- Restore up to 188 acres of emergent marsh habitat.
- Convert smaller patches of grassland to mature forest.
- Maintain and restore up to 1,197 acres of riparian forest and 2,025 acres of mature forested wetlands.
- Provide 500 additional acres of habitat for breeding marshbirds.



Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge

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We will enhance our existing public use opportunities on Montezuma NWR, with an emphasis on expanding wildlife observation opportunities and the refuge hunting program. Our expanded public use opportunities will include the following:

- Expanding hunting on the refuge to include turkey hunting and continue to allow waterfowl and deer hunting.
- Developing two discovery areas and an observation tower.
- Constructing a new visitor contact station.
- Developing new wildlife observation trails throughout the refuge.

We are proposing to enhance our environmental education and interpretation program by:

- Developing curricula that meets NYS standards for learning.
- Offering new environmental interpretation programs and materials.
- Developing new partnerships with organizations such as the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, the NYS Thruway, NYSDOT, and with other local services and attractions.
- Providing offsite educational and interpretive programs to different organizations.

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Implementing the Plan

We will immediately begin implementing projects outlined in the CCP. We encourage you to also stay involved during the plan's implementation. In order to be successful, we must continue to maintain and develop partnerships. We will continue to work with our volunteers, State agencies, and other partners to achieve our vision and goals. We also hope you will come visit us at the refuge!

### Contact Information

To learn more about Montezuma NWR, please visit our Web site at: <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/montezuma>

You may reach the Montezuma NWR staff at:

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge  
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<http://www.fws.gov>

**Federal Relay Service for the deaf or  
hard of hearing 1 800/877/8339**

**February 2013**

*A Greater Yellowleg on the refuge*

## Vision Statement

Amid the clamor of thousands of birds, huge flocks of migrating waterfowl alight on freshwater marshes while bald eagles soar overhead. Sweeping vistas of expansive wetlands, interspersed with cattail-stands and forest, invite a closer look at areas teeming with a diversity of migratory birds and other wildlife. These are some of the images that reward and inspire visitors of Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Nestled in the heart of New York State's pastoral Finger Lakes region, the refuge is an essential link in an international network of wetlands and conservation lands. The refuge belongs to a coalition of partners which make up the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, part of what once was historically a 50,000-acre swamp and marshland where the sky is often "black with ducks." Through the collaboration of current and newly forged partnerships, the refuge continues to demonstrate and promote wise and responsible resource stewardship and showcase wetland restoration management practices applied on a landscape level to benefit both wildlife and people.

Visitors of all ages and abilities feel welcome at the refuge and enjoy spectacular wildlife viewing opportunities. The refuge continues to be an important component of the local economy and community, and provides a full complement of quality wildlife-dependent recreation, education and interpretation programs, and other public uses. We work closely with our friends, local citizens, and partners to enhance and improve nature-based tourism through community outreach, education, and advocacy.

We hope all refuge visitors from everywhere continue to value Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge for enhancing their quality of life. Within the National Wildlife Refuge System, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge is treasured for conserving wetlands and wildlife and providing inspirational outdoor experiences for present and future generations of Americans.



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*Sunrise on Knox-Marsellus Marsh*

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