

Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuge

Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Greetings from the Refuge!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) is pleased to announce the release of our final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuge (refuge). We thank everyone who provided comments and input on our draft CCP/Environmental Assessment (EA) released in May 2010. These comments provided us with valuable information for preparing our final document.

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

You may view or download the CCP from our website at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/nomansland/ccphome.html>.

You may also obtain a print copy or CD-ROM version by contacting the refuge complex headquarters (see contact information below).



Nomans Land Island NWR's rocky coastline

Erin Victory

Refuge Background

Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1998 for the purpose of conserving and managing migratory birds. The 628-acre refuge island is 3 miles south of Martha's Vineyard and contains a diversity of habitats including intertidal, freshwater wetland, grassland, and shrubland habitats. The island serves an important role as nesting habitat for landbirds and colonial waterbirds, and as a stopover for migratory birds and raptors.

In 1970, what is now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began managing a portion of the eastern side of the island as an overlay refuge while it was still under Navy ownership. The agreement was updated in 1975, and then in 1998, management of the entire island was transferred from the U.S. Navy to the Service, and the entire island was designated the Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuge.

The refuge is part of the Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife

Refuge Complex. Refuge complex with headquarters in Sudbury, Massachusetts.

Public Comment on the Draft Plan

We released the draft CCP/EA for public comment from May 28, 2010 to July 2, 2010. We also held a public meeting on June 23, 2010 in Chilmark, Massachusetts.

We greatly appreciated the level of public interest and involvement throughout our planning process. We benefited from the discussions during open houses and public meetings and from written input received in response to our newsletters and draft documents.

We received a total of 24 comments during the public comment period. These comments covered a variety of topics including public access, refuge habitat management and monitoring programs, refuge administration and the proposed wilderness designation.

We evaluated all of these comments and include our responses to them



American oystercatcher eggs

Stephanie Koch/USFWS



American oystercatcher

in Appendix J “Summary of Public Comments and Service Responses,” in the final CCP. These comments helped us improve our management objectives and strategies in the final plan.

Approval of the Final CCP

The CCP for the Nomans Land Island refuge is the culmination of a planning effort involving the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Navy, local partners, private landowners, and the local community.

The CCP establishes our management direction on the refuge for wildlife and habitat programs, visitor services, refuge administration, and facilities.

The final plan is based on alternative C, which was the Service-preferred alternative in the draft CCP/EA. We selected alternative C for implementation for several reasons. We feel it comprises the array of actions that, in our professional judgment, works best towards achieving refuge vision, goals, and purposes, and the priorities of other State and regional conservation plans. We also believe it most effectively addresses the key issues raised during the planning process. However, based on public comments, we made several minor changes for the final CCP (see below).

Our Regional Director’s decision to adopt the plan, including these changes, is documented in Appendix K, “Finding of No Significant Impact,” of the final CCP.

Changes between Draft and Final Plan

1. We recently became aware of additional partnership opportunities on Martha’s Vineyard. To reflect this, we added wording to the rationale for objective 2.2 that these partnerships could provide additional resources to support our visitor services programs.

2. We added language to Chapter 4 stating that, although it is not possible to clean up the island to pre-bombing conditions, we would continue to work with the U.S. Navy, and Federal and state regulators to complete the five-year site reviews of unexploded ordnance. If a new method for extracting unexploded ordnance without major ground disturbance or impact to wildlife becomes available, we would evaluate additional clean-up then.

3. We included language in Chapter 4 stating we will work with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program to evaluate altering the frequency of prescribed burns to benefit rare plant management and to evaluate the appropriateness of tern restoration efforts.

4. For the first time in 30 years, the refuge is home to a breeding pair of piping plovers. Due to this, we incorporated more life history information on piping plovers in Chapters 3 and 4 and refined our biological objectives and management actions for the species.

Highlights of the CCP

Under the CCP, the Service will recommend the refuge for



Peregrine falcon

designation as a Wilderness Area. As a Wilderness Area, the refuge would become a unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), established by the Wilderness Act of 1964. To preserve the wilderness characteristic of the refuge, we will allow natural processes to shape the refuge habitats, with minimal management by refuge staff.

The focus of our biological and habitat management programs will continue to be providing important stop-over habitat for migratory birds and raptors, and nesting habitat for landbirds and colonial waterbirds. The refuge will also continue to be closed to the public for safety reasons due to unexploded ordnance.

The following provides more details on specific management actions outlined in the CCP.

Wilderness Area Designation

- Continue to maintain the wilderness character (e.g. naturalness, solitude, cultural and natural resources) of the refuge
- Pursue formal designation as a unit of the NWPS

Nomans Land Island Refuge Goals

Goal 1. Perpetuate the biological integrity and diversity of coastal island habitats to support native wildlife and plant communities, including species of conservation concern.

Goal 2. Promote awareness and stewardship of our coastal natural resources by working with partners to provide off-site interpretation, education and outreach opportunities.

Goal 3. Recognize the archaeological and cultural importance of the island.

Goal 4. Protect, maintain, enhance, and preserve the wilderness character of Nomans Land Island NWR.

Nomans Land Island Refuge Vision Statement

We envision Nomans Land Island NWR to be a vital and unique maritime resource for migratory birds along the Atlantic Flyway. Our management will perpetuate the diversity of nesting, resting, and foraging habitats used by passerines, raptors, waterfowl and seabirds throughout the island. In particular, species of regional conservation concern including the peregrine falcon will benefit from land which is free from mammalian predators and from present-day human disturbances.

Nomans Land Island has a culturally rich human history that began thousands of years ago and our management will ensure that this legacy endures. Culturally sensitive management actions on the island, and strong partnerships with the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and other partners, will foster cultural awareness and an appreciative and knowledgeable public.

With its recent history of human use, Nomans Land Island NWR will be a place few people can experience firsthand; yet we will provide meaningful alternatives for members of the public to experience the beauty and singularity of the Refuge. Through partnerships, education, interpretation and outreach, we hope to instill a sense of wonder about complex and dynamic coastal ecosystems, and underscore the value of the Refuge in conserving those resources.

Wildlife & Habitat Management

- Allow natural processes to influence the refuge's 400 acres of important migration stop-over shrub habitat. Establish a fire regime, if needed, to minimally manage shrub habitat.
- Allow coastal processes, such as wind and wave action, to shape 15 acres of herbaceous upland dune vegetation, 100 acres of marine intertidal beach and rocky shore habitats, and almost 150 acres of freshwater wetlands
- Evaluate the feasibility of introducing the New England cottontail on the refuge within five years

Biological Monitoring

- Monitor vegetation changes every three years using aerial photography and/or site visits
- Monitor invasive species annually and control those that threaten healthy ecosystems

Visitor Services

- Enhance visitor services program through a broader array of off-site programming and outreach through partnership opportunities
- Update existing interpretive materials, develop brochures, and pursue partnership to develop an interpretive trail and associated viewing area at the Aquinnah Cultural Center on Martha's Vineyard

Refuge Administration

- Coordinate annually with the U.S. Navy to exchange information on operations, management planning, and cleanup of the refuge

Cultural Resources

- Document and prevent the loss of refuge archeological and cultural resources
- Maintain the Luce Cemetery on the refuge, as staffing and funding allows
- Work with partners to develop an activity, display, or set of materials interpreting refuge cultural and archeological resources

What's Next?

Implementation of priority projects determined by the Refuge Manager can begin immediately. We encourage you to stay involved during the CCP's implementation. In order to be successful, we need your help. Specifically, we must continue to develop partnerships and enhance our volunteer program.



Monarch butterfly

USFWS



Common tern

Contact Information

For more information on the refuge, please visit our website at: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nomanslandisland/>.

To learn more about the Eastern Massachusetts Refuge Complex, visit <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/easternmanwrcomplex/>.

Please contact refuge complex staff in Sudbury, Massachusetts if you have any questions or for more information.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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