

United States Department of Interior

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NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces final decision on future management of Timber Point estate

Agency reviews diverse public comments and selects alternative that balances wildlife management with enhanced interpretation of the historic structures

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has selected the preferred alternative to preserve the structures and enhance interpretation at Timber Point on Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in Biddeford, Maine. The Service made this decision after reviewing diverse public comments received during a public involvement process and is announcing its final decision.

The Service received more than 280 public comments, held two public meetings and conducted three public tours of the Main House during a 30-day public comment period last fall. Since that time, the Service has been analyzing the public comments and preparing the final documents that affirm the management direction for the Timber Point site. The Service is releasing a summary of the public comments and the Finding of No Significant Impact. All of the documents are posted on the website at:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/rachel_carson/what_we_do/conservation/TimberPointEA.html

The public comments were diverse in nature with respondents supporting each of the alternatives including demolishing the structures and turning the main house into an environmental education center. Neighbors and residents along the main access road to Timber Point expressed concern about increased traffic congestion and road safety for the enhanced visitor use alternatives. Since the Service's final decision supports enhanced interpretation for the site, the Service is committed to working with neighbors, local residents and the City of Biddeford to address their concerns.

The Service evaluated the physical, biological and human impacts of all four management alternatives, and believes that the preferred alternative (alternative B) strikes the right balance between the interests for public use at the site while maintaining wildlife values. The Service will

implement Alternative B to ensure conservation of wildlife and habitat, as well as provide opportunities for cultural and natural resources interpretation. In addition to continuing with current management, the refuge will initiate additional repairs and improvements to ensure the long-term preservation of the buildings eligible for the National Register as funding becomes available. A spur trail through the Ewing residential estate will be added to the existing Timber Point Trail and interpretive signs and materials will be developed, in partnership with others.

In December 2011, the Service acquired the 157-acre Timber Point, which became part of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge's Little River Division. It is one of the last large, undeveloped properties on the southern Maine coast. There are several buildings and structures on the property that were part of the summer estate, including a main house, garage/woodshop complex, truck garage, boat house, changing shed, remnants of a greenhouse, and other structures. The buildings and structures on the site are part of a 1930s-era summer estate designed by architect Charles Ewing. Many of these buildings are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Service has retained an architectural historian who is evaluating the proposed historic preservation status for the buildings and will work with the State of Maine Historic Preservation Office to complete a nomination package for consideration by the National Historic Preservation Office. The Service hopes to complete the nomination package this year and will keep the public apprised of that process.

Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1966 in cooperation with the State of Maine to protect valuable salt marshes and estuaries for migratory birds. Located along 50 miles of coastline in York and Cumberland counties, the refuge consists of eleven divisions between Kittery and Cape Elizabeth. The proximity of the refuge to the coast and its location between the eastern deciduous forest and the boreal forest creates a composition of plants and animals not found elsewhere in Maine. Major habitat types present on the refuge include forested upland, barrier beach/dune, coastal meadows, tidal salt marsh, and the distinctive rocky coast.

The **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through social media channels: www.facebook.com/RachelCarsonNWR