

Reader's Guide to the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge's Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

Chapters

Chapter 1: Purpose of, and Need for, Action gives an overview of why the refuge needs a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and provides background on the refuge's establishment history and its purposes, vision, and goals.

Chapter 2: The Planning Process describes the planning process, the laws and Service policies that guide our planning, and summarizes the public and partner issues, opportunities, and concerns we addressed in the draft CCP.

Chapter 3: Affected Environment gives an overview of the Connecticut River watershed and the existing refuge's natural and socioeconomic environments including: air quality, water quality, wildlife, fish, plant, and habitats, and historical and archaeological resources. It also describes refuge administration and existing public use opportunities on refuge lands.

Chapter 4: Alternatives, Including the Service's Preferred Alternative details four alternative scenarios for managing the refuge: Alternative A–Continuing Current Management; Alternative B–Consolidated Stewardship; Alternative C–Enhanced Conservation Connections and Partnerships (the Service's Preferred Alternative); and Alternative D–Reduced Management with Emphasis on Backcountry Recreation.

Chapter 4 presents broad, watershed-level objectives for achieving refuge goals in collaboration with partners throughout the watershed. It introduces the concepts of Conservation Partnership Areas (CPAs) and Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs). The table at the end of chapter 4 compares and contrasts some of the major actions proposed under the four alternatives. Appendix A is the companion to chapter 4 and focuses on more specific sub-objectives and strategies for managing existing and proposed refuge lands.

Chapter 5: Environmental Consequences analyzes the anticipated beneficial and adverse impacts from implementing the four different alternatives. The table at the end of chapter 5 summarizes and compares the impacts of the actions proposed under the four alternatives.

Chapter 6: Coordination and Consultation lists public and partner meetings we attended or held during the planning process.

Chapter 7: List of Preparers lists all of the Service, state, and other partner personnel who worked on the plan.

Bibliography lists all of the literature cited for the chapters.

Glossary, Acronyms, and Species Scientific Names defines technical terms, lists the scientific names for all the species mentioned, and defines the acronyms used in the chapters.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Resources Overview and Management Direction for Conservation Focus Areas and Refuge Units describes our proposed management actions on existing refuge lands (divisions and units) and where we propose future refuge acquisitions (CFAs). Appendix A takes the broad, watershed level goals and objectives from chapter 4 and steps them down more specifically for refuge lands. This appendix is focused on our proposals under Alternative C (Service-preferred alternative), but is also relevant to refuge lands under alternative B. This appendix is organized by alphabetically by state.

Appendix B: Process for Establishing Priority Refuge Resources of Concern describes how we identified refuge species and habitat priorities.

Appendix C: Land Protection Plan provides detailed information on the proposed refuge expansion under alternative C.

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Appendixes (continued)

Appendix D: Findings of Appropriateness and Compatibility Determinations explains which public uses we propose to allow and not allow on existing and proposed refuge lands under alternative C.

Appendix E: Wilderness Review evaluates existing refuge lands for their potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. At this time, we do not recommend any refuge lands for wilderness designation.

Appendix F: Wild and Scenic Rivers Review describes river segments in existing and proposed refuge lands and the process for evaluating their eligibility as National Wild and Scenic Rivers. At this time, we recommend working with partners to evaluate entire rivers, beyond just the segments of rivers on existing and proposed refuge lands.

Appendix G: Refuge Operations Needs System and Service Asset Maintenance Management System reflects staffing, operations, and maintenance needs and costs for alternative C.

Appendix H: Staffing Charts depicts the current and proposed staffing under each of the alternatives.

Appendix I: U.S. Geological Survey Report: Economic Impacts of Current and Proposed Management Alternatives describes the current regional economic setting. It also analyzes and compares the projected socioeconomic impacts of implementing the four alternatives.

Appendix J: Forest Management Guidelines provides additional details on the desired future condition of refuge forests, the specific forest management techniques we propose to use to actively manage refuge forests, and provides a glossary of forestry terms.

Appendix K: Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Act of 1991 is the full-text of the refuge's establishing legislation.

Appendix L: Fire Management Program Guidance outlines guidance for fire management, explains the fire management planning process, and describes the current fire management program at the refuge.

Appendix M: Conservation Plans and Initiatives Guiding the Development of the CCP lists and describes the conservation plans and initiatives we use to develop the CCP, including national and regional bird plans, state wildlife action plans, recovery plans for federally listed species, and regional recreation plans.

Appendix N: List of Partnerships highlights the extent and importance of the partnership network in the watershed and lists some of the refuge's important partners, including government agencies, nonprofits, recreational and environmental educational organizations, academic institutions, and refuge Friends groups.