

# Presquile National Wildlife Refuge

## *Release of the 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 the 1,329-acre Presquile National Wildlife Refuge (Presquile NWR, refuge).

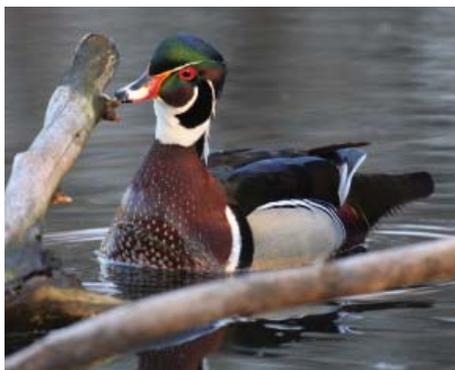
This CCP represents our 15-year management plan for the refuge. The plan furthers the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System; provides direction to achieve the refuge's purpose, vision, and goals; and contributes to State and regional conservation plans. Implementing the plan will help achieve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

### **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/presquile/ccphome.html>. You may also request a printed copy or CD-ROM version by contacting refuge staff (see "Contact Information").

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

We released the draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (draft CCP/EA) for public comment from August 2 to September 7, 2012.



Mike Sweet/USFWS

Wood Duck



Meghan Carfoli/USFWS

Presquile NWR

We thank everyone who provided comments. We received 19 written comments on the draft CCP/EA during the comment period, including those submitted at three public meetings held on August 7, 2012 in Chester, Virginia, and August 8, 2012 in Richmond, Virginia.

The comments covered a variety of topics including grassland conversion; invasive species control; species of conservation concern management; cultural resource interpretation; refuge facilities; environmental education; non-motorized boat access; and hunting opportunities.

Our responses to comments are in Appendix F, "Summary and Response to Public Comments," in the final CCP.

### **Changes Made to the Plan**

The final CCP is based on alternative B (the Service-preferred alternative) in the draft CCP/EA.

In response to the comments we received, we made several minor changes to alternative B for the final plan. These minor changes include updating information, making factual corrections that do not alter the conclusions drawn from their analysis, and fixing typographical errors.

We selected alternative B for the final CCP, with the changes above, for several reasons. First, we believe it will best achieve the refuge's purpose, vision, and goals, Refuge System policies, and the goals of other State and regional conservation plans. Second, we believe 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 G, "Finding of No Significant Impact," in the final CCP.

## Goals

**Goal 1:** Protect, maintain, and restore the integrity of the refuge's tidal swamp forest and tidal freshwater marsh to sustain native plants and wildlife, including species of conservation concern, and benefit aquatic resources of the James River watershed and Chesapeake Bay.

**Goal 2:** Protect, restore, and enhance the refuge's upland habitats, with emphasis on the mixed mesic forest ecological community, to sustain plants and wildlife native to the James River area, in particular those species of conservation concern.

**Goal 3:** Protect and conserve the refuge's cultural resources and landscape, and seek opportunities to increase knowledge and appreciation of the refuge's history as part of the James River region.

**Goal 4:** Provide environmental education experiences for visitors to inspire appreciation and stewardship of the refuge in relation to the James River watershed, the Chesapeake Bay Estuary, and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

**Goal 5:** Provide wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities (interpretation, wildlife observation, nature photography, and hunting) for visitors to enjoy and connect with nature, and to develop an enhanced appreciation for, and understanding of, the refuge's natural and cultural resources.



*Atlantic Sturgeon*

Duane Raver/USFWS

## Highlights of the Final Plan

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

Our habitat management program on Presquile NWR will emphasize specific habitats to support species of conservation concern in eastern Virginia. Our major habitat management activities include:

- Protecting and maintaining the refuge's tidal swamp forest and tidal freshwater marsh to sustain native plants and wildlife and priority species of concern, such as the federally threatened sensitive joint-ventch and migrating and wintering waterfowl.
- Working with partners to protect the refuge's tidal creeks and the James River mainstem for the benefit of aquatic resources of concern, including the federally endangered Atlantic sturgeon.
- Maintaining the refuge's 46 acres of mature mixed mesic forest to provide breeding and migratory habitat for forest-interior dwelling birds of conservation concern, including

scarlet tanager and wood thrush.

- Promoting native forest succession on approximately 197 acres of the refuge's existing grassland habitat.
- Enhancing and protecting the refuge's river escarpment to benefit resources of conservation concern, including nesting and perching bald eagles and great blue heron.
- Controlling invasive and pest species to improve the biological integrity, diversity, and ecological health of refuge habitats.
- Expanding our inventory and monitoring program to help inform future management decisions.

We will also protect and conserve the refuge's cultural resources and landscape by expanding our understanding of the area's cultural history and resources, educating the public, and working with partners.

We will enhance our existing visitor services program on Presquile NWR by:



*Wood Thrush*

Steve Maslowski/USFWS

### Vision Statement

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge exemplifies the majesty of our natural world and the significance of the Lower James River as a major tributary of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Throughout the year, bald eagles perch on the island’s forested shores and survey the rich assemblage of wildlife: the wake of the prehistoric sturgeon heading to spawn, basking turtles in the warm spring sun, colorful warblers darting amongst trees all summer, and thousands of wintering waterfowl resting in the quiet waters of the winding river.

This isolated island bridges the modern world to its long and storied history of people connecting to the land. The joyful sound of children learning in the natural classroom echoes through the forest in this gateway to wild places. Stewardship fostered here generates action beyond the river in communities across the watershed.

- Increasing environmental education opportunities, in partnership with the James River Association, for up to 2,000 students annually.
- Assisting other agencies and organizations in their environmental education programs and events to raise awareness about the refuge and Refuge System.
- Improving interpretive programs, displays, and materials, and increasing participation in our programs by 20 percent over existing levels.
- Maintaining the current deer hunt and including the flexibility to adjust the total number of hunt days from 3 days to 5 days each year.

### Implementing the Plan

We will begin implementing projects outlined in the CCP immediately. To successfully accomplish those projects and achieve our vision and goals, it is critical that we continue to maintain and develop new partnerships and sustain our invaluable volunteer program. We encourage you to stay involved during the plan’s implementation.

### Contact Information

To learn more about the refuge, please visit our Web site at: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/presquile/>.

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P.O. Box 1030  
Warsaw, VA 22572



Great Egret

USFWS

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>  
1 800/ 344 WILD

**Federal Relay Service for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing**  
1 800/877 8339



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James River Association conducting an environmental education program

James River Association



*Presquile NWR*

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