

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update Newsletter - June 2011

Hello Friends of Presquile!

In March 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS, we) began developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Presquile National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, refuge). Our April 2011 public meetings attracted community members and representatives from a wide variety of non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies. This newsletter provides a summary of the comments we have received through May 23, 2011, which was the close of the public scoping comment period.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation for your involvement. This planning process will continue through Spring 2012, and we encourage your continued participation in the development of a 15-year management vision for Presquile NWR.

Sincerely,
Andy Hofmann, Refuge Manager
Eastern Virginia Rivers
National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Public Participation to Date

In March 2011, we announced our intent to prepare a CCP/EA and formally invited the public to participate in the planning process by publishing a notice in the *Federal Register*, our first planning newsletter, and a press release. We asked the public to submit comments by email, mail, and fax.

During the public scoping comment period, we hosted two open house meetings on April 19 in Chester, VA and one on April 20 in Richmond, VA. A total of 13 individuals attended these meetings. At each meeting, brief presentations on the CCP process and Presquile NWR were followed by discussions between attendees and refuge planning staff. We recorded meeting attendees' comments.



Prothonotary warbler

Mdf/Wikimedia Commons

What is a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?

A CCP is a 15-year plan that describes the desired future conditions for a refuge. CCPs provide long-range guidance and management direction to:

- achieve the purposes of the refuge;
- help fulfill the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- maintain, and where appropriate, restore the ecological integrity of the refuge and National Wildlife Refuge System;
- help achieve the goals of the National Wilderness Preservation System; and
- meet other mandates.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Pub. L. 105-57) requires the USFWS to develop Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCPs) for each national wildlife refuge. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), each CCP is also accompanied by either an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that describes and analyzes the potential environmental consequences of the actions outlined in the CCP.

Throughout the CCP process, we provide opportunities for individuals and local communities to be involved in the long-term management of the refuge.

We also invited government partners to an interagency meeting on April 20. A total of 14 agency representatives attended and participated in a facilitated discussion of their agency's interests in the long-term management vision, goals, and objectives for Presquile NWR.

Summary of Public Comments

We received many valuable and insightful comments and prepared the following brief summary of these comments, grouped into six broad categories. The complete comment set is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/presquile/newsletters.html>.



Public scoping meeting participant

Long-term natural resource protection and management

Several commenters requested that we consider and evaluate long-term threats to habitat availability and quality on the refuge, such as global climate change, sea level rise, emerald ash borer, industrial air pollution, and development pressures on surrounding privately owned lands. We also received a variety of recommendations on how to manage shoreline erosion, as well as wildlife, habitat, and ecosystem management at the local and landscape-levels.

Public awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the refuge

Numerous commenters suggested ways to increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the refuge. Several commenters were supportive of the partnership between USFWS and the James River Association for the development and offering of environmental education programming for schoolchildren visiting Presquile NWR. Some also wished to see this partnership expanded to offer programming to a wider range of ages, groups, and subject matters.

Cultural resources

One commenter provided specific suggestions for revising our cultural resource goal. We received numerous suggestions about specific cultural resources information to include in our

educational programs and interpretive media. Some commenters consider Presquile NWR to be “one of the few intact indigenous cultural landscapes” representing the 17th century prior to European settlement.

Refuge access and visitor carrying capacity

Several respondents asked about the USFWS jurisdiction over public activities in waterways in and around the refuge. Commenters inquired about opportunities to:

- Establish new public access to areas on adjacent lands
- Expand public access to the refuge to help achieve management goals
- Offer more regularly scheduled opportunities for visitors to access the refuge.

We also received comments regarding the carrying capacity of visitors on the refuge and inquiries about efforts to determine the maximum number of visitors for the refuge. Otherwise, people were interested to know how we would manage increased visitation and detect unacceptable adverse impacts to resources should we modify our “by permit-only” public access policy.

Expanding variety of wildlife-dependent recreational uses

Numerous commenters expressed support for continued management of the refuge for wildlife protection, providing access for wildlife-dependent recreation, environmental education, interpretation of natural and cultural resources, and research. Others inquired about the potential for allowing turkey hunting on the refuge.

New and existing partnerships

Numerous State and Federal government agencies offered to share data, information, technical assistance, and other resources with the refuge.

Many of our partners expressed that Presquile NWR is among the many special places along the lower James River and that continued collaboration is important to the conservation of wildlife and habitats throughout the region. The existing



Lesser scaup pair

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge Management Priorities

Presquile NWR is part of an impressive network of wildlife habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. It was established in 1953 from lands generously donated by Dr. A.D. Williams, D.D.S. The refuge’s purpose is for use as “an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds.” We remain true to this purpose by managing the refuge to provide high-quality habitat for wintering waterfowl, breeding songbirds, upland game birds, and bald eagles. The refuge is recognized as important habitat within the James River Bald Eagle Concentration Area, the Lower James River Important Bird Area, and the Lower James River Waterfowl Focus Area. The refuge also plays an important role in the protection and recovery of globally imperiled species, including Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) and the federally threatened sensitive joint-vetch (*Aeschynomene virginica*).



Environmental education group

network of partnerships (with government agencies, conservation organizations, academic institutions, and community members) is active, and bringing in new partners would further expand the capability to achieve mutual conservation goals.

Next Steps

Our next step is to evaluate and consider all the comments we received. We will use this information to help:

- Refine our draft vision statement and draft goals;
- Create and improve refuge management objectives; and
- Develop a range of management alternatives and strategies to consider.

We will keep you informed of our progress on Presquile's Planning Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/presquile/ccphome>. This should help to generate more questions and discussions as we develop our collective vision of Presquile NWR for the next 15 years. We anticipate having a draft CCP/EA prepared for your review in Spring 2012. At that time, we will invite to participate in our public open houses to discuss the plan and provide feedback during a 30-day public comment period.

Share your thoughts with us*

You have great questions and ideas, so please continue to share them with us. See the contact information box for more details on where to send comments.



Bald eagle



Presquile National Wildlife Refuge

USFWS/Meghan Carfioli

Contact Information

About the CCP

Meghan Carfioli
Natural Resource Planner
Phone: 804/829-5413
Email: Meghan_Carfioli@fws.gov
Web site: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/presquile/ccphome.html>

About the Refuge

Cyrus Brame
Outdoor Recreation Planner
Phone: 804/829-9020
Email: Cyrus_Brame@fws.gov
Web site: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/presquile>

Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Mailing Address

Attn: Presquile CCP Planning Team
EVRNWR - Charles City Sub-office
11116 Kimages Rd
Charles City, VA 23030

Email Address

FW5RW_EVRNWR@fws.gov
Please type "Presquile CCP" in the subject line

Do you know of a club, school, business, or any other group that would like us to give a presentation about our CCP development for Presquile NWR? We would be happy to do so! Please contact Meghan Carfioli, our Natural Resource Planner.

**Before including personal identifying information in your comments, such as names and mailing address, please be aware that your entire comment and accompanying personal information may be made publicly available if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. You may request that your information not be released; we will honor your request to the extent allowed by law.*

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

Federal Relay Service for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing:
800/877-8339.



June 2011

Planning Process Timeline for Presquile National Wildlife Refuge CCP/EA

Planning Steps and Activities	Status	Dates	Public Involvement	Public Involvement Dates
A. Preplanning	Completed	Winter - Spring 2011		
B. Initiate Public Involvement and Scoping	Completed	Spring 2011	Attend public open houses and write to share goals and concerns	Held open houses on April 19-20, 2011. Public scoping period ended May 23, 2011.
C. Review Vision Statment and Goals; Determine Significant Issues	Underway	Summer - Winter 2011	Provide comments about the goals and concerns, as well as ideas for developing alternatives	Ongoing
D. Develop and Analyze Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action		Summer - Winter 2011	Provide comments to consider during the development of action alternatives	Ongoing
E. Prepare Draft Plan and NEPA Document		Winter - Spring 2012	Attend public meetings and write to provide review and comments on draft CCP/EA	30-day public comment period
F. Prepare and Adopt Final Plan		Summer 2012		
G. Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate Plan		Beginning in Summer 2012		
H. Review and Revise Plan		Before or by Summer 2027		



Gray Catbird/Bill Thompson

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 NWRS - Refuge Planning
 300 Westgate Center Drive
 Hadley, MA 01035

