

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Scoping and Issues Summary

Prepared by



403 Venture Court, Unit 7
Verona, WI 53593

for

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Northeast Regional Office
Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Presquile National Wildlife Refuge
11116 Kimages Rd
Charles City, VA 23030

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Introduction

The following describes the scoping process and how others were engaged in developing issues for the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). First, it details pre-planning activities and our efforts to encourage involvement of the public and conservation partners: other federal and state agencies, federally recognized tribes, county and municipal officials, civic groups, non-governmental conservation and education organizations, and user groups. It then summarizes the comments of those attending agency and public scoping meetings or those providing written comment by May 23, within the period for public review on issues for consideration at the refuge.

This summary does not detail the dozens of meetings, events, and informal discussions the refuge manager and staff have had since January 2011 where the CCP was a topic of conversation. Those involved a wide range of audiences, including conservation groups, elected officials or their staffs, educators, refuge visitors and other interested individuals. During those discussions, the refuge manager and her staff would provide an update on CCP progress and encourage comments and participation.

Chronological Summary of CCP Scoping Process

Our refuge planning began formally on January 13, 2011 during a conference call between refuge staff, regional Service staff, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), and contractors. One of the major outcomes of the meeting was a timetable for accomplishing the major steps in the planning process and determining when and how we should involve others. At this time, the agency scoping meeting was tentatively scheduled for April 19, 2011 and the public scoping meeting tentatively scheduled for April 19 & 20, 2011. Possible locations for both the agency and public scoping meetings were discussed.

January 2011:

Our pre-planning activities in January included drafting the NOI, development of a draft communications plan, and development of the contact database for notification of the CCP and invitation to the agency scoping meeting.

On January 24 and 25, 2011 a two day kick-off meeting was held between refuge staff, regional Service staff, VDGIF, and contractors to identify data needs, obtain input on the contact database, discuss newsletter, review the CCP process and discuss agenda and logistics for kick-off meeting. On January 24, 2011 refuge staff, regional Service staff, VDGIF, and the contractors met to review refuge conditions and resources, identify issues of concern, review the project timeline, develop a vision, discuss the newsletter, and discussed the preparations for the agency and public scoping meetings. On January 25, 2011 the core team continued the meeting. The core team drafted their major goals for the refuge reviewed the contact database and discussed data and plans.

February 2011

On February 24, 2011 a conference call was held between refuge staff, regional Service staff, VDGIF, and contractors to review scoping meeting needs, the resources of concern identification tables, timeline and contact database.

March 2011

On March 4, 2011 a conference call was held between refuge staff and contractors to work on the development of the resources of concern table.

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On March 22, 2011 a conference call was held between refuge staff, regional Service staff, VDGIF, and contractors to finalize preparations for the agency and public scoping meetings. Attendees also discussed chapter development, the resources of concern table, the newsletter and partnerships.

On March 24, 2011, the core team reached out to approximately 318 contacts included in the planning contacts database compiled for the CCP. Refuge Manager, Andy Hofmann, emailed 278 of those contacts an inviting them to participate in our scoping process and attend our public open houses in April and included an electronic copy of the scoping newsletter. The remaining 40 contacts were mailed hardcopies of the scoping newsletter containing a similar invitation to participation.

On March 25, 2011, Nancy McGarigal, Refuge Planner, followed up with an email notification to 160 local, county, State, and Federal agency contacts included in the public notice. This follow up invited agency participation in the agency scoping meeting in order to provide other government entities the opportunity to share their issues and concerns related to Presquile National Wildlife Refuge.

April 2011

The core team completed their agency and public scoping meetings in mid-April. Two public scoping meetings were held on April 19, 2011 in Chester, Virginia at the Chesterfield Public Library from 2:00 to 4:00 PM and another session at 6:30 to 8:30 PM. These meetings were attended by seven individuals from the surrounding communities. A third public scoping meeting was held in Richmond, Virginia at the Maymont Park Stone Barn from 6:30 to 8:30 PM on April 20, 2011. This meeting was attended by six individuals. Refuge and planning team staff were also in attendance at all three meetings, but not included in the participant attendance noted.

The core team held their agency scoping workshop on April 20, 2011 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The workshop was attended by 14 representatives from county, State, and Federal agencies. Refuge and planning team staff were also in attendance at all three meetings, but not included in the participant attendance noted.

Summary of Issues Identified During the Agency and Public Scoping Process

During the scoping process, the core planning team members, refuge staff, state and federal agency staff, and concerned members of the general public identified numerous issues that generally can be categorized within the following broad issues categories of for consideration in the planning process.

The Service will continue to refine this list of issues as comments are received to determine significant issues to be addressed in the CCP. The planning team welcomes continued participation of organizations and the public and addition opportunity for public comment will be provided in the upcoming months for completion of the draft CCP.

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Landscape Scale/Ecosystem-wide Issues (e.g. climate change, land protection, water quality)

Climate Change Issues

1. Value of corridors for wildlife is documented in DCR Natural Heritage database. Someone in their department is looking into climate change issues that may inform the CCP. (DCR NH)
2. The CCP must consider and analyze the impacts of climate change. We believe that climate change is among the most “significant problems” affecting plants and animals today, and thus the potential impacts of climate change should be a central consideration in the development of refuge CCPs. (Defenders of Wildlife)

Specifically,

- a. the vision should acknowledge the important role that climate change will play in shaping the future conditions of Presquile NWR.
 - b. Secretarial Order 3289 explicitly directs that climate change be considered in Department planning exercises. This should be expressed in the CCP.
 - c. Describe current and historic temperature and precipitation, observed trends, and projected future conditions.
 - d. Incorporate information on how climatic changes could affect refuge resources.
3. Consider implications of global climate change and other long range threats to the habitat such as sea level rise and emerald ash borer. (General Public)

Landscape Issues

1. Each planning office has to do a 3C transportation annual review on population management with comprehensive land plans – environmental protection areas in James floodplain. They rural residential (1 unit/acre). Area across Presquile does not have a heavy development demand. (Henrico County)
2. Industrial and commercial land uses more than residential. Area around Presquile is the highest development demand. (Chesterfield County)
3. Resource mapping in GIS for John Smith Trail, have easements, access information, and other resources that may benefit the Presquile CCP. Comprehensive management plan has been signed. Now working on James River segment of plan because of Jamestown location and centennial. (NPS)
4. Review blue ways and green ways, NiSource HCP: mitigation plan for an additional landscape look at mitigation opportunities, habitat restoration opportunities. (DGIF)
5. Outline a strategy for improving habitat connectivity. (Defenders of Wildlife)

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Air Quality Issues

1. Will any air testing be done at Presquile as a response to the upwind industries? (General Public)

Biological Program Issues (e.g. management, restoration, monitoring, inventories, research)

Habitat Issues

1. Peregrine falcons were known to maintain an active nest in 1990s at the refuge. (VA Natural Heritage Program)
2. Manage wildlife populations regarding wildlife action plan, species of conservation need. (DGIF)
3. Consider creating vernal pool habitat in Presquile uplands. (General Public)

Erosion and Sedimentation Issues

1. Consider stabilizing the bank with a living shoreline or a series of different techniques to use a demonstration site. (General Public)
2. Consider the long term future of sedimentation on the existing James River channel – oxbow. (General Public)
3. Consider using A-jacks or other structures to encourage deposition along the shoreline. (General Public)
4. Consider initiation a no-wake zone along the cut-off channel. (General Public)

Management Issues

1. How does any activity outside of USFWS mission occur on the refuge? (General Public)
2. Consider managing the property to wildlife protection. (General Public)
3. Who has duck hunting rights along the refuge? (General Public)
4. The CCP should outline an Inventory and Monitoring Plan related to climate change variables and trends. (Defenders of Wildlife)
5. The CCP should address ongoing environmental threats. (Defenders of Wildlife)
6. Include an assessment of water resources in the CCP. (Defenders of Wildlife)

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Public Use Programs (e.g. range or quality of programs, access, conflicts, impacts)

Access Issues

1. Presquile is one of the “sweet spots” identified during the focus group meetings for CAJO Trail Segment Planning. (NPS)
2. Are we aware of access opportunities in the Curles Neck area? (VA DCR Planning & Rec)
3. Charles City County just applied for a grant for a boat ramp at the James Lewis county park, and their plan would have to be expanded to accommodate boats to Presquile. Parking is an issue, but there has been no thought regarding parking so that people can get to Presquile with more than just a kayak. (Charles City County)
4. Is there a discussion on more regular access? Consider developing a regular schedule such as an open house 1/month or something that people can play. (General Public)
5. If protection is tightened up, will cultural exploration of the area be limited? (General Public)
6. Find alternative water access that avoids the cut-off channel. (General Public)
7. Interest in the FWS Transportation Plan and exploring the potential for a new kayak launch on Turkey Island Creek. (NPS)

Wildlife Dependent Recreation

1. Many members of the public inquire about turkey hunting at Presquile. (DGIF)
2. There is a public interest in a turkey hunt; Would USFWS would allow hunting? How does the proclamation waters affect opportunities for waterfowl hunting? (DGIF)
3. Provide access for wildlife recreation (hunting, fishing, bird watching), and wildlife education. (DGIF)
4. Presquile provides an ideal location for exposing visitors and students to core indigenous and contemporary values regarding native wildlife and habitat, exploration of the outdoors, and land and water stewardship as part of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. This is particularly the case if public access to appropriate parts of the refuge is expanded and interpretive and education programs are further enhanced. I encourage you to consider this as a major factor in your planning process. (NPS)
5. Include Presquile as a component of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. The refuge affords a number of natural and cultural resource values that provide significant opportunities for interpretation, education and visitor experiences of key trail themes. (NPS)

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Cultural History Interpretation

1. Inform visitors of cultural history about Native American towns in the vicinity. (NPS)
2. Native American History is a favorite component of the refuge. Want to see signage or interpretation information included in the refuge on the island. Provide educational opportunities. (General Public)
3. Consider doing a small re-creation of historical farming practices on the refuge for cultural interpretation for school age children. (General Public)
4. Presquile NWR provides an ideal place to demonstrate to the public how an appreciation of indigenous values regarding stewardship of land and wildlife can add to our public and personal attachment to the James River watershed. (Virginia Council on Indians)
5. Amend the draft goal regarding cultural resources so that it reads: Conserve, protect, and foster appreciation, *through identification, education, and interpretation*, of the cultural resources and cultural history which connects the community, visitors, and refuge staff and the refuge's role in the history of the James River region. (Virginia Council on Indians)
6. When interpreting various natural resources, identify and communicate how those resources would have been part of the lifeways of the Appamattuck Indians. This information will be increasingly useful if public access is expanded, and Presquile is identified as an indigenous cultural landscape in the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. (Virginia Council on Indians)

Environmental Education

1. When do we expect environment center open? (General Public)
2. When the center is open, do you anticipate reaching out to local schools including home schools? (General Public)
3. Consider having on-going restoration activities so that kids and the public can have hands-on experience and get involved. Develop restoration plan that incorporates volunteers. (General Public)
4. Include climate change information in environmental education programs. (Defenders of Wildlife)

Other Refuge Issues (e.g. conflicts, impacts, “not” appropriate uses/activities)

1. How will the refuge control the added visitation if open access is provided to the refuge? (VCU)

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2. Are there any concerns/efforts to develop maximum number of visitors to have a negative impact on refuge resources such as bald eagles and prothonotary warbler? (General Public)
3. What is the carrying capacity for visitors on the refuge? (General Public)

Facilities, Infrastructure, Staffing Issues (e.g. safety, suitability, accessibility, additional needs)

Facilities and Infrastructure Issues

1. Consider re-constructing a “ghost” building of the Randolph mansion to provide a cultural opportunity to a previous use. (General Public)
2. Consider installing an “eagle cam” on the refuge to improve outreach. (General Public)

Staffing Issues

1. Consider utilizing Dr. Watts (W&M) as an instructor or an eagle counter. (General Public)
2. Consider housing a grad student on the refuge to do research and perform interpretation as a naturalist. (General Public)
3. What is the staffing at the refuge and how does it affect management? (General Public)

Community Relations/Outreach/Local Economy (e.g. tourism, quality of life, local impact)

Partnership Issues

1. Consider starting a “friends” group for the refuge. (General Public)
2. Contact Steven, the weatherman from Channel 12, who had developed an environmental education program. Showcase and outreach for the refuge.

Other Service Programs, Other Agencies, and Partner Coordination

Opportunities for Agency Partner Coordination

1. Captain John Smith Trail offers opportunities and interpretation of John Smith story and eco tourism. Chez Bay access, somewhere that people already on the water can dock. Opportunities for cooperative resource conservation. (NPS)
2. Threatened & Endangered species/habitat sharing of data, education of rare species. (DCR Natural Heritage)

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3. Formal review of plan and section 106 of HPA, education of history and pre-history. Assist with historic information. (DHR)
4. Provide information on adjacent land use. Assist with land use information and department of public works for access issues. (Henrico County)
5. James River heritage trail and potential connections? (DCR)
6. Assist with educational programs. They do two tours a year (16 people each), free program, spaces fill very quickly. Have recently acquired several properties that they do not have a plan for. (Chesterfield County)
7. Riparian buffer nurseries, timber assessments, assist with burns. (Department of Forestry)
8. Manage wildlife, habitats, erosion and would like to help. (DGIF)
9. Invasive species management, mammalian species feral hogs and nutria (confirmed in Surry Co. Wildlife damage management coordination with localities Canada Geese. Black vultures and turkey vulture management, destroying houses and vehicles. Conduct mammalian predator determination. Wildlife disease coordination, mortality event. Role refuge plays with. (USDA)
10. Comprehensive plan has conservation-recreation section include riparian buffers, envir. Ed., green space within county. Teacher in-service: teachers visited island. (Chesterfield County)
11. Build awareness of American Indian communities, along with John Smith trail. Haven't found any evidence of contact erra information. American Indian natural resource protection, represent tribes. Landscape priorities is indigenous cultural landscape, Presquile is a perfect landscape that has a cultural heritage influence. (VCI)
12. State updating comprehensive state plan, recommendations, counter support CCP, regional. (NPS)
13. Coastal Gems and Virginia Landscape conservation efforts - VA Land Conservation Assessment. (DCR NH)

Opportunities for Public Partner Coordination

1. Consider working with VA State Historical Society, Paul Levingood, for information on the Randolph family. (General Public)
2. Continue collaborating with VCU Rice Center on research and education at the refuge. (General Public)