



Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek and Blue Ridge National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update #5 - April 2012

Draft Conservation Plan Now Available!

The Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment (CCP/EA) for Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek, and Blue Ridge national wildlife refuges (NWRs) is available online at: www.fws.gov/hoppermountain or e-mail us at: fw8plancomments@fws.gov to request a compact disc. Printed copies are available for viewing at:

- Fillmore Library
- Ventura County Library - E.P. Foster Branch
- Kern County Library - Taft Branch
- Porterville Public Library
- Tulare County Library - Springville Branch

Public Open House

Please join us at one of the public open houses to provide comments on the Draft CCP/EA.

Refuge staff will be available at several stations located in the meeting rooms to answer questions and gather your comments on the Draft CCP/EA. For more information, visit our web site listed above.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to providing access to this meeting for all participants. Please contact Pamela Bierce with your request for sign language interpreting services or other accommodation at Pamela_Bierce@fws.gov or 916-414-6542 by close of business May 1, 2012.

Wednesday, May 16, 2012
4:00 - 6:00 PM
Poinsettia Pavilion -
Canada Larga Room
3451 Foothill Road
Ventura, California 93003

Thursday, May 17, 2012
4:00 - 7:00 PM
The Historic Fort Taft
Main Auditorium/Meeting Room
915 North 10th Street
Taft, California 93268

Greetings from the Project Leader

Greetings - In October 2011, I became Project Leader for the Refuge Complex and joined the CCP team. Since our last planning update, the team has been working hard to complete the Draft CCP/EA for your review. Based on comments and recommendations we received on the 2008 Draft EA for Grassland Habitat Management and Restoration at Bitter Creek NWR and the scoping comments received for the CCP/EA, the CCP team developed three draft alternatives for managing the refuges over the next 15 years. The management alternatives for Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek and Blue Ridge NWRs are summarized in this update and described in detail in the Draft

CCP/EA now available for public review on our website and by other means detailed in this update.

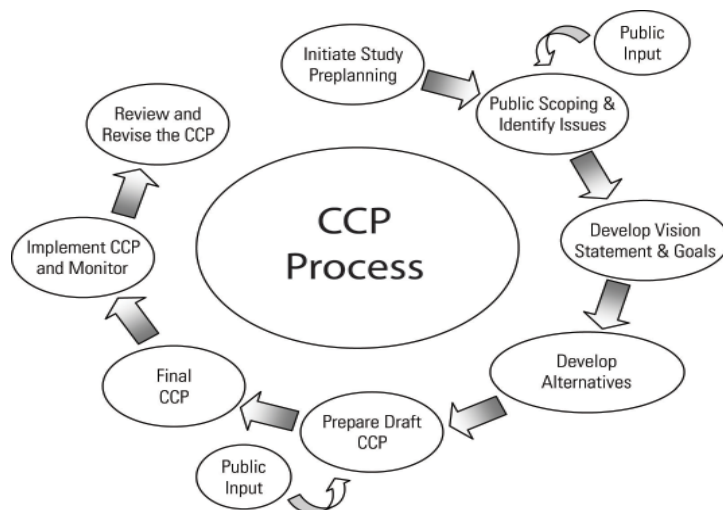
If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at (805) 644-5185. Thank you for your continued interest in this process. I look forward to meeting you next month at one of the upcoming public open houses for the Draft CCP/EA.



Michael Brady
 Project Leader
 Hopper Mountain Refuge Complex

An Update on the Refuges' CCP Process

Since we distributed *Planning Update #4*, the CCP planning team has developed and analyzed draft alternatives for managing Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek and Blue Ridge NWRs. The results of this analysis are available in the Draft CCP/EA, which is now available for public review.



Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: USFWS

Highlights of the Refuge Management Alternatives

The draft environmental assessment (EA) for the draft CCP analyzes three alternatives for managing the refuges.

Under **Alternative A** (the no action alternative), we would continue to manage the refuges as we have in the recent past. There would be continued maintenance of facilities and support of the California Condor Recovery Program (Recovery Program) activities. All three refuges would remain closed to the public.

Hopper Mountain NWR

Alternative B

Under Alternative B (the preferred alternative), we would increase condor management and support actions; collect baseline data for refuge resources with emphasis on special status species; improve management of all habitat types on the refuge; and increase outreach, and Service-guided visitor and volunteer opportunities. The refuge would remain closed to the public.

Alternative C

Under Alternative C for Hopper Mountain NWR, we would increase some

condor management and support actions, expand baseline data collection, manage invasive plants without using pesticides, increase habitat protection and enhancement of select black walnut and oak woodlands, increase some visitor services, and consider providing wildlife-dependent recreation on the refuge in the future.

Bitter Creek NWR

Alternative B

Under Alternative B (the preferred alternative) for Bitter Creek NWR, we would increase condor management and support actions, install a 1,000 square-foot condor treatment facility, and collect baseline data on refuge resources with emphasis on special status species. We would also use grazing and other methods to improve habitat quality to support special status San Joaquin Valley wildlife, and restore some springs and drainages to natural conditions. We would expand visitor services by opening portions of the refuge to public use, including opening an interpretive trail and developing a refuge administrative

office, visitor contact station, and condor observation point.

Alternative C

Under Alternative C for Bitter Creek NWR, we would implement more condor and habitat management and visitor services activities than in Alternative B. The Service would open portions of the refuge for public use.

Blue Ridge NWR

Alternative B

Under Alternative B (the preferred alternative), we would increase condor management activities, collect baseline data for special status species, add volunteer opportunities, and open portions of the refuge for public use.

Alternative C

Under Alternative C, we would increase some condor management actions, but to a lesser extent than Alternative B, and work with partners to increase some guided visitor and volunteer opportunities. The refuge would remain closed to the public.

We Would Like to Hear From You!

The Draft CCP/EA for the Hopper Mountain, Bitter Creek, and Blue Ridge NWRs is available for public review and comment until **June 11, 2012**. Comments may be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to:

Sandy Osborn, Refuge Planning
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Southwest Region
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825
E-mail: fw8plancomments@fws.gov
FAX: (916) 414-6497

Please indicate "Hopper CCP" in the subject line.

If you would like to be added to or removed from the mailing list or are receiving multiple copies of these updates, please let us know via the e-mail or FAX contact information shown above.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Southwest Region
2800 Cottage Way, Refuge Planning
Sacramento, California 95825

Address correction requested