



Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update #2/January 2011



Black-crowned night heron.
Photo: Dave Menke

Greetings from the Refuge Manager

Thank you for participating in our scoping process regarding the management of the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges. We read through every one of the comments that you shared at our scoping meetings, and via letter, email, and comment cards. We appreciate your thoughtful suggestions and concerns.

In this Planning Update we will summarize the public comments and identify the next steps in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

To view the full summary of comments we received, please see:

www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges/ccp.html.

As usual, if you have any questions or comments about our CCP process, please feel free to contact us at:

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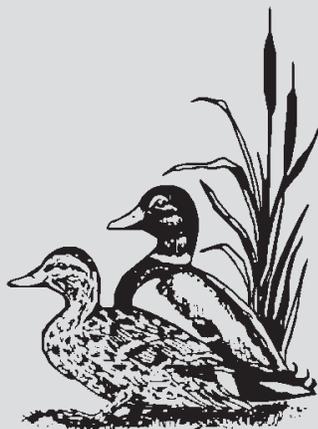
Thank you again for participating; your input has been and continues to be very valuable.

Ron Cole

Ron Cole, Refuge Complex Manager

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Public Comment Summary

We began the scoping process for the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) in spring 2010. Briefing materials and requests for input were posted to the Web site, circulated via newspapers and radio programs, and mailed to known interested parties. The Federal Register Notice of Intent to Prepare a Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement was published on April 29, 2010. Public scoping meetings were held in Tulelake, CA (May 10th), Medford, OR (May 11th), Redding, CA (May 12th), and Klamath Falls, OR (May 13th). Approximately 72 people attended the four meetings, and written comments were recorded. Additional comments were received via letters, emails, and comment

cards. The scoping comment period ended on June 28, 2010.

To view the full summary of comments from individuals, organizations, elected officials, and other public agencies concerning issues to be considered throughout the development of the Draft CCP for the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex, please see: www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges/ccp.html.

The purpose of soliciting comments was to learn what the public thinks is important about the refuges and to hear issues and solutions that could be addressed in the CCP. While many comments echoed similar concerns, it should be noted that the objective of compiling comments does not represent a voting process. Every effort was made to capture all of the issues and concerns expressed by everyone.

How your comments are used throughout the planning process

Your comments have identified special values, opportunities, issues, and conflicts related to the Klamath Basin NWRC. From you, we heard that there are things about how the refuges are currently being managed that should remain the same and other things that you hope will change. We also heard existing and potential problems and a wide range of ideas for resolving these problems. One of the tasks before us now is to go through each of these issues and decide whether it is best to address them in the CCP. If so, we will consider different ways we can resolve or address each issue.

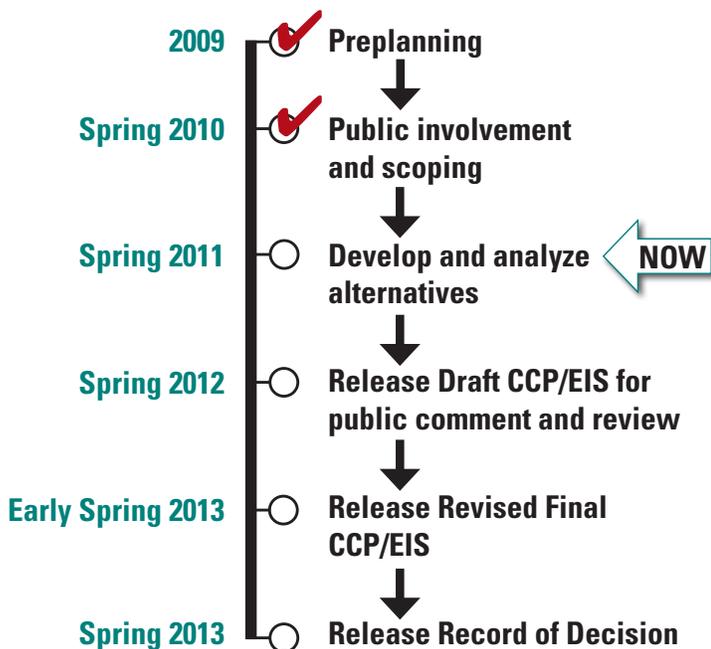
Once we have evaluated the full range of issues and the variety of ways each could be resolved, we will put them together into different management scenarios called “alternatives.”

Each alternative will present a comprehensive set of actions for managing the refuges for the next 15 years. One required alternative is the “no action” alternative, which means management will continue as is. The Draft CCP/EIS will contain an analysis of how each alternative could affect refuge resources (such as fish, wildlife, and plants) and the human environment (such as economics, recreation, and agriculture).

Your continued involvement is important to this planning process. The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Draft CCP/EIS, which we expect to release during spring 2012. At that time, you will be invited to another round of public meetings to discuss the range of alternatives and the Draft CCP/EIS. At these meetings, you will have

the chance to tell us which alternative you prefer, or whether there is yet another approach that could be taken to achieve the purpose of the refuges. Public comments will then be used to develop the Final CCP/EIS. We expect the Final CCP/EIS to be completed during the spring of 2013. Once adopted, the official “Record of Decision” will be signed, the plan will be implemented, and the refuges will be managed accordingly for the following 15 years.

In the meantime, you will receive periodic Planning Updates, such as this, to keep you updated on planning process benchmarks. You may also visit our CCP Web page at <http://fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges/ccp.html> to stay apprised on the planning process to view CCP-related materials.



Timeline for Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) & Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)



Burn crew prepares line before a prescribed fire burn. Photo: Scott Swanson

The range of issues submitted through public comments

The full summary of public comment is available at <http://fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges/ccp.html>. The following text describes the major themes of the issues you shared with us.

Agriculture

We received many comments related to agricultural practices on the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges. Several respondents asked that we fully analyze and describe the agricultural history of the Klamath Basin. Many were supportive of continuing agricultural practices on the refuges and believed that agriculture is wildlife compatible. Others suggested that agriculture should be considered incompatible with the purpose of the refuges. Some expressed support for continued chemical use, while others called for reducing chemicals, and some requested a total prohibition of chemical use. Some pledge support for the commercial lease lands program stating it is a “win-win” for Klamath agricultural producers, the local economy, and the KBNWR. Others asked that we assess the compatibility of the commercial farming program on the KBNWR and evaluate if it is consistent with the Kuchel Act. We received several other general agriculture comments related to crop section, the Walking Wetlands program, and grazing.

Fire

We received a few comments related to fire management on the KBNWR. Comments included support for continued use of prescribed fire as well as developing alternatives to burning. We also received a request to update all aspects of our existing fire management plan, to include conservation of wildlife as the highest priority and a discussion of the natural, historic role of fire.

Habitat

We received many comments related to wildlife habitat on the KBNWR. We were encouraged to manage primarily for the conservation of waterfowl and other native birds, but also for a full diversity of other species that use the refuges. We received several suggestions to restore historic lakes, marshes, wetlands, and also improve upland habitats. We also received specific suggestions for managing habitat at each individual refuge.

Water

We received many comments related to water on the KBNWR. Most respondents agree that water supply for the KBNWR is a critical issue and encouraged us to explore opportunities to secure reliable water for the refuges and ensure that water is used efficiently. Respondents voiced support and opposition to the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA). We were asked to describe how the full range of alternatives would affect flows on the Klamath River, including impacts to listed species. We also asked to prioritize water quality improvement and describe how the full range of alternatives would affect water quality throughout the upper Klamath Watershed.

Visitor Services

We received many comments related to visitor services on the KBNWR. Many of these comments were related to hunting, support and opposition for continued permitting of hunting guides, and requests for planning pheasants. Other comments were related to generally improving our facilities and opportunities for people interested in wildlife viewing and photography, and increasing opportunities for environmental education.



Swans in flight at KBNWR. Photo: George Gentry

Law Enforcement

We received a few comments about law enforcement on the KBNWR; including a suggestion to add more officers and to make contact information for officers more readily available.

Environmental Threats

We received several comments about environmental threats— including weeds, invasive species, and climate change—on the KBNWR. We were asked to assess the risk of weeds and invasive species and evaluate options for threat reduction. We were also asked to describe anticipated climate conditions and how they may affect refuge resources including habitat, water, and public use opportunities into the future.

Planning Process

We received several comments about the planning process in general. General comments included outreach, public involvement opportunities, format of public meetings, and ensuring coordination with Tribes.

Please feel free to contact us!

Your participation in this process is most welcome. Please feel free to contact us with any questions, comments, or concerns.

For more information, visit our Web site at:

www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges

Or contact:

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A mother Canada goose and her young out for a swim. Photo: Dave Menke

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