



Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 3 – Winter 2018

Greetings from the Project Leader

Greetings - This is the third planning update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to help keep you informed about the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process for the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). Work on the CCP was suspended due to other regional priorities and changes in Refuge personnel; however, we have once again turned our attention to the CCP.

In our first two planning updates, we described the Refuge, its importance as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the Service's responsibility for managing the Refuge in accordance

with the purposes for which it was established: *"...a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds..."*

We also asked for your input on the future management of the Refuge and then summarized the comments received during the scoping period for the CCP.

Since then, I became the Project Leader for the Refuge and joined the CCP team. After careful consideration of the input we received, the CCP planning team is now preparing the Draft CCP and environmental assessment (EA) that will analyze

the draft alternatives for Refuge management and public use.

Another planning update will be distributed when the Draft CCP/EA is available for review, but please check our website for updates at: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/ruby_lake/

Thank you for your continued interest and support in this important planning process.

Pete Schmidt

Project Leader
Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge

CCP progress

- Pre-planning
- Public Scoping and Identify Issues
- Develop Draft Vision Statement
- Prepare Draft CCP/EA
- Public Review of Draft CCP/EA
- Prepare Final CCP/EA
- Public Notice of Decision

Next steps

Our next step is to complete preparation of a Draft CCP and environmental assessment, which includes draft alternatives, objectives, and strategies for the Refuge with consideration of the issues identified during the public and internal scoping processes.



Ruby Lake NWR entrance.

Photo: USFWS

Please feel free to contact us!

Comments are welcome any time during the planning process by sending an e-mail to the CCP team at: fw8plancomments@fws.gov

There will be additional opportunities for input during the public review period for the Draft CCP.

Please check our website for previous Planning Updates and updates as new information becomes available at: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/ruby_lake/

Who we are and what we do

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principle federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, which currently encompasses 836 million acres and 566 refuges. Ruby Lake Refuge is one of nine National Wildlife Refuges in Nevada.

Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge lies at the southern end of Ruby Valley in northeast Nevada within the Great Basin Desert. Located at an elevation of 6,000 feet and flanked on the west by the rugged and scenic Ruby Mountains, it is one of the most remote refuges in the lower 48 states. The Refuge encompasses 39,926 acres. Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1938, by Executive Order 7923, with the primary purpose of serving as "... a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife." The Refuge also serves "... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act).

Conservation Priorities

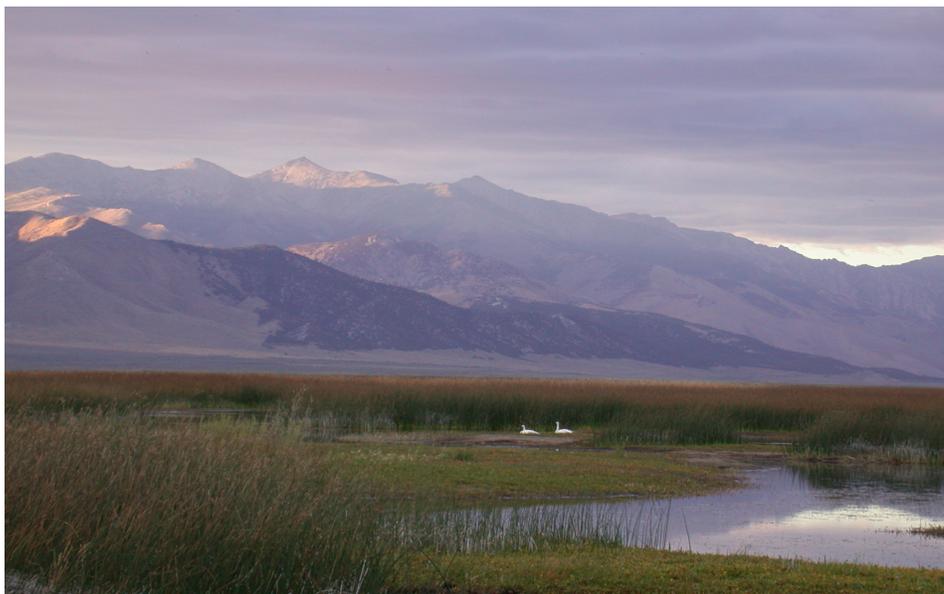
As part of the CCP planning process, the Service is reviewing conservation priorities for the Refuge. Identifying conservation priorities or "targets" helps to focus conservation efforts and limited resources where the most benefits can be achieved. Conservation targets can be refuge habitats, wildlife species groups, and individual species. The conservation target selection process for the Refuge included a

review of refuge purposes, habitats, and species occurrence information; state and regional conservation plans; and species status information.

All large-scale habitat types found on the Refuge such as marsh, playa/seasonal wetlands, meadows, and shrub-steppe are included as conservation targets. Small-scale habitat types such as springs, riparian areas, cliffs, and even developed sites that contribute to the biological integrity and diversity of the Refuge are also included. These habitats total approximately 17,000 acres of wetlands and 23,000 acres of uplands, which provide for the life cycle needs of many native wildlife species that have been identified as conservation priorities in Nevada.

The three migratory bird groups - waterfowl, waterbirds, and shorebirds - that are most associated with Refuge wetlands and for which the Refuge was established are included as conservation targets. Individual migratory bird species that are conservation targets include: canvasback, redhead, cinnamon teal, trumpeter swan, white-faced ibis, black tern, greater sandhill crane, long-billed curlew, black-necked stilt, and American avocet. Refuge wetlands are very important to these migratory birds because of their strategic flyway location and large area in an otherwise arid environment, and because the more than 200 springs that feed the wetlands are a reliable water source.

Three additional conservation target species associated with Refuge wetlands are relict dace, northern leopard frog, and muskrat. Relict dace, the only native fish on the Refuge, are present in just a few other valleys in northeastern Nevada. The northern leopard frog is a conservation priority species in Nevada due to apparent declining populations. Systematic surveys have yet to be conducted, but incidental sightings indicate we have a healthy population of them on the Refuge. Muskrats are a conservation target for the Refuge because they are a keystone species in marsh habitat.



Ruby Lake NWR, trumpeter swans.

Photo: USFWS

They help balance emergent vegetation by eating bulrush shoots and building mounds that provide important bird nesting and resting platforms.

Sagebrush is a habitat type within the broader shrub-steppe habitat on the Refuge. Conservation targets associated with sagebrush habitat include: greater sage-grouse, sagebrush sparrow, sage thrasher, pygmy rabbit, and pronghorn.

Public Use Priorities

There are laws and policies that guide the management of public uses on national wildlife refuges. Only those public uses that are determined to be compatible with the mission of the Refuge System and the purposes of the refuge are allowed. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-57) identifies six wildlife dependent public uses as priority uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and environmental interpretation.

Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge provides opportunities for all six priority public uses plus boating, which

is enjoyed for its own sake as well as in association with several other uses. Fishing and wildlife observation are the most popular recreational activities on the Refuge. Many visitors enjoy fishing for bass in the summer and trout all year. Watching birds, pronghorn, and other wildlife as well as viewing and photographing the scenery are also very popular. We want our public use opportunities to provide quality experiences, attract diverse visitors, help instill a conservation ethic, inform visitors about natural and cultural resources, and highlight locally unique features. By carefully balancing natural resource protection and public use, the Service supports the Refuge System's "wildlife first" conservation mission and fulfills its purpose as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds.

What are the goals of this planning process?

The goals of the CCP planning process are to:

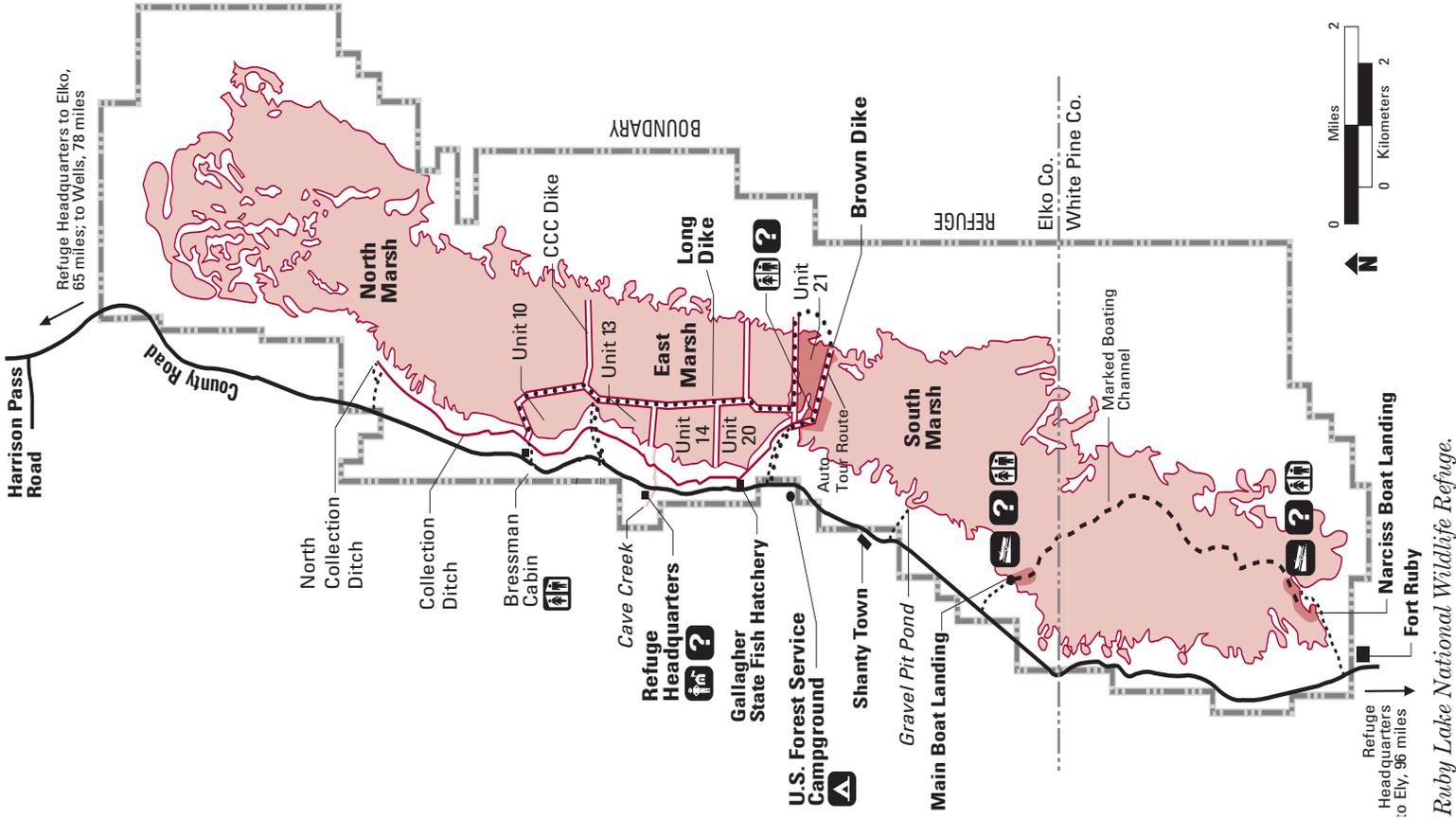
- Outline Refuge management priorities for the next 15 years;
- Describe significant Refuge resources and their importance;
- Identify how the Refuge can best protect these resources;
- Clarify what public uses are, and are not, compatible with managing significant resources;
- Identify the Refuge's role within the local community and as a national resource.



Other photos: USFWS

Northern leopard frog.

Photo: K. Breedveld



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Pacific Southwest Region
 Natural Resources Division
 2800 Cottage Way, W-1832
 Sacramento, California 95825
Address correction requested

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