



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Otay-Sweetwater Unit and Vernal Pools Stewardship Project

Planning Update 2 - December 2006

Greetings!

This is the second in a series of *Planning Updates* that are intended to keep you informed about the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process for the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge).

The purpose of this second *Planning Update* is to summarize key issues and concerns identified through the public scoping process, to encourage your continued input, and to invite you to participate in the upcoming Public Use Workshop scheduled for the morning of Saturday, January 6, 2007 (details provided on page 4).

Public Scoping Provided Important Insight

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the scoping process for the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (NWR or Refuge) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). More than 70 individuals representing the interests of private property owners, hunters, trail users, environmental organizations, land conservancies, public agencies, and others, attended the public scoping meetings held this past June. Many others contributed written comments either electronically or by mail. We received input addressing over 150 different issues ranging from law enforcement and fire management to public use and habitat protection.



More than 70 people attended the Public Scoping Meetings.

A number of comments came from long-time residents who have spent years exploring and appreciating the lands now included in the Refuge. They provided information regarding past land uses, important natural resources, and activities occurring in and around the Refuge. Others offered suggestions for how and where various public uses should be accommodated on the Refuge.

A summary of the comments received during the public scoping process is presented on page 2 and a more detailed listing of the comments is available at our CCP website (see the

back page for details). You can also contact the Refuge Planner to receive the detailed comments in the mail (contact numbers are provided on page 7).

The input provided to date will assist us in defining the types of Refuge management actions that should be implemented over the next 15 years. To further define the issues raised during public scoping, we have scheduled a Public Workshop to discuss potential public uses for the Refuge (see page 4 for details).

We encourage your continued input and involvement in the San Diego NWR CCP process and hope to see you at the Public Use Workshop. Feel free to contact us with any questions.

Andrew R. Yuen

*Andrew R. Yuen
Project Leader, San Diego
National Wildlife Refuge
Complex*

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The Value of Public Input

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) can only fulfill the promise of the National Wildlife Refuge System in partnership with refuge friends and neighbors. Such partnerships help refuge staff develop long-term goals and objectives for refuge management.

The purposes of scoping meetings and workshops are to inform and educate the public about the CCP process, provide meaningful and timely opportunities for public input, identify key resources and land use issues to be analyzed, and provide avenues for additional input throughout the decision-making and review process. The public scoping period for the San Diego NWR began on May 24, 2006, with a Notice of Intent being published in the Federal Register. In addition, a press release was issued to various media outlets and over 1,000 individuals,

Tribes, organizations, and agencies received a copy of *Planning Update 1*. Two public scoping meetings were conducted in mid-June and comments were solicited on the Refuge website. These actions generated more than 150 different comments. All of these comments are now being considered and evaluated as part of the development of potential management strategies for the Refuge. The issues, suggestions, and concerns expressed during the scoping process will provide valuable assistance to us as we formulate the vision and goals for the Refuge and establish priorities for actions related to wildlife and habitat management, refuge operations, and public use.



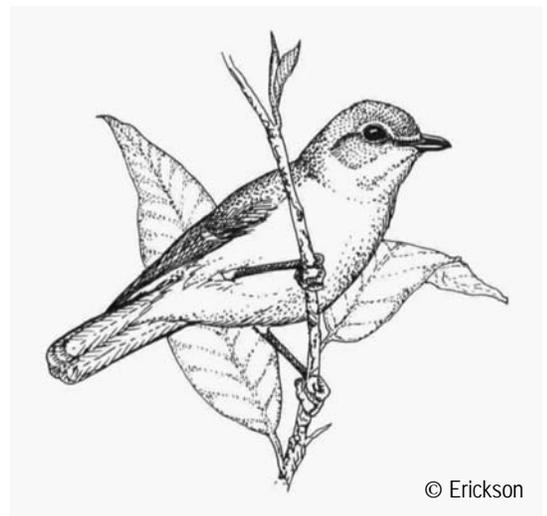
Many of the comments reflected a desire to see a designated system of multiple use trails established on the Refuge.

Summary of Public Scoping Comments

The issues, concerns, and recommendations received during the scoping process fall into several categories, including wildlife and habitat management, public use, cultural resources, refuge operations (e.g., law enforcement, fire management, regulatory signage, maintenance), and the CCP/NEPA process. The various comments are summarized below.

Wildlife/Habitat Management

- Comprehensively plan for habitat conservation, management, and monitoring within the Refuge acquisition boundary, regardless of ownership.
- Incorporate as appropriate the statewide and South Coast Region conservation actions described in the draft California Wildlife Action Plan.
- Acquire and protect wildlife corridors to ensure continued wildlife movement between protected habitat areas.
- Restore/enhance native habitats and expand/reintroduce populations of listed and sensitive species.
- Control invasive plant and animal species.
- Monitor water quality and quantity and ensure adequate water availability to support Refuge resources.



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The endangered least Bell's vireo nests within the San Diego NWR along the Sweetwater River.

Summary of Public Scoping Comments (continued from page 2)

Public Use

- Allow hunting in accordance with state regulations.
- Refrain from identifying specific hunting locations or types of game species in the CCP in order to allow flexibility as conditions, such as game populations and development of adjacent parcels, change.
- Consider wildlife needs, conflicts with other users, and the proximity of the Refuge to developed areas when evaluating requests to allow hunting on the Refuge.
- Provide opportunities for fishing, dog training, multiple use trails (e.g., hiking, equestrian, and mountain biking), wildlife observation, interpretive trails, environmental education, and camping.
- Emphasize wildlife first and avoid allowing any public uses that would impact or conflict with another use.
- Establish the Refuge as a center for research on urban/wildland interface issues.
- Provide a visitor center/interpretive center to accommodate educational and research activities.

Cultural Resources

- Identify and protect important cultural resource sites.

Refuge Operations

- Improve the conditions on Millar Ranch Road through the Refuge to reduce safety issues for adjacent residents.
- Clearly post all Refuge boundaries, identify and secure entry points being used for unauthorized access onto the Refuge, and work with adjacent property owners to reduce access from their properties onto Refuge lands.
- Increase Refuge law enforcement to deter illegal off-road activity, homeless and migrant encampments, dumping, and other illegal activities.
- Consider including prescribed burns as an appropriate action for facilitating habitat restoration and maintenance and reducing the presence of hazardous fuels on the Refuge.
- Develop a volunteer program to expand the Refuge's ability to implement habitat enhancement and restoration projects, maintain trails, and conduct public education programs.
- Accelerate the acquisition of properties within the approved acquisition boundary to avoid the permanent loss of potential Refuge lands to development.
- Set acquisition priorities to ensure that adequately sized contiguous blocks of native habitat are acquired to support native plants and wildlife, as well as to better support priority public uses such as hunting and wildlife observation.

CCP/NEPA Process

- Consider amending the acquisition boundary to address changes in development patterns and habitat conditions.
- Analyze the effect of continued acquisition within the approved Refuge boundary on essential public facilities and planned public roadways within the region.
- Consider the impacts of continued land acquisition on the availability of aggregate resources.

Priority Public Uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Act) provides direction for authorizing public uses on National Wildlife Refuges. The Act defines **hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and environmental interpretation** as wildlife dependent recreational uses and requires that these six uses receive priority consideration in refuge planning. They are often referred to as the six priority public uses of the Refuge System.

You are invited to participate in a

PUBLIC USE WORKSHOP

on
Saturday, January 6, 2007 - 9:30 AM to Noon

Jamul Primary School, Multipurpose Room
14567 Lyons Valley Road, Jamul

We will discuss Refuge public use policies
and explore in greater detail potential public uses for the
San Diego National Wildlife Refuge.

Directions: From Highway 94 (Campo Road) turn onto Lyons Valley Road and travel about 1.5 miles to the Skyline Truck Trail/Lyons Valley Road stop sign. Turn right, continuing on Lyons Valley Road to the second driveway on your right (look for the Jamul Primary School sign).

For more detailed directions, contact Victoria Touchstone, Refuge Planner
(See page 7 for contact information.)

Topics of the Public Use Workshop

At the Public Use Workshop, we will address the many public use comments you provided during public scoping. Proposed uses ranged from hunting, multiple use trails, environmental education and interpretation to dog training, and camping. Provided below are just some of the comment received.

- Provide a designated system of multiple use trails within the Refuge that are well-marked, appropriately maintained, and linked to the regional trail network. Close and restore all other trails.
- Consider ATV use on Refuge trails.
- Provide opportunities for hunting and fishing.
- Do not allow hunting.
- Work with the San Diego County Wildlife Federation on approaches for managing a hunting program.
- Allow dog training in conjunction with shot-gun use in designated areas.
- Outreach and environmental education should be provided for all ages.
- Provide public access via boardwalk, trail, or overlook to vernal pools.
- Provide interpretation along the trails and at trailheads.
- Provide a visitor center to accommodate educational and research activities.
- Do not allow one use on the Refuge to have an advantage over another.
- Confine recreational uses to the outer edges of the Refuge.

How Public Uses Are Authorized on National Wildlife Refuges

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Act) recognizes that wildlife dependent recreational uses (i.e., hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and environmental interpretation), when determined to be compatible, are legitimate and appropriate public uses of the Refuge System that should receive priority consideration in refuge planning and management. According to the Act, when a wildlife-dependent recreational use is determined to be a compatible use and is not inconsistent with public safety, that activity should be facilitated.

In order for any other general public use (e.g., mountain biking, equestrian use, boating) to be permitted on a Refuge, the use must first be found to be appropriate in accordance with the Appropriate Refuge Uses Policy (Section 603 FW 1 of the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual).

To be considered appropriate, general public uses must either contribute to fulfilling the refuge purpose(s), the Refuge System mission, or the goals or objectives described for the refuge in a management plan approved after October 9, 1997; or must be found to comply with the ten criteria provided in Section 1.11 of the Policy (see inset below).

If a general public use is determined to be appropriate, the use must then undergo a compatibility review. A compatibility review is required for all appropriate public uses, including wildlife-dependent recreational uses.

The term “compatible use” is defined as a wildlife dependent recreational use or any other use of a refuge that, in the sound professional judgment of the Refuge Manager, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the mission of the System or the purposes of the refuge. (Continued on page 6.)

Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System

“The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

The ten criteria to be considered in determining appropriateness:

1. Do we have jurisdiction over the use?
2. Does the use comply with all applicable laws and regulations?
3. Is the use consistent with applicable Executive Orders and Department and Service policies?
4. Is the use consistent with public safety?
5. Is the use consistent with refuge goals and objectives in an approved management plan or other document?
6. Has an earlier documented analysis not denied the use or is this the first time the use has been proposed?
7. Is the use manageable within available budget and staff?
8. Will the use be manageable in the future within existing resources?
9. Does the use contribute to the public’s understanding and appreciation of the refuge’s natural or cultural resources, or is the use beneficial to the refuge’s natural or cultural resources?
10. Can the use be accommodated without impairing existing wildlife-dependent recreational uses or reducing the potential to provide quality, compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation into the future?

How Public Uses Are Authorized on National Wildlife Refuges

(continued from page 5)

Part 603 FW 2 of the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual sets forth the policy and guidelines for determining compatibility of proposed uses and provides procedures for documentation and periodic review of existing uses. In addition, the policy requires an opportunity for public review and comment on all compatibility determinations. When prepared in conjunction with a CCP, compatibility determinations are distributed for public review along with the draft CCP and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Refuge Manager has the authority to determine, by exercising sound professional judgment, what is a compatible use. In addition to determining if a use would materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the System mission or the purposes of the refuge, the Refuge Manager must also evaluate the direct and indirect impacts of a use on refuge resources. Further, the cumulative impacts of the use when conducted in conjunction with other existing or planned uses of the refuge must also be considered.

After evaluating the anticipated impacts of a proposed use and determining if any stipulations (terms or conditions) are needed to avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts, the Refuge Manager will determine whether or not the use is compatible. This determination is documented in writing and is available for review by the public.

WHAT IS SOUND PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT?

The Act defines sound professional judgment as a finding, determination, or decision that is consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management and administration, available science and resources, and adherence to the requirements of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), and other applicable laws. Included in this finding, determination, or decision is a refuge manager's field experience and knowledge of the particular refuge's resources.

A proposed use can be denied without determining compatibility under certain circumstances, such as:

1. instances in which a proposed use would conflict with other applicable laws or regulations;
2. the use would result in conflicts with the goals or objectives of an approved CCP; or
3. when a use is determined to be inconsistent with public safety.

Refuges are first and foremost national treasures for the conservation of wildlife. Through careful planning, consistent Refuge Systemwide application of regulations and policies, diligent monitoring of the impacts of uses on wildlife resources, and preventing or eliminating uses not appropriate to the Refuge System, we can achieve the Refuge System conservation mission while also providing the public with lasting opportunities for experiencing the diverse resources of our National Wildlife Refuges.

More information about appropriate refuge uses and compatibility determinations is provided on the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) website (www.fws.gov). The complete text of the Appropriate Refuge Use Policy is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/policy/603fw1.html> and the Compatibility Policy is available at: <http://policy.fws.gov/603fw2.html>.

Refuge Purposes

The purposes for the San Diego NWR are defined by language in a number of acts of Congress which grant the Service general authority to acquire land for the National Wildlife Refuge System. The purposes for establishment of the San Diego NWR include:

"... to conserve (A) fish or wildlife which are listed as endangered species or threatened species . . . or (B) plants . . ."
16 U.S.C. §1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)

"... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . ."
16 U.S.C. §742f(a)(4) "... for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude . . ."
16 U.S.C. §742f(b)(1) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

Refuge News - Barn at the Oaks



Designated a San Diego County Historic Site in 1996.

The Refuge Complex has received funding to design and implement a stabilization plan for the Barn at the Oaks, a historic barn located within the San Diego NWR. The Barn at the Oaks, which was constructed some time between 1895 and 1936, is a gambrel roof, balloon frame wood barn with a field stone and concrete foundation and horse stalls. Around 1928, the property was converted from a farm operation to a school for boys. In 1936, the property was leased to Esther Riddle for the school which operated until 1957.

In 1996, the Barn at the Oaks was granted a Historic Site Designation by the County Board of Supervisors. In 1999, the tract with the barn transferred to the Service for inclusion in the San Diego NWR.

Years of fall winds and winter rains, combined with vandalism and natural decay, have caused the condition of the structure to deteriorate to the point that it is now in danger of collapsing. The Service is proposing to stabilize the barn to prevent further structural deterioration. The repair and stabilization efforts will include: removing the existing roof ; 2) constructing a new wood shingle roof ; 3) installing a support structure for the new roof; 4) realigning and bracing walls to plumb and prevent collapse from lateral and seismic forces; 5) repairing decayed wood; 6) salvaging historic materials for later reuse; and 7) replacing the chain link fence to prevent trespass and vandalism. All work will follow the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.

We are currently consulting with the State Historic Preservation Office regarding the proposal and hope to begin the stabilization project in early 2007. Contact the Refuge Planner for more information.

Please feel free to contact us!

We are available to provide additional information about the San Diego NWR and to answer any questions you might have about the planning process. You can contact us by phone, mail, or e-mail.

For information about the CCP process or to provide any comments, contact:

Victoria Touchstone, Refuge Planner

San Diego NWR Complex

6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, CA 92011

760-431-9440 ex. 349 (phone), 760-930-0256 (fax)

Email: Victoria_Touchstone@fws.gov

Concerns regarding current Refuge operations can also be directed to:

Slader Buck, Deputy Project Leader

San Diego NWR Complex

6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, CA 92011

760-930-0168 (phone), 760-930-0256 (fax)

Email: Slader_Buck@fws.gov

CCP Planning Schedule

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| May 2006 | Initiated Public Scoping |
| June 2006 | Held Public Scoping Meetings |
| <u>January 6, 2007</u> | Public Use Workshop (9:30 - Noon) at the Jamul Primary School (see page 4 for details) |
| November 2007 | Issue Draft CCP/NEPA Document |
| February 2008 | Publish Final CCP |



United States Department of the Interior
Fish & Wildlife Service
San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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Carlsbad, CA 92011

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Notice of Public Workshop

Public Use Workshop

Saturday, January 6, 2007 (9:30 AM to Noon)

Details on page 4

PLEASE JOIN US!

We have set up a webpage for the San Diego NWR CCP at our San Diego NWR Complex website. You can visit this site throughout the CCP process to keep up-to-date with the CCP process and to learn more about the San Diego NWR. Go to: <http://sandiegorefuges.fws.gov>. Once at the website, under Refuge Planning click on "SD NWR CCP."

If you did not receive this *Planning Update* through the mail and would like to be on our mailing list, or if you would like to be removed from the list, contact the Refuge Planner (see page 7 for contact information). Please feel free to pass this *Planning Update* along to anyone you think might be interested in the CCP process for the San Diego NWR. Thank you!