

# **Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment**

## **Scoping Report**

*May, 2009*

### **Introduction**

This report summarizes initial outreach activities and public comments gathered for the preparation of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge (KNWR or the Refuge). The purposes of scoping are to notify the affected public of the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the CCP and encourage them to: comment on preliminary wildlife, habitat, and public use goals; help identify potential issues, management actions and concerns, significant problems or impacts; and opportunities or alternatives to resolve them (602 FW 3, 3.4(2b)). While public scoping will continue as we prepare a draft CCP/EA, the outreach and public comments in this report represent initial CCP public scoping that ended on March 25, 2009.

After public scoping, the planning team reviewed and evaluated all potential issues, management concerns and problems, and the opportunities to resolve them, that the planning team, other Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) personnel, partners, and the public identified. These findings were used to develop a list of significant refuge issues to be addressed in the CCP. The Service defines an issue as: “Any unsettled matter that requires a management decision, e.g., an initiative, opportunity, resource management problem, threat to the resources of the unit, conflict in uses, public concern, or the presence of an undesirable resource condition (602 FW 1 1.6 K).” Significant issues typically are those that are: within our jurisdiction, suggest different actions or alternatives, and will influence our decision (602 FW 3 Sec.3.4 (3b)). The final section of this scoping report documents the selection and rationale for issues to be addressed in the CCP, and those considered to be outside the scope of the CCP.

### **Outreach Efforts**

#### **Federal Register Notice of Intent to Prepare a CCP – published February 23, 2009**

The Federal Register Notice included background information on the Refuge and preliminary issues with request for scoping comments.

#### **Planning Update #1**

The January 2009 Planning Update #1 was made available to FWS staff and the general public throughout the scoping period. Two hundred sixty-six hardcopies were distributed to individuals and organizations on the mailing list, including Federal, state, Tribal, and local governments and land management agencies; nongovernmental organizations, media contacts, and private citizens. An additional 250 copies were available to scoping meeting attendees, and Refuge office visitors and partners. An electronic copy of the Planning

Update was available for visitors to the FWS website at [http://www.fws.gov/kootenai/refuge\\_planning.html](http://www.fws.gov/kootenai/refuge_planning.html). The Planning Update included background information on the Refuge, in addition to the preliminary goals and issues to be considered in the CCP. Information about the CCP process, an invitation to attend two public meetings, and a solicitation for comments was also included.

### **Media Outreach & Press Coverage**

A news release, entitled “Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge Initiates Plan for the Future,” was released on January 9, 2009. The release was sent to 27 TV, radio, and newspaper media contacts. The news release was posted on [ruralnorthwest.com](http://ruralnorthwest.com) on January 9, 2009, appeared in the Bonners Ferry Herald on January 15, 2009, and in the Boundary County Digest on January 28, 2009. A subsequent news release extending the comment period to March 25, 2009 was released February 23, 2009.

### **Scoping Meetings**

The scoping meetings began with PowerPoint presentations by the Refuge Manager and Lead Planner giving an overview of the Refuge and the CCP process. Following the PowerPoint presentations there were four informational tables set up with Refuge Complex employees available to answer questions and receive comments. The informational tables each featured different topics: “Wetland and Instream Habitats”, “Riparian and Forest Habitats”, “Hunting and Fishing”, and “Non-consumptive Uses.” Scoping meeting location, dates, and times were:

Bonnors Ferry, ID - Jan 23, 2009, Session 1, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Bonnors Ferry, ID - Jan 23, 2009, Session 2, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

### **Invitations Mailed to Idaho Dept of Fish and Game, and Tribal Officials**

Letters to representatives of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho were emailed on April 6, 2009, to request their participation on the extended planning team and throughout the process.

### **Meetings with Congressional Representatives and Senators or their Aides, Meetings with State Agency Representatives, and Meetings with City/County Representatives**

1) Boundary County Commissioners, Bonners Ferry, ID, January 27, 2009

FWS Participants: Dianna Ellis, Refuge Manager

Other Participants: Boundary County Commissioners Dan Dinning and Walt Kerby; along with Deputy Clerk Michelle Rohrwasser (stenographer). No members of the public were present during Dianna’s ½ hour presentation. Information packets were left with each of the three participants. A subsequent interview with radio news reporter Mike Brown of KBFI, Blue Sky Radio News, occurred on February 9, 2009. Mr. Brown read the minutes from the Commissioners Meeting and contacted Ms. Ellis. Select comments from the interview were aired two days later.

2) Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI), Bonners Ferry, ID, February 23, 2009

FWS Participants: Dianna Ellis, Refuge Manager

Other Participants: Approximately 18 people including officials from the City of Bonners Ferry and Boundary County; Kootenai Tribe of Idaho representatives; representatives from the US Forest Service, the Idaho Dept of Fish and Game, and the Army Corps of Engineers;

staffers from Senator Crapo’s and Congressman Minnick’s offices; business and industry representatives; and local citizens. The Refuge Manager gave an overview of the CCP process and preliminary issues identified by the planning team, including the proposed land exchange with IDL, and answered questions posed by the meeting attendees.

## Summary of Comments

**Note:** “ID” below refers to a unique number that is assigned to each *submittal*—written or verbal—by a single individual. One submittal may contain several individual *comments*. Therefore the same ID number may appear under several different topics.

### Land Acquisition

#### General Land Acquisition

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
41	Increase area of refuge.

#### Proposed Land Exchange with IDL

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
16	IDL originally asked FWS if we were interested in leasing the land.
16	Later thought it was a good addition to the Refuge to do the swap.
16	FWS & IDL would only swap on equal value.
16	Would elk hunting still be allowed on former IDL land if FWS acquired it?
18	Likes land swap idea, one on one, trade or buy. There is so much forest land here, sees IDL land as good. Would like to refuge expand in other ways too.
24	Opposed to land swap w/state. At least a dozen bow hunters hunt elk on state land south of Refuge. Would NWR restrict big game hunting on bottom if it becomes part of Refuge?
27	Think land exchange would be a good swap.
32	Support Kootenai in the land exchange being considered. Exchanging forest land for this wetland should be done value for value, not acre per acre. This exchange sounds like a great idea. Both agencies & the public would benefit from this.
38	Exchange the forest upland area for riparian area. There are some uplands associated w/this riparian area where you could plant forage for geese.
41	Do not exchange ecologically important timber lands w/IDL. Uneven aged timber harvest is NOT restoration. School children will remember that adults destroyed valuable habitat for short term economic gain.
42	IDL has not shown best stewardship of its lands & an exchange of floodplain for old growth should not be considered at this time. IDL does not optimize revenue for schools by charging fair market value for its leases, particularly in relation to grazing – suspect timber harvest is not any different.
42	Old growth forest is increasing scarce & islands of this resource need to be preserved. Part of that preservation is management. USFWS has same capability for management logging as any other agency & only way to assure optimum management is to retain oversight of this scarce resource.

## **Planning Process**

### General Planning Process

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
40	Encourage refuge to develop a draft CCP w/a full range of different alternatives. This will allow public to clearly identify which management actions are appropriate for KNWR. (Often seen plans develop 3 action based alternatives. One alternative is usually commodity based & another is conservation based. Middle alternative is usually a mix of the two. Range of alternative causes public to gravitate towards either the commodity based or conservation based alternative. Middle alternative rarely sees public support.)
42	Commends Kootenai CCP for incorporating human dimension into conservation planning from the beginning.
42	Most important aspect of refuges is public education, wildlife viewing, & access to outdoor recreation opportunities.
42	First most important aspect being function of refuge for migratory waterfowl.
42	There are already good opportunities for education & recreation & having discrete preliminary VS goals mirrors importance of working people into conservation management.
42	Having goals that emphasize environmental education, a Friends group to assist staff in providing services & incorporating volunteers.
42	As budgets tighten, urge refuge to be creative in incorporating people, education, & recreation into equation of refuge mgmt.
43	Supports list of issues identified for consideration in NEPA analysis process.
43	Recommend NEPA analysis framework for the project address the effects of climate change & what it may mean for Kootenai NWR. For example, the framework could include components such as climate change adaptation, mitigation, & education. Most current science predicting effects of climate change on Pacific Northwest – see Univ. of WA Climate Impacts Group website. Encourage you to examine the presentation & develop a plan of action, which addresses the effects of climate change on KNWR & visa versa.

### Interested in Participating and/or Being Informed

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
28, 30, 31, 34, 36	Would like to remain on mailing list to receive subsequent information.
33	Welcomes any further questions & could offer more suggestions.
37	Please put me on your mailing list for any future mailings concerning management plan.
40	IDPR would like to be added to the mailing list for the planning effort.
42	Let me know if there is anything I can offer to the refuge to enhance good resource management, environmental education, evaluation of water quality or fisheries issues or anything else that comes to mind.
43	If we can assist you as you develop your NEPA analysis, please contact us.

## **Refuge Administration**

### General Refuge Administration

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
12	Like to see regional communication & cooperation between ID Dept. of Fish & Game w/their two WMAs, TNC's Ball Creek Ranch, Kootenai NWR, & Creston WMA.
12	Like to see sharing of plans & information such as acquiring new lands or managing lands differently.

- 12 Regional management across agencies would carry more weight, provide more clout, & potentially more support for wildlife management in the KV.
- 12 Refuge has more public use than other management areas in the KV.
- 29 We have taken over so much room from animals of all kinds. Places like refuges are needed.
- 33 Love the refuge & the recreational opportunities it has given me already.
- 37 Pleased w/current upgrades that have been accomplished at the refuge. Family enjoys hiking, biking, & waterfowl hunting on refuge.

**Law Enforcement**

**ID Comment**

- 24 Refuge needs increased LE presence during hunting season.
- 30 Rules like “dog on leash” needs to be enforced & speed limit, & cornering, cutting off & chasing elk, deer during the hunting season.
- 32 KNWR certainly could use more LE, so funding needs to increase to help w/this.
- 33 More COs are needed to better enforce regs & check hunters.

**Staff and Volunteers**

**ID Comment**

- 17 Would like to be on volunteer list for eagle documentation projects & photographs.
- 17 Already belong to Friends Group; interested in serving on Board (not political/fundraising).
- 27 Volunteered in the past; asked one time to assist w/eagle watch but nest was damaged; never contacted again; also offered photography services if needed.
- 27 Is a volunteer list being kept? Can refuge have a volunteer that would organize programs & people?
- 27 Think there’s enough volunteers in area to help w/programs.
- 33 I think staff is doing a good job currently.
- 34 Everything is so well maintained.

**Public Access, Roads, and Transportation**

**General Access Issues**

**ID Comment**

- 28 Keeping the access free brings in more people to visit the community.
- 28 Keep local access & hunting free & open.
- 31 Create & improve ways for the public to view the above (birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, amphibians, plants, fish, etc.).
- 34 Open more access to foot traffic on the riverside levees. Perhaps these levee areas can be opened & closed on a rotating basis.

**Refuge roads/auto tour route**

**ID Comment**

- 18 Plow Auto Tour Route.
- 23 Auto gates programmable to be set later or earlier?
- 38 Keep auto tour route. More turnouts along north & east side of road route.

## County roads

### **ID      Comment**

- 41      Reclaim Westside Road, on southern portion of refuge, to the beginning of private lands north of Snow Creek. Vehicles can still get to Bonners Ferry through Deep Creek.

## **Threats to Refuge Resources**

### General Threats to Refuge Resources

#### **ID      Comment**

- 22      Dikes; river; Libby dam.  
22      Stimulus dike repair?

## Human Disturbance to Wildlife

### **ID      Comment**

- 32      Like that most of refuge is closed to the public to offer protection to wildlife species. Much of the wetlands & grasslands areas are so open birds & wildlife can be viewed/observed from a distance w/aid of binoculars.

## Climate Change

### **ID      Comment**

NOTE: See # 43's comments under General Planning Process.

## **Wildlife/Habitat Management**

### General Wildlife/Habitat Mgmt

#### **ID      Comment**

- 27      Don't know much about habitat mgmt. In general, would like to see a bit more wetlands; need to work w/whoever to protect the water & safety is an issue.
- 31      Create or improve habitat for a diversified number of birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, amphibians, plants, fish, etc.
- 31      Study the numbers & trends.
- 31      Maintain the mudflats.
- 31      Plant butterfly gardens.
- 31      Create perches for owls & hawks in open areas.
- 32      Should be more mgmt. of non-game species on the refuge. Funding increases are necessary to help w/this so a non-game stamp, birdwatchers stamp, or something similar could be developed & sold, much like duck stamps are sold to allow hunting/providing funding to support habitat.
- 42      Fish & wildlife focus has to remain on migratory waterfowl w/particular emphasis on trend analysis, disease monitoring, & population dynamics.
- 42      Important aspect of refuge is maintaining or enhancing diversity of habitats including wetland, grassland, & riparian.
- 42      Interesting potential exists to convert grasslands to riparian habitat on refuge. Riparian habitat is limited, but would expect native grasses are even more limited.
- 42      Croplands vs. seasonal wetlands is decision related to seasonal food crops of varying time periods & should be governed by migration needs.
- 42      Managed wetlands vs. more natural wetlands – concept of max production or optimum production that incorporates wetland function for water quality & diversity. Overriding goals of migratory populations have to be weighed against wetland function in the KV.
- 42      Believe winter habitat functions for elk, moose, & deer should be sustained to fulfill those species needs related to limiting factors. Minimizing damage to riparian areas

would involve expanding riparian habitat & feeds into ? of conversion of grasslands to riparian habitat.

### Waterfowl Management

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
19	Plant wild rice for ducks.
30	Since Ball Creek Ranch has open water areas & also Boundary Creek WMA has large water areas & feeding – we see less waterfowl & birds @ Kootenai Refuge – a definite decline last few years.
36	Maintaining & improving waterfowl habitat - both in the non-hunting area & the hunting zones.
38	Keep equal distribution (of waterfowl food) so as not to appear favoring baiting or other interpretations.
38	Keep same (answer to questions on closing more of refuge to public use during waterfowl migration).

### Wetland Management

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
32	KNWR manages a lot of water. Would like to see a couple of areas converted to seasonal wetland, a more natural wetland system – flooded in the spring, gradually drying up as summer progresses and leaving good mudflats by the end of July, August, & Sept. Waterfowl use these areas but it would increase habitat for migrating shorebirds. Then maybe these areas could be reflooded for waterfowl hunting season later in the year?? Hopefully these areas could be located for observation not so far away from the observer. Shorebirds can be difficult to identify by species even w/the use of binoculars & a scope.
38	Create more wetlands where feasible utilizing landscape for any shaping. Small ephemeral excavated potholes would be nice. Let natural wetland dynamics dictate for moist soil mgmt.
38	On some wetlands (convert some of refuge’s managed wetlands to a more natural wetland system?); practice moist soil mgmt. thru natural draw downs to create natural mud flats.
38	Re-contour where practical to reconnect any old wetland basins or swales.

### Dikes/Dike Maintenance

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
38	If some trees are posing hazard by tilting & creating major soil mass movement; cut those & leave stump wad for stability. No massive mowing down cottonwoods.
41	Remove dikes along Kootenai River, Myrtle, & Deep Creeks to restore natural overland flows.
41	Raise the road crossing @ Kootenai above the flood level. Add additional bridges to allow for overland flow.

### Instream Habitat

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
41	Restore Myrtle Creek & floodplain drainage channels on the 1928 GLO maps (provided copy) to their original form.

## Grassland Habitat

### **ID Comment**

- 38 Should refuge continue to provide winter habitat for deer & elk @ current pop. levels? – Primary objective is waterfowl & migrants. Keep current levels. Additional wetland or grassland habitats will draw more anyway.
- 38 Should refuge provide more short grass habitat for foraging geese? – yes, need to consider what short grass. Short blue grass adjacent near wetland created by office may work. Need perennial low type grass? Blue grass? You see geese grazing along parkways of blue grass.

## Forest Management, Fire Ecology and Management

### **ID Comment**

- 38 Provide good silvicultural practices such as thinning trees, reduce slash & ladder fuel loads.
- 41 Maintain & restore structure, processes, functions, & linkages of needled forested lands adjacent to wetland complexes. This allows succession to low elevation coniferous old growth which has been eliminated in KV; fire disclimax Ponderosa Pine communities are locally rare & provided habitat for White-headed woodpeckers that have been extirpated from county; fire disclimax; P pine communities provide crucial wintering habitat for Clark's nutcrackers, which provide linkages to subalpine whitebark habitats that are being restored to local ridge tops.
- 41 Allow black cottonwood communities to repopulate farm fields of refuge.

## Invasive/Non-native Species

### **ID Comment**

- 38 Control all major noxious weeds as much as practical. Make public aware of efforts.

## Riparian/Upland Restoration

### **ID Comment**

- 24 Potential for firewood gathering as a fuel reduction measure?
- 38 Additional riparian habitat is always more valuable & diversifies the habitats. Reconnect old swales or basins by re-contouring as much as possible.
- 38 Possible control permits hunting big game after waterfowl season. – How can refuge minimize winter deer & elk damage to riparian plantings?
- 42 Importance of fisheries & water quality in refuge management is of high importance & USFWS priority in CCP is appreciated. Important to identify that dam operations limit potential for riparian restoration. These conditions are not likely to change & should figure into priorities. Water quality in streams may be evaluated w/ the flow alteration realities taken into consideration.

## Wildlife/Habitat Protection

### **ID Comment**

- 24 Doesn't see a conflict w/deer & elk winter habitat & waterfowl use.

## **General Visitor Services Administration**

### General Visitor Services

#### **ID Comment**

- 5 Would like balance of public uses on Refuge more towards non-consumptive, less hunting.

- 5 Lots of waterfowl hunting options locally.
- 18 Kootenai not as oriented toward public as some other refuges.
- 30 It would be helpful to have an accurate count of visitors that go through the refuge.

### Visitor Facilities

- | <b>ID</b> | <b>Comment</b>   |
|-----------|--|
| 18        | Would like more boardwalks & observatories (like Creston) off HQR to small pond; two story lookout; good projects to put people to work.   |
| 31        | Create boardwalks & lookout towers.  |
| 32        | Over the next 15 years, would like to enjoy many activities @ Kootenai such as bird watching, observing wildlife, walking, cross-country skiing, driving the Auto Tour Route, & environmental education programs.  |
| 32        | Would like to see refuge install an observation/bird watching/photographer blind set-up & available year round.  |
| 32        | Observation tower would be nice; one/both (see above) of these could be set-up near an area to view a section of pond, wetlands, & mudflats in particular to assist in the observation of shorebirds as they migrate through the area. Much of the wetlands & ponds are so far away that even with the help of a scope many species of birds are difficult to identify. Gazebo located off Westside Road helps with this but it could be greatly improved. |
| 34        | The water in the toilets is kind of rusty perhaps a water softener or some such thing.   |

### **Hunting**

#### Anti-hunting

- | <b>ID</b> | <b>Comment</b>   |
|-----------|--|
| 27        | At present, hunters' access to refuge seems to be greater than general public. Preference is to close refuge to hunters since there are plenty of areas to hunt in N ID. While that may never happen, limit hunting to 2 days per week. Afraid to walk on Auto Tour Route since blinds are close to road. No ducks & geese due to overhunting? |
| 30        | No or more limited waterfowl hunting.  |
| 30        | More limited or no hunting.  |
| 39        | Plan for wildlife & bird slaughter needs complete reversal. Main population of the US does not take joy or fun in murdering wildlife & birds.  |

#### Pro-hunting

- | <b>ID</b> | <b>Comment</b>  |
|-----------|---|
| 35        | Continue providing hunting opportunities for both waterfowl & big game. |

#### Hunt Management

- | <b>ID</b> | <b>Comment</b>   |
|-----------|--|
| 1         | Opposed to fee hunt.   |
| 7         | Not opposed to fee permit system.  |
| 8         | Would support fee permit system for waterfowl hunting.   |
| 12        | Consider rotating hunted & non-hunted areas; don't hunt the same area every year (not a hunter). |
| 24        | Assignment of blinds is not necessary.   |
| 24        | Permit fee – OK if it helps to keep hunting available.   |

- 35 Only concern rests in the efforts of those who work to limit access & availability of those who hunt. This refuge, the KNWR, was purchased by Duck Stamp proceeds – provided overwhelmingly by hunters. It should remain accessible to those who hunt.

### Waterfowl Hunting

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1	Supports waterfowl hunting on Refuge.
1	Might consider ways to allocate hunting fairly & reduce conflicts.
3	Concerned w/water mgmt on Bullseye Blind (E of E ditch); lack of water.
10	More water; more ducks.
11	Need parking closer to the blinds for aged/disabled; add gravel; add disabled signs for those who truly are disabled.
11	Blinds east of New & Redhead Ponds are too close & have had close calls w/other hunters there.
11	Need signs that say “decrepit” instead of wheelchair symbol.
13	Waterfowl hunters want to see more water & more ducks.
19	Why no hunting to river’s edge?
24	Would like to see duck hunt access in North Bend area, alternating w/current area so birds move more, increasing hunter’s chances for success. Keep Dave’s Pond as sanctuary (Center Pond & New Pond included). Not a net increase in hunt time (same open days) just alternate hunting areas.
25	Disappointed w/quality of duck hunting on South unit – no ducks!
25	Agrees w/idea of shifting hunting between N. Bend area & regular hunt area to disperse birds & increase hunter success.
26	Make sure there is plenty of water on the ponds at the beginning of waterfowl season.
33	Heard a lot of bad comments from locals (Bonners Ferrians) & not so locals (Coeur d’Alene) about water levels in huntable ponds during the waterfowl hunting season. Most comments are that there’s no water during the first couple of weeks of hunting season. I do hunt waterfowl but not that much on the refuge due to this problem & other reasons – basically too many hunters that are often too close together shooting at anything that comes even close to them.
35	My primary interest is in waterfowl – develop food plots in which to keep & hold migrating flocks. Leave standing stubble for goose flocks.
36	It is a unique piece of wildlife habitat that was purchased w/duck hunters dollars in 1964 for wetland replacement. Non-consumptive wildlife uses are valuable but it is important to keep waterfowl hunting heritage that made the whole thing possible.
36	Open water areas have to be maintained around hunting blinds & flooded during the waterfowl season. More waterfowl forage should be developed on the south portion of the refuge to create bird movement.
38	Additional blind sites to dissipate hunters on “first come, first serve only.” (How should refuge address increasing demands for hunting, & assoc. LE & safety issues, while ensuring quality?)
38	Keep same size (waterfowl sanctuary area). Change name of refuge to mgmt. areas etc. so public does not perceive no hunting assoc. w/ name refuge.
38	No permits. Need large staff for this. (? on should refuge issue permits &/or assign blinds?)
38	(Should refuge continue to offer both blinds & free-roam hunting?). Provide blind hunting.
38	Not willing to pay permit fee; will hunt other areas.

- 40 According to the 2008 SCORP, adult waterfowl hunting was lower than the statewide average.

### Big Game Hunting

- | <b>ID</b> | <b>Comment</b>  |
|-----------|---|
| 1, 8      | Opposed to big game hunts on Refuge.  |
| 24        | Potential for big game hunting in areas of refuge currently closed to big game hunting feasible?  |
| 24        | Big game hunting opportunities availability is important. Offer shotgun, muzzleloader, archery – short range weapons only.  |
| 32        | Recommend closing area along Westside Road near refuge headquarters & across the road from headquarters to big game hunting. Area is in close proximity to an already closed area – the Myrtle Creek Game Preserve. Boundaries are difficult to determine, game moves freely between them, it can be difficult for a hunter to make a killing shot that drops the animal on the spot so this increases the likelihood of hunters tracking wounded animals into closed areas. Westside Road is also a very busy road! Chances for accidents are increasing. Out of state hunters are not familiar w/boundaries nor are aware of Myrtle Creek Game Preserve being a closed hunting area (an issue ID F&G needs to seriously address). |
| 33        | Enjoy ability to hunt big game on refuge during valid hunting season.   |
| 33        | Have killed more than one deer on the refuge & would love to be allowed the opportunity in the future. The same goes for all big game hunting on refuge property.   |
| 38        | Big game hunting opportunities not important (answer to set refuge?). Perhaps just deer hunting & no bear hunting or just upland grouse hunting.  |

### Upland Game Hunting

- | <b>ID</b> | <b>Comment</b>  |
|-----------|---|
| 2         | Supports pheasant hunting on Refuge; pheasants have established themselves on Refuge.   |
| 10        | Can we hunt pheasants? Lots of pheasants on refuge.   |
| 21        | If we could allow pheasant hunting 2 days per week; suggested we could open the area south of the county road (between Snipe & Island Pond).                                |
| 20        | Allowing pheasant hunting 2x a week w/1 day off would disturb waterfowl.  |
| 24        | Pheasant population is not large enough to sustain a huntable population.   |
| 24        | Opposes trading any waterfowl hunting time for pheasant hunting opportunity.  |
| 25        | Believes there are plenty of pheasants for a hunt. Possibly allow pheasant hunt on south unit, while duck season is open since few ducks hunters are there due to no ducks! |
| 33        | Would love opportunity to hunt the exotic pheasant & turkey on refuge property.   |
| 37        | Would like refuge to consider opening a hunting season for pheasants, similar to the Boundary Creek WMA.  |

### **Fishing**

#### Maintenance/Management of fishing opportunities

- | <b>ID</b> | <b>Comment</b>  |
|-----------|---|
| 24        | Potential for fishing access along refuge bank of Deep Creek?   |
| 24        | If fishing is allowed from bank of Myrtle Creek, why not allow canoe/boat fishing?  |
| 33        | Hand powered boat access to Myrtle Creek would be lovely for fishing. Paddling from Deep Creek boat launch or dragging a canoe from the Westside Road crossing is both legal/doable, but not practical for most visitors. |
| 38        | Fishing opportunities? This is not important. There are many other areas in county to fish.   |

## Restoration of Native Species

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
4	Supports reintroduction of kokanee.
4	Like to see artificial redds like in Canada in Myrtle & Deep Creeks.
4	Kokanee would increase diversity, attract eagles & bears.
4	Kokanee would make a great wildlife viewing experience.
31	Improve kokanee spawning.
38	Improve fish habitat where feasible. Secure local partners \$ for off site projects working w/agencies.

## **Non-consumptive uses**

### General comments on public use

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
38	Provide hiking, skiing, bird watching. (Answer to ? on should refuge continue to allow all public uses.)

### Wildlife observation and photography

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
5	Would like photo blinds.
5	Wildlife too distant for photography; often goes to Creston WMA for wildlife photography.
5	Safety concerns on auto tour & trails during hunt season; knows hunters are suppose to shoot towards ponds but does not feel safe.
6	Would like photo blinds & more opportunities & facilities for photographers.
15	Refuge used to have a photo blind; put another one in.
17	Creston WMA is better for photography than Kootenai; photographer use camo.
17	Refuge has blinds for hunting – would like to see photo blinds.
17	Suggest 3-sided blinds so you can see natural behavior of wildlife.
17	Photographs ducks & geese all year.
17	Refuge needs permanent blinds – several on north & south sides.
17	Hunting keeps photographer from using Refuge for photography; Refuge should be more for general purpose to see wildlife & do programs & not so much for hunting.
27	Would like blind (3 sided & a roof) for photography.
27	Usually go to Creston to photograph since it's hard to get close to the wildlife unless there's a blind.
27	Recommend 2 blinds that stay in place so wildlife is used to it.
27	Blinds would bring in other wildlife photographers to the area.
27	Can get free blinds through North American Nature Photographers (NANPA).
27	Would like blinds to be open 2 days per week; open during non-duck hunting days.
27	Photography is listed in goal #1 for visitor services but as a photographer, I don't believe it's provided other than someone taking snapshots. True wildlife photographers need a blind.
40	In 2008, IDPR completed the SCORP which showed that over 50% of North Idaho adults participate in bird watching.

### Environmental Education

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
17	Would like to see more use of EEC for programs.

- 27 Believe education needs to be a part of the refuge; school programs, summer programs; artists could have a wildlife painting day, photography contest, & much more. Hunting program is good, but it needs to go beyond hunting.
- 38 Provide more opportunities for environmental ed? An outdoor amphitheater. Use current new barn for classes.

**Secondary and non-wildlife dependent uses**

Cross Country Skiing

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
9	Concerns w/cross country skiers going onto flats during hunt season – safety issue. Post signs.
14	Concerns about cross country skiers going onto flats during the hunt season - safety issue.
14	Need to post signs for cross country skiers.
18	Would like to ski on Auto Tour Route & Deep Creek Trail (not aware it’s already allowed).

Dog walking/exercising

<b>ID</b>	<b>Comment</b>
37	Disappointed in current leash policy & have reduced visits substantially to the refuge for purpose of exercising my hunting dog during the off-hunting seasons. I’ve noticed other people have reduced their use of the refuge for that purpose also. Would like to see a return to the previous policy which allowed for pets to be off the leash as long as they remained under control & except for spring waterfowl nesting season.

**Total number of submittals: 43**  
**Total number of comments: 198**

**Major Issues within the Scope of the CCP/EA**

The USFWS received 43 submittals from the public during the scoping period. These submittals contained a total of 198 individual comments. Below is a brief summary of the type and/or range of comments received for each theme.

**Land Acquisition**

There were 13 comments regarding land acquisition. One comment simply stated to increase the area of the refuge. Regarding the proposed land exchange with IDL, of the 8 individuals who commented, 5 approved while 3 were opposed. Those opposed felt that IDL was not a good steward of the land and that it was more important for the refuge to retain the old growth since it is becoming scarce in the area. Part of preserving the old growth includes management.

**Planning Process**

Three individuals provided 9 comments regarding the Planning Process. The comments were primarily recommendations in nature such as encouraging the refuge to develop a full range of different alternatives; developing goals that emphasized environmental education and recreation; and addressing climate change and its effect upon the refuge. The majority of individuals who commented expressed their desire to keep informed as Kootenai NWR moved through the planning process.

### **Refuge Administration**

Eighteen comments from 10 individuals were received regarding refuge administration issues. The comments were positive in nature regarding general refuge administration. One individual wanted to see regional cooperation & coordination among the various agencies (state, federal, NGOs) in the Kootenai Valley. Another individual remarked how places like refuges are needed; another loved the refuge and the recreational opportunities provided here; another was pleased with the upgrades. Four individuals voiced a need for increased law enforcement presence on the refuge. The four individuals who provided comments regarding staff and volunteers, expressed an interest in either volunteering on the refuge or seeing more volunteer recruitment.

### **Public Access, Roads, and Transportation**

There were eight comments received regarding public access, roads, and transportation issues. A few comments expressed the desire to keep access free to the public. Other comments included the request to create and improve ways for the public to view wildlife; open the river dikes to public foot access; plow the Auto Tour Route in the winter (keep open to motor vehicles year-round) and to add more turn-outs to the Auto Tour Route. One individual said to “reclaim the Westside Road.”

### **Threats to Refuge Resources**

Only three comments were received regarding threats to refuge resources. Two of the comments identified the river dike and Libby Dam as a threat and the need for dike repair while one individual liked that most of the refuge was closed to the public to offer protection to wildlife.

### **Wildlife/Habitat Management**

The refuge received 37 comments regarding wildlife and/or habitat management with a consistent desire for wildlife protection. The issues were categorized into several groups:

- General Wildlife/Habitat Management (13) – many comments were related to maintaining/improving/increasing wetland, grassland, and riparian habitats; maintain mudflats; plant butterfly gardens; create perches for hawks and owls; devote more management to non-game species; and to sustain winter habitat for deer, elk, and moose.
- Waterfowl Management (5) – requests to: plant wild rice for waterfowl; maintain and improve waterfowl habitat in the hunting and non-hunting areas; keep an equal distribution of food (grain crops) in hunting and non-hunting areas; and to keep the same public use during the migration. One comment stated the decline of birds at Kootenai NWR since Ball Creek Ranch (TNC) and Boundary Creek WMA were established.
- Wetland Management (4) – the comments expressed the desire to see more natural seasonal wetlands for shorebirds; create small potholes; practice moist soil management; and re-contour old natural wetland basins or swales.
- Dikes/Dike Management (3) – one comment was to cut leaning trees on the dike to all stumps to re-sprout while the other two comments were to remove all of the dikes to restore natural overland flows, and to raise the road crossing at the refuge above the flood level.

- Instream Habitat (1) – restore Myrtle Creek and its floodplain drainage channels to their original form.
- Grassland Habitat (2) – comments were to keep the current level since the primary objective is for waterfowl and migrants and to provide short grass habitat for foraging geese.
- Forest Management, Fire Ecology, and Management (3) – one comment was to provide good silvicultural practices (thinning, reducing slash and ladder fuels); maintain and restore forested land adjacent to wetland complexes for White-headed woodpeckers; and to allow cottonwood communities to repopulate the farm fields.
- Invasive/Non-native Species (1) – control all major noxious weeds as much as practical and make public aware of efforts.
- Riparian/Upland Restoration (4) – one suggestion to allow firewood gathering as a means of reducing fuels. Another suggestion to reconnect old swales or basins by re-contouring. Provide hunting permits to control deer and elk browsing in riparian areas. Identify the dam operations which limit riparian restoration when considering priorities.
- Wildlife/Habitat Protection (1) – did not see a conflict with providing winter habitat for deer and elk with waterfowl use.

### **General Visitor Services Administration and Facilities**

Ten comments were received regarding visitor services. One individual wanted to see public uses of the refuge more towards non-consumptive. Four comments supported creating boardwalks, observation towers, and photography blinds.

### **Hunting**

Fifty-two comments were received pertaining to hunting. The issues were categorized into the following categories:

- Anti-hunting (4) – three individuals wanted to see no or limited hunting on the refuge. One individual did not like hunters having more access to the refuge than the general public.
- Pro-hunting (1) – continue with waterfowl and big game hunting.
- Hunt Management (7) – one comment opposed hunt fees; three comments were not opposed to a fee; one comment suggested rotating hunted and non-hunting areas; one comment expressed concern that there others who are trying to limit opportunities for those who hunt. Since Kootenai NWR was purchased with Duck stamp funds, it should remain accessible to hunters.
- Waterfowl hunting (23) – the comments were all in support of continuing waterfowl hunting on the refuge. Six comments related to water level management; one comment asked why no hunting to river's edge; two comments were to alternate areas open to hunting; one suggestion to plant crops on the southern end of the refuge to attract waterfowl there; one comment to develop food plots and leave standing stubble for waterfowl.
- Big Game Hunting (8) – two comments opposed big game hunting; one comment recommended closing Westside Road to hunting; four comments in support of hunting and opening up other areas currently closed to big game hunting; one

- Upland Game Hunting (9) – eight comments in support of having a pheasant hunt program; one opposed to trading any waterfowl hunting opportunities in order to allow pheasant hunting.

### **Fishing**

There were ten comments regarding management of fishing opportunities on the refuge and restoration of native species. One request was to allow fishing in Deep Creek and two individuals wanted to see boats allowed on Myrtle Creek. Six comments were in support of reintroduction of kokanee and improving fish habitat.

### **Non-consumptive Uses**

Twenty-three comments were received pertaining to non-consumptive “Big Six” uses. Eighteen comments were related to photography blinds and two of the comments related to hunting interfering with bird watching and photography on the refuge. Three comments supported the refuge providing more environmental educational programs.

### **Secondary and Non-wildlife Dependent Uses**

Five comments were received pertaining to secondary and non-wildlife dependent uses. Three comments expressed concerns about cross country skiers going into closed areas during the waterfowl hunting season. One comment related to the change with the dog leash policy and wanted to see a return to allowing pets off the leash after the nesting season (this was allowed by prior managers and was not in compliance with refuge policy as stated in 50 CFR).

### **Issues Outside of the Scope of the CCP/EA**

In addition to the Refuge related comments, several comments were received that pertain to issues off of the Refuge, such as management of lands under the jurisdiction of other Federal or state agencies; or management of water levels in the Kootenai River, which is under jurisdiction of other agencies.