

PLANNING AND ACCOMPLISHMENT NARRATIVE
Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge
P. O. Box 606
Manteo, North Carolina 27954

FY-1973

PERSONNEL

N. F. Williamson, Jr.	Refuge Manager
Tim M. Wilkins	Assist. Refuge Manager
Marvin C. Toler	Maintenanceman
Beverly Daniels	Clerk-Typist (Part Time)
Carl A. Linden	Biological Aide
Jack H. Hagan	Assist. Refuge Manager

Approved, Regional Office

Submitted by:

Signature

Signature

Title

Title

Date

Date

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PART I. REFUGE HIGHLIGHTS

The crew at Pea Island was kept busy during FY 1973 with the normal refuge programs. This included general maintenance to facilities and equipment, bird banding, weed control, brush control, planting green browse for wintering birds, pest plant control, minor construction and many other items.

Weather was normal for most of the year. However, we had northeast winds during October and November that did considerable erosion on the refuge beaches and dune system. In places, as much as 30 feet of the primary dune system was washed away. On February 10, a severe storm hit the area. The storm dropped heavy snow, sleet and rain on the area. Temperatures dropped to the low 20's. Winds, with gusts up to 80 mph from the NNE again severely eroded the beaches. The ocean breached the dunes in several places. These high winds coupled with high water in our fresh water ponds caused quite a bit of damage to the bulkhead in North Pond and eroded the dike in New Field. On March 22-23, another northeaster hit the area. Again erosion occurred, but not as much damage as the February storm.

Several unusual and/or rare species of birds were seen on the refuge during the year. In October and November a flamingo was seen frequently on the shallow shoals in Pamlico Sound. In mid-November the bird moved into the South Pond for a few days but was not seen after late November.

In early July, 2 common shelducks were seen in the North Pond. These 2 birds were seen occasionally through November.

In May, three more unusual species were seen. One noddy tern was seen feeding along the beach. One white-faced glossy ibis was seen with several glossy ibis near a rookery in North Pond. A ruff was seen over a period of several days in North Pond.

In February, a snowy owl was seen on the refuge by a State Fisheries Inspector. Sighting was not reported to us until August 1973.

Other unusual species seen on the refuge include a swallow-tailed kite, ross' goose and white-fronted goose.

In addition to normal activities, we were able to get a few significant improvements accomplished. These include the construction of a third observation platform on the North Pond dike; the acquisition and erection of plaques at the old Pea Island Coast Guard Station; and erection of plaques at observation platforms on North Pond and ocean dunes.

Several important studies were initiated during this fiscal year. The first study called for the transplanting of nest of the Atlantic loggerhead sea turtle from Cape Romain. In an effort to extend the breeding range of this specie, 10 nests will be transplanted to Pea Island, Back Bay and Chincoteague Refuges each year for the next five years.

The second study is concerned with trapping and transplanting pheasant from Pea Island to areas on the North Carolina mainland. This study is being carried out by the State of North Carolina. In September and October, 40 birds, 14 cock and 26 hens, were trapped and released on Pungo National Wildlife Refuge. If the birds reproduce and can survive on the mainland and the Pea Island population does not decline, present plans are to continue restocking other areas on State gamelands.

Two other studies entitled, "Gadwall Brood Area Turtle Population Survey and Stomach Analysis" and "Gadwall Brood Area Invertebrate Survey and Stomach Analysis" was started in June and completed in Fiscal 1974.

A wilderness area study was begun during April. The proposal involves several small islands in Pamlico Sound containing approximately 200 acres.

PART II. REFUGE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In many cases refuge accomplishments were quite different from the outputs planned. In many cases the percentage deviation is deceptive, for example Other Programs, 6-20, shows a 999% increase over that planned. In this case the difference was 18 activity hours. Other outputs deviations believed significant are as follows.

Wildlife-Wildlands Interpretation

6-10 Trails - Deviation from planned output was only -18%. We believe several factors attributed to this decrease. Insects, mosquitoes, deer flies and greenhead flies, were worse than we have ever seen. Numerous days were almost calm. With calm days coupled with swarms of insects, the people just could not stay on the walks.

Environmental Education

6-20 Students - This output element was up 394% (394 AH) over our planned program. Our estimate was based on past year output. This large increase was due to two groups of high school students, with teachers, camping out on the refuge for the weekend.

6-21 Teachers - Output down from planned output by 52% (78 AH). Due primarily to error in our reporting. Some of the activity hours in 6-20 were college students, with professors and should have been reported as 6-21 Teachers.

6-22 Professional Services - Activity was up 62% above our estimate for the year. Since the number of hours are so small, 31 AH, we believe the overage to be insignificant. The overage was primarily due to management practice discussion with National Park Service personnel and State Biologists.

Wildlife-Wildlands Recreation

6-32 Saltwater Fishing - Output down by 38%, 216,000 activity hours from planned outputs. Planned units were based on previous years. We attribute the decrease in this output to the poor winter and spring fishing season. The fish were not in the area, therefore, no fishing.

6-34 Wildlife Observation - This output was up by 95%, 80,430 activity hours. The reason for this increase is that we reevaluated Wildlife Observation and Wildlands Appreciation and charged part of the use that was planned as Wildlands Appreciation to Wildlife Observation, down by 24% or 85,400 activity hours.

For those unfamiliar with Pea Island, possibly more of an explanation is needed for clarification.

There is one hard surface road that traverses the Outer Banks. This highway transects the entire length of the refuge. There is an estimated 1.25 million people that pass through the refuge each year. Most of these people do not stop, but do observe wildlife and view and appreciate the wild, undeveloped area. Therefore, we feel that the time spent traveling through the refuge should be charged to these activities.

6-35 Wildlands Appreciation - This activity is shown as Wildlife Appreciation on "Planning and Accomplishment Report", Part II and Public Use Report, Form # 3-239a, but as Wildlands Appreciation in WRH-4, Part III, page 36.

See 6-34 Wildlife Observation for explanation for decrease.

6-36 Photography - Output for photography was up 195% over the estimated use. The increase is due primarily to error in our estimated use. We believe there was also an increase in actual use.

Non Wildlife Oriented Recreation

6-40 Camping - Camping on the refuge is limited to group camping in a campground operated by The National Park Service. Camping in

general was down slightly. However, the primary reason for the 53% drop was the change in number of hours reported per camper day. Hours per camper day was dropped from 24 to 12.

6-41 Picnicking - Picnicking at Pea Island is limited to use at the National Park Service campground and primitive picnicking on the open beach. Most picnicking is in association with other activities such as fishing.

Picnicking was down from the estimated use of 8,500 AH to 954 AH reported, a drop of 89%. Part of this drop was due to less use because of insects. However, the major portion is believed due to error in estimates and reporting use.

6-42 Swimming - Swimming on the refuge was much higher than expected, up 61% or 18,400 AH. Our records indicate use in April and May of 1973 was extremely high when compared to other years. Also, Pea Island beaches are isolate and more and more people try to get away from everyone else.

6-45 Off-road Vehicling - This activity was down by 65%, or 16,900 AH. Three major factors attributed to this decline in estimated use. First, our estimates are based on figures from National Park Service. We believe their figures were high, therefore, our estimates were high. Second, vehicular use on our beach is closely tied to fishing. Fishing was not good, therefore, driving on the beach was down. Third, due to severe erosion from storms beginning in October 1972, the beach was very narrow and could not be driven except at low tide. This cut down vehicular beach use considerably.

6-46 Other Non W/W Oriented - The hours reported here is for traffic that goes through the refuge at night. Probably should not be reported.

Professional Services

6-50 Studies and Publications - Output for studies is much higher, 167%, than that planned. We planned for three (3) studies, but actually had eight (8). Three studies were initiated, two by refuge personnel and one by non-refuge personnel during the year. Upon reviewing the criteria for studies, it was determined that two other projects could be classified as studies and was reported.

Environmental Preservation

6-61 Scientific Sites - Historic - We consider the old Coast Guard Station site at Pea Island to have historic significance in that it was the first, if not the only, completely Black Coast Guard Station in the United States.

Wildlife

6-70 Threatened Species - Estimated units for this output was 6,900 use days. Our records show we had and reported 6,464 use days. The Planning and Accomplishment Report, Part # II showed accomplished units as 169,304 use days. The error here appears to have been made at the data processing center.

6-72 Wildlife Diversity - The Planning and Accomplishment Report show a total of 298 species, while our plans called for 325 species. This 325 species included birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians that we have on the refuge list or have been able to identify on the refuge.

On Form # 3-249, Miscellaneous Wildlife Outputs, Wildlife Diversity only calls for (No. Bird Species). When this form was filled out, only the birds, mammals and reptiles were reported. The amphibians and fishes, 27 species were erroneously omitted.

6-81 Species Transplanted - This output category called for 40 units. The Planning and Accomplishment report shows a decrease of 100%. Again, the difference is due to an error in reporting. When the report form was filled out, the section for transplants was omitted.

6-82 Species Donated - Plans call for donating 100 specimens to schools and museums. Accomplishment for this category was zero, down 100%. We had the specimens on hand to be donated to local high schools, but they were never delivered.

APPENDIX