

## Public Open House Meetings Scheduled for March 25th and 26th

Two public open house meetings are scheduled to provide you opportunities to help us identify refuge issues and to have your questions about Refuge programs answered. The public meetings are scheduled at two locations for your convenience.

Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2008  
Time: From 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Location: Willapa Bay Chamber of Commerce  
915 W. First  
(corner of Alder and First)  
South Bend, WA 98586

Date: Wednesday, March 26, 2008  
Time: From 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Location: Ilwaco Heritage Museum  
115 Lake St  
Ilwaco, WA 98624

## Your Comments are Important

Your comments help shape the future of the Refuge.

### Address comments to:

Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader  
Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
3888 SR 101  
Ilwaco, WA 98624-9707  
Phone: (360) 484-3482 Fax: (360) 484-3109

To learn more about refuge planning visit our website:  
<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/>

Email comments to: [FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov](mailto:FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov)

### For information on the planning process contact:

Rebecca Young, Conservation Planner  
1211 SE Cardinal Court, Suite 100  
Vancouver, WA 98683  
Phone: (360) 604-2563 Fax: (360) 604-2505

*Comments are due April 30, 2008.*



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Division of Planning and Visitor Services  
911 NE 11th Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97232

*Change of address requested.*

### In this issue:

Your comments on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge are requested. What natural resource issues are important to you?

To learn more about the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge visit our website: <http://www.fws.gov/willapa/>



*Tens of thousands of migrating shorebirds flock to the mudflats at south Willapa Bay. Photo: USFWS.*

## Greetings from Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

This is the first in a series of planning updates we will distribute to keep you informed and invite your participation in a conservation planning process we are initiating for the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge (refuge).

Over the next year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will seek input from you regarding your interests, concerns, and viewpoints about refuge management issues we need to address during development

of the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

## Help Us Plan for the Future

As we begin the CCP planning process, we are provided the opportunity to look at our habitat management and public programs from a fresh perspective.

We will review in detail our refuge management programs and the needs of our refuge habitats including wetlands, old-growth forest, riparian zones, pastures, and aquatic environments. We will also review each of our public use

programs including fishing, hunting, environmental education, interpretation, photography, and wildlife observation.

The refuge purpose will remain the same as when the areas were set aside to protect wildlife habitat and provide wildlife-dependent recreation consistent with wildlife needs.

Your insights and observations are needed to provide a more complete and thoughtful process. Please share your ideas with us by attending an upcoming meeting or submitting written comments (see the back page for details).

*Your participation is critical to the success of this effort—we want to hear from you!*

Please share your ideas with us at the upcoming public meetings or by submitting written comments. See back page for public meeting and contact information.

## About the Refuge

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1937 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife, and for conservation purposes in and around Willapa Bay.

Subsequent acquisition of lands over the last 70 years has expanded the refuge to approximately 15,000 acres. Current wildlife and habitat management activities include

wetland restoration, stream and riparian restoration, salmon reintroduction, grazing and pasture management, exotic species and weed control, forest management, and migratory bird and endangered species management and monitoring.

To learn more about the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge visit our website: <http://www.fws.gov/willapa/>.



*Habitat for the threatened western snowy plover and other listed species is protected on the Refuge.*

*Photo: © Rudy Schuver.*

## National Wildlife What?

Refuges are places where wildlife comes first. The National Wildlife Refuge System comprises the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for wildlife and provides important habitat for native plants and animals.

The National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the Nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for the benefit of the American people.

The mission of the 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."*

*Late successional forest.*  
*Photo: USFWS.*

## About the CCP

When Congress amended the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Act) in 1997, it incorporated an underlying philosophy that "wildlife comes first" on refuges.

The Act provided the Service with guidance for managing refuges to ensure the long-term conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. It also established six priority public uses on National Wildlife Refuges—wildlife observation and photography, hunting, fishing, interpretation, and environmental education.

The Act also strengthened the compatibility determination process for assuring that priority uses and other activities do not conflict with refuge management purposes.

The Act requires all lands within the Refuge System to be managed in accordance with a CCP. A CCP ensures that the management of

each refuge reflects the purposes of that refuge and the mission, policies, and goals of the Refuge System. The Service views the planning process as an opportunity to strengthen current partnerships and forge new ones.

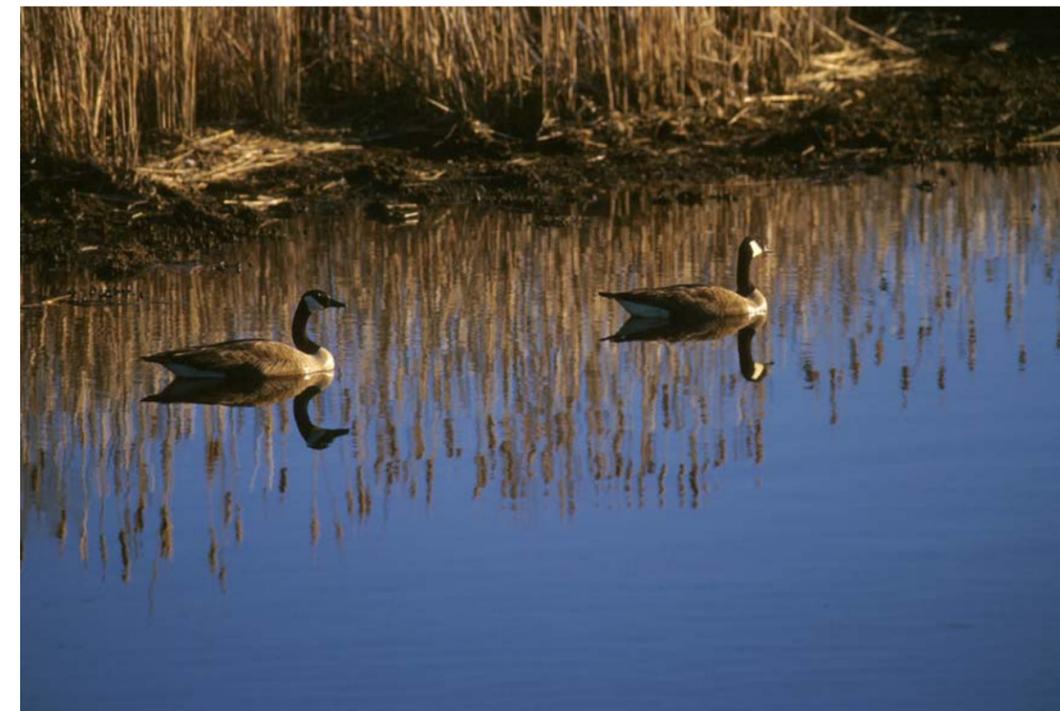
The CCP for Willapa Refuge will outline refuge goals, objectives, and

management strategies to be achieved over a 15-year period following completion of the CCP. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be developed with the CCP to analyze the effects of proposed alternatives.

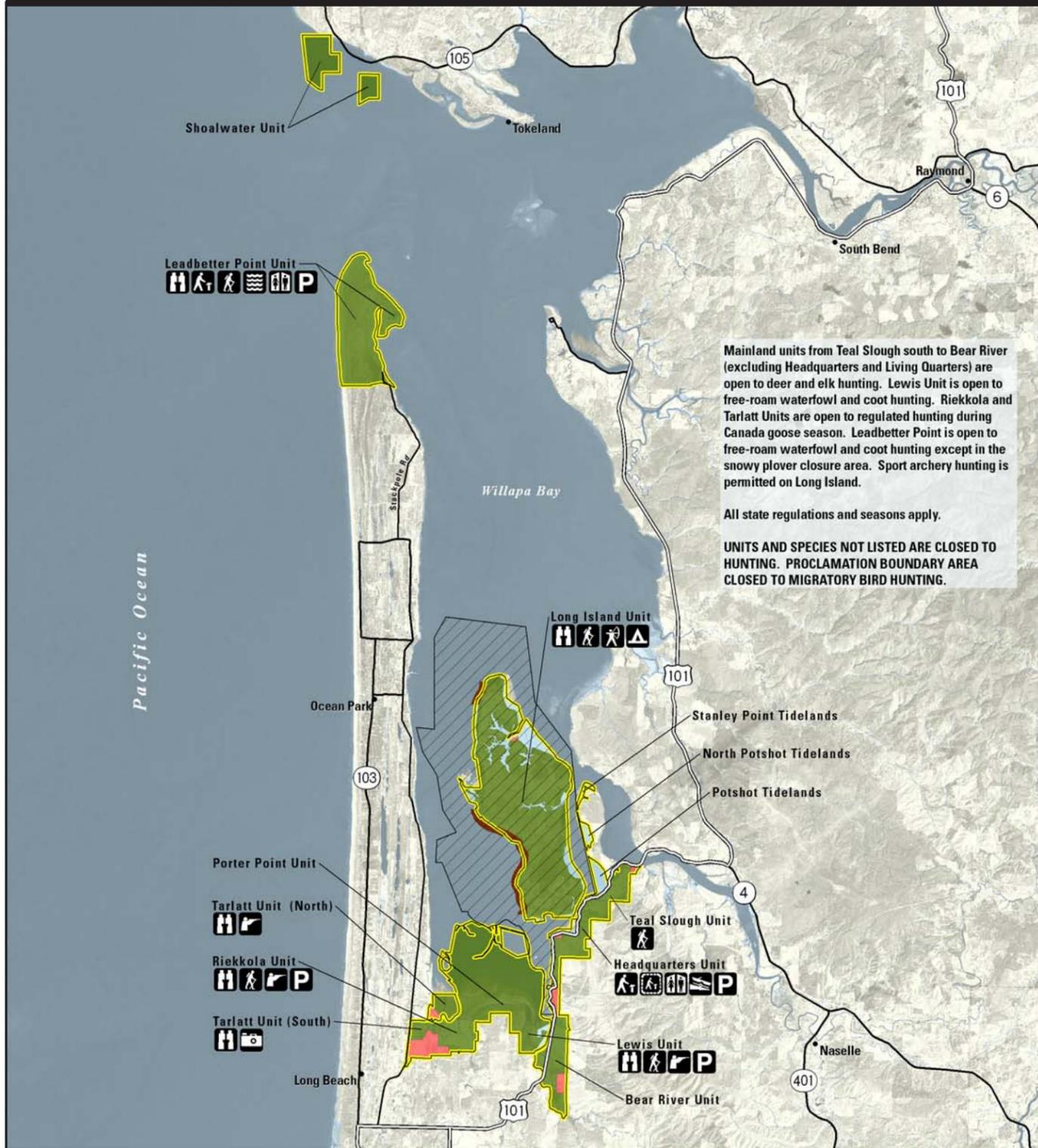
## Tentative Planning Schedule

Planning Step:	Target Date:
Planning Update 1 issued.....	March 2008
Public Meetings.....	March 25 and 26, 2008
Planning Update 2 issued.....	Spring 2008
Public review of Draft CCP and EIS.....	Spring 2010
Response to public comments on the draft CCP/EIS in Planning Update 3.....	Summer 2010
Distribution of final CCP.....	Fall 2010

*We will keep you informed if dates change.*



*Canada geese.*  
*Photo: © George Gentry*



**Willapa National Wildlife Refuge**

<b>Refuge Land Status</b>	<b>Public Use</b>	<b>Interpretive Trail</b>	<b>Bathroom</b>
Approved Refuge Boundary	Wildlife Viewing Area	Beach Access	Boat Launch
Fee Title	Wildlife Photography	Hunting	Parking Area
Easement	Interpretive Panels	Archery Hunting	Clamming
Inholding	Hiking Trail	Campgrounds	
Proclamation Boundary			

0 Miles 4  
0 Kilometers 4



*Native chum salmon and cutthroat trout runs have been restored in a small stream near the Refuge's headquarters.*  
Photo: © Rudy Shuver.

### Preliminary Goals

Goals are broad statements intended to provide direction for future management of the refuge. They are based on the refuge purposes, the mission and policies of the Refuge System, input received through this planning process, and the key issues identified as most significant to this refuge.

The planning team has developed the following set of preliminary goals for the refuge.

**Goal 1. Protect, maintain and restore late-successional forest habitats** (mature and old growth forest) historically characteristic of the low-elevation temperate forests in the southwest Washington coastal region for the benefit of endangered and threatened species, migratory and resident birds, and a diverse assemblage of other native species.

**Goal 2. Protect and maintain riparian forests** with diverse

age and structural features, historically characteristic of the low-elevation temperate forests in the southwest Washington coastal region, for the benefit of fish, amphibians, migratory and resident birds, and a diverse assemblage of other native species.

**Goal 3. Protect, maintain and restore estuarine habitats** historically characteristic of the southwest Washington coastal region for the benefit of salmonids, Pacific brant, other waterfowl, and a diverse assemblage of other native species.

**Goal 4. Protect, maintain and restore freshwater habitats** historically characteristic of the southwest Washington coastal region for the benefit of salmonids, amphibians, mussels, lamprey, and a diverse assemblage of other native species.

**Goal 5. Protect, maintain and restore coastal beach, dune and prairie habitats** historically characteristic of the southwest

Washington coastal region for the benefit of the western snowy plover, streaked horned lark, pink sandverbena, Oregon silverspot butterfly and a diverse assemblage of other native species.

**Goal 6. Provide short-grass fields (improved pastures) for the benefit of Canada geese and other grassland-dependent species.**

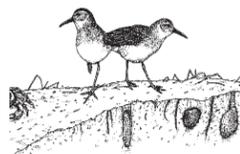
**Goal 7. Gather scientific information**—inventories, monitoring, research, studies—in support of adaptive management decisions on the refuge.

**Goal 8. Foster a connection between refuge visitors and nature.** Visitors will have the opportunity to participate in safe, quality wildlife-dependent recreation activities located throughout the refuge. These activities and programs include wildlife observation, hunting, fishing, interpretation, education, and photography.

## Preliminary Issues for the Willapa Refuge's CCP

The CCP planning team compiled a list of preliminary issues for you to review and comment on. More issues may be identified when we begin receiving public comments and throughout the planning process as the CCP is developed.

### Tidal Marsh Restoration



We have restored tidal marshes at Headquarters, Bear River tributaries, and on Long Island. The refuge has approximately 800 acres of former tideland located in the South Bay, protected by dikes and tidegates. These areas are managed primarily for waterfowl, and in some cases for salmonids and amphibians. This is currently accomplished by managing grasslands using grazing and mowing; manipulating freshwater marshes using water control structures and fish ladders; and by controlling exotic weeds. Many of these areas could be restored to historic tidally influenced conditions, by removing dikes and associated infrastructure.

*Is tidal marsh restoration a desirable action and if so, which refuge units should be considered and which units if any, should remain under current management practices?*

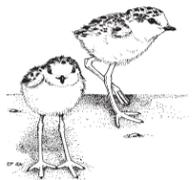
### Land Acquisition



Willapa Refuge currently encompasses approximately 15,000 acres in fee title and easements located primarily in the South Bay and on the tip of Leadbetter Peninsula. In 1999 we expanded the Refuge's acquisition boundary by 2,200 acres. Since then we have acquired approximately 1,700 acres from willing sellers. A large increase in the amount of land acquired by nonprofit organizations for conservation purposes has occurred in Pacific County and many groups have expressed interest in strategically expanding the Refuge's boundary to include sensitive habitats in need of protection.

*Should expansion of the refuge boundary be considered and if so, which properties and for what reasons should the refuge consider expanding the acquisition boundary?*

### Recovery of the federally threatened Western Snowy Plover



The western snowy plover is threatened throughout its range by loss and disturbance of habitat and nesting sites. The primary threats to the snowy plover are habitat degradation caused by human disturbance, urban development, beach grass introduction, and predators. The plovers nesting on the Leadbetter Unit face additional disturbance from an increasing number of elk that frequently feed and utilize the dune habitat restored for plovers. However, most direct losses of nests are due to predation, particularly by crows and ravens, resulting in poor hatching and fledging success.

*What management actions should be implemented to better protect western snowy plovers from disturbance and predation while measures to protect and restore habitat are ongoing?*

### Leadbetter Unit Elk Management



Increasing numbers of elk on the Leadbetter Unit have resulted in damage to rare plants and birds, particularly those within the habitat restoration area created for nesting western snowy plovers. Elk have been observed flushing plovers from their nests, causing nest abandonment and damaging exclosures that protect nests from depredation. Elk also trample native vegetation in the area, including the pink sandverbena, a Federal species of concern, and listed as an endangered plant by the State. The coastal dune habitat restoration area within the Leadbetter Unit supports the only known population of pink sandverbena in the State; it also supports other dune plants that are locally rare, such as beach morning glory and gray beach pea.

*What management actions should be implemented to alleviate threats to rare plants and animals caused by elk on the Leadbetter Unit?*

### Forest Management



Forest lands in the Willapa Bay area, including the refuge, are dominated by second and/or third growth forests, very little old growth or late-successional forest exists. The quantity, distribution, and quality of the forest community has been significantly altered due to past timber harvest practices. These changes have invariably affected the structure of the wildlife community associated with this forest landscape. A variety of wildlife are dependent on these forest types, including the federally threatened marbled murrelet. The lack of late-successional/old growth forest habitat is one reason for the disappearance of the spotted owl from the refuge. Forest streams also provide habitat for anadromous fish such as Chinook, coho, and chum salmon, and sea-run cutthroat trout, making stream restoration a necessary part of forest management efforts. Due to the degraded nature of the refuge's forests, and those in the surrounding areas, a major effort is needed to restore these forests to an assemblance of their natural state.

*What forest management practices should be implemented to restore forest complexity and biodiversity?*

### Wildlife-Dependent Recreational Uses



The refuge currently provides opportunities for high quality, wildlife-dependent recreational uses that highlight the coastal dunes, open bay waters, salt marshes, mudflats, grasslands, and old growth forests. The refuge is open to the public for a variety of uses, including hiking trails, hunting programs (waterfowl, deer, elk, and bear), wildlife observation, clamming, fishing, beach activities, and camping. School groups enjoy environmental education programs both on and off the refuge. Visitors are introduced to the refuge's resources through various interpretive exhibits located on the refuge.

*Should the Refuge's wildlife-dependent recreational uses be expanded or reduced? What opportunities are available that would satisfy public needs while conserving the trust resources?*

### Spartina Control



The ongoing spartina eradication effort is an issue that is common to all alternatives. Monitoring and continued removal of this plant species will be part of the refuge's invasive species management program.