



Antioch Dunes

Planning Update #2

May 1999 **NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

Greetings!

This is the second in a series of updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to keep you informed about planning efforts for the Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge. We will be sending these planning updates regularly to landowners near the study area, government agencies, private organizations, and others who express interest.

available scientific knowledge, to help managers achieve the purposes for which each refuge was established, and to work toward the mission of the Refuge System. The Act lays out directives for managing refuges in a way that ensures the long-term conservation of fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats. Maintenance of biological integrity and diversity is one of the directives laid out in the Act.

inventory and analysis of the natural and aesthetic resources at Antioch are still in progress.

Panel of experts

On February 2, 1999, the Antioch Refuge planning team hosted a technical panel of scientific experts at the Ramada Inn in Antioch. Scientists and others currently working on the refuge gave an overview of the planning and refuge status in the morning. The group then took a working field lunch out on the refuge. Wildlife Biologist Erin Fernandez led a tour of the refuge, pointing out areas that the refuge has been actively managing. In the afternoon, the group was led through a discussion by facilitator Rick Morat. The scientists were in general agreement about several things. Problems facing the refuge include: invasive plant species, lack of open sand, lack of disturbance (before the dunes were mined, they shifted, or were disturbed periodically by wind, gravity, and water), and the difficulty in sustaining naturally reproducing populations of primrose. One of the more interesting points brought up was that some disturbance promoted bee nesting. Bees are important pollinators for the wallflower and the primrose.

What we've been doing

Since the last planning update, sent out in December 1998, the planning and refuge staff have been working to develop the comprehensive conservation plan for the Antioch Refuge. The Service Planning Team has been meeting monthly to discuss various issues about the plan. The planning team also convened

a panel of scientific experts. We describe the findings from the panel later in this planning update.

In addition to reviewing and analyzing comments from agencies, the public, and the technical panel, we have been gathering information on the existing conditions at Antioch. We have started writing the introduction, refuge descriptions, and analysis of resources sections of the plan. We have almost completed data collection on existing Federal lands within the Antioch Refuge. An

As far as solutions and suggestions, many people suggested creating soil surface disturbance the refuge, either by scraping or adding more sand, in a mosaic pattern so that the entire refuge isn't disturbed at one time, focusing more attention on other endemic (meaning restricted to a certain area or region) plant species (besides



Lange's metalmark butterfly
Photograph by John Lauenroth
Participant in the technical panel

This update presents a description of the work we've been doing on the plan and the planning process we are undertaking.

Where we started

In 1997, Congress passed the Refuge System Improvement Act. In addition to identifying a mission for the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Act directs that all wildlife refuges have a comprehensive conservation plan (plan) in place by the year 2013. These plans will provide a 15-year guide, using the best



Contra Costa Wallflower. CalPhotos Database. California Plants & Habitats Photos, Berkeley Digital Library Project. Photograph by Beatrice F. Howitt.

the wallflower and primrose), continuing research, adding more sand, and using a combination of fire and pesticides to control invasive plants.

If you would like to learn more about the technical panel meeting, please contact Leslie Lew, whose address is near the end of this planning update.

Here's what you said

We identified issues based on public comments that we received through the mail and e-mail. Using your comments and agency comments, we are in the process of analyzing the management situation at the Antioch Refuge:

This is a sampling of the issues and concerns that we have received.

- C Open the refuge to the public for fishing and

swimming.

- C Several people requested guided tours of the refuge.
- C Provide opportunities for volunteers.
- C The refuge should remain a sanctuary.
- C Concern was expressed about the extensive invasive non-native vegetation. A suggestion was made to burn, where appropriate, spray, and grub invasive plant species.
- C Consider restricting native plantings until non-native invasives are under control.
- C Provide a part-time caretaker to repair fences, weed control and supervision. An off duty fireman could possibly provide this service.



Key members of the Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge Planning Team. Sandra Matasol, Erin Fernandez, Leslie Lew and Tory Slowik. Photograph by Louise Vicencio, USFWS

Planning Process

- : Identify public and agency issues and concerns
- : Gather data
- : Develop goals and objectives
- 9 Develop strategies
- 9 Evaluate impacts
- 9 Write draft
- 9 Circulate draft
- 9 Public notice of decision

Vision Statement

Currently, the Antioch Planning Team is working on a vision statement. The draft of the vision statement is as follows:

When this plan is fully implemented, our vision is that management of endangered species will be incorporated into the overall management of the riverine sand dune ecosystem. Using management actions that mimic natural processes, Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge will support self-sustaining populations of Lange's metalmark butterfly, Contra Costa wallflower, and Antioch Dunes evening primrose and other native species.

Through an environmental education program, the public will have opportunities to appreciate the unique ecosystem of Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge.

We arrived at the vision statement by trying to visualize what the refuge could look like in the future, given the refuge purpose and input that the public, technical panel, and the Service has provided. The vision statement is compatible with the interim refuge goals written by the refuge in 1986 and described in the first planning update.

What's Next

Using comments we received during the scoping period, in addition to the data we've collected, we will

develop goals, objectives, strategies, and alternatives for Antioch Dunes Refuge. When we've developed this information, we'll share them with you in a later planning update.

For More Information

We are available to provide any information that you may need regarding the refuge and this planning process. Also,

the Fish and Wildlife Service staff can attend a meeting of your organization to discuss the development of the Antioch Dunes Refuge conservation plan. Please notify us at least 3 weeks in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts.

If you have questions, comments, concerns, or would like information about the Refuge, please feel free to call, e-mail, or write us:

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Please pass this planning update along to anyone you think might be interested in the planning process.

Please call or write to us to be placed on our mailing list or to report a change in your mailing address.

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Attention: Leslie Lew*