

Cover: Blackwater marsh



This goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service* is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 540 national wildlife refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas. It also operates 65 national fish hatcheries and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid Program which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.

Comprehensive Conservation Plans provide long-term guidance for management decisions and set forth goals, objectives, and strategies needed to accomplish refuge purposes and identify the Service's best estimate of future needs. These plans detail program planning levels that are sometimes substantially above current budget allocations and, as such, are primarily for Service strategic planning and program prioritization purposes. The plans do not constitute a commitment for staffing increases, operational and maintenance increases, or funding for future land acquisition.

Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

Volume II. Appendixes May 2005

Prepared by The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5

Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex 2145 Key Wallace Drive Cambridge, Maryland 21613-9536

Division of Conservation Planning and Policy 300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, Massachusetts 01035-9589 Highlights of the Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

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CCPs provide long-term guidance for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service management decisions; they set forth goals, objectives, and strategies for accomplishing refuge purposes; and, they identify our best estimate of future needs. They detail levels of program planning that are sometimes substantially above our current budget allocations; as such, they serve primarily in strategic planning and prioritizing Service programs. They do not constitute a commitment for increases in staffing, operating and maintenance, or future land acquisition funding.