

Appendix C. Other Service, State, and Local Plans and Programs

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Strategic Plan (1997–2002) has committed the Service to conserving a nation-wide ecologically diverse network of lands and waters by conserving migratory bird populations, stabilizing or improving populations of threatened and endangered species, and protecting, restoring, or enhancing 64.7 million acres of uplands, 28.4 million acres of wetlands, 15.5 million acres of deep water and riverine habitat, and 3,250 miles of riparian habitat by the year 2002.

Another strategic goal is to increase opportunities for participation in uses of fish and wildlife resources by 3 percent from 1996 levels, and to increase public understanding of the relationship between healthy fish and wildlife resources and sound management practices. The Service also seeks to enhance the diversity and technical capability of its workforce. The Refuge Complex now contributes to all of these strategic goals, and any modification to unit boundaries or changes in management or administration would affect the level of its contribution to this CCP.

Partners for Wildlife is a voluntary partnership program that provides financial and technical assistance to private landowners interested in wetlands restoration. Partners for Wildlife works with local governments and conducts projects on public lands. It gives priority to projects that restore degraded or former wetlands and associated natural habitats. Participants receive direct assistance with planning their wetlands restoration projects from the Service or another cooperating group. The Service then contracts or otherwise arranges for the actual construction work, or pays the landowners for services. To receive financial assistance, landowners must sign a cooperative agreement to maintain the restored wetland for at least 10 years.

The North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) supports the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, to encourage voluntary public–private partnerships to conserve North American wetland ecosystems. The act creates a grant program to help support partners’ conservation activities. It provides funding for wetland conservation projects involving acquisition, restoration, and enhancement.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) approves funding, based on recommendations from the North American Wetlands Conservation Council. The Service coordinates the Council, and can provide assistance to landowners in developing proposals for submission to the Council and MBCC. NAWCA grants require a minimum one-to-one grant match from any non-Federal source, such as state or local governments, non-profit groups, or private landowners.

The Region 5 Ecosystem Management Strategy goals are to (1) provide leadership to conserve ecological systems within Region 5 at all landscape levels for present and future generations; (2) restore, conserve, and protect the health of ecological systems; and (3) foster and perpetuate a

land stewardship ethic in cooperation with other agencies, organizations, businesses, and the general public.

Some of our ecosystem plan objectives include:

1. Maintaining viable populations of native plants and animals well distributed throughout their geographic range;
2. Maintaining genetic variability within and among populations of native species;
3. Restoring and maintaining representative examples of the full spectrum of natural ecosystems, biological communities, and habitats;
4. Restoring and maintaining soil productivity, water quality, and air quality;
5. Restoring and maintaining the fundamental patterns and processes that operate within each system;
6. Increasing scientific understanding of biological diversity and ecological processes;
7. Increasing public awareness, understanding, and support for conserving biological diversity and ecosystem management; and,
8. Maximizing the extent to which production and maintenance of consumptive and nonconsumptive resources are carried out in an environmentally sensitive manner at levels that ensure a high probability that long-term human and economic well being can be maintained. Strategies include establishing and managing reserves and other protected areas throughout Region 5.

The Chesapeake Bay/Susquehanna Ecosystem Plan recognizes that the Blackwater and Nanticoke Rivers significantly contribute to a larger geographic area—the Chesapeake Bay drainage area, or watershed—which covers 64,000 square miles, encompassing portions of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, and West Virginia. Waters from this extensive landscape flow into the largest estuary in the United States, the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay contains an array of habitat types that supports thousands of different species of fish and wildlife. We have listed the priorities of the Chesapeake Bay/Susquehanna Ecosystem Plan below.

- *Endangered Species Resource Priority.—Protect, monitor, and restore threatened, endangered, and candidate species facing immediate or serious decline.*

The emphasis area is the “biological crescent of the Eastern Shore,” because of its impressive array of rare species and natural communities and habitats, most of which are in pristine condition. The Maryland and Delaware Natural Heritage Programs have documented 200 species of rare, threatened, or endangered plants, and almost 70 species of rare, threatened, and endangered animals in the watershed. Globally rare species include more than 20 plants and 5 animal species. Federally protected species in the emphasis area include the Delmarva fox squirrel, bald eagle, and recently delisted peregrine falcon.

- *Wetlands Resource Priority.—Protect or restore vegetated palustrine and riverine wetlands with emphasis on the seven areas identified in Recent Wetlands Status and Trends in the Chesapeake Watershed (Tiner 1994): Southeastern Virginia, Virginia Piedmont, Maryland Eastern Shore, Western Delaware, Virginia Upper Coastal Plain, Virginia Blue Ridge/Appalachians, Northeastern Pennsylvania.*

The brackish marshes on the Refuge Complex make up more than 80 percent of the intertidal wetlands within the watershed, and approximately 50 percent of those in the Nanticoke watershed in Maryland. Forty types of palustrine communities are found within the watershed, and the States of Delaware and Maryland have identified more than 30 Natural Heritage Areas within the Refuge Complex. More than one-third of the total acreage of Blackwater NWR lies within two Maryland Natural Heritage Area sites: the Upper Blackwater and Gum Swamp. The refuge is noted for having the northernmost expanses of three-square-bulrush-dominated marshes in the United States.

- *Anadromous Fish Resource Priority.—Restore and maintain self-sustaining populations of anadromous species (American shad, hickory shad, river herring, striped bass, and Atlantic sturgeon), coastal migratory fishes identified in the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act of 1993, and those species for which the Fisheries Management Workgroup of the Chesapeake Bay Program has developed fishery conservation plans.*

The Nanticoke and Blackwater Rivers watershed provides significant nursery and spawning habitat for most of the anadromous species. Species of commercial value include the white perch, alewife, river herring, American eel, striped bass, and American shad. Many fish species are listed as "Special Status," and include those that at present have low populations, e.g., American shad, hickory shad, striped bass, and yellow perch. Also included are those species that have a very limited distribution. The Nanticoke is the only drainage in Delaware where four species occur: the longnose gar, mottled sculpin, shield darter, and shorthead redhorse. Other rare fishes associated with Blackwater NWR

include the glassy darter, comely shiner, mud sunfish, blackbanded sunfish, and Atlantic sturgeon.

- *Non-Game Birds Resource Priority.—Reverse the decline of migratory bird populations identified in Migratory Non-game Birds of Management Concern in the Northeast (Schneider and Pence 1992) including grassland species and other migrant Neotropical birds.*

More than 180 species breed regularly within the habitats encompassed in the emphasis area. Of these, 80 (44.4 percent) are considered priority species of conservation concern (Watts unpubl. 1999).

- *Waterfowl and other Migratory Game Birds Resource Priority.—Restore waterfowl populations to 1970s levels by the year 2000 as identified in the North American Waterfowl Conservation plan and the Chesapeake Bay Waterfowl Policy & Conservation plan.*

More than 90 percent of all waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway use the Chesapeake Bay area. Blackwater NWR, the Nanticoke focus area, and Martin NWR provide excellent habitat for waterfowl and other migratory game birds. Large numbers of regionally significant populations of four priority waterfowl species use the Refuge Complex: black duck, mallard, northern pintail, and blue-winged teal.

Back to Volume 2 titles