

# Wapack National Wildlife Refuge

## Conservation Planning Update

### Vision for the Future

*Encompassing the North Pack Monadnock Mountain in southern New Hampshire, the Wapack National Wildlife Refuge provides exceptional mature spruce-fir and northern hardwood-mixed habitat for wildlife, particularly migratory birds. The rock outcrop and cliff on its peak, afford an ideal location to view migrating hawks each fall. We will manage the refuge to preserve its natural conditions in a setting which appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.*

*All visitors are welcome to enjoy opportunities to observe and photograph nature along refuge trails, including a 4-mile segment of the Wapack trail. Old and new partnerships with other federal agencies, state agencies, local conservation organization, and volunteers will foster public stewardship of this refuge and its resources, and enhance public understanding of the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in conserving our nation's trust resources.*

### Status of Our Conservation Plan

In January 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) convened a planning team to begin developing a comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment (CCP/EA) for Wapack National Wildlife Refuge (refuge). Once final, the CCP will provide strategic management direction for all refuge programs over the next 15 years.

During February-March 2007 we held two public meetings in Peterborough, New Hampshire. At the first meeting, participants had the opportunity to learn about existing refuge programs, help the planning team identify key issues, share ideas and concerns, and make recommendations on how



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Black-throated green warbler



USFWS/Lelaina Martin

View from Ted's Trail

the refuge should be managed in the future. At the second meeting, our team presented draft management alternatives and provided participants with the opportunity to share any comments, issues, or ideas they had regarding those alternatives.

Since then, the planning team has been busy expanding upon our draft management alternatives by developing more detailed objectives and strategies.

Additionally, in July 2007, we made a trip to the refuge and used Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to more precisely locate two trails; Ted's and Carolyn's Trails. These two trails traverse both private and refuge land. We wanted to determine where they cross into the refuge (please see the refuge trail map on the page 2).

In August 2007, we met with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), to discuss a partnership to complete a forest health assessment on the refuge. This strategy will be discussed in detail in the draft CCP/EA.

We expect to release the draft CCP/EA for public review and comment by December 2007. The draft CCP/EA will describe two management alternatives in detail, and identify the one Service-preferred alternative our planning team recommends.

### Description of the Alternatives

We based our two alternatives on the purposes for establishing the refuge, its vision and goals, and the issues and concerns the public, state agencies, our partners, and the Service identified during the planning process.

Page 2 highlights some actions that distinguish our proposed management alternatives from each other. There are other actions that are common to all alternatives. These are actions we believe crucial for achieving the purpose, vision and goals of the refuge:

- managing refuge lands according to deed stipulations
- controlling invasive plant species
- initiating forest health assessment
- maintaining partnerships
- distributing refuge revenue sharing payments to county governments
- protecting cultural resources

## Refuge Goals

**Goal 1.** Allow natural processes and disturbances to enhance biological diversity and integrity of upland wildlife habitat.

**Goal 2.** Establish a public use program that will encourage compatible, low-impact recreation on refuge trails.

**Goal 3.** Enhance the conservation, management and stewardship of wildlife resources through partnerships with public and private conservation groups, private landowners, State agencies and local entities.

## Highlights of Management Alternatives

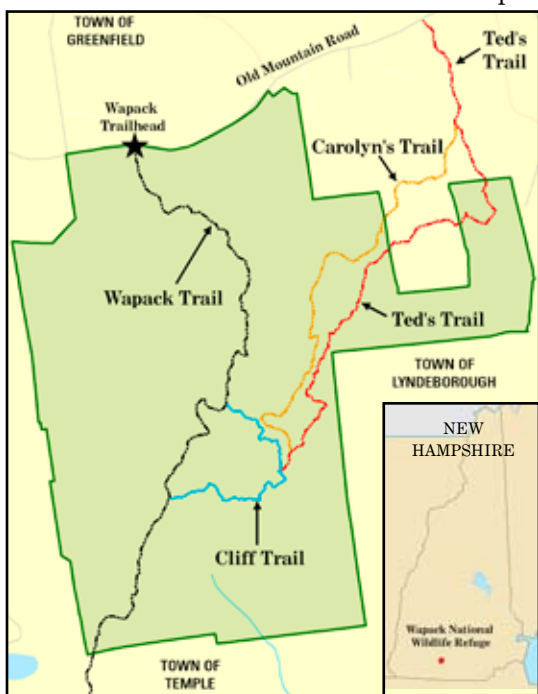
### Alternative A:

Alternative A is the “No Action,” or current management alternative. It describes how we currently manage the refuge and how we would continue to do so in the future.

*Under alternative A we would continue to:*

- Manage the refuge in a “wilderness-like” setting; no development, minimal signage and other infrastructure.
- Maintain an informal agreement with the Friends of the Wapack (FOW) and Mountain View Hiking Club to maintain refuge trails.
- Allow FOW to maintain one informational sign at Wapack trailhead.

### *Map of Refuge Trails*



- Maintain refuge boundary signs.
- Allow wildlife observation, photography, berry picking, hiking/backpacking, jogging/walking, and snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.
- Prohibit hunting, fishing, trapping, travel in or use of vehicles, and cutting of trees, except for the maintenance of trails (as listed in the deed).
- Prohibit dog walking, camping, mountain biking, and horseback riding.
- Work under the memorandum of understanding (MOU) for cooperative law enforcement with the NH Fish and Game Department (NHFG).

### Alternative B (Service-preferred):

Alternative B is the “Service-preferred” alternative. It represents the planning team’s recommended strategies and actions for best achieving the refuge purposes, goals, and objectives. This alternative serves to improve our biological as well as visitor services program through enhanced partnerships with other federal agencies, state agencies, town departments, local conservation organizations, and individuals.

*Under alternative B we would:*

- Maintain “wilderness-like” setting; allow natural processes and disturbances to occur.
- Set up meetings with various partners to discuss possible partnership opportunities for conducting wildlife surveys, and collecting vegetation data, consistent with Service protocols.
- Utilize a partnership with USFS to complete a full forest health assessment.
- Complete a MOU with the FOW and the Mountain View Hiking Club for maintenance of refuge trails.
- Explore potential for developed parking area near Wapack trailhead in partnership with the Town of Greenfield, Brantwood Camp, and the NH Division of Parks and Recreation.
- Enhance or replace informational sign at the Wapack trailhead.

- Install small, unobtrusive “Welcome to your National Wildlife Refuge” signs at the refuge entrances of both Ted’s and Carolyn’s Trails.
- Increase the number of refuge boundary signs posted so they are intervisible.
- Improve refuge visibility among state and local elected officials through improved communication.
- *Make the following changes to allowed uses:* formally open refuge to dog walking on leash only and prohibit jogging and organized picnicking.
- Develop outreach materials to communicate refuge opportunities and explain prohibited activities.

- Work with partners and volunteers to monitor refuge uses and step-up outreach.
- Improve communication with zone conservation officer from NHFG to discuss any new law enforcement issues or concerns that arise and possible solutions.

- Provide support to regional conservation efforts through identification of areas of high resource value and determination of management techniques for habitats and ecosystems.

### **For additional information or to submit comments on this newsletter, contact:**

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Regional planning website: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Wapack/ccphome.html>

Federal Relay Service for deaf and hard-of-hearing: 1 800/877 8339

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