

unexploded ordnance would be restricted, the alternatives presented in this Draft Plan were developed with the assumption that these lands would be cleaned of any contaminants that would pose a threat to either wildlife or humans.

Before the Service began the development of the Draft Plan, it hosted a series of public scoping meetings to solicit public opinion and identify issues that should be addressed. To address the existing habitat conditions, the ongoing cleanup activities, the issues identified by the public, and the mission and purpose of the refuge, the planning team developed a series of goals for the plan. The goals are: (1) Conserve, enhance, and restore native plant communities and wetland habitats and their associated fish, wildlife, and plants, representative of the native biological diversity that would have been found on Vieques Refuge lands prior to major agricultural and military use of the lands; (2) monitor, protect, and recover special status animals, plants, and species of management interest; (3) provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation and education to enhance public appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of refuge wildlife, habitats, and cultural history; (4) ensure, through the cooperative efforts of partners, that the refuge is cleaned of all classes of contaminants that could pose a threat to the health and safety of the wildlife, residents, staff, and visitors; (5) provide the resources needed to implement the selected management alternative and ensure the other goals and objectives identified in the plan can be achieved; and (6) develop effective and open communication with the community to raise public awareness of refuge programs, management decisions, the missions of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System by working closely with Vieques citizens and interested groups and organizations.

Based on these goals and information obtained during the scoping process, the plan offers three alternatives to help address the issues identified and achieve the vision of the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge.

#### **Alternative A (Current Management or No Action)**

The current management alternative provides for a continuation of the existing level of management. Staffing would remain at the current levels and ongoing programs and activities would continue with only minor changes and no new programs.

#### **Alternative B (Resource Emphasis)**

This alternative focuses on wildlife and habitat management but maintains the existing visitor programs and public uses. Habitat management and monitoring would be expanded and agreements with research, governmental, and non-governmental organizations would be developed to provide information needed for the management of forests, grasslands, coastal wetlands, beaches, and listed species and their habitats. In partnership with others, programs would be developed for management of nesting sea turtle populations on Vieques Refuge beaches.

#### **Alternative C (Habitat Management and Public Use Emphasis) (Proposed Alternative)**

This alternative directs the refuge toward a realistic and achievable level of both habitat management and public use and provides a management program that addresses the needs of the resources and, where appropriate and compatible with the refuge purposes, the needs of the community. This alternative provides for an increase in management efforts to restore the refuge habitats without diminishing the wildlife values associated with the current conditions. There is also a focus on management activities to benefit threatened and endangered species. This includes the possible reintroduction of species extirpated from Vieques and expansion of populations of species already found on the refuge. Priority public uses, as identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, would be expanded and other uses that are determined to be compatible with the refuge mission may be permitted. Historic and archaeological resources would be stabilized and, where possible, interpretation of their significance and role in the evolution of Vieques Refuge would be provided.

After the review and comment period for the Draft Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, all comments will be analyzed and considered by the Service. All comments become part of the official public record. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and other Service and Departmental policies and procedures.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Gisella Burgos; Telephone: 787/741-2138.

**Authority:** This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge

System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105-57.

Dated: November 21, 2006.

**Cynthia K. Dohner,**

*Acting Regional Director.*

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## **DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

### **Fish and Wildlife Service**

#### **National Wildlife Refuges, North Dakota**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) intend to gather information necessary to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and associated environmental documents for twelve (12) National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) located in the State of North Dakota. The twelve (12) NWRs are Stump Lake, Lake Alice, Kellys Slough, Audubon, Chase Lake, Lake Nettie, McLean, Lake Zahl, Shell Lake, White Lake, Lake Ilo, and Stewart Lake. We furnish this notice in compliance with our CCP policy to advise other agencies and the public of our intentions, and to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to be considered in the planning process.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by March 30, 2007.

**ADDRESSES:** Send your comments or requests for more information to John Esperance, Planning Team Leader, Division of Refuge Planning, P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal Center, Denver, CO 80225.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** John Esperance, 303-236-4369, or Michael Spratt, 303-236-4366.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** With this notice, the Service initiates a CCP for twelve (12) NWRs in various locations throughout the State of North Dakota.

#### **Background**

##### *The CCP Process*

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), requires the Service to develop a CCP for each NWR. The purpose in developing a CCP is to

provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, plans identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

The Service established each unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, including these twelve (12) NWRs, with specific purposes. We use these purposes to develop and prioritize management goals and objectives within the National Wildlife Refuge System mission, and to guide which public uses will occur on these NWRs. The planning process is a way for the Service and the public to evaluate management goals and objectives for the best possible conservation efforts of this important wildlife habitat, while providing for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that are compatible with each NWR and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Service will conduct a comprehensive conservation planning process that will provide opportunity for Tribal, State, and local governments; agencies; organizations; and the public to participate in issue scoping and public comment. We request input for issues, concerns, ideas, and suggestions for the future management of these NWRs in North Dakota. We invite anyone interested to respond to the following two questions.

- (1) What problems or issues do you want to see addressed in the CCP?
- (2) What improvements would you recommend for these twelve (12) NWRs?

We have provided the above questions for your optional use; you are not required to provide information to us. The planning team developed these questions to gather information about individual issues and ideas concerning these NWRs. Our planning team will use the comments it receives as part of the planning process; however, we will not reference individual comments in our reports or directly respond to them.

We will also give the public an opportunity to provide input at an open house to scope issues and concerns. You can obtain the schedule from the Planning Team Leaders (see **ADDRESSES**). You may also submit comments anytime during the planning process by writing to the above

addresses. All information provided voluntarily by mail, phone, or at public meetings becomes part of our official public record (i.e., names, addresses, letters of comment, input recorded during meetings). If a private citizen or organization requests this information under the Freedom of Information Act, we may provide informational copies.

The Service will conduct the environmental review of this project in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); NEPA Regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508); other appropriate Federal laws and regulations; and our policies and procedures for compliance with those regulations. All comments we receive from individuals on our environmental assessments and environmental impact statements become part of the official public record. We will handle requests for such comments in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, NEPA (40 CFR 1506.6(f)), and other Departmental and Service policies and procedures. When we receive a request, we generally will provide comment letters with the names and addresses of the individuals who wrote the comments. However, to the extent permissible by law, we will not provide the telephone number of the commenting individual in response to such requests.

#### *North Dakota NWRs*

These twelve (12) NWRs were established for the protection of critical migratory waterfowl habitat within the State of North Dakota. Through these NWRs, the Service manages a complex of wetlands in 34 counties within North Dakota. The wetlands range from seasonal shallow basins to deeper, more permanent ponds that provide resting and feeding areas for millions of birds during Spring and Fall migration.

Dated: January 30, 2007.

**James J. Slack,**

*Deputy Regional Director, Region 6, Denver, Colorado.*

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## **DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

### **Fish and Wildlife Service**

#### **Wetland Management Districts, North Dakota**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan and

environmental assessment; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) intend to gather information necessary to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and associated environmental documents for nine (9) Wetland Management Districts (WMDs) located in the State of North Dakota. The nine (9) WMDs are Devils Lake, Arrowwood, Valley City, Chase Lake, Kulm, Audubon, J. Clark Salyer, Lostwood and Crosby. We furnish this notice in compliance with our CCP policy to advise other agencies and the public of our intentions, and to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to be considered in the planning process.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by March 30, 2007.

**ADDRESSES:** Send your comments or requests for more information to John Esperance, Planning Team Leader, Division of Refuge Planning, P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal Center, Denver, CO 80225.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** John Esperance, 303–236–4369, or Michael Spratt, 303–236–4366.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** With this notice, the Service initiates a CCP for nine (9) WMDs in various locations throughout the State of North Dakota.

### **Background**

#### *The CCP Process*

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee), requires the Service to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose in developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, plans identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

The Service established each unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, including these nine (9) WMDs, with specific purposes. We use these