

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Newsletter

January 2007



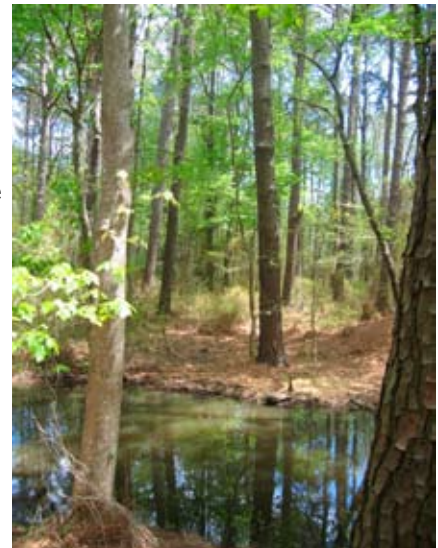
Map of Refuge

Focus on Planning

In 2002, the US Fish and Wildlife Service began the process of developing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for the Refuge. A CCP will provide strategic management direction for the next 15 years. It will explain the Refuge's priorities for wildlife and habitat management, public use, staffing and facilities.

Although it has been several years since our last planning newsletter, the planning team has been working during that time to develop Refuge goals, objectives and strategies. The planning team has also developed three alternatives that aim to achieve the Refuge purposes, and respond to public issues. Some issues that have already been identified include: invasive plant management, pest species management, land acquisition/expansion, administrative operations, and hunting and fishing opportunities on the Refuge.

In this newsletter we would like to share with you our draft vision and goals and some highlights from our preliminary alternatives.



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Forest at Black Gut

A vision for the future

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge will work closely with partners and communities to provide a biologically healthy natural environment that restores abundant fish, wildlife and plant populations. Special consideration will be given to those species whose survival is in jeopardy. We will provide a healthy haven of land and water to support Back Bay's diverse wildlife communities, with an emphasis on migratory waterbird and songbird management. We will strive to promote active stewardship of these natural resources for present and future generations, while also providing opportunities for compatible public uses. In doing this, we hope to ensure a sound coexistence between wildlife and people that will allow people to share our passion and appreciation of Back Bay's many natural resources, while also enhancing the quality of life in Back Bay.

Refuge Goals

Goal 1: Maintain and enhance a diversity of wetland habitats for migratory birds.

Goal 2: Enhance and preserve native woodland diversity and health.

Goal 3: Manage beach and dunes to preserve and protect migratory bird and other wildlife habitats.

Goal 4: Provide natural environment for native fish, wildlife, and plant populations (with special consideration to those species whose survival is in jeopardy).

Goal 5: Provide additional viewing opportunities of migratory birds and other wildlife to increase the general public's appreciation and support of natural resources.

Goal 6: Provide and expand hunting and fishing opportunities to the public where compatible with Refuge purposes.

Goal 7: Promote understanding and appreciation for the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitats and the role of the Refuge in this effort through effective community outreach programs and partnerships.



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Charles Kuralt Trail

Alternatives for CCP

The following three Refuge management alternatives are designed to address the issues identified by both the planning team and the public.

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 will:

- Continue cooperative farming on the Refuge.
- Continue to conduct land bird, marsh bird and waterfowl surveys to monitor responses to impoundment management.
- Continue to conduct nesting and stranded sea turtle patrols.
- Continue current methods of woodland management.
- Continue current methods of nuisance and exotic species control.
- Maintain the existing opportunities for visitors to engage in wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education and interpretation.
- Maintain existing hunting and fishing opportunities on the Refuge.
- Continue to allow year-round hiking and bicycling opportunities along the Refuge beachfront, Refuge entrance Road and the headquarters trail system.
- Maintain existing infrastructure.

Alternative B: (proposed action)

Alternative B is the “proposed action” alternative. It represents the planning team’s recommended strategies and actions for best achieving the Refuge purposes, goals and objectives. This alternative serves to enhance the conservation of wildlife and their habitats, as well as provide for additional visitor opportunities on the Refuge, such as an expansion of the deer hunt and new hiking/canoeing trails.

In addition to Alternative A we will:

- Assess/inventory fish populations and habitat conditions in all Refuge impoundments.
- Restore nearly 150 acres of wetland and forest habitat.
- Open up forest canopy by selectively removing loblolly pine, sweetgum and red maple.
- Work with partners to treat phragmites areas on private lands immediately adjacent to the Refuge property.
- Withdraw the 1974 wilderness designation proposal for Long Island, Green Hills, and Landing Cove (2,165 acres).
- Initiate youth hunts.
- Expand fishing education events at the Refuge to a total of two events per year.
- Develop a canoe/kayak trail on west side of bay.
- Develop and design new headquarters, visitor contact station, environmental education center and maintenance compound at New Bridge Road site.
- Develop hiking trail from proposed headquarter site along Ashville Bridge Creek to Horn Point.



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Loggerhead Sea Turtle

Alternative C:

Alternative C would encourage the growth of forest habitat. It also provides for additional visitor opportunities such as an expansion of fishing opportunities and a shuttle service.

Under this alternative we will:

- Cease cooperative farming by 2009
- Augment existing forest with seedlings, in areas where Cypress is not regenerating.
- Increase research on feral hogs’ effects on migratory bird habitat.
- Utilize a proposed interagency agreement that would allow previously proposed wilderness areas to continue to meet the minimum criteria, and manage accordingly.
- Enhance “Teach the Teacher” workshops, upon completion of the new headquarters.
- Develop a hiking trail along Nanny’s Creek.
- Explore possibilities of opening Colchester impoundment for fishing opportunities.
- Work with partners to provide a shuttle (for a fee) service from the new headquarter site to the barrier spit.

For further information, contact:

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