

Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Conservation Planning Update

December 2006

Plan scheduled for Summer 2007

Thanks for being a part of the Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process. We anticipate that the draft plan for Prime Hook refuge will be available by the summer of 2007. In this update, we share with you our draft vision statement and draft refuge goals, and also let you know what's new at Prime Hook.

History of our planning process

In November 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officially initiated the federal-mandated comprehensive conservation planning process for Prime Hook refuge. The team invited the public and other interested groups to share their thoughts and concerns about refuge issues. That input provided the foundation for developing goals.

Refuge goals

Goals describe the desired future condition of the refuge and provide a framework for writing objectives. Developing goals early in the planning process helped focus our thinking about management actions. Our goals are described below in three categories.

Habitat Goals

We will preserve, restore and enhance the biological diversity and ecological integrity of the refuge's native plants and wildlife in wetland and upland habitats within the Delmarva coastal plain ecosystem with the following goals:

Visit our website

Our website has links to information including refuge history, birding and hunting opportunities, current events, refuge activities, and more!

<http://primehook.fws.gov/>



USFWS

Refuge operations specialist George O'Shea works with a volunteer to place a bird band on an osprey. Bird bands allow scientists to monitor, study, and ultimately protect wild birds. Bird banding is one of many volunteer opportunities available at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge.

■ Barrier Island Beach Habitats

Manage the especially dynamic nature of barrier island beach habitats for native plants and animals, especially migratory birds and horseshoe crabs.

■ Wetland Habitats

Maintain, enhance, and where appropriate, restore a diversity of tidal and nontidal wetland habitats for native plants and animals, especially migratory birds and locally rare plant communities.

■ Early Successional Upland Habitats

Perpetuate early successional grasslands and shrubland communities for native plants and animals, especially associated invertebrates, and migratory and breeding birds.

■ Forested Habitats

Maintain, enhance, and where appropriate, restore a diversity of forested habitat for native plants and animals, especially endangered Delmarva fox squirrels and migratory and breeding birds.

Public Use Goal

Visitors of all abilities enjoy quality wildlife-dependent recreation, appreciate the refuge's cultural and natural resources, and increase their understanding and support of the refuge's mission.

Other

Collaborate with the local community and partners to complement habitat and programs on the refuge and the surrounding landscape.

Refuge landscape, history, and our draft vision statement

Prime Hook refuge, established in 1963, historically consisted of tidal marshes and agricultural lands cultivated in corn and small grains. These refuge areas were also grazed by cattle. Back then, the landscape surrounding the refuge was dominated by small farms producing vegetables and small grains. Today, resort and residential development increasingly surround the refuge. Agriculture is still one of Delaware's major industries with over 480,000 acres in croplands, mostly to support a considerable poultry industry located in Sussex County.

The refuge's 10,000 acres are adjacent to three bay front communities: Slaughter Beach, Prime Hook Beach, and Broadkill Beach. Eighty percent of the refuge is dominated by emergent wetlands, mostly impounded freshwater marshes with various inclusions of red maple, atlantic white cedar, and seaside alder swamps. The remaining area consists of 700 acres of upland mixed pine and hardwood forest, 600 acres of farmed fields, and 700 acres of post-agricultural fields. The draft vision statement below qualitatively describes our desired future character of Prime Hook refuge. We will refine it throughout the planning process with input from our partners and the public, and it will guide program emphases and priorities at the refuge.

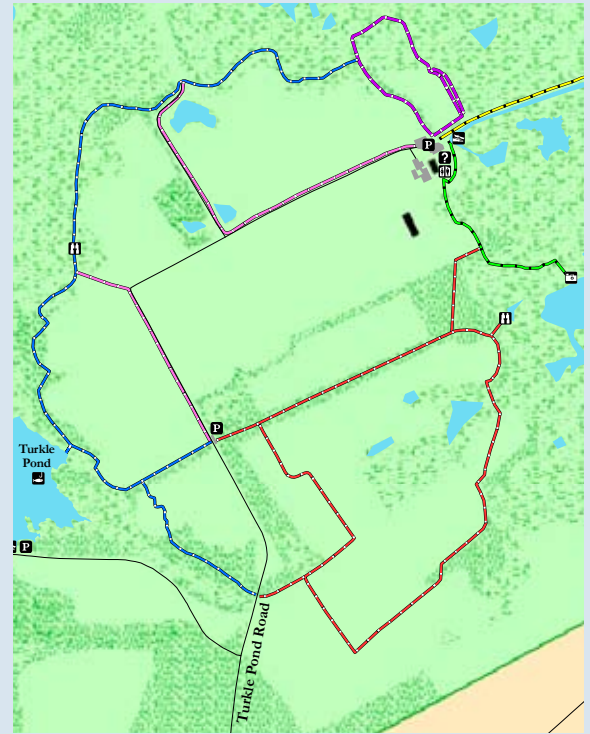
Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge will comprise a variety of Delmarva coastal plain habitats, such as barrier island beach, freshwater and tidal wetlands, grassland, shrubland and forest. The refuge will manage, maintain, enhance and, where appropriate, restore habitats for native plants and animals, with an emphasis on migratory birds and rare species. A balanced approach will be used to ensure all wildlife-dependent recreational users experience quality opportunities. The refuge will be a leader in conservation, research and community partnerships, adapting to physical and community changes as necessary to maintain the ecological integrity of the refuge and build a stewardship ethic for current and future generations.

Why do we need a plan?

Once our Regional Director approves the final CCP, it will provide strategic management direction for all programs over the next 15 years. Among other

Trails at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Come explore the new "Blue Goose" trail that connects the refuge's existing trails into an exciting 6.3 mile loop that winds through several different habitats, observation decks and a photography blind. The trail begins and ends at the kiosk adjacent to the boat ramp in the headquarters area. Additionally, we just completed work on an accessible fishing pier at Fleetwood Pond.



Legend

Base Information	Trails	Refuge Features	
Refuge Lands	Black Farm Trail	Buildings	Observation Area
Wooded Lands	Boardwalk Trail	Parking	Photo Blind
Wetlands	Dike Trail	Office/Visitor Contact Station	Boat Launch
Water	Photo Blind Trail	Parking	Canoe
Roads	Pine Grove Trail	Restrooms	Kayak
	Blue Goose Trail		Fishing
	Return Route		

things, it will ensure long-term continuity in refuge management and outreach to partners, elected officials, refuge neighbors, and others.

What can I do to get involved?

Effective conservation usually begins with effective community involvement. You can provide feedback on our draft vision statement and goals right now. We will gladly consider any comments and suggestions. Please visit our website or call our main office for details.

Taking the next steps

We are currently in the process of developing alternatives. Alternatives are packages of complementary management objectives for achieving the missions of the Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Additionally, alternatives fulfill the vision and goals of the refuge while also responding to the issues and opportunities identified during the planning process.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

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