



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges

August 2004 - Planning Update #3

### Greetings!

This is the third planning update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intended to keep you informed about our planning process for the three National Wildlife Refuges in the Columbia River Gorge.

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### The Planning Process

- Identify issues & concerns
- Gather data
- Develop strategies
- Evaluate impacts
- Write draft
- Circulate draft
- Public Notice of Decision



*Canada geese grazing in a mowed pasture, USFWS*

### Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan Coming Soon!

In September of 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began the process of preparing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan, or CCP, for Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges. Located in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, these three refuges are collectively called "Gorge Refuges" in the CCP. All wildlife refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) must complete a CCP to comply with the NWRS Improvement Act passed by Congress in 1997. Every CCP contains a vision statement, goals, and specific objectives and strategies that will guide management of a refuge or group of refuges for the next 15 years. The draft CCP evaluates and compares management alternatives in an Environmental Assessment(EA) or Environmental Impact Statement(EIS).

Since beginning the planning process, the Service's planning team for the Gorge Refuges has gathered comments and other input from the public, and has used this information to formulate three alternatives for the management of the Gorge Refuges. We are pleased to announce that the Draft CCP/EA will be released to the public for a 30-day comment period beginning on August 20, 2004. This planning update provides a preview of the Draft CCP/EA. Included are management goals, as well as a summary of each management alternative designed to accomplish these goals. You will find a map of the Service's preferred alternative, Alternative B as an insert in this update newsletter. Maps of the other alternatives will be available through the sources identified on page 7 in this update. Continued public participation is key to a successful planning effort. The final CCP selected by the Service will be determined, in part, by the comments received on the Draft CCP/EA. For information on how to obtain your copy and where to submit comments, please see page 7 of this update.

## Revised Draft Goals for the Gorge Refuges

Refuge goals are broad statements intended to provide direction for the future management of the Gorge Refuges. They are based on the purposes of the Refuges, the mission and policies of the NWRS, issues identified in the planning process, and input received from the public.

The original draft goals for the Gorge Refuges were presented in Planning Update #2. These goals were based on the key issues of habitat and wildlife management, research and monitoring, and public uses. Since then, public input has been incorporated into the revised draft goals and a new goal was added to address the critical issue of invasive species. The following revised goals were used to develop objectives and strategies in the Draft CCP/EA.

### Habitat

Goal 1: Protect, restore, and enhance the natural diversity of floodplain, upland forest, and grassland habitats representative of the lower Columbia River ecosystem.

### Wildlife & Plants

Goal 2: Protect and enhance populations of native flora and fauna with an emphasis on State- and federally-listed threatened and endangered species, species of conservation concern, and their habitats.

### Invasive Species

Goal 3: Reduce the impacts of nonnative and invasive species on native flora and fauna.

### Research & Monitoring

Goal 4: Provide management-based research opportunities and conduct Refuge studies to investigate ecosystem dynamics, wildlife and habitat relationships, habitat use patterns, and human impacts.

### Public Use

Goal 5: Develop and encourage public understanding of and support for the purposes and visions of Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges.



## Gorge Refuge Draft Alternatives

### Actions Common to All Alternatives

The Draft CCP/EA identifies and evaluates three alternatives for managing the Gorge Refuges over the next 15 years. Each alternative describes a combination of habitat and public use management prescriptions designed to achieve the Refuge purposes, goals, and vision.

Some of the proposed projects and programs would occur regardless of which alternative is ultimately selected for implementation. These are identified on this page as Actions Common to All Alternatives.



*Western pond turtle with tracking antenna, USFWS*

**Steigerwald Lake Gateway Center.** Subject to availability of appropriated funding, the Service will construct a Gateway Center and interpretive trail at Steigerwald Lake Refuge, as described in the Service's Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact signed in 1999. The facility will serve as an introduction and orientation to the Scenic Area and information on resources in the vicinity. Development will include a parking area, open-air kiosk with interpretive displays, restroom, interpretive trail connecting to the Columbia River Dike Trail, and staffed Gateway Center with interior exhibits, sales area, conference room, refuge offices, and an outside viewing deck. The kiosk, interpretive trail, and support facilities may be developed before funding becomes available to construct the Gateway Center.

**Steigerwald Lake Feasibility Study.** Acting under authority of Section 1135 of the Water Resources Act of 1986, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will direct the feasibility study phase of a project to reestablish hydrologic connections between the historic Steigerwald Lake, Columbia River, and Gibbons Creek.

**Western Pond Turtle Program.** The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will continue to release and monitor western pond turtles (a State endangered species) on Pierce Refuge, and will also investigate the feasibility of introducing pond turtles to Steigerwald Lake Refuge. The establishment of a population at Pierce Refuge will be coordinated and conducted in a manner complimentary and compatible with the Refuge's other existing natural resource, public use, cultural, and historical management programs.

**Fire Management.** The CCP contains a draft Fire Management Plan (FMP) that, when approved by the Service, will provide guidelines for suppression and prescribed fire programs at the Gorge Refuges. Full suppression of all wildland fires will continue to be the norm. Prescribed fires may be used, in conjunction with other Refuge management tools identified in the CCP to reduce hazard fuels, restore the natural processes and vitality of ecosystems, improve wildlife habitat, remove or reduce non-native species, and conduct research.

**Mosquito Management.** The Service will consult and coordinate with local mosquito control districts to implement mosquito management activities on the Gorge Refuges. The Skamania County Mosquito Control District personnel will be allowed to monitor and treat mosquitoes within specific areas of Franz Lake Refuge as stipulated in the Service's Compatibility Determination. The Compatibility Determination will be revised in 2012 or sooner to reflect new information and to comply with final Service policy for mosquito management on units of the NWRS currently being developed. Additionally, a contingency plan will be developed as soon as possible to identify the authorized agencies, responsible parties, treatment protocol, and contact lists to be used in the event of a disease outbreak (e.g., West Nile virus).

## Gorge Refuge CCP Alternative Narrative Statements

Alternatives A, B, and C are briefly described in narrative and table format on these pages.

The Service prefers Alternative B because it best achieves Refuge purposes, vision, and goals; contributes to the Refuge System mission; addresses the substantive issues and relevant mandates; and is consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management.



*Goslings in the nest,*  
USFWS

**A** In Alternative A, the “no action” alternative, the Service would continue to protect, maintain, and where feasible, restore habitat for priority species, including Canada geese, waterfowl, and State and federally-listed species. However, at current levels of funding and staff, these efforts would be inadequate to fulfill Refuge purposes and achieve Refuge goals. The Service would implement its earlier decision to prohibit horseback riding, dogwalking, jogging, and bicycling on the 0.6-mile section of the Columbia River Dike Trail at Steigerwald Lake Refuge. Opportunities for the public to attend special events and staff-led tours of the Refuges will continue. Pierce Refuge would continue to be available to local school groups for environmental education.

**B** Alternative B, the Service’s preferred alternative, would focus Refuge management on restoring and maintaining biological diversity with particular emphasis on the conservation targets identified in the CCP. Inventory monitoring, and research would increase. Working with partners, the Service would seek to remove blockages to fish passage within the Gibbons Creek, Indian Mary Creek, and Hardy Creek watersheds. The Service would participate in ongoing efforts to cleanup Gibbons Creek and to eliminate the threat of contaminated groundwater and stormwater runoff from entering Steigerwald Lake Refuge. Substantially more acres would be targeted for restoration under this Alternative than under Alternative A. Opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography, and environmental education and interpretation would be increased. In addition to the current wildlife-dependent public uses of the Columbia River Dike Trail, the Service would officially open the portion of the trail on Steigerwald Lake Refuge to horseback riding, jogging, bicycling, and leashed dogs. Refuge staff would increase the number of guided tours of the Refuges. We would partner with the City of North Bonneville to promote wildlife viewing from an existing public trail adjacent to Pierce Refuge. Environmental education would be enhanced through coordination with local school teachers and classroom visits.

**C** Alternative C has many features in common with Alternative B. The primary difference is that under Alternative C, the Service would seek to restore more of the historic (pre-Bonneville Dam) vegetation cover. At Pierce Refuge, artificially created wetlands and open water habitat would be reduced and pastures eliminated. The amount of pasture at Steigerwald Lake Refuge would be reduced to the minimum needed to support wintering Canada geese. The maximum amount of oak restoration would occur under Alternative C. Partnerships would be developed to monitor water quality, remove or modify fish barriers, and control or eliminate noxious weed populations. A Research Natural Area would be established at Franz Lake Refuge. Public uses would be similar to those proposed in Alternative B, with the exceptions of the classroom visits, teacher workshops, and the wildlife viewing trail adjacent to Pierce Refuge. The public uses would not be developed under Alternative C.

## Gorge Refuges CCP Comparison of Proposed Alternatives

Issue or Topic	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B (Proposed Action)	Alternative C
<b>Habitat and Native Species and Populations Management (Goals 1 and 2)</b>			
Wetlands	provide 207 acres at Steigerwald Lake and 9 acres at Pierce of low- to medium-quality habitat	provide 237, 42, and 11 acres of high-quality habitat at Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, & Pierce, respectively	reduce nonnative plants on 212, 37, and 3 acres at Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, & Pierce, respectively
Riparian Forest and Scrub-shrub	restore 76 acres at Steigerwald Lake and 34 acres at Pierce	restore 270, 152, and 213 acres at Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, & Pierce, respectively	restore 258, 152, and 201 acres at Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, & Pierce, respectively
Oak Woodland and Savanna	maintain 40 acres at Steigerwald Lake and 28 acres at Pierce	restore 134 acres at Steigerwald Lake, 40 acres at Pierce	restore 134 acres at Steigerwald Lake, 63 acres at Pierce
Fields managed for Canada goose browse	331 acres at Pierce and Steigerwald Lake Refuges	191 acres at Pierce and Steigerwald Lake Refuges	138 acres at Steigerwald Lake Refuge; phase-out at Pierce Refuge
In-Stream Barriers to Fish Migration on Gibbons, Indian Mary, & Hardy Creeks	remove barriers to nine miles of fish habitat	work with watershed partners to remove barriers to 13 miles of fish habitat	work with watershed partners to remove barriers to 14 miles of fish habitat
Inventory and Monitoring	continue winter Canada goose surveys and fish monitoring	in addition to A, implement an inventory and monitoring program for conservation targets and habitats at all Gorge Refuges	
Water Quality	participate in Gibbons Ck monitoring	participate in watershed efforts to improve water quality	
<b>Invasive Species Management (Goal 3)</b>			
Monitoring and Response	survey once every five to 10 years	increase surveys, education, research, coordination; rapid-response	
Bullfrog and Nonnative Fish Control at Pierce Refuge	periodically remove from Pierce Lake	periodically remove from Refuge s lakes	remove habitat for these species from behind impoundments
<b>Ecological Research (Goal 4)</b>			
High Priority Research	distribute a list of research projects	establish new partnerships that support research	
Research Natural Area	none	establish 420-acre Research Natural Area at Franz Lake Refuge	
<b>Public Uses (Goal 5)</b>			
Public Outreach	participate in three public events, on- or off-refuge, each year	host at least three on-refuge public events, and participate in two off-refuge public events each year	in addition to B, develop traveler information radio station
Environmental Education (EE)	nonrefuge personnel conduct EE at Pierce Refuge for up to 180 students per year; provide educational materials to school	establish EE program with volunteers and Service staff; teacher workshops and community service projects; site improvement plan for Pierce Refuge	same as B, except no in-class programs or workshops; provide bus parking and portable toilets at Pierce Refuge
Environmental Interpretation	update Franz Lake overlook interpretive panels	update or develop Franz Lake and Steigerwald Lake overlooks; develop wildlife viewing opportunities on existing North Bonneville trail; guided kayak tours of Franz Lake Refuge	same as B, except do not develop wildlife viewing trail in North Bonneville
Authorized Public Uses of Columbia River Dike Trail on Steigerwald Lake	open trail to public except close east 0.6 mile section to horses, bikes, dogs, and joggers	open trail to public for wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation, horseback and bicycle riding, dog-walking, and jogging; provide Refuge information in kiosk on Dike Trail	

## Refuge News & Updates

### **Pierce Refuge** ***Chum Chat***



*Chum salmon, USFWS*

Hardy Creek on Pierce Refuge hosts one of the last chum salmon runs along the lower Columbia River, and as such, Service fisheries biologists monitor chum spawning and reproduction in Hardy Creek every spawning season. Adults are trapped and tagged during the mid-November to late December spawning period to evaluate their movements and to determine the size of the reproductive population using Refuge waters. During the spring of 2004, trapping and marking operations resulted in capture of almost 60,000 juvenile salmon leaving the Hardy Creek spawning beds to travel downstream to the Columbia River. This compares to captures of about 100,000 juvenile salmon trapped in spring 2003.

### **Franz Lake Refuge** ***Mosquito Management***



*Franz Lake NWR, USFWS*

The Service signed a Compatibility Determination in October 2002 to allow mosquito monitoring, control, and research within specific areas of Franz Lake. In 2002, 2003, and 2004, the Service permitted the Skamania County Mosquito Control Board to monitor mosquito larvae and apply an approved mosquito larvicide, called *B.t.i.* (*Bacillus thurientiensis israel*), within canarygrass wetlands east of a dike at Franz Lake Refuge. The effects of *B.t.i.* on non-target aquatic insects, which are an important food for salmonids, including several federally-listed species, are not adequately known to authorize its application west of the dike. Service researchers collected data in 2003 to evaluate the potential impacts of expanding mosquito treatment into areas where listed salmonids may occur. Results from the study will be available in fall, 2004.

### **Steigerwald Lake Refuge** ***Active Avians***



*Canada geese, USFWS*

Canada geese and other waterfowl are often the most easily observed wildlife using Steigerwald Lake Refuge wetland and pasture habitats. By November, wintering geese are often seen from Highway 14 foraging on fields of mowed grass. Prior to the refuge's establishment in 1987, historic data showed fewer than 500 Canada geese wintered around Steigerwald Lake. Today, Refuge fields are supporting higher numbers of wintering geese than ever recorded. This past winter, refuge fields averaged 850 geese per survey. Throughout the winter, geese populations on the Refuge may range between 500 to 1,500.

## Who Do I Contact & How?

### Refuge Planning Team:

Eric Anderson,  
Technical Writer

Jim Clapp, Refuge Manager

Yvette Donovan,  
Outdoor Recreation Planner

Joe Engler, Wildlife Biologist

Glenn Frederick,  
CCP Team Leader

Tom Melanson,  
Project Leader

Rebecca Young,  
Deputy Project Leader

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### Other Contacts:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Division of Refuge Planning  
911 NE 11th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97232-4181  
(503) 231-2231

Pacific Northwest CCP Team  
16507 SW Roy Rogers Road  
Sherwood, OR 97140-8306  
(503) 590-6596

CCP/EA documents can be  
viewed on our regional web  
site:  
<http://pacific.fws.gov/planning>

Members of the refuge planning team are available to provide information, and answer your questions regarding the Gorge Refuges and this planning process.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Draft CCP/EA, have questions, comments, concerns; or if you would like to provide us with your contact information, you may reach us at the following:

Refuge Manager  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Ridgefield NWR Complex  
PO Box 457  
Ridgefield, WA 98642

(360) 887-4106  
(360) 887-4109 FAX

E-mail to: [FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov](mailto:FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov). Please include "Gorge Refuges" in the subject line so that your comments may be directed appropriately.

Please feel free to pass this planning update along to anyone you feel may be interested in this planning process.



*Great blue heron, USFWS*

## What's Next?

□ The draft CCP will be available for public review and comment by August 20, 2004. The public comment period will extend for 30 days. Public notice will be published in the Federal Register and in the local media.

□ At the end of the comment period, the Service will respond to public comments and revise the draft CCP/EA.

□ When the revisions have been completed and an alternative selected, the Service will issue a Record of Decision. The final CCP/EA will be issued winter 2004.



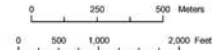
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Fish & Wildlife Service  
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
PO Box 457  
Ridgefield, Washington 98642  
(360) 887-4106





**Legend**

- |  |  |  |                                    |  |                       |  |                             |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------|
|  | Administration Site                                |  | Columbia Gorge NSA Boundary        |  | Cottonwood-Ash Forest |  | Reed Canarygrass            |
|  | Approved Future Gateway Center/Refuge Headquarters |  | Approved Acquisition Boundary      |  | Oak Woodland          |  | Wet Meadow Study Plot       |
|  | Overlook   |  | Gibbons Creek Channel              |  | Oak Savanna           |  | Emergent Wetland            |
|  | Information Kiosk                                  |  | Dike                               |  | Scrub-Shrub           |  | Open Water/Riverine Wetland |
|  | Water control structure                            |  | Approved Future Interpretive Trail |  | Managed Field         |  | Private Property            |
|  |  |  | Columbia River Dike Trail          |  | Old Field             |  |                             |



1:18,500



All of the information on this map was derived from different sources of varying scales and accuracies. Any attempt to use this map for other than general planning purposes would be inappropriate.

Sources: Orthophoto - USGS 1993, Other data - USFWS, EDAAW 2003, P:\046201\CMS\Steigerwald\_Lake\_NWR\mxd\at\_b.mxd June 2003

**Figure 3-4**

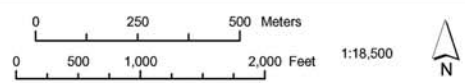
**Draft Alternative B  
Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge**





**Legend**

- |                               |                             |                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Overlook/Interpretive Panels  | Conifer-Deciduous Forest    | Old Field           |
| Water Control Structure       | Cottonwood-Ash Forest       | Private Property    |
| Approved Acquisition Boundary | Scrub-Shrub                 | U.S. Forest Service |
| Service Road                  | Reed Canarygrass            |                     |
| Public Road                   | Emergent Wetland            |                     |
| Guided Water Trail            | Open Water/Riverine Wetland |                     |



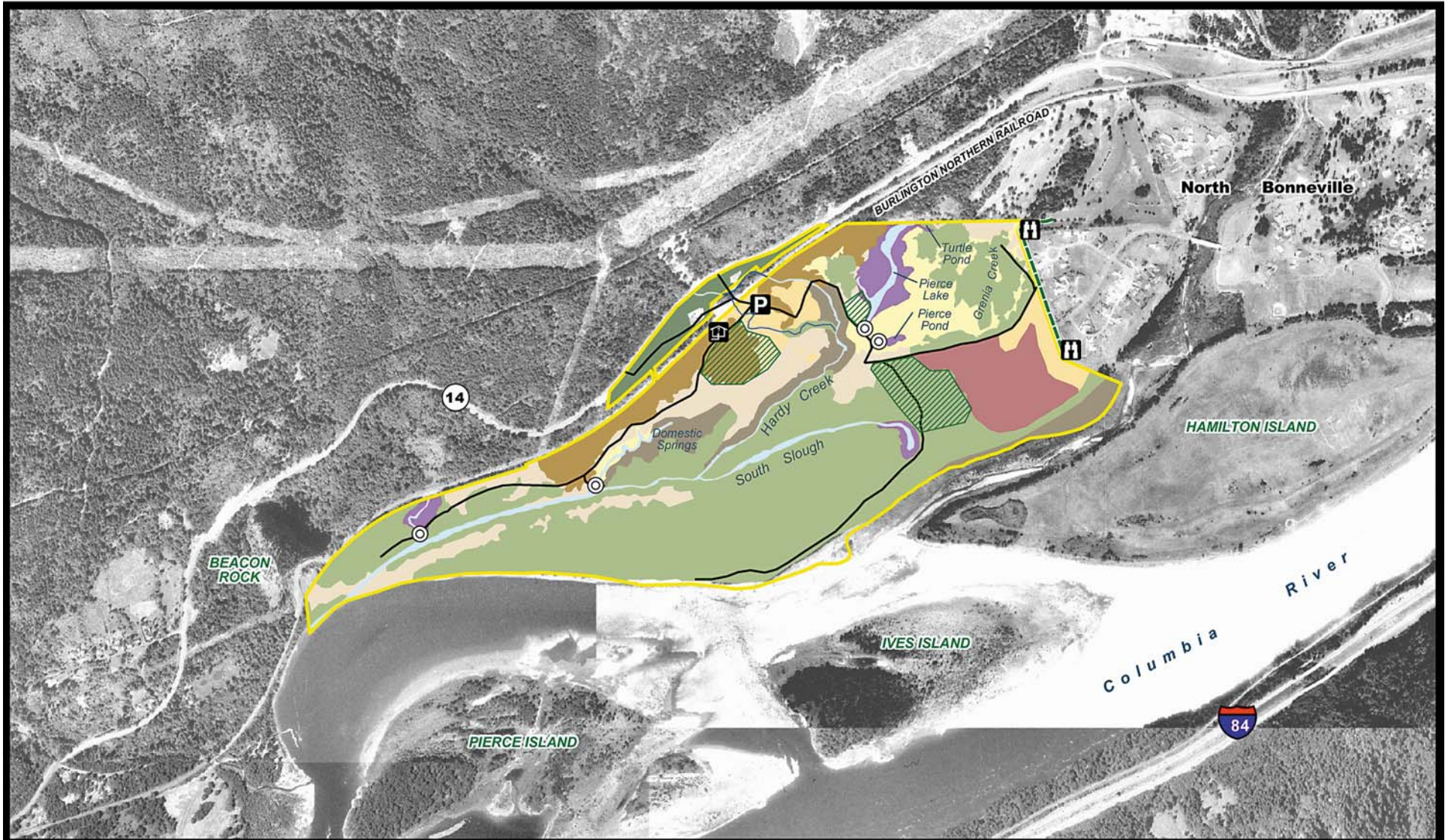
All of the information on this map was derived from different sources of varying scales and accuracies. Any attempt to use this map for other than general planning purposes would be inappropriate.

Sources: Orthophoto - USGS 1993. Other data - USFWS, EDAW 2003.  
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**Figure 3-5**

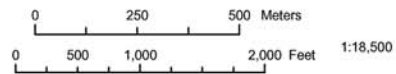
**Draft Alternative B**  
**Franz Lake National Wildlife Refuge**





**Legend**

- |   |                          |                              |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>P</b> Parking (information kiosk and vault toilet also located here) | Conifer-Deciduous Forest | Old Field                    |
| Environmental Education Shelter/ Equipment Shop                         | Cottonwood-Ash Forest    | Reed Canary Grass            |
| Water Control Structure   | Oak Woodland             | Emergent Wetland             |
| Wildlife Viewing Area   | Oak Savanna              | Open Water/Riverine Wetland  |
| Approved Acquisition Boundary   | Scrub-Shrub              | Environmental Education Site |
| Off-Refuge Trail  | Managed Field            |                              |
| Artificial Spawning Channel   |                          |                              |
| Service Road  |                          |                              |



All of the information on this map was derived from different sources of varying scales and accuracies. Any attempt to use this map for other than general planning purposes would be inappropriate.

Sources: Orthophoto - USGS 1993. Other data - USFWS, EDAW 2003. P:\2e40801\GIS\mxd\figure3\_6.mxd March 2004

**Figure 3-6**

**Draft Alternative B  
Pierce National Wildlife Refuge**