



# Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges

## In This Update:

Location map .....	1
About the Refuges .....	2
Gateway Center .....	2
Who to contact .....	2
Information on planning .....	3
Preliminary issues .....	3
Other Issues & Concerns .....	3
Tentative schedule .....	4
Getting involved .....	4
Comment form .....	Insert

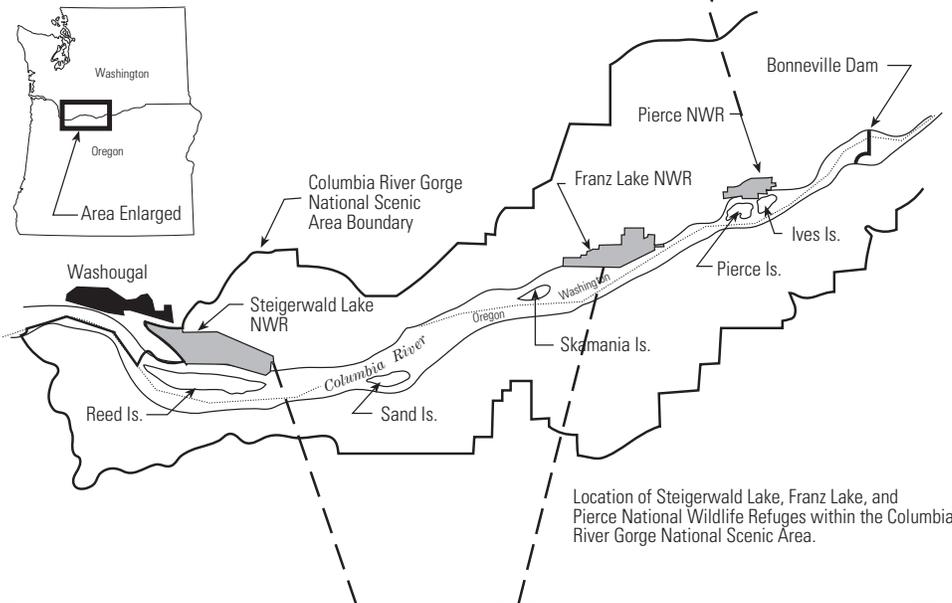


Pierce NWR

## Help Us to Plan the Future

The Columbia River Gorge has long been regarded as one of the most beautiful and scenic areas of the Northwest. Born of violent and turbulent geological phenomena, the result produced the ecologically rich and diverse area we see today. In 1986, Congress passed the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) Act which recognized a 292,000 acre area including both the Oregon and Washington sides of the Gorge as one of our nation's premier scenic areas. Located within the boundary of the CRGNSA on the Washington side are Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges. The Refuges are managed to preserve and protect nesting, breeding and wintering habitat for many species of fish and wildlife.

Over the next year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be seeking input from the public, interested agencies, Tribes and organizations regarding their interests, concerns and viewpoints about important refuge management issues. This information will be helpful in the production of a future management plan for the Refuges. This planning update is the first in a series to keep you informed as the planning process progresses. Your participation is critical to the success of this effort.



Steigerwald Lake NWR



Franz Lake NWR

## What are Refuges all about?

The National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System comprises the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for wildlife and provides important habitat for native plants and animals. National Wildlife Refuges are managed by the Department of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for the benefit of the American people.

## What Refuges are included in this planning?

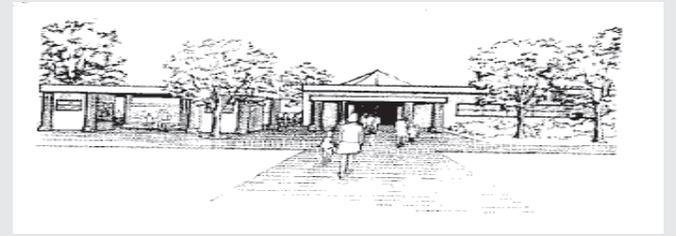
The three Refuges being planned for are Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges.

**Steigerwald Lake NWR** was created in 1984 and contains 974 acres of historic lakebed and river bottomland habitat. The purpose of the Refuge is to provide partial mitigation for wildlife losses caused by the construction of the second powerhouse at Bonneville Dam and for development, advancement, management, conservation and protection of fish and wildlife resources. The Refuge supports anadromous fish, breeding neotropical birds and migrating and wintering ducks, geese, cranes, and other migratory birds.

**Franz Lake NWR** was established in 1990 and contains a total of 490 acres. The purpose of the Refuge is also for the development, advancement, management, conservation and protection of fish and wildlife resources. Franz Lake's system of river streams and wetlands provide habitat for breeding, migrating and wintering waterfowl and other aquatic migratory birds and raptors such as bald eagles. The Refuge is a popular place for wintering tundra swans which are a source of pride for the neighboring community.

**Pierce NWR** was acquired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through a land donation of 319 acres made by the previous land owner Mrs. Lena Pierce. Today, the Refuge has a total of 337 acres of habitat to provide sanctuary for wintering waterfowl such as Canada geese, ducks and other aquatic birds. One of the last remaining chum salmon runs exists in Hardy Creek which flows through the Refuge and empties into the Columbia River.

## *Steigerwald Lake NWR Gateway Center*



In 1999, The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service approved construction of a scenic overlook and Gateway Center at Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge. This project is currently in the design phase and upon completion will provide visitors with information on how to access the many attractions in the Gorge. Additionally, the project calls for the construction of informative kiosks, exhibits, hiking trails, a parking area and restroom facilities located at the northwest entrance to the Scenic Area in the state of Washington. This facility will enhance wildlife viewing, photography and educational opportunities on the Refuge. An interpretive trail will take visitors along Gibbons Creek where native salmon spawn and through various habitats and along the Columbia River. Contingent upon future funding, the project may also consist of a staffed Gateway Center with interior exhibits, an outside wildlife viewing and scenic observation deck, information and sales counters, conference and classrooms and serve as the headquarters office for Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges.

These Refuges are a part of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex headquartered in Ridgefield, Washington. For information on the Refuges in the Columbia River Gorge, you may contact:

Thomas J. Melanson, Project Leader  
 Ridgefield NWR Complex  
 PO Box 457  
 Ridgefield, WA 98642  
 (360) 887-4106  
 (360) 887-4109 fax

## Why is this planning effort starting now?

In October of 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System (System) Improvement Act (Act). This law officially establishes the mission of the System, develops a new process of determining compatible public use activities on refuges, and requires that a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) be developed for each refuge in the System. The Act also states that, first and foremost, the System must focus on wildlife conservation.

## What are the planning issues?

In preparing the CCP, a range of possible alternative management approaches will be explored and evaluated, including those currently being used. The effects of the various alternatives on the biological resources of the Gorge Refuges and effects on local communities will be evaluated in an Environmental Assessment, which will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

At this time, some preliminary issues have been identified to include the following:

1. What invasive species should the Refuges target and how should these species be controlled?
2. What should be done to protect and restore aquatic resources, particularly rare and declining species?
3. What should be the role of water level manipulations on the Refuges?
4. What opportunities exist to restore riparian areas on the Refuges?
5. How should upland vegetation be managed to benefit wildlife resources?
6. What opportunities exist for compatible public uses of the Refuges and how should these uses be managed to protect Refuge resources?

*Franz Lake is used by wintering Tundra Swans that are attracted by the abundant food source of Wapato, which is an aquatic plant containing a starchy potatoe like tuber.*

## Other Issues and Concerns

Mosquitoes are another issue of concern to the public. Although floodwater mosquitoes are not known to transmit disease to humans in Skamania and Clark Counties, they can be extremely annoying. Mosquito control will always be permitted on the Refuges when mosquitoes threaten human health. County agencies currently monitor and treat nuisance mosquito populations on the Franz Lake NWR. In the future, the Fish & Wildlife Service will continue to cooperate with local officials in monitoring mosquito populations on the Refuges. The CCP will evaluate the continued use of Bti (short for *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*) to control nuisance mosquitoes in specific areas of the Refuges. The compatibility of issuing a permit for mosquito control will be the focus of an updated Compatibility Determination.



## Tentative Planning Schedule

Planning Update #1 Issued .....	September 1, 2000
Open House-Issue Scoping Meeting .....	September 20 & 21, 2000
Planning Update #2 .....	January 2001
Planning Update #3 .....	August 2001
Public Review of Draft Document .....	September 2001
Final CCP/EA .....	December 2001

### You Are Invited to the First Open House-Issue Scoping Public Meetings

The first open house-issue scoping public meetings are opportunities for you to help us identify the issues to be addressed in the CCP and to have your questions answered about the Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges in the Columbia River Gorge. Two public meetings are scheduled for you to discuss planning issues with us and to submit your comments and ideas. For more information about the meetings, please contact Mr. Thomas Melanson at the address and phone number listed below.

#### In Clark County

**Date:** Wednesday, September 20, 2000

**Time:** 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

**Place:** Jemtegaard Middle School, 35300 Evergreen Blvd., Washougal, Washington

#### In Skamania County

**Date:** Thursday, September 21, 2000

**Time:** 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

**Place:** Rock Creek Center, 710 SW Rock Creek Drive, Stevenson, Washington



**U.S. Department of the Interior**  
**Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex**  
**PO Box 457, Ridgefield, Washington 98642**  
**(360) 887-4106**

*Address correction requested*