

Goal 1: Support and assist each of the North Carolina National Wildlife Refuge's mission to conserve and protect fish and wildlife resources.

Eastern North Carolina's 11 National Wildlife Refuges are managed by the Service for wildlife and wildlife-dependent recreation and education. While each refuge has its own professional staff, the RFO both shares in the public trust responsibilities for these refuges and values their role in contributing to our other goals of migratory bird, diadromous fish, and endangered and threatened species conservation. With over 400,000 acres under Service stewardship in eastern North Carolina, National Wildlife Refuges are anchors for biodiversity and landscape level conservation. These areas have value now, and they will become more critical for wildlife, fish, plants, and people as eastern North Carolina is increasingly developed. As such, refuges will be a focus of our work in the RFO. Our commitment to refuges is an embodiment of the "One Service" priority of the Southeast Regional Director, an acknowledgement of our role in helping achieve the visions for refuges as provided in the *National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997* and the 1999 *Fulfilling the Promises* report, and recognition of the value of these places to achieving our office's Resource Vision.

The objectives under this goal are designed to ensure that we meet our stewardship responsibilities on refuge lands and waters and take advantage of the conservation benefits they provide. Through implementation of these objectives we will proactively maintain water quality and enhance land protection on and around refuges. The objectives are designed to enable us to be responsive to the technical assistance needs of refuge staff, proactive in addressing actions with the potential to negatively affect refuge resources and the public's use of those resources, and cognizant of opportunities to enhance cooperation. A Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is being developed for each refuge, and each includes goals related to *Wildlife, Fish, and Plant Populations; Habitat Management; Public Use; Resource Protection; and Administration*. Because each refuge has its own vision, goals, management objectives and strategies within the CCPs, the actions outlined below are intended to be broad enough to encompass the 11 refuges collectively. Where specific refuge projects we are involved with are known they are listed, and annual work activity guidance will expand on refuge-specific work.

Objective

Respond to the technical assistance needs and deadlines of refuge staff with regard to our work responsibilities and areas of expertise. This assistance will help each refuge meet their Habitat Management and Wildlife, Fish and Plant Population Goals.

Strategy: Learn refuge needs and plans and update that knowledge frequently.

Strategy: Meet the intra-Service section 7 consultation requirements related to refuge activities.

Performance Measure: Percent of intra-Service consultations completed ahead of schedule.

Strategy: Help address issues of refuge management concern which require additional technical or financial resources outside their base capabilities.

Objective

Proactively address protection of land and water quality on refuges as part of helping each unit meet their Resource Protection Goals.

Performance Measures: Percent of surface waters managed by DOI that meet EPA approved water quality standards (DOI Strategic Plan measure). Percent of reporting Class 1 DOI lands that meet ambient air quality standards and visibility objectives (DOI Strategic Plan measure).

Strategy: Share information on refuge resources with development and permitting interests as advanced identification of these important resources for their planning.

Performance Measure:

Strategy: Place a priority on technical review and coordination of air, water, and land development permits and projects with the potential to negatively impact refuge resources.

Strategy: Include benefits to refuge lands and waters among the criteria for prioritization of projects and programs we help deliver.

Objective

Work with partners to restore and enhance refuge lands and waters so that Service lands are models and demonstration areas for natural resource stewardship.

Performance Measure: Percent of acres of wetlands, uplands, marine and coastal habitat, and miles of stream/shoreline achieving desired conditions as specified in management plans consistent with applicable substantive and procedural requirements of State and Federal water law (DOI Strategic Plan measures).

Strategy: Help address known restoration issues of refuge management concern.

Strategy: Proactively address protection of endangered and threatened species and at-risk species on National Wildlife Refuges to assist each refuge to meet their Resource Protection Goals.