

Background

The CCP Process

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee), which amended the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, requires us to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose for developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year plan for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and our policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, CCPs identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Improvement Act.

Congress established each unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System for specific purposes. We use these purposes as the foundation for developing and prioritizing the management goals and objectives for the refuge within the National Wildlife Refuge System mission, and to determine how the public can use the refuge. The planning process is a way for us and the public to evaluate management goals and objectives for the best possible conservation approach to this important wildlife habitat, while providing for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that are compatible with each refuge's establishing purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Our CCP process provides participation opportunities for Tribal, State, and local governments; agencies; organizations; and the public. At this time we encourage input in the form of issues, concerns, ideas, and suggestions for the future management of J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

We will conduct the environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); NEPA regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508); other appropriate Federal laws and regulations; and our policies and procedures for compliance with those laws and regulations.

Special mailings, newspaper articles, and other media announcements will be used to inform State and local government agencies and the public of the opportunities for input throughout the planning process. Open house meeting(s) will be scheduled and held throughout the scoping phase of the comprehensive conservation planning process.

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge was originally established as the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge in 1945. The refuge was originally established "for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purposes, for migratory birds, and suitable for incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, the protection of natural resources, and the conservation of threatened and endangered species." In 1967, the refuge was renamed in honor of Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling and now consists of 6,300 acres of mangrove estuaries, freshwater spartina wetlands, and tropical hardwood hammocks. In 1976, Public Law 94–557 approved 2,825 acres of the refuge as a Wilderness Area.

Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authority: This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105–57.

Dated: February 8, 2008.

Cynthia K. Dohner,

Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. E8–6790 Filed 4–1–08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R4–R–2008–N0016; 40136–1265–0000–S3]

Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge, Ashley, Bradley, and Union Counties, AR; Overflow National Wildlife Refuge, Ashley County, AR

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), intend to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents for Felsenthal and Overflow National Wildlife Refuges. We provide this notice in compliance with our CCP policy to advise other agencies, Tribes, and the public of our intentions, and to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to consider in the planning process.

DATES: To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by May 19, 2008. We will announce opportunities for public input in local news media throughout the CCP planning process.

ADDRESSES: Send your comments or requests for more information to: Mike Dawson, Refuge Planner, Fish and Wildlife Service, 6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Suite B, Jackson, Mississippi 39213; Fax: 601/965–4010; Electronic mail: mike_dawson@fws.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mike Dawson; Telephone: 601/965–4903, extension 20.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

With this notice, we initiate our process for developing a CCP for Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge in Ashley, Bradley, and Union Counties, AR, and Overflow National Wildlife Refuge in Ashley County, AR. We provide this notice in compliance with our planning policy to (1) advise other Federal and State agencies and the public of our intention to conduct detailed planning on the refuge, and (2) obtain suggestions and information on the scope of topics to consider in the environmental document and during development of the CCP.

Background

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C.

668dd–668ee), which amended the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, requires us to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose for developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year plan for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and our policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, CCPs identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Improvement Act and NEPA.

We establish each unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System for specific purposes. We use these purposes as the bases to develop and prioritize management goals and objectives for the refuge within the National Wildlife Refuge System mission, and to determine how the public can use the refuge. The planning process is a way for us and the public to evaluate management goals and objectives for the best possible conservation approach to this important wildlife habitat, while providing for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that are compatible with the refuge's establishing purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Our CCP process provides opportunities for Tribal, State, and local governments; agencies; organizations; and the public to participate. At this time we encourage the public to provide input in the form of issues, concerns, ideas, and suggestions for the future management of Felsenthal and Overflow National Wildlife Refuges.

We will conduct the environmental review of this project in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.); NEPA regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508); other appropriate Federal laws and regulations; and our policies and procedures for compliance with those laws and regulations.

Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1975, as a result of the Corps of Engineers' Ouachita and Black Rivers Navigation Project. Geographically, the 65,000-acre refuge is located in what is known as the Felsenthal Basin, an extensive natural

depression that is laced with a vast complex of sloughs, bayous, and lakes. The region's two major rivers, the Saline and Ouachita, flow through the refuge. Historically, periodic flooding of the "bottoms" during winter and spring provided excellent wintering waterfowl habitat. These wetland areas in combination with the refuge's diverse forest ecosystem of bottomland hardwoods, pine forests, and uplands support a wide variety of wildlife and provide excellent opportunities for fishing, hunting, boating, wildlife observation, and environmental education.

Overflow National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1980, to protect one of the remaining bottomland hardwood forests considered vital for maintaining mallard, wood duck, and other waterfowl populations in the Mississippi Flyway. This 13,000-acre plus refuge is a wetland complex within the watershed of Overflow Creek, which flows southerly along the length of the refuge. The majority of the refuge is bottomland hardwood forests, consisting primarily of willow and overcup oaks. Willow oaks, found here in abundance, produce small acorns that are an excellent source of food for the mallards and wood ducks that make the refuge their winter home.

Authority: This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105–57.

Dated: December 31, 2007.

Jon Andrew,

Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. E8–6797 Filed 4–1–08; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R4–R–2008–N0005; 40136–1265–0000–S3]

Pine Island, Caloosahatchee, and Matlacha Pass National Wildlife Refuges, Lee County, FL; Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Charlotte County, FL

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), intend to prepare a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental assessment (EA) for Pine Island,

Caloosahatchee, Matlacha Pass, and Island Bay National Wildlife Refuges. These refuges are located within the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex. We provide this notice in compliance with our CCP policy to advise other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and the public of our intentions, and to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to consider in the planning process.

DATES: To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by May 19, 2008. We will hold public meetings to begin the CCP planning process. We will announce opportunities for public input in the local news media throughout the CCP planning process. Open house meetings will be scheduled and held throughout the scoping phase of the comprehensive conservation plan development process.

ADDRESSES: Comments, questions, and requests for more information regarding the planning process should be sent to: Laura Housh, Regional Planner, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Route 2, Box 3330, Folkston, GA 31537.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Laura Housh; Telephone: 912/496–7366, Extension 244; Fax: 912/496–3332.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

With this notice, we initiate our process for developing a CCP for Pine Island, Caloosahatchee, and Matlacha Pass National Wildlife Refuges, Lee County, FL; and Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Charlotte County, FL.

This notice complies with our CCP policy to (1) advise other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and the public of our intention to conduct detailed planning on these refuges, and (2) obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to consider in the environmental document and during development of the CCP.

Background

The CCP Process

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee) (Improvement Act), which amended the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, requires us to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose for developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and our policies. In addition to outlining broad management