

Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

*Draft Comprehensive
Conservation Plan and
Environmental Assessment*

August 2006





This blue goose, designed by J.N. “Ding” Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 535 national wildlife refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas. It also operates 65 national fish hatcheries and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restore wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid Program which distributes hundred of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.

CCPs provide long-term guidance for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service management decisions; they set forth goals, objectives, and strategies for accomplishing refuge purposes; and, they identify our best estimate of future needs. They detail levels of program planning that are sometimes substantially above our current budget allocations; as such, they serve primarily in strategic planning and in prioritizing Service programs. They do not constitute a commitment for increases in staffing, operating and maintenance, or future land acquisition funding.

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Abstract

Type of action: Administrative
Lead agency: U.S. Department of the Interior
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The Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge fully compares three management alternatives. A brief overview of each alternative follows.

Alternative A

Protection of remaining 3,833 acres within the approved acquisition boundary and continued current management.

This is the “no action” alternative required by regulations under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Selecting this alternative maintains the status quo in refuge management actions over the next 15 years. This alternative portrays current, planned, and approved management and staffing and serves as a baseline for comparing and contrasting the two “action” alternatives. It also incorporates three new facilities to support current and approved management, staffing, and administrative obligations.

This is the current management.

Alternative B

Refuge expansion of 5,558 acres and notably expanded management and public use.

Selecting this alternative will protect the 3,833 acres remaining within the approved acquisition boundary and expand the refuge by 5,558 acres beyond its current approved boundary. It would add additional acreage to the Brave Boat Harbor, Upper Wells, Spurwink, Biddeford, Mousam River, Little River, and Moody divisions, and would establish a new York River Division encompassing the largest undeveloped salt marsh south of Portland. A new administrative complex, including office space, maintenance facilities, and visitor contact station, will be built. This alternative, and alternative C, include combining the Moody, Lower Wells, Upper Wells, and Mousam River divisions into one Wells Bay Division.

This is the preferred alternative.

Alternative C

Refuge expansion of 11,397 acres and greatly expanded management and recreation.

Selecting this alternative will protect the 3,833 acres remaining within the approved acquisition boundary and expand the refuge by 11,397 acres beyond its current approved boundary. The 11,397-acre expansion includes the 5,558 acres in alternative B, and would add acreage to the Brave Boat Harbor, Upper Wells, Spurwink, Biddeford, and Moody divisions. It would establish a new York River Division, encompassing the largest undeveloped salt marsh south of Portland, and build a new administrative complex, including office space, maintenance facilities and visitor center. This alternative would require the greatest increases in budget and staffing.

