



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge

*Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan
and Environmental Impact Statement*

June 2007





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

The *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service* is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 545 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 restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance Program which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.

Comprehensive Conservation Plans provide long term guidance for management decisions and set forth goals, objectives, and strategies needed to accomplish refuge purposes and identify the Service's best estimate of future needs. These plans detail program planning levels that are sometimes substantially above current budget allocations and, as such, are primarily for Service strategic planning and program prioritization purposes. The plans do not constitute a commitment for staffing increases, operational and maintenance increases, or funding for future land acquisition.



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Refuge Vision Statement

“We envision Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge as an essential link in the network of conservation lands in the Northern Forests. We will showcase science-based, adaptive management in a working forest landscape and provide an outstanding center for research. We will achieve this through strong partnerships with State agencies, conservation organizations, land managers, and neighboring communities.

“Our management will perpetuate the diversity and integrity of upland spruce-fir and northern hardwood forests, boreal and riverine wetlands, and lake habitats for the continued health of native fish and wildlife populations. These habitats will provide an important regional breeding area for migratory land birds, waterfowl, and other species of regional significance, such as the common loon and bald eagle.

“Visitors of all ages will feel welcome to enjoy the full complement of priority wildlife-dependent public uses. We will foster their knowledge of and support for conserving northern forest habitats through exceptional outreach and visitor programs. We want all our visitors to return home filled with enthusiasm for promoting and practicing resource stewardship in their own communities.

“We hope residents of neighboring communities in Maine and New Hampshire will value the refuge for enhancing their quality of life. Within the National Wildlife Refuge System, the refuge will be treasured for conserving Federal trust resources and providing inspirational outdoor experiences for present and future generations of Americans.”

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Abstract

Type of action:	Administrative
Lead agency:	U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
Responsible official:	Marvin Moriarty, Regional Director, Region 5
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The “Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge” fully compares three management alternatives. Its 14 appendixes provide additional information supporting our analysis.

Alternative A.— Current Management:

This “no action” alternative, required by regulations under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, would simply extend the way we now manage the refuge over the next 15 years. It also provides a baseline for comparing the two “action” alternatives. We would continue to protect the refuge from external threats, monitor its key resources, and conduct baseline inventories to improve our knowledge of its ecosystem. We would continue our public use programs for wildlife observation, hunting and fishing, allow snowmobiling and camping at their present capacities in designated areas, and offer limited environmental education and interpretation. We would continue to acquire from willing sellers 6,392 acres within the approved refuge boundary, adding to its current 20,513 acres.

Alternative B.— Focal Species Habitat Management (Service- preferred):

We recommend this alternative for approval. Its highest priority is to protect the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of Umbagog Lake and its associated rivers and tributaries. Its second priority is to conserve the upland mixed forest and associated species. Management will focus on enhancing habitats for selected refuge focal species: species of regional conservation concern whose habitat needs generally represent the needs of many other federal trust resources. Alternative B would also improve the quality of our wildlife-dependent recreation programs, and strengthen our partnerships with state and local entities offering similar programs in the area. Another partnership would focus on developing a Land Management Research Demonstration (LMRD) program for applying the best available science in management decisions that affect wildlife resources in the Northern Forest. This alternative includes expanding the refuge as part of a network of conservation lands by acquiring 49,718 acres from willing sellers: 65 percent in fee simple and 35 percent in easements. Those habitats are important for conserving refuge focal species and other federal trust resources. Alternative B also proposes a new refuge headquarters and visitor contact facility. Refuge staffing and budgets would increase commensurately.

Alternative C.— Natural Landscape Composition, Patterns, and Processes Management:

This alternative focuses not so much on benefiting selected species, but rather, on passively or actively manipulating vegetation to create or hasten the development of natural communities, landscape patterns and processes. Similar to alternative B, it improves wildlife-dependent recreation, strengthens our partnerships, develops the LMRD program, and adds a new headquarters and visitor contact facility. It expands the refuge by 76,304 acres, which we will purchase in fee simple from willing sellers. Our target is to create contiguous blocks of hydrologically connected conservation habitat greater than 25,000 acres: the size we estimate as the minimum necessary to facilitate the natural progression of ecological processes in the Northern Forest conservation network.

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