



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge

*Final Environmental Impact Statement for
the Comprehensive Conservation Plan*

April 2005



Cover Photos: Cross Island, *USFWS*
Harbor seal, *USFWS*
Atlantic puffin, *USFWS*
Roseate tern, *Gil Lopez-Espina*



*This goose, designed by J.N.
“Ding” Darling, has become a
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 Aid 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.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge

(formerly Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge Complex)

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April 2005



Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge

Final Environmental Impact Statement

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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 Final Environmental Impact Statement for Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge fully compares four management alternatives. Its eleven appendices provide additional information supporting our analysis. A brief overview of each alternative follows.

Alternative A Current Management

Refuge expansion of 1,034 acres and continued current management. This is the “no action” alternative required by regulations under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Although it would expand the Petit Manan Refuge by 1,034 acres beyond the current approved boundary, selecting this alternative would otherwise maintain the status quo in refuge management actions over the next 15 years. Thus, it provides a baseline for comparing or contrasting the three “action” alternatives.

Alternative B Preferred Alternative

Refuge expansion of 2,459 acres and notably expanded management and recreation. Selecting this alternative would expand the Petit Manan Refuge by 2,306 acres beyond the current approved boundary on 87 nationally significant seabird, wading bird, or bald eagle coastal nesting islands and 153 acres of wetlands on the mainland. It would add six new seabird restoration projects to our present six, and intensify the focus of our biological programs on birds of high conservation priority in the Gulf of Maine. It would increase opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation, especially in our environmental education and interpretation programs, build new trails on the Gouldsboro Bay, Sawyers Marsh, and Corea Heath divisions, and open the Petit Manan Point Division for deer hunting. And, it would recommend that 13 Refuge islands in 8 wilderness study areas be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Refuge staffing and budgets would increase commensurately. We recommend this alternative for approval.

Alternative C

Refuge expansion of 6,463 acres and greatly expanded management and recreation. Selecting this alternative would expand the Petit Manan Refuge by 6,463 acres beyond the current approved boundary, adding 6,310 acres on all or parts of 151 seabird or bald eagle nesting islands and 153 acres of wetlands on the mainland. Its wilderness proposal mirrors the proposal in alternative B. It would create 12 new seabird restoration projects, and allow trapping under refuge regulations on three mainland divisions and Bois Bubert and Cross islands. New trails would be developed on refuge mainland divisions, the same as alternative B. This alternative would also require the greatest budget and staffing increases.

Alternative D

No refuge expansion beyond the current approved boundary and reduced management with minimal human intrusion. This alternative adopts a custodial or low intervention approach to management. Selecting it would neither expand a refuge nor recommend wilderness designation. It would restore only minimal seabird habitat, focus our public use, environmental education and interpretation on offsite programs, and close all refuge islands to public access. Except for our emergency intervention to avert or mitigate catastrophic events, it would leave refuge habitats and species to the effects of environmental processes.

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