

Steller sea lions, and 100 northern elephant seals.

The Three Arch Rocks Refuge is located a half-mile west of the town of Oceanside in Tillamook County, Oregon. The Refuge is comprised of 9 rocks and islands with a total land area of 15 acres, and supports one of the largest seabird breeding colonies—mainly tufted puffins and common murre—in Oregon. It is also the only breeding site for the threatened Steller sea lion on the north coast of Oregon. The Refuge is a designated wilderness area known as Three Arch Rocks Wilderness.

#### Draft Alternatives We Are Considering

We identified and evaluated two alternatives for managing the Refuges for the next 15 years. Alternative 1 is the No Action Alternative, and Alternative 2 is the Preferred Alternative, which is a collaborative approach to protection and management of refuge lands. Draft compatibility determinations for public uses are available for review with the Draft CCP/WSP/EA. Brief descriptions of the alternatives follow.

##### Alternative 1

This alternative assumes no change from current Refuge management programs. We would continue to protect and maintain habitat for priority species, including seabirds and pinnipeds. Efforts to prevent wildlife disturbance on rocks, reefs, and islands would continue, including prohibiting public access, posting educational and regulatory signs, and deploying buoys annually, to delineate the seasonal 500-foot watercraft exclusion buffer zone around Three Arch Rocks Refuge. Habitat management would consist primarily of monitoring and treating invasive plant infestations as funding allows. We would continue to conduct regularly scheduled aerial, boat, and land surveys of nesting seabirds. Existing public uses, including wildlife observation and photography, would continue at current levels. We would continue to partner with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) to provide quality wildlife viewing opportunities at Cape Meares Refuge and other parks adjacent to rocks, reefs, and islands within Oregon Islands and Three Arch Rocks Refuges.

##### Alternative 2

Under the Preferred Alternative, a collaborative approach to protection and management of the Refuges' rock, reef, island, and old-growth habitats would be emphasized over the current staff-directed approach. We would develop a Geographic Information System (GIS)

based inventory and monitoring program for pinnipeds, seabirds and other migratory birds, terrestrial mammals, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and plant species, and invasive species would be monitored and aggressively treated.

Partners would be actively sought to collaborate on research, design, and implementation of studies that would directly contribute toward maintaining or restoring the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuges. We would establish formal agreements with coastal resource management agencies to cooperate on strategies to protect wildlife.

New partnerships would also be established with public and private entities to develop interpretive panels and new wildlife viewing opportunities. The Refuges' Volunteer Interpreter Program would be expanded to include priority sites with heavy visitation and prime wildlife viewing opportunities. We would also develop a quality environmental education program focusing on the Refuges' wildlife.

#### Public Availability of Documents

We encourage you to stay involved in the CCP planning process by reviewing and commenting on the proposals we have developed in the Draft CCP/WSP/EA.

Copies of the Draft CCP/WSP/EA on compact disk are available upon request from the Refuge Complex at phone number (541) 867-4550. Copies may be reviewed at the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 2127 SE Marine Science Drive, Newport, OR. The Draft CCP/WSP/EA is also available for viewing and downloading on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/oregoncoast/>. Printed copies will be available for review at the following libraries.

- Chetco Community Public Library, 405 Alder St., Brookings, OR 97415,
- Bandon Public Library, 1204 11th St. SW., Bandon, OR 97411,
- Newport Public Library, 35 NW Nye St., Newport, OR 97365,
- Driftwood Public Library, 801 SW Hwy 101 #201, Lincoln City, OR 97367,
- Tillamook County Library, 1716 3rd St., Tillamook, OR 97141, and
- Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway, Seaside, OR 97138.

#### Public Comments

Public comments are requested, considered, and incorporated throughout the planning process. Comments on the Draft CCP/WSP/EA will be analyzed by the Service and addressed in final planning documents. All comments received from individuals

become part of the official public record and may be released. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), NEPA regulations, and Service and Department of the Interior policies and procedures.

Dated: May 11, 2009.

**David J. Wesley,**

*Regional Director, Region 1, Portland, Oregon.*  
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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R8-R-2009-N0070; 80230-1265-0000-53]

#### Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, Modoc County, CA

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability: draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of a draft comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental assessment (EA) for Modoc National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) for public review and comment. In these documents, we describe alternatives, including our preferred alternative, to manage this refuge for the 15 years following approval of the final CCP. Draft compatibility determinations for several public uses are also available for review and public comment in the Draft CCP/EA.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by July 30, 2009. We will announce upcoming public meeting in local news media.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments or requests for copies or more information by any of the following methods. You may request hard copies or a CD-ROM of the documents.

*E-mail:* [Jackie\\_Ferrier@fws.gov](mailto:Jackie_Ferrier@fws.gov).

Include "Modoc NWR Draft CCP and EA" in the subject line of the message.

*Fax:* Attn: Jackie Ferrier, Refuge Planner, (530) 934-7814.

*U.S. Mail:* Sacramento NWR Complex, 752 County Road 99W, Willows, CA 95988.

*In-Person Drop-off, Viewing, or Pickup:* Call (530) 233-3572 to make an appointment (necessary for view/pickup only) during regular business hours at

the Modoc NWR, at 5364 County Road 115, Alturas, CA 96101 during business hours. For more information on locations for viewing or obtaining documents, see "Public Availability of Documents" under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Steve Clay, Project Leader at Modoc NWR, (530) 233-3572 (telephone) or Jackie Ferrier, Refuge Planner at Sacramento NWR Complex at (530) 934-2801 (telephone).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Introduction**

With this notice, we continue the CCP process for Modoc NWR. We started this process through a notice in the **Federal Register** (72 FR 44850; August 9, 2007).

The 7,021 acre Modoc National Wildlife Refuge is located southeast of Alturas, California. The Refuge was established in 1960 pursuant to the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715d) and the Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460k-460 K.4). Lands within the Refuge have been set aside for use as an inviolate sanctuary, and other management purposes, for migratory birds, for incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, for the protection of natural resources, and for the conservation of endangered species or threatened species.

Located near the confluence of the north and south forks of the Pit River, the Refuge conserves, protects, and manages a mosaic of freshwater lakes and ponds, seasonal wetlands, irrigated meadows, grasslands, and sagebrush/juniper upland habitats. These habitats provide important resting, feeding, and nesting areas for ducks, geese, and other migratory birds including the greater sandhill crane.

**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 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 and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Improvement Act.

*Public Outreach*

We started the CCP for Modoc NWR in August 2007. At that time and throughout the process, public comments were requested, considered, and incorporated in numerous ways. Public outreach has included a public scoping meeting, planning updates, a CCP Web page, and **Federal Register** notices. Comments we received cover topics such as wildlife, habitat, refuge management, invasive species management, partnerships, and visitor services. We have considered and evaluated all of these comments, with many incorporated into the various alternatives addressed in the draft CCP and the EA.

**CCP Alternatives We Are Considering**

During the public scoping process with which we started work on this draft CCP, we, other governmental partners, Tribes, and the public raised several issues. Our draft CCP addresses them. A full description of each alternative is in the EA. To address these issues, we developed and evaluated the following alternatives, summarized below.

The Draft EA/CCP presents an evaluation of the environmental effects of four alternatives for managing the Modoc Refuge for the next 15 years. The Service proposes to implement Alternative C, as described in the EA. Alternative C best achieves the Refuge's purposes, vision, and goals; contributes to the Refuge System mission; addresses the significant issues and relevant mandates; and is consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management. This alternative is described in more detail in the CCP.

There are many features of proposed Refuge management that are common to all four alternatives. Features common to all alternatives include invasive species management, habitat management and restoration, implementation of a hunting and fishing program, and providing wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation opportunities. There are also many features of each alternative that are distinct.

Alternative A, the no action alternative, assumes no change from

current management programs and is considered the baseline to compare other alternatives against. Under Alternative A, the primary management focus of the Refuge would continue to be providing habitat for migrating and nesting migratory and resident birds with an emphasis on migratory birds by restoring and maintaining wetland, riparian, and grassland habitats. The Refuge would continue to offer wildlife-dependent recreation including wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, interpretative programs, fishing and hunting, with emphasis on youth and disabled hunters.

Under Alternative B, the Refuge would emphasize management for biological resources. Biological opportunities would be maximized to allow optimum wildlife and habitat management throughout the majority of the Refuge. The Refuges would continue its current focus of providing migratory and nesting habitat for migratory birds. Habitat and invasive species management programs would be expanded. Environmental education, interpretation, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, fishing, and hunting, programs would be reduced.

Under Alternative C, the Refuge would achieve an optimal balance of biological resource objectives and visitor services opportunities. Habitat management and associated biological resource monitoring would be improved. Visitor service opportunities would focus on quality wildlife-dependant recreation distributed throughout the Refuge. In addition, environmental education, interpretation, wildlife observation, photography, fishing, and hunting programs would be expanded beyond Alternative A.

Under Alternative D, the Refuge would emphasize management for visitor services. Wildlife-dependant recreational opportunities would be expanded on the Refuge. Opportunities for the six priority public uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation, would be expanded beyond Alternatives A, B, and C.

**Public Availability of Documents**

In addition to any methods in **ADDRESSES**, you can view or obtain documents at the following locations:

- *Our Web site:* <http://www.fws.gov/modoc>.
- *Public Libraries:* Modoc County Library 212 West Third Street Alturas, CA 96101, Cedarville Branch Library 460 Main Street, Cedarville, CA 96104, Conservation Library, USFWS-NCTC,

698 Conservation Way, Shepherdstown, WV 25443 during regular library hours.

### Next Steps

After this comment period ends, we will analyze the comments and address them in the form of a final CCP.

### 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.

Dated: June 2, 2009.

**Margaret T. Kolar,**

*Acting Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region, Sacramento, California.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### National Park Service

#### **General Management Plan; Devils Postpile National Monument; Mono County, CA; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement**

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the National Park Service—in cooperation with Inyo National Forest—is undertaking a conservation planning and environmental impact analysis process for creating a new General Management Plan (GMP) for Devils Postpile National Monument (monument), California. The GMP is intended to set forth the basic management philosophy for this unit of the National Park System and provide the strategies for addressing issues and achieving identified management objectives for that unit. The GMP will serve as a “blueprint” to guide management of natural and cultural resources and visitor use during the next 15–20 years.

In addition to identifying an “environmentally preferred” alternative, one or more development concept plans, which guide more detailed, site-specific preservation and development, may also be included with the GMP. The GMP will also include an eligibility assessment for wild and scenic river designation for the upper Middle Fork San Joaquin River, as required by NPS

Management Policies 2006 for rivers and river segments in the National Park System.

The National Park Service (NPS) will serve as lead agency and the U.S. Forest Service shall assume the role of cooperating agency in preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Devils Postpile National Monument is working in cooperation with the Inyo National Forest on this GMP so as to seamlessly address visitor opportunities within the valley (such as facilities, transit, and overall visitor experience) and resource management issues in the upper Middle Fork San Joaquin River watershed (such as watershed management, biodiversity, and response to climate change). For any actions that the Forest Service determines would be necessary to be undertaken on Forest Service lands, the Forest Service would approve appropriate compliance separately.

**Background Information:** Devils Postpile National Monument was established in 1911 by presidential proclamation. The 798-acre monument rests along the Middle Fork San Joaquin River on the Sierra Nevada’s western slope and was established to preserve the columnar formation, Devils Postpile, and 101-foot Rainbow Falls. The formation Devils Postpile ranks as one of the world’s finest examples of columnar jointing. Its columns tower 60 feet high and display an unusual symmetry. The monument also preserves natural mountain scenery and serves as a portal to the High Sierra backcountry. Both the John Muir Trail and Pacific Crest Trail pass through the monument.

Originally administered by the U.S. Forest Service, the monument was transferred to the national park system in 1934. After the transfer, the monument was managed as a satellite unit first by Yosemite and then by Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks before becoming an independent unit of the national park system. Congress also included 747 acres of the monument in the Ansel Adams Wilderness in 1984, consequently over 90% of the monument is designated as Wilderness.

The National Park Service oversees the 798-acre Devils Postpile National Monument, while the U.S. Forest Service manages the lands surrounding the monument. These two Federal agencies work as partners to manage public lands in this area. Access to Devils Postpile is primarily via a mandatory bus system managed by the Forest Service. Hiking trails wind seamlessly in and out of the monument and onto the adjacent national forest.

Both agencies are also responsible for wilderness areas. The Devils Postpile trailhead provides one of three main access points to the Pacific Crest and John Muir trails as well as portals to the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses. Wilderness permits for the national forest may be obtained through the monument.

**Preliminary Issues:** A comprehensive management plan that provides a broad, long-term vision for management of Devils Postpile National Monument has never been developed. Management direction was previously provided through Yosemite and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Programmatic strategies to protect, maintain or restore resources and address visitor access, services, and development specific to the monument are needed.

Consistent with NPS Planning Program Standards, this GMP will: (1) Describe the monument’s purpose, significance, and primary interpretive themes; (2) identify the fundamental resources and values of the monument, its other important resources and values, and describe the condition of these resources; (3) describe desired conditions for cultural and natural resources and visitor experiences throughout the monument; (4) develop management zoning to support these desired conditions; (5) develop alternative applications of these management zones to the monument’s landscape (*i.e.* zoning alternatives); (6) address user capacity; (7) analyze potential boundary modifications; (8) ensure that management recommendations are developed in consultation with interested stakeholders and the public and adopted by NPS leadership after an adequate analysis of the benefits, environmental impacts, and economic costs of alternative courses of action; (9) develop cost estimates for implementing each of the alternatives; and (10) identify and prioritize subsequent detailed studies, plans and actions that may be needed to implement the GMP, including further wild and scenic river planning or Wilderness management planning that may be required.

**Scoping Process:** The purpose of this scoping outreach effort is to elicit early public feedback regarding potential issues and concerns, the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts (and as appropriate, mitigation measures), and alternative concepts which should be addressed in developing the monument’s first plan. Through the outreach activities planned in the scoping phase, the NPS welcomes information and suggestions from the