

public use program. About a third to half as many new observation facilities (trails, viewing overlooks, etc.) would have been added as under Alternative 2, due to staffing and funding resources being directed toward refuge farming activity. The current area closed to public access on all three refuges would have remained closed, in order to provide sanctuary during the wintering waterfowl season, except for the proposed change at Snag Boat Bend as described in Alternative 2 above. Fishing access to the Willamette River would have been provided through a canoe launch at Snag Boat Bend Unit; however, bank fishing access would not have been provided.

Deer hunting, threatened and endangered species management, environmental education, elk management, cultural resources, subsequent land protection planning, and conservation partnership activity would have occurred as under Alternative 2.

Comments

We solicited comments on the draft CCP/EA from May 25, 2011, to June 24, 2011 (76 FR 30382; May 25, 2011). A total of 27 separate communications from 25 different commenters (two commenters submitted two letters each) were received regarding the draft CCP/EA. To address public comments, responsive changes and clarifications were made to the final CCP where appropriate. These changes are summarized in the FONSI.

Selected Alternative

After considering the comments received, we have selected Alternative 2 for implementation. The goals, objectives, and strategies under Alternative 2 best achieve the purpose and need for the CCP while maintaining balance among the varied management needs and programs. Alternative 2 addresses the refuge purposes, issues, and relevant mandates, and is consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management.

Dated: October 20, 2011.

Robyn Thorson,

Regional Director, Pacific Region, Portland, Oregon.

[FR Doc. 2012-3759 Filed 2-16-12; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R1-R-2011-N228;1265-0000-10137-S3]

Keālia Pond National Wildlife Refuge and Kakahai'a National Wildlife Refuge, Maui County, HI; Final Comprehensive Conservation Plans and Findings of No Significant Impact for the Environmental Assessments

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of our final comprehensive conservation plans (CCPs) and findings of no significant impacts for the environmental assessments for the Keālia Pond National Wildlife Refuge (refuge or NWR) and Kakahai'a National Wildlife Refuge. In the final CCPs, we describe how we plan to manage these refuges for the next 15 years.

ADDRESSES: You may view or obtain copies of the final CCPs and findings of no significant impacts (FONSIs) and environmental assessments (EAs) by any of the following methods. You may request a hard copy or CD-ROM.

Agency Web Site: Download the documents at www.fws.gov/pacific/planning.

Email: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov. Include "Keālia Pond NWR final CCP" or "Kakahai'a NWR final CCP" in the subject line of the message.

Mail: Glynnis Nakai, Project Leader, Maui National Wildlife Refuge Complex, P.O. Box 1042, Kihei, Hawai'i 96753.

In-Person Viewing or Pickup: Call (808) 875-1582 to make an appointment during regular business hours at Maui NWR Complex, Milepost 6, Mokulele Highway (Hwy. 311), Kihei, Hawai'i 96753.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Glynnis Nakai, Project Leader, Maui NWR Complex, phone number (808) 875-1582.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

With this notice, we announce the completion of the CCP processes for Keālia Pond NWR and Kakahai'a NWR. The Service started this process through a notice of intent in the **Federal Register** on October 20, 2009 (74 FR 53755). We released the draft CCPs/EAs to the public, announcing and requesting comments in a notice of availability in

the **Federal Register** (76 FR 52008; August 19, 2011).

We announce our CCP decisions and the availability of the FONSIs for the EAs in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee) (Refuge Administration Act) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1506.6(b)) requirements. We prepared a thorough analysis of impacts, which we included in the EAs that accompanied the draft CCPs.

The CCPs will guide us in managing and administering the refuges for the next 15 years. Alternative C, as described in the draft CCPs for each refuge, is the basis for the CCPs.

Background

The Refuge Administration Act, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, requires us to develop a CCP for each 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 compatible 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 Refuge Administration Act.

The Keālia Pond and Kakahai'a NWRs are part of the Maui NWR Complex. Keālia Pond Refuge, located along the southern shore of the island of Maui, was established in 1992 for the purpose of providing habitat for endangered Hawaiian waterbirds, specifically the endangered Hawaiian stilt (ae'o) and endangered Hawaiian coot ('ālae ke'oke'o). The refuge is administered under a perpetual conservation easement provided by Alexander and Baldwin, Inc., and encompasses open water, marsh, mudflat, upland shrub, and coastal beach strand habitats. The refuge has one of the largest concentrations of wetland birds in Hawai'i, and is an important breeding, foraging, and resting area for the ae'o and 'ālae ke'oke'o. In addition, Keālia Pond NWR provides a strategic landfall for migratory birds coming from Alaska, Siberia, and Asia, including Northern

pintail (koloa māpu), Northern shoveler (koloa mohā), lesser scaup, Pacific golden-plover (kōlea) and ruddy turnstone (‘akekeke). A majority of the refuge is closed to general public access; however, trails, overlooks, and educational programs provide the public with opportunities to view some of Hawai‘i’s endangered and migratory wildlife.

Kakahai‘a NWR, located on the southeastern coast of the island of Moloka‘i, was established in 1976 to protect and provide habitat for endangered species. Habitats found on this refuge include freshwater marsh, grassland, dry forest, and coastal strand. The refuge has the potential to provide breeding, foraging, and resting areas for endangered waterbirds, a variety of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wetland birds. Some of the more common migrants are koloa māpu and kōlea. Kakahai‘a NWR is closed to the general public; however, nongovernmental organizations occasionally conduct wetland education programs.

During the CCP planning process, many elements were considered, including wildlife management and habitat protection, compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, on- and off-site environmental educational opportunities, and coordination with State and Federal agencies and other interested groups.

The draft CCPs and EAs identified and evaluated three alternatives for managing each refuge. These were available for a 30-day public review and comment period, which included two open house public meetings. The Service incorporated or responded to the comments on the Keālia Pond NWR draft CCP and Kakahai‘a NWR draft CCP in the final CCPs.

Selected Alternative for Each Refuge

All actions in the selected alternative for each refuge are subject to funding and any other compliance requirements. After considering the comments we received, we have selected each refuge’s Alternative C for implementation. Implementing Alternative C for the CCPs will encompass the following key actions:

Keālia Pond NWR

The Service will remove the most aggressive invasive plants and control pickleweed on the flats. Planned projects include constructing a water control structure, developing new wells to deliver water to target areas, and recontouring topography to maintain water on the flats. We expect an increased capability to dewater and

flood the Main Pond will enhance our dust, midge, and tilapia control efforts. New vegetated blinds will provide better wildlife viewing opportunities, and public interpretation and environmental education programs will be expanded. Internships will be provided for up to five students. Wildlife monitoring on the proposed Molokini Unit will include up to six visits during the period running March through November, and we will initiate a native plant restoration plan.

Kakahai‘a NWR

If funded, we will restore the 15-acre Old Pond and 5.5 acres of New Pond by removing California bulrush and other aggressive nonnative species, dredging accumulated sediment, recontouring topography, removing radial levees, reconstructing perimeter levees, replacing the water control structure, and replacing the pump between the two ponds. A well, pump, water distribution line, and control outlet for New Pond will be constructed, and levees will be rebuilt. All monitoring activities will resume as part of the wetland restoration. A predator-proof fence will be installed to protect wetland habitat and species. The coastal strand will be restored and protected from further erosion to provide a protective barrier to the refuge wetlands and highway. A cultural resources survey will be completed for the entire refuge. Opportunities for visitors to engage in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation may expand with new staffing. At a minimum, a kiosk will be constructed along the refuge entrance road and volunteer groups will be developed to assist refuge staff with restoration and maintenance activities.

Dated: November 9, 2011.

Robyn Thorson,

Regional Director, Pacific Region, Portland, Oregon.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R6–R–2011–N212; FF06R06000–FXRS1265066CCP0S2–123]

Establishment of Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area, Kansas

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has established the Flint Hills

Legacy Conservation Area, the 555th unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Service established the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area on September 28, 2011, with the donation of a conservation easement in Chautauqua County, Kansas.

ADDRESSES: A map depicting the approved Refuge boundary and other information regarding the Refuge is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Amy Thornburg, Planning Team Leader, USFWS, Division of Refuge Planning, P.O. Box 25486, DFC, Denver, CO 80225.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Service established the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area, which covers all or part of 21 counties in eastern Kansas. Today, less than 4 percent of the once-vast tallgrass prairie remains, most (80 percent) of which lies within the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma. The Service will work to conserve tallgrass prairie and the wildlife resources in the conservation area primarily through the purchase of perpetual easements from willing sellers in Kansas. These conservation easements will protect native grassland birds, as well as over 80 species of native fish, and native mollusks that depend on the pristine streams that are found in the Flint Hills region.

The Service recognizes the importance of protecting and fostering traditional cultural values, including ranching lifestyles and economies, in concert with habitat conservation interests. Ranching has historically played a major role in preserving the tallgrass ecoregion—and by extension, conserving valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Based on anticipated levels of landowner participation, objectives for the conservation area are to protect up to 1.1 million acres of tallgrass prairie habitat. The conservation area is a landscape-scale effort to conserve populations of native grassland birds, which are among the most consistently declining species in the United States. Therefore, it is important to incorporate the elements of strategic habitat conservation (SHC) to ensure effective conservation. SHC entails strategic biological planning and conservation design, and integrated conservation delivery, monitoring, and research at ecoregional scales.

This conservation area allows the Service to purchase perpetual conservation easements, using the acquisition authority of the Fish and