

Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, 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 (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, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Administration Act.

Each unit of the Refuge System was established for specific purposes. We use these purposes as the foundation for developing and prioritizing the management goals and objectives for each refuge within the Refuge System mission, and to determine how the public can use each refuge. The planning process is a way for us and the public to evaluate management goals and objectives for the best possible conservation approach to this important wildlife habitat, while providing for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that are compatible with the refuge's establishing purposes and the mission of the Refuge System.

Our CCP process provides participation opportunities for Tribal, State, and local governments; agencies; organizations; and the public. We encourage input in the form of issues, concerns, ideas, and suggestions for the future management of Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR.

We will conduct the environmental review of this project in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); NEPA regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508); other appropriate Federal laws and regulations; and our policies and procedures for compliance with those laws and regulations.

The Noxubee NWR was established on June 14, 1940, by Executive Order 8444, under the authority of 16 U.S.C. 715 (Migratory Bird Conservation Act). It was renamed the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge on June 22, 2012. The refuge's stated purpose is "for use as a Refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife." In conjunction with the

primary establishing purposes, the refuge provides an area for the "conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans" 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997), as well as "for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources" 16 U.S.C. 742(a)(4) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956). Subsequently, a small amount of land was purchased with Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp monies "for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds" 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act).

Public Availability and Comments

Before including your address, phone number, email 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.

Authority

This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd *et seq.*).

Dated: December 20, 2012.

Mark J. Musaus,

Acting Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R4-R-2012-N218;
FXRS1265040000S3-123-FF04R02000]

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, FL; Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of the final comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and finding of

no significant impact for the environmental assessment for St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Franklin and Gulf Counties, Florida. In the final CCP, we describe how we will manage this refuge for the next 15 years.

ADDRESSES: You may obtain a copy of the CCP by writing to Ms. Shelley Stiaes via U.S. mail at St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 447, Apalachicola, FL 32329. Alternatively, you may download the document from our Internet site, <http://southeast.fws.gov/planning>, under "Final Documents."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Shelley Stiaes, at 850-653-8808 (telephone) or shelley_stiaes@fws.gov (email).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

With this notice, we finalize the CCP process for St. Vincent NWR. We started the process through a notice in the **Federal Register** on April 8, 2009 (74 FR 16002). For more about the process, see that notice.

St. Vincent NWR is located in Franklin and Gulf Counties along the Gulf Coast of northwest Florida, approximately 60 miles from Panama City and 80 miles from Tallahassee. St. Vincent NWR's approved acquisition boundary is approximately 13,736 acres, with a current management boundary of approximately 12,490 acres. The staff oversees 21 Farm Service Agency easements, totaling 1,625 acres in six counties. The 12,490-acre refuge boundary includes two islands—St. Vincent (12,358 acres) and Pig (46 acres). It also includes a mainland tract—14 Mile Tract (86 acres).

Background

The CCP Process

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee) (Administration Act), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, 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, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Administration Act.

Comments

We made copies of the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (Draft CCP/EA) available for a 30-day public review and comment period via a **Federal Register** notice on May 2, 2012 (77 FR 26035). We provided more than 125 copies of the Draft CCP/EA to those individuals or organizations requesting a copy. A total of 12 individuals, organizations, and government agencies provided comments by U.S. mail or email. Comments were received from many organizations, including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission; University of South Florida; Florida State University; Florida Department of Environmental Protection; Florida Natural Areas Inventory; Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; Jena Band of Choctaw Indians; and Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources; and several members of the public.

CCP Alternatives, Including our Preferred Alternative

We developed three alternatives for managing the refuge (Alternatives A, B, and C), with Alternative C selected for implementation. This alternative will focus on a greater effort to manage and protect the refuge's native and imperiled species. We will continue to survey and monitor species of federal responsibility, such as threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, and key native species, but will also gain a better understanding of native species on the refuge. Additional efforts will be made to protect and support nesting for key species, as well as gain a better understanding of population dynamics of some species. We will conduct evaluations to determine if it is suitable to reestablish populations of the eastern indigo snake, gopher tortoise, and eastern wild turkey on the refuge.

We will continue to manage lakes 1, 2, and 3 by seasonal draw-downs to support the needs of shorebirds and wading birds. Lakes 4 and 5 will continue to support deep water for a freshwater fisheries program, with an occasional draw-down to manage vegetation within the system. Since the purchase of the refuge, there has been minimal emphasis on timber condition, so a forest habitat assessment will be conducted. The management of exotic,

invasive, and nuisance animals and plants will be a focus, with emphasis on aggressively eradicating feral hogs.

Wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the refuge will be expanded. We will allow hunting of white-tailed deer, sambar deer, and raccoon. Fishing will consist of saltwater and freshwater opportunities. Wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation will be enhanced to focus on imperiled species, the unique barrier island history and ecosystem as they relate to the coastal environment, and management style incorporating climate change effects. We will enhance the environmental education program to incorporate Florida Sunshine Standards, while establishing guidelines for public programs. Vehicle tours that meet management objectives will continue as long as we have sufficient staff to support the program. In addition to the current staff, the following positions will be added: assistant refuge manager, wildlife biologist, maintenance worker, wildlife officer, visitor services specialist, and boat operator. We will also add a wildlife biologist under the Student Conservation Employment Program, continue our participation in the Youth Conservation Corps, and explore Student Conservation Association and AmeriCorps program opportunities.

We will continue to use volunteers and strive to build stronger relationships with the Friends group and our partners to manage the resources, support the Strategic Habitat Conservation initiative, and the Landscape Conservation Cooperative. As climate change affects the refuge, we will increase research of species and habitat changes to support the best management decisions through adaptive management.

We have included compatibility determinations in the final CCP for the following: (1) Hunting (Big Game); (2) Recreational Fishing; (3) Environmental Education and Interpretation; (4) Wildlife Observation and Photography; (5) Hiking, Jogging, Walking, and Bicycling; (6) Boating (canoeing and kayaking); (7) Camping (associated with hunting); (8) Firewood Gathering (associated with hunting); (9) General Research and Scientific Collecting; and (10) Beach Use and Shelling.

Authority

This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd *et seq.*).

Dated: November 2, 2012.

Mark J. Musaus,

Acting Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R6-R-2012-N232; FF06R06000-FXRS1265066CCPOS2-123]

Establishment of Swan Valley Conservation Area, Montana

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 Swan Valley Conservation Area as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Service established the Swan Valley Conservation Area on August 6, 2012, with the donation of an 80-acre conservation easement in Missoula County, Montana.

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: Toni Griffin, Planning Team Leader, Division of Refuge Planning, USFWS, P.O. Box 25486, DFC, Denver, CO 80225. <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Service has established the Swan Valley Conservation Area in western Montana, including portions of Lake and Missoula Counties. The Service will conserve wildlife resources in the conservation area, primarily through the purchase of perpetual easements and a limited amount of fee-title from willing sellers. These easements will connect and expand existing lands under conservation protection. Fee-title purchases will be restricted to lands immediately adjacent to Swan River National Wildlife Refuge.

The project will help ensure the perpetual conservation of one of the last undeveloped, low-elevation coniferous forest ecosystems in western Montana, in the greater Crown of the Continent ecosystem. Based on anticipated levels of landowner participation, objectives for the conservation area are to protect 10,000 acres of wildlife habitat through conservation easements and another 1,000 acres through fee-title around the