Want to Get Involved?

Participation by you and other interested groups and individuals is critical to the success of this planning process. Only then can we develop effective management taking your comments into consideration. In addition to public meetings, periodic planning updates will be sent to individuals on our mailing list. If you would like to be on our mailing list, we must have your written permission. Please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to the contact listed below.

Contact Information

We are available to provide additional information about refuge history, goals, and accomplishments to date, and to answer any questions about the planning process. Contact us through phone, fax, or email at the following address:

Comprehensive Conservation Plan
Attn: Toni Griffin,
Planning Team Leader
Division of Refuge Planning, Region 6
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
PO Box 25486
Denver Federal Center
Denver, CO 80225-0486
Ph: 303/236 4378
Fax: 303/236 4792
email: toni_griffin@fws.gov

The Planning Schedule

Preplanning
Jun 2002 - Dec 2002

Draft Vision Statement and Goals
Jan 2003 - Jan 2003

Public Scoping
Mar 2003- Aug 2003

Data Gathering and Research
Mar 2003 - Mar 2004

Develop and Analyze Alternatives
Apr 2004 - Feb 2005

Prepare Draft CCP
Mar 2005 - Jul 2005

Public Review of Draft CCP
Aug 2005 - Oct 2005

Develop Final CCP
Nov 2005 - Feb 2006

The Next Steps

The next phase of the CCP process will focus on data gathering, research, and the development of alternative management strategies. Planning team members will continue to focus their efforts on data gathering through March of 2004. In April, the core planning team will reconvene to begin to develop several management alternatives for the refuges. Alternatives will address conservation techniques and refuge management actions as well as compatible wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities.

When draft management alternatives have been produced, the planning team will again turn to the public for input. During a public open house, the planning team will present the proposed alternatives and solicit feedback and ideas for refinement of the management strategies and ideas.

We encourage you to stay involved in the planning process, and to provide input on the proposed management alternatives when they are presented to the public.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Souris River Loop National Wildlife Refuges

Des Lacs NWR, J. Clark Salyer NWR, Upper Souris NWR

Planning Update

Volume Two, November 2003

Greetings,

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is preparing comprehensive conservation plans (CCP) to help guide the conservation of natural resources and promote appropriate public uses of Des Lacs, J. Clark Salyer and Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). Sharing your ideas and concerns will help us prepare plans that are sensitive to your needs.

We have already received some public input via a series of open houses held in local communities during March 2003. Thanks to all of you who participated in our public open houses, and to those who submitted electronic and written comments. This planning update provides another opportunity for you to submit comments. Just complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to us in the self-addressed postage-paid envelope provided. If you would like to be placed on the CCP mailing list, to receive future planning updates and a draft CCP for review, please be sure to complete the mailing list authorization form on the reverse side of the questionnaire. If you have already provided comments and/or completed the mailing list consent form, you need not do so again; your comments have been recorded and placed in the official planning record.

Refuge staff are also available to meet with individuals or groups to answer comprehensive conservation planning questions. If you would like a special presentation to your group, or would like to make an appointment to meet individually, please call the appropriate refuge office to make arrangements.

We look forward to working with you throughout this important planning process.

Sincerely,

Fred Giese
Refuge Manager
Des Lacs NWR

Robert Howard
Refuge Manager
J. Clark Salyer NWR

Dean Knauer
Refuge Manager
Upper Souris NWR

Observing wildlife at Des Lacs NWR

USFWS

Souris River Loop Refuges *- your prairie places*

Public Involvement

The purpose of developing the comprehensive conservation plan with public input is to craft informed decisions through the exchange of ideas between the public and the Service. The public involvement process ensures that interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies and governmental entities are consulted and given opportunities to have their ideas heard.

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Informing the Public

Throughout the planning process, the Service will focus on informing the public, gathering public input and analyzing public comments.

Planning Updates and Announcements

Over the course of the planning process, five planning updates will be published and distributed to the public. The updates will report on the CCP process, announce opportunities for public involvement and document the progress of the CCP. Updates will be sent to individuals on the CCP mailing list and distributed at presentations, open houses and workshops.

Media Coverage

Announcements in local newspapers and on television and radio stations will notify the public about opportunities for involvement and the progress of the CCP.

Website

The public may access information about the planning process on-line at mountain-prairie.fws.gov/planning, and download planning documents as they become available.

Public Open Houses

The public will be encouraged to participate in a series of open houses held at strategic phases of the plan development including public scoping, management alternatives, draft plan and environmental assessment review, and final plan and public celebration. The purpose of these open houses will be to generate ideas, gather input on refuge planning issues, and inform the public on refuge issues and the planning process. Open houses will be held in the communities of Bottineau, Bowbells, Kenmare, Minot, Mohall, and Towner.

Presentations and Briefings

To keep the public and stakeholder groups posted on the CCP process, presentations and briefings will be conducted by refuge staff at local community events and group meetings throughout the planning process.

Analyzing Public Input

The Service will review and consider all substantive comments gathered at workshops, other public meetings, and those comments received via electronic and surface mail.

Interview with Upper Souris NWR employee.

USFWS photo

Summary of Public Comments

Six open houses were held in Mohall, Bowbells, Bottineau, Kenmare, Towner, and Minot, North Dakota in March 2003. The public provided input on the draft vision statement and goals, refuges' qualities, issues, and opportunities to be considered during the planning process. Thanks to all of you who participated in the open houses, and to those who submitted electronic and written comments! This planning update provides a synopsis of the comments we have received. We could not include all the comments in this publication due to space limitations, but rest assured that all comments have been placed in the planning record and will be considered in the development of proposed management alternatives for the CCP.

Topics of Interest
(by percentage of all comments received)

Public Outreach and Partnerships	36%
Habitat and Wildlife	27%
Public Use Programs	23%
Water Management	6%
Vision and Goals	6%
Cultural Resources	2%

Public Outreach & Partnerships

- *Public Outreach*: Provide more communication to local and national audiences regarding public use opportunities at the Souris River Loop Refuges.
- *Partnerships:* Strengthen existing partnerships and develop a variety of additional partnerships with local schools and universities, special interest groups, city and county governments and private and nonprofit organizations.

Habitat and Wildlife Management

- *Prescribed Fire:* Use prescribed fire as a habitat management tool.
- *Haying and Grazing Programs:*
  -- Continue haying and grazing programs at current or expanded levels.
  -- Change/eliminate the grazing program, which does not appear to be producing the desired habitat for grassland-nesting birds.
- *Invasive Species:*
  -- Place more emphasis on the control of noxious weeds.
  -- Develop an aspen abatement plan.
- *Wildlife Disease:* Address West Nile Virus and Chronic Wasting Disease.

Public Use Programs

- *Hunting and Fishing:*
  -- Continue hunting and fishing programs at current or expanded levels.
  -- Place more emphasis on non-consumptive recreational uses such as wildlife observation and photography.
- *Environmental Education:* Expand environmental education and interpretation programs.
- *Trail Development:* Develop more trails on the refuges.
- *Water Sports:*
  -- Do not allow water skiing and motor boating on the refuges.
  -- Allow water skiing and motor boating on the refuges.

Water Quality and Water Management

- *Water Quality:* Continue monitoring water quality of the Souris and Des Lacs rivers.
- *Water Management:* Develop water management plans that create shorebird habitat.

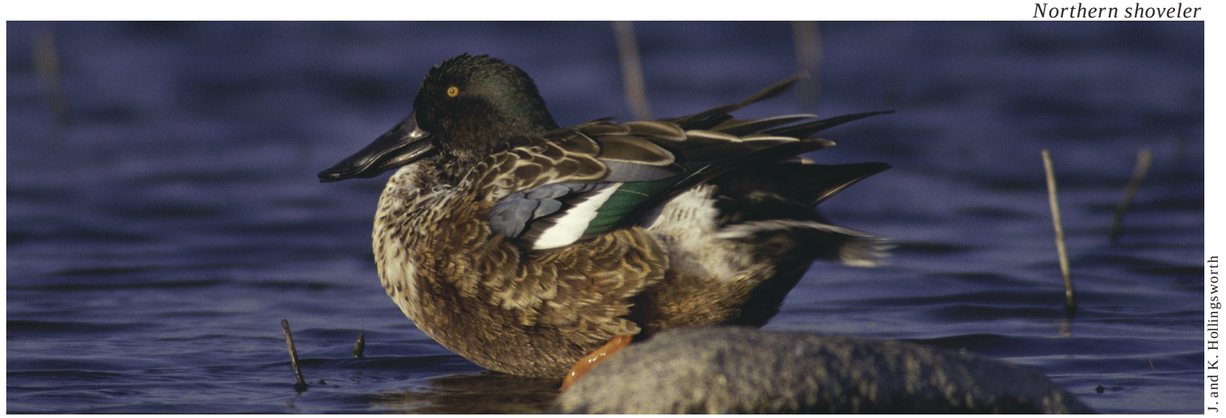
Cultural Resources

- Increase documentation of Native American and historic resources on the refuges.
- Increase involvement of Native Americans in refuge events and activities.

Vision and Goals

- Eliminate technical terminology from the vision statement and goals.

Northern shoveler



J. and K. Hollingsworth