

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Fish and Wildlife Service****Draft Planning Policy Pursuant to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997**

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We propose to establish requirements and guidance for National Wildlife Refuge System planning, including Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) and step-down management plans. This policy, which incorporates the CCP provisions of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (NWRSA-1997), will replace Part 602 Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

Our policy for managing units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (System) is that we will manage all refuges in accordance with an approved CCP that: guides management decisions; sets forth goals, objectives, and strategies for achieving refuge purposes; contributes to the mission of the System; and meets other relevant mandates. We also may require step-down management plans to provide additional details about meeting goals and objectives and implementing management strategies identified in CCPs. Each plan will be consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management, available science, legal mandates, and our other policies, guidelines, and planning documents.

DATES: Submit comments on or before October 12, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send comments concerning this draft planning policy via mail, fax or e-mail to: Chief, Division of Refuges, US Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 670, Arlington, Virginia 22203; fax (703) 358-2248; e-mail:

Planning_Policy_Comments@fws.gov

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Liz Bellantoni, Refuge Planning Coordinator, Division of Refuges, US Fish and Wildlife Service, telephone (703) 358-2422.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The NWRSA-1997 amends and builds upon the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, providing an "Organic Act" for the National Wildlife Refuge System. It clearly establishes that wildlife conservation is the singular mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System; provides guidance to the Secretary of the Interior for management of the National Wildlife

Refuge System; reinforces the importance of comprehensive planning for all units of the National Wildlife Refuge System; and gives refuge managers uniform direction and procedures for making decisions regarding wildlife conservation and uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Planning and the NWRSA-1997

We will develop a CCP for each refuge or related complex of refuges by October 2012 and will revise each plan every 15 years thereafter or sooner as necessary. The NWRSA-1997 also requires that we provide an opportunity for active public involvement during the preparation and revision of CCPs. These plans will guide management decisions and establish strategies for achieving the mission of the System and the purposes of each refuge unit.

The NWRSA-1997 includes a number of provisions that specifically address planning. The following is a summary of those provisions and how they apply to us.

In general, we will propose a CCP for each refuge or related complex of refuges. For each proposed plan we will publish a notice of opportunity for public comment in the **Federal Register**. We will issue a final CCP for each planning unit consistent with the provisions of the NWRSA-1997 and, to the extent practicable, consistent with the fish and wildlife and conservation plans of the State in which the refuge is located. We will revise the CCP every 15 years after issuance or sooner as necessary.

We shall manage each refuge or planning unit under plans in effect on the date of enactment of the NWRSA-1997, to the extent such plans are consistent with the NWRSA-1997, until new CCPs revise or supercede these plans. Uses or activities consistent with the NWRSA-1997 may occur on any refuge or planning unit before we revise existing plans or issue new CCPs. Upon completion of a CCP for a refuge or planning unit, we shall manage the refuge or planning unit in a manner consistent with the CCP and revise the plan at any time if we determine that conditions affecting the refuge or planning unit have changed significantly.

In developing each CCP for a planning unit, the plan shall identify and describe: the purposes of each refuge comprising the planning unit; the distribution, migration patterns, and abundance of fish, wildlife, and plant populations and related habitats within the planning unit; the archaeological and cultural values of the planning unit; such areas within the planning unit that

are suitable for use as administrative sites or visitor facilities; significant problems that may adversely affect the populations and habitats of fish, wildlife, and plants within the planning unit and the actions necessary to correct or mitigate such problems; and opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses.

In preparing and revising each CCP, we shall, to the maximum extent practicable and consistent with the NWRSA-1997, consult with adjoining Federal, State, local, and private landowners and affected State conservation agencies. We shall also coordinate the development of the CCP or revision with relevant State conservation plans for fish and wildlife and their habitats.

We shall develop and implement a process to ensure active public involvement in the preparation and revision of CCPs. At a minimum, the publication of any final CCP shall include a summary of the comments made by States, owners of adjacent or potentially affected land, local governments, and any other affected persons, and a statement of the disposition of concerns expressed in those comments.

Prior to the adoption of each CCP, we shall issue a public notice of the draft proposed CCP, make copies of the CCP available at our field and regional offices, and provide opportunity for public comment.

Purpose of This Draft Policy

This draft policy would establish requirements and guidance for National Wildlife Refuge System planning, including CCPs and step-down plans, and ensure that planning efforts comply with the provisions of the NWRSA-1997. This draft planning policy describes a systematic decision-making process that fulfills the requirements we are establishing for developing a CCP. It is not the intent of this policy to provide step-by-step direction on how to prepare a CCP but rather to establish the requirements and standards to which we will hold all CCPs.

Fish and Wildlife Service Directives System

Because many of our field stations are in remote areas across the United States, it is important that all employees have available and know the current policy and management directives that affect their daily activities. Our Directives System, consisting of the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, Director's Orders, and National Policy Issuances, is the vehicle for issuing our standing and continuing policy and management

directives. We post new directives on the Internet upon approval, ensuring that all employees have prompt access to the most current guidance.

The Fish and Wildlife Service Manual contains our standing and continuing directives with which our employees must comply and has force and effect within the Service. We use it to implement our authorities and to "step down" our compliance with statutes, executive orders, and departmental directives. It establishes the requirements and procedures to assist our employees in carrying out our authorities, responsibilities, and activities.

We limit Director's orders to temporary policy, procedures, delegations of authority, emergency regulations, special assignments of functions, and initial functional statements on the establishment of new organizational units. We convert all Director's orders, as needed, to appropriate parts of the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual. We generally do not issue material appropriate for immediate inclusion in the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual as a Director's order.

National Policy Issuances promulgate the Director's national policies for managing the Service and our programs. These policies are necessarily broad and generally require management discretion or judgment in their implementation. They represent the Director's expectations of how we will act in carrying out our official responsibilities.

The Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, Director's Orders, and National Policy Issuances are available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/directives/direct.html>. When finalized, we will incorporate this policy on National Wildlife Refuge System planning into the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual as Part 602 Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Comment Solicitation

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods. You may mail comments to: Chief, Division of Refuges, US Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 670, Arlington, Virginia 22203. You may comment via the Internet to: Planning_Policy_Comments@fws.gov. Please submit Internet comments as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please also include your name and return address in your Internet message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received

your Internet message, contact us directly at (703) 358-1744. You may also fax comments to: Chief, Division of Refuges, (703) 358-2248. Finally, you may hand-deliver comments to the address mentioned above.

Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

We seek public comments on this draft planning policy and will take into consideration comments and any additional information received during the 60-day comment period.

We will send a copy of the draft Fish and Wildlife Service Manual chapters on National Wildlife Refuge System planning to anyone who would like to receive them. In addition, these chapters will be available on the National Wildlife Refuge System web site (<http://refuges.fws.gov> [select link to "Library," then link to "Service Manual/Policy—Draft Chapters"]) during the 60-day comment period.

Primary Author: Elizabeth Bellantoni, Fish and Wildlife Biologist (Refuge Planning Coordinator), Division of Refuges, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is the primary author of this notice.

Dated: July 14, 1999.

John G. Rogers,
Director.

Refuge Management

Part 602 National Wildlife Refuge System Planning

Chapter 1 Refuge Planning Overview 602 FW 1

1.1 What is the purpose of Part 602? Part 602 provides guidance for National Wildlife Refuge System (System) planning, including specific chapters on Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) and step-down management plans. This chapter (602 FW 1) provides an overview of refuge planning.

1.2 What does Part 602 apply to?

Part 602 applies to all units of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

1.3 What is our policy for managing refuges? We will manage all refuges in accordance with an approved CCP that guides management decisions and sets forth goals, objectives, and strategies, which when implemented will achieve refuge purposes, contribute to the System mission, and meet all other relevant mandates. We also may require step-down management plans to provide additional details about meeting goals and objectives and implementing management strategies identified in CCPs. Each plan will be consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management, available science, legal mandates, and our other policies, guidelines, and planning documents.

1.4 What are our authorities?

Authorities listed below include laws that require us to manage units of the System in accordance with approved CCPs and to integrate refuge planning decisions with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

A. National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, 16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee (Refuge Administration Act).

This law states that " * * * the Secretary shall—(i) propose a comprehensive conservation plan for each refuge or related complex of refuges * * * in the System; (ii) publish a notice of opportunity for public comment in the **Federal Register** on each proposed conservation plan; (iii) issue a final conservation plan for each planning unit consistent with the provisions of this Act and, to the extent practicable, consistent with fish and wildlife conservation plans of the State in which the refuge is located; and (iv) not less frequently than 15 years after the date of issuance of a conservation plan under clause (iii) and every 15 years thereafter, revise the conservation plan as may be necessary." This law provides additional detail on conservation planning for the System.

B. Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 as amended, 16 U.S.C. 140hh-3233, 43 U.S.C. 1602-1784 (ANILCA).

Section 304 states, in part, "The Secretary shall prepare, and from time to time, revise, a comprehensive conservation plan * * * for each refuge." Find additional guidance on the content of these plans and on management direction in this and other sections of ANILCA. If any provisions of the Refuge Administration Act conflict with the provisions of

ANILCA, the provisions of ANILCA shall prevail for refuges in Alaska.

C. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA, 40 CFR 1500-1508. NEPA is the basic national charter for the protection of the environment (NEPA, section 2). The procedural provisions in CEQ's regulations require Federal agencies to: integrate the NEPA process with other planning at the earliest possible time in order to provide a systematic interdisciplinary approach; identify and analyze environmental effects of their actions; describe appropriate alternatives to the proposal; involve the affected State and Federal agencies, Indian tribes, and the affected public in the planning and decision making process; and fully integrate all refuge proposals that may have an impact on the environment with the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1501.2).

1.5 What are the goals of refuge planning?

A. To help ensure that we manage the System for the conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats; and that refuge management accomplishes our policies, the System mission, and the purposes for which we established the refuge.

B. To help ensure that the administration of the System contributes to the conservation of biological diversity and integrity and to the structure and function of the ecosystems of the United States.

C. To help ensure that our other programs; Federal, State, and local agencies; Tribal governments; conservation organizations; adjacent landowners; and the public have opportunities to participate in the refuge planning process.

D. To provide a basis for adaptive management by monitoring progress, evaluating plan implementation, and updating refuge plans accordingly.

E. To promote efficiency, effectiveness, continuity and national consistency in refuge management.

F. To help ensure consistent Systemwide consideration of the six priority general public uses—hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation—established by the Refuge Administration Act.

1.6 What do the following terms mean? (Quotations are from the Refuge Administration Act)

A. Alternative. Alternatives are different means of accomplishing refuge purposes and goals, contributing to the System mission, and resolving issues.

B. Comprehensive Conservation Plan/CCP. A document that describes the desired future conditions of the refuge and provides long-range guidance and management direction to accomplish the purposes of the refuge, contribute to the mission of the System, and meet other relevant mandates.

C. Coordination Area. A wildlife management area that is made available to a State, by "(A) cooperative agreement between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the State fish and game agency pursuant to section 4 of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 664); or (B) by long-term leases or agreements pursuant to the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (50 Stat. 525; 7 U.S.C. 1010 *et seq.*).'" States manage coordination areas but they are part of the Refuge System. We do not require CCPs for Coordination Areas.

D. Goal. Descriptive, open-ended, and often broad statement of desired future conditions that conveys a purpose but does not define measurable units.

E. Issue. Any unsettled matter that requires a management decision, e.g., an initiative, opportunity, resource management problem, threat to the resources of the unit, conflict in uses, public concern, or the presence of an undesirable resource condition.

F. National Wildlife Refuge (refuge). "A designated area of land, water, or an interest in land or water within the System, but does not include Coordination Areas." Find a complete listing of all units of the System in the current *Annual Report of Lands Under Control of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*.

G. National Wildlife Refuge System Mission (mission). "The mission of the System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."

H. Objective. An objective is a concise statement of what we want to achieve, how much we want to achieve, when and where we want to achieve it, and who is responsible for the work. Objectives derive from goals and provide the basis for determining management strategies, monitoring

refuge accomplishments, and evaluating the success of the strategies. Make your objectives attainable and time-specific and state them quantitatively to the extent possible. If you cannot state objectives quantitatively, state them qualitatively.

I. Planning Area. A planning area may include lands outside existing planning unit boundaries currently studied for inclusion in the System and/or partnership planning efforts. It may also include watersheds or ecosystems that affect the planning unit.

J. Planning Team. Planning teams are interdisciplinary in membership and function. Teams generally consist of a Planning Team Leader; Refuge Manager and staff biologists; and other appropriate specialists (e.g., social scientist, ecologist, recreation specialist). Team members may come from our other programs and other Federal, Tribal, and State natural resource agencies. The planning team prepares the CCP.

K. Planning Team Leader. The Planning Team Leader typically is a professional planner or natural resource specialist knowledgeable of the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and who has planning experience. The Planning Team Leader manages the refuge planning process.

L. Planning Unit. A single refuge, an ecologically/administratively related refuge complex or distinct unit of a refuge.

M. Purposes of the Refuge. "The purposes specified in or derived from the law, proclamation, executive order, agreement, public land order, donation document, or administrative memorandum establishing, authorizing, or expanding a refuge, refuge unit, or refuge subunit."

N. Refuge Operating Needs System (RONS). The Refuge Operating Needs System is a national database which contains the unfunded operational needs of each refuge. We include projects required to implement approved plans, and meet goals, objectives, and legal mandates.

O. Step-down Management Plans. Step-down management plans deal with specific management subjects (e.g., habitat, public use, fire, safety) or groups of related subjects. Step-down management plans describe management strategies and implementation schedules.

P. Strategy. A specific action, tool or technique or combination of actions, tools, and techniques used to meet unit objectives.

Q. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Mission. Our mission is working with

others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

R. Wildlife-Dependent Recreational Use. "A use of a refuge involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, or environmental education and interpretation." These uses are the six priority general public uses of the Refuge System as established in the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act.

S. Vision Statement. A concise statement of what the planning unit could be, or what we could do, in the next 10 to 15 years, based primarily upon the System mission and specific refuge purposes, and other relevant mandates.

1.7 What is the relationship between the Refuge System, and other planning efforts? Refuge planning should maintain continuity and consistency with other planning initiatives. The relationship between these planning efforts is hierarchical, starting from national plans to regional, State, and ecoregion level plans stepping down to refuge-specific planning. See Exhibit 1. The process of adaptive management uses feedback from refuge research and monitoring, and evaluation of management actions to support or modify goals, objectives, and strategies at all planning levels.

A. National and Regional Plans. Opportunities and issues to address in refuge planning will consider other Service documents that address particular programs, species, habitats, public uses, economic uses, archaeological resources, etc. National and regional goals, objectives, strategies, and policies influence management planning for refuges. Source documents include the Service Manual, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, National Outreach Strategy, regional resource plans, endangered species recovery plans, migratory bird and flyway plans, fishery resource plans, joint venture plans, Partners in Flight plans, and strategies to promote the conservation of natural biological diversity. The contribution of the refuge to achieving regional and national goals will help implement our mission and ensure the integrity of the System.

B. Service Ecoregion Plans, State Fish and Wildlife Conservation Plans, and Other Landscape Level Plans. Refuge planning will reflect conservation goals and objectives for the landscapes in which the refuges are located. Refuges must review goals and objectives of existing ecosystem plans and determine how the refuge can best contribute to the functioning of the ecosystem.

Coordinate refuge planning with State conservation agencies, Tribal governments, other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. To the extent practicable, the plans will be consistent with the fish and wildlife conservation plans of the State and the conservation programs of Tribal, public, and private partners within the ecosystem.

C. Land Acquisition Planning.

(1) Refuge planning typically begins before the establishment of an area as a unit of the System. Land acquisition planning, (usually resulting in a Land Protection Plan (LPP) and associated NEPA document) is a preliminary step in the continuous, integrated refuge planning process. This process eventually results in completion of a CCP and appropriate refuge step-down plans. Other land use, species, or habitat protection planning efforts, or legislative or executive directive may precede land acquisition planning. Initial refuge establishment documentation (LPP and associated NEPA document) should identify the approved refuge boundary, refuge purpose(s), goals, and general management direction.

(2) Planning for proposed new refuges or major expansions to existing refuges not undergoing a CCP will include the development of a Conceptual Management Plan (CMP) for the new unit. We design the CMP to provide general, interim management direction. The CMP should identify refuge purpose(s), interim goals, and pre-existing compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses that we may allow to continue on an interim basis. We define the interim period as the duration of time between establishment of a new refuge or refuge expansion and the completion of an approved CCP. Fully integrate land acquisition planning efforts into CCP preparation whenever possible. Some proposed new refuges or refuge expansions may warrant CCP development at the time of acquisition planning. Include appropriate Realty staff on the planning team when considering land acquisition during the CCP process to ensure consistency with land acquisition policy. Also see 341 FW 2.

D. Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP). The CCP is a document that describes the desired future conditions of the refuge and provides long-range guidance and management direction for the Refuge Manager to accomplish the purposes of the refuge, contribute to the mission of the System, and to meet other relevant mandates. See 602 FW 2. For refuges established after October 9, 1997, prepare CCPs

when the refuge obtains staff and acquires a land base sufficient to accomplish refuge purposes, but no later than 15 years after we establish the refuge. Convert refuge long-range management plans (e.g., master plans and refuge management plans), approved prior to October 9, 1997, into CCPs with appropriate public involvement and NEPA compliance no later than October 2012.

E. Step-down Management Plans.

Step-down management plans provide the details necessary to implement management strategies identified in the CCP. CCPs will either incorporate or identify step-down plans required to fully implement the CCP. After completion of the CCP, modify existing step-down plans to accomplish stated objectives as needed. See 602 FW 3.

F. Integration with Budget

Development and Implementation. We will use CCPs to guide annual budget requests. We will identify the unfunded costs of implementing strategies in refuge plans using our budget databases, including the Refuge Operating Needs System (RONS), Maintenance Management System (MMS), and Land Acquisition Priority System (LAPS). As we complete or update each plan, we will review and update these databases to incorporate projects identified in refuge plans. The total funding and staffing identified in these databases represents the additional resources required to fully implement the refuge plans.

1.8 Who are the responsible officials?

A. Director. The Director is responsible for providing national policy and ensuring adherence to refuge planning policy.

B. Regional Director. The Regional Director: (1) Ensures compliance with national planning policy, NEPA, and other applicable laws and policies; (2) approves CCPs and associated NEPA and other agency compliance documents; and (3) ensures that we manage refuges in accordance with approved CCPs. The Regional Director or designee approves step-down plans, determines planning priorities and allocates funds to develop and implement plans.

C. Refuge Programmatic Assistant Regional Director (PARD)/Geographic Assistant Regional Director (GARD). The Refuges and Wildlife Program Assistant Regional Directors are responsible for initiating and completing refuge plans, budgeting for planning, ensuring programmatic staff participation, and developing planning priorities with input from the Geographic Assistant Regional

Directors. The Geographic Assistant Regional Directors are responsible for ensuring that ecosystem teams participate in developing plans and implementing approved plans.

D. Refuge Planning Coordinators. The Washington Office, Division of Refuges and each Region will designate a Refuge Planning Coordinator. The Coordinators will periodically meet as a national team to review and recommend changes to planning policy, resolve common planning problems and issues, and help ensure national consistency. In cooperation with representatives of our National Conservation Training Center, the Coordinators will establish and maintain appropriate training courses. Refuge Planning Coordinators will provide guidance and direction to assist regional and field-based planning staff and planning team members. The coordinators are also responsible for maintaining regional planning schedules and updating status reports and funding needs for the planning program.

E. Planning Team Leader. The Planning Team Leader is responsible for initiation of the planning process,

preparation and completion of refuge plans, and associated compliance requirements. The Planning Team Leader is responsible for identifying appropriate and proper representation on the interdisciplinary planning team, including core team members, support personnel, and outside or contract assistance. The Refuge Manager and Planning Team Leader submit the final CCP through line supervision for concurrence and approval by the Regional Director.

F. Refuge Supervisor. The Refuge Supervisor is responsible for overseeing participation of the Refuge Manager in CCP preparation and implementation, and for providing direction and guidance on compliance with System policy and regulations.

G. Refuge Manager. The Refuge Manager prepares the CCP working closely with the Planning Team Leader. The Refuge Manager assures that the refuge staff participates in plan development. The Refuge Manager and Planning Team Leader submit the final CCP through line supervision for concurrence and approval by the Regional Director. The Refuge Manager

is responsible for making compatibility determinations and ensuring that agency compliance requirements are met and that the CCP, when implemented, will achieve the purposes of the refuge and will contribute to fulfilling the System mission. The Refuge Manager is responsible for implementing approved comprehensive and step-down plans, monitoring progress, and recommending changes to plans based on monitoring and evaluation. The Refuge Manager also reports plan accomplishments through standard reporting mechanisms and budgeting procedures.

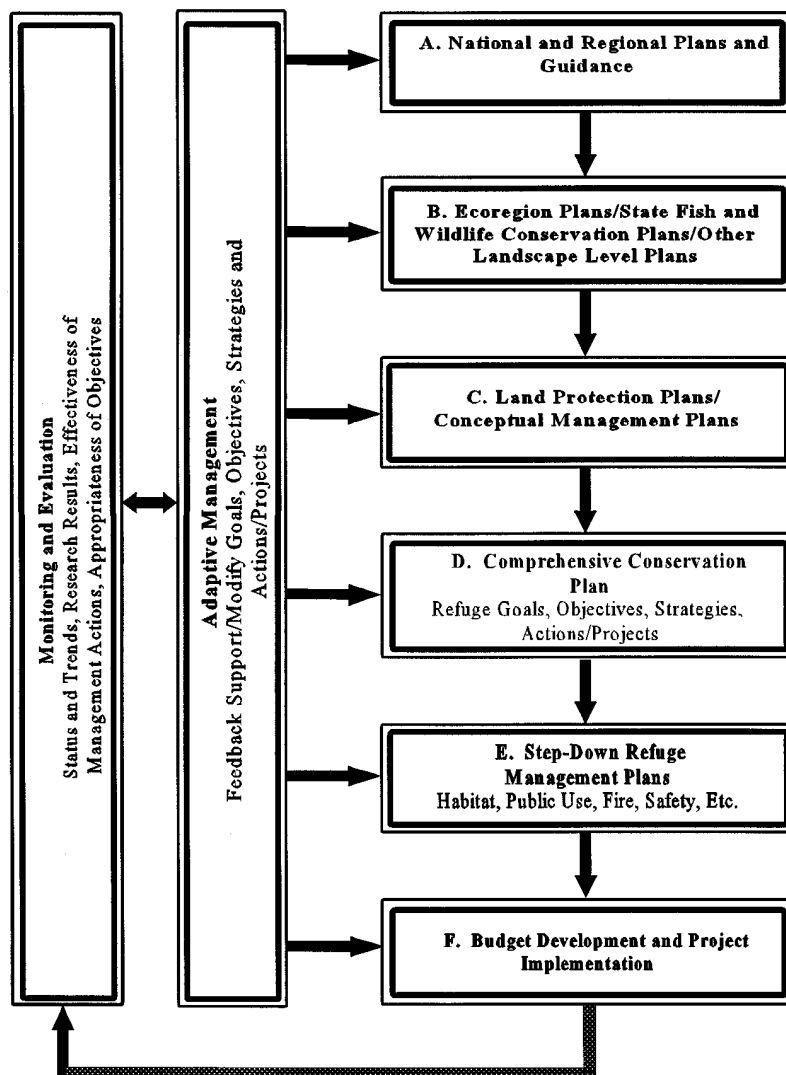
H. Planning Team. The planning team, coordinated by the Planning Team Leader, is responsible for the initiation and completion of all planning steps, including public involvement and NEPA compliance, resulting in a refuge CCP. We describe the steps in 602 FW 2.4 C.

I. Regional Environmental (NEPA) Coordinator. The Regional Environmental (NEPA) Coordinator provides technical assistance on NEPA-related matters.

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Exhibit 1

Relationships Between Service, System, and Other Planning Efforts



Refuge Management

Part 602 National Wildlife Refuge System Planning

Chapter 2 Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process

602 FW 2

2.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) describe the desired future conditions of a refuge, and provide long-range guidance and management direction for the Refuge Manager to accomplish the purposes of the refuge, contribute to the mission of the System, and meet other relevant mandates. The purpose of this chapter is to describe a systematic decision-making process that fulfills the requirements we are establishing for developing a CCP. It is not the intent of this policy to provide step-by-step direction on how to prepare a CCP but rather to establish the requirements and standards to which we will hold all CCPs. Experienced planners lead the CCP process. We strongly encourage the Refuge Manager and other key planning team members to attend the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) course on Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning.

2.2 What is our policy for CCPs? We will prepare a CCP for each refuge in existence as of October 9, 1997, by October 2012. For refuges established after October 9, 1997, we will prepare CCPs when we staff the refuge and acquire a land base sufficient to accomplish refuge purposes, but no later than 15 years after establishment of the refuge. To the extent practicable, we will coordinate the development of CCPs with affected States. We will continue to manage each refuge or planning unit with existing plans effective prior to October 9, 1997, to the extent these plans are consistent with the Refuge Administration Act, until we revise such plans or new CCPs supercede them. Upon completion of a CCP, we will manage the refuge or planning unit in a manner consistent with the CCP. We will revise the CCP every 15 years thereafter, or earlier, if conditions that affect the refuge or planning unit change significantly.

2.3 What are our goals for Comprehensive Conservation Planning?

A. To provide a clear and comprehensive statement of desired future conditions for each refuge or planning unit.

B. To help ensure that we manage each refuge to fulfill the mission of the System as well as the specific purposes for which we established that refuge.

C. To encourage that we conduct refuge planning in concert with an ecosystem approach. This includes conducting concurrent refuge planning for refuges within the same watershed or ecosystem, and to consider the broader goals and objectives of the ecoregion, ecosystems and watersheds in which refuges are located when developing management direction.

D. To support management decisions and their rationale by sound professional judgment.

E. To provide a forum for the public to comment on the type, extent, and compatibility of uses on refuges.

F. To provide a uniform basis for budget requests for operational, maintenance, and capital improvement programs.

G. To ensure public involvement in refuge management decisions by providing a process for effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with affected parties, including Federal agencies, State conservation agencies, Tribal governments, local governments, conservation organizations, adjacent landowners, and interested members of the public.

2.4 What is the Comprehensive Conservation Planning process?

A. The Comprehensive Conservation Planning process (see Exhibit 1) provides consistent guidelines for developing CCPs. We designed the planning process to result in the development of vision statements, goals, objectives, and management strategies that achieve refuge or planning unit purpose(s), contribute to the fulfillment of the System mission, and meet other relevant mandates.

B. Each CCP will comply with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) through the concurrent preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will accompany or be integrated with the CCP. We have integrated NEPA compliance requirements directly into the CCP planning process. When preparing an EA, consider integrating it into the draft CCP. When preparing an EIS with a CCP, integrate the documents. See Exhibit 1. Following completion of the final CCP/NEPA document, the product of the Comprehensive Conservation Planning process will be a stand-alone CCP, separate from the EA or EIS.

C. Our Comprehensive Conservation Planning process consists of the following eight steps. Although we display the steps sequentially, CCP planning and NEPA documentation are iterative processes. It is normal to cycle

through some of the steps more than once or to have several steps occurring simultaneously. Actions within each of the eight steps may not be sequential.

(1) Preplanning: Plan the Plan

(a) Planning Team. Assemble the planning team, including the Planning Team Leader, the Refuge Manager and key staff members, and appropriate support staff or specialists from both regional and ecosystem teams (e.g., fisheries, cultural resources, endangered species, external affairs/outreach, realty, contaminants, migratory birds, water resources, etc.). The planning team also may include representatives from appropriate State or Tribal conservation agencies, and any agency that may have a direct land management relationship with the refuge.

(b) Identify Planning and Compliance Requirements and Special Designations.

The planning team will identify planning and compliance requirements by reviewing our mission statements and those of the System, as well as refuge purposes and establishing legislation of the refuge. See Exhibit 2 for a list of laws and Executive Orders that may apply and Exhibit 3 for a checklist of elements we must include within a CCP. The planning team will identify and review other relevant mandates including laws, executive orders, regulations, and our policies, especially those with compliance requirements. The planning team also will review any existing special designation areas such as wilderness, research natural areas, wild and scenic rivers, wetlands of international importance, Western Hemisphere shorebird reserves, etc., and will specifically address the potential for any new special designations. Concurrent with the CCP process we will conduct a wilderness review and incorporate a summary of the review into the CCP. Refer to the wilderness section of the manual (Part 610) for guidance.

(c) Purpose and Need for the Plan.

The purpose of developing the CCP is to provide the Refuge Manager with a 15-year management plan for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their related habitats, while providing opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses. The CCP, when fully implemented, should achieve planning unit purpose(s), contribute to the mission of the System, and address any relevant mandates. The CCP must be specific to the planning unit and identify the overarching wildlife, public, or management needs for the refuge.

(d) Planning Area, Data Needs, and Data Standards. Identify the relationship between the planning unit and its ecosystem(s) as well as relationships between the refuge and any other refuges or protected areas. Identify data available to address issues discussed in Step (g) Internal Scoping. You do not need to develop new data for the CCP; the CCP can identify the need for further data collection as a part of plan implementation and refinement. Identify and describe the following as appropriate (also see Exhibit 3).

(i) Distribution, migration patterns, and abundance of fish, wildlife, and plant populations, including any threatened or endangered species, and related habitats.

(ii) Significant problems that may adversely affect the populations and habitats of fish, wildlife, and plants found within the planning unit and the actions necessary to correct or mitigate the problems.

(iii) Diversity of habitats and natural communities.

(iv) Archaeological and cultural resources.

(v) Land acquisition or habitat protection efforts.

(vi) Habitat management practices.

(vii) Natural and historic role of fire and other major disturbance agents affecting ecological processes.

(viii) Water resources including quality and quantity.

(ix) Known or suspected sources of environmental contaminants and their potential impacts on the planning unit (refer to the Contaminant Assessment Program).

(x) Opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreation.

(xi) Potential need for administrative sites or visitor facilities.

(xii) Existing administrative resources, including staffing, funding, and facilities.

(xiii) Existing special management areas, or the potential for such designations (e.g., wilderness, research natural areas, and wild and scenic rivers).

(e) Review all available information, plans, data, maps, and data standards. Based on this review, determine what the initial planning area should include and identify any additional information and data needs, including mapping and GIS needs. **Note:** All Federal agencies and their contractors must comply with data standards endorsed by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (Executive Order 12906; 59 FR 17671, April 13, 1994). Of particular relevance to refuge planning are the Vegetation Classification Standard (FGDC-STD-005) and the Classification of Wetlands

and Deep Water Habitats (FGDC-STD-004). Compliance with these standards will facilitate the sharing and exchange of high-quality vegetation and wetland data among Federal agencies and their partners. We also are developing other data standards, such as cartographic standards for delineation of refuge boundaries and land status.

(f) Vision and Goals. Review the existing planning unit vision statement and goals and determine the need for revision. If these do not exist, prepare draft vision and goals for consideration during public scoping. At a minimum each refuge should develop goals within the following management areas: habitat; fish, wildlife, and plant populations; compatible wildlife-dependent recreation; and other relevant mandates (such as refuge-specific legislation, executive orders, special area designations, etc.). In some cases, one or more of these areas will not require goal statements because opportunities do not exist in the management area. Goals will reflect planning unit purposes, contribute to the mission of the System, and will be consistent with relevant mandates and principles of sound fish and wildlife management. Planning unit goals will also reflect ecosystem goals to the extent these goals do not conflict with the System mission or the purposes for which we established the refuge. We also may develop refuge goals for our relevant mandates. Subsequently, we will develop objectives and strategies for planning unit goals (see 602 FW 2.5 (D)(a) Objective Development). For additional information on developing goals and objectives, see the *Writing Refuge Management Goals and Objectives: A Handbook* (March 1996).

(g) Internal Scoping. The planning team begins the internal scoping process by identifying management concerns, issues, and opportunities to resolve them, as well as any potential impacts and alternatives that we may need to address in the CCP and the NEPA analysis. Identify any significant problems that may adversely affect the populations and habitats of fish, wildlife, and plants found within the planning unit (including candidate, threatened, and endangered species) and the actions necessary to correct or mitigate such problems. Make a preliminary assessment of water quality and quantity issues. See 403 FW1-3. Identify the potential need for administrative sites or visitor facilities, and land acquisition. Review the background, rationale, and the success or failure of any controversial management actions, and determine whether you need more information or

data. Identify any additional information and data needed where appropriate.

(h) Public Involvement/Outreach Planning. The planning team will prepare a Public Involvement/Outreach Plan indicating how and when we will invite the affected public to participate in the development of the CCP. Establish a mailing list. Identify appropriate techniques and materials to use in public involvement efforts. Public involvement and outreach are integrated into each step and will continue throughout the planning process. For additional information on public involvement techniques, consult the *Public Participation Handbook* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1985) or the *NCTC Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning Course Handbook and Reference Notebook*.

(i) Work Plan/Planning Schedule. Establish a work plan or planning schedule for the project. Determine who will be responsible for carrying out identified tasks, gathering information and data, and preparing products identified in the work plan or schedule. Identify all key NEPA compliance steps and public involvement activities. Identify any additional expertise, besides the planning team, required to prepare the CCP. This may include an economist, a facilitator for public and other meetings, contracted professional services, etc.

(j) Planning Record. Establish a Planning Record to document the preparation of the CCP and NEPA compliance, and assign its maintenance to a team member. The Planning Record will serve as a valuable reference source and provide important background and historical information. If there is a legal challenge to the CCP, use the Planning Record to construct the Administrative Record. For additional information on the Planning Record, consult the *NCTC Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning Course Handbook and Reference Notebook*.

(2) Initiate Public Involvement and Scoping

(a) Notice of Intent. Prepare a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a CCP, with appropriate NEPA compliance, and publish the notice in the **Federal Register**. The notice initiates public scoping for the CCP/NEPA planning and decision-making process. If we initially determine that we will prepare an EIS for the CCP, the NOI should specify that. If at any time during the planning process we decide to prepare an EIS, we will publish a NOI to prepare an EIS in the **Federal Register**. A 30-day comment period will follow this notice.

(b) Public Scoping. Using news releases to the local media and other appropriate means, notify the affected public of the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the CCP and begin the scoping process. Conduct public involvement activities and gather public comments on any existing planning unit vision statements, goals, and objectives. Encourage the public to help identify potential issues, management actions and concerns, significant problems or impacts, and opportunities or alternatives to resolve them.

(c) Issues and Data Needs. Analyze all comments gathered and recorded during the scoping process. Identify any new issues, concerns, or significant problems, opportunities to resolve them, and potential refinements or revisions of existing planning unit vision statements, goals, and objectives. Based on this analysis, identify any additional information and data needed.

(3) Review Vision Statement and Goals and Determine Significant Issues

(a) Vision and Goals. Review and evaluate the public's comments on the planning unit vision statement and goals. Based on this review, modify the vision and goals for the planning unit as appropriate. See 602 FW2.5A(5).

(b) Determine Significant Issues. Review and evaluate all potential issues, management concerns, and problems and the opportunities to resolve them that the planning team or the public have identified. Identify those issues and concerns that are significant and that the CCP and associated NEPA document will address. Document the rationale for selecting significant issues, as well as the rationale for not selecting the other issues and concerns (e.g., outside the scope of the CCP, does not contribute to meeting refuge purposes/mission, etc.).

(4) Develop and Analyze Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action. This part of the process is not sequential, it is iterative. Iterations of issue assessment; refinement and development of goals, objectives, and strategies; analysis and comparison of impacts and benefits of management actions; and the packaging or combining of similar themes or programs to develop preliminary alternatives result in the development of alternative management plans, and assessment of their environmental consequences. Start the process by defining the No Action or Continuation of Current Management Alternative. The alternatives should reflect different sets of strategies and actions to achieve refuge purposes, goals and objectives. Consider presenting this information in a matrix comparing

issues, impacts, and benefits for each alternative.

(a) No Action Alternative. Define the No Action Alternative, which usually will be a continuation of current planning unit management strategies, fish, wildlife, plant populations, habitat, and public use management with no changes, or changes that would have occurred without the CCP. Develop maps that depict the No Action Alternative and document current management strategies.

(b) A Range of Alternatives. Develop a range of alternatives, or different approaches to planning unit management, that we could reasonably undertake to achieve planning unit goals and resolve any significant issues identified. Combine different sets of objectives and strategies to provide alternatives for management of the refuge. Give an equal effort to each alternative regarding specific objectives and strategies so that the decision-maker can make an informed choice. NEPA requires an equal and full analysis of all alternatives considered for implementation.

(c) Proposed Action. Identify our proposed action. This may be the alternative that best achieves planning unit purpose(s), vision, and goals; contributes to the System mission; addresses the significant issues and relevant mandates, and is consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management. Our proposed action is, for all practical purposes, the draft CCP for the planning unit.

(d) Objective Development. Develop objectives to address each goal. Consult our manual chapters on habitat management, populations management, and wildlife-dependent recreation during the development of objectives. The planning team should develop detailed, quantitative objectives when possible, using available information. Developing detailed objectives at this stage will expedite development of step-down plans. Develop objectives for specific refuge habitat types, management units, key species (e.g., migratory birds and threatened and endangered species), wildlife-dependent recreation, monitoring populations of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats, and other areas of management. Objectives may also deal with station information needs (for example, including the development of baseline data), administrative needs, and any other issues we need to address to meet the goals of the refuge. Document the rationale which supports each objective. The planning team also should consult *Writing Refuge Management Goals and Objectives: a*

Handbook (March 1996). Prepare step-down management plans to provide the specific details of how to implement some strategies, and accomplish some objectives, if needed.

(e) Strategy Development. Develop strategies to identify the specific actions, tools, or techniques which are necessary to accomplish each objective. Strategies represent specific projects that provide the detail required to assess and develop funding, staffing, and partnerships needed to implement the plan. Develop inventory and monitoring strategies to measure implementation results in quantifiable and verifiable ways. We may need step-down management plans to provide the specific details of how to implement some strategies.

(f) Environmental Consequences. Assess the environmental consequences of implementing each alternative as required by NEPA. Compare the consequences of implementing each alternative in relation to the No Action Alternative, which serves as a baseline. Describe the adverse and beneficial impacts of implementing each alternative on fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats; any threatened or endangered species; cultural resources; the local economy; the ability to provide opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and other issues identified earlier in the planning process. This analysis must provide the level of detail necessary to assess the compatibility of all proposed uses. Describe each alternative's ability to achieve planning unit purpose(s), vision, and goals; contribute to the System mission; and address the significant issues and relevant mandates. This assessment will also identify the funding, staffing, and facilities required for implementation of each alternative.

(5) Prepare Draft Plan and NEPA Document

(a) Draft CCP and NEPA Document. Concurrently prepare the draft CCP and appropriate NEPA documentation. When preparing an EA, consider integrating the draft CCP with the EA. When preparing an EIS with a CCP, integrate the documents. If you decide to prepare separate documents, see Exhibit 4 for a recommended CCP outline. If the documents are separate, the proposed action and alternatives in the EA/EIS must fully contain all of the major actions of the draft CCP. If you decide to merge the CCP and NEPA documents, see Exhibit 5 for a recommended outline. During the process of preparing the plan, refer to Exhibit 3 to ensure that you include all

required elements in the plan. Ensure compliance regarding other programs and policies, including Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 14 of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, Executive Order 13007—Protection of Sacred Sites, Executive Order 11990—Protection of Wetlands, Executive Order 11988—Floodplain Management, etc. See Exhibit 2 for a list of relevant mandates to consider during the planning process.

(b) Compatibility Determinations.

Complete or recertify compatibility determinations as part of the CCP process for all individual uses, specific use programs, or groups of uses associated with our proposed action. Prepared concurrently with the CCP, incorporate the draft compatibility determinations into the draft CCP as an appendix. We require public review and comment for all compatibility determinations. We can achieve this concurrently through public review and comment of the draft CCP and NEPA document. While other alternatives do not require formal compatibility determinations, assess the environmental consequences, and, for all practical purposes, compatibility of all uses proposed in those alternatives in the NEPA document. For additional information on compatibility determinations, consult the Service Manual, Part 603, Chapter 3 (603 FW 3).

(c) Interim Compatibility

Determinations. If our proposed action includes expanding the planning unit by acquiring new lands, the draft CCP and NEPA documents also must identify any existing wildlife-dependent recreational uses occurring on those lands. Also identify those uses deemed compatible that we may allow to continue on an interim basis once we acquire the lands, pending completion of the CCP. Incorporate these interim compatibility determinations into the draft CCP and NEPA document.

(d) Internal Review. Submit the draft CCP and NEPA document for internal review within the Region following established regional procedures. Also submit these documents for internal review to all Regional Planning Coordinators and the Washington Office Planning Coordinator. Consider all comments received from the internal reviews and make appropriate changes to the draft document. Print the draft CCP and NEPA document and prepare for public review.

(e) Public Notice, Review, and

Comment. Prepare a Notice of Availability of the draft CCP and NEPA

document and publish it in the **Federal Register**. Notify the affected public of the availability of these documents through other appropriate means, as identified in the Public Involvement/Outreach Plan. Public notices will make clear that we are seeking concurrent review on compatibility determinations. Provide a minimum of 30 days review for a draft CCP with an EA and 60 days for a draft CCP with a draft EIS. Make copies of the draft CCP and NEPA document available to appropriate elected officials; Federal, State, and local agencies; Tribal governments; organizations; libraries; adjacent landowners; and individuals requesting them. Conduct appropriate public involvement activities as called for in the Public Involvement/Outreach Plan. Document all public comments, both written and oral, received on the draft CCP and NEPA document as part of the planning record.

(6) Prepare and Adopt Final Plan

(a) Public Comment, Analysis, and Response. Review and analyze all written and oral comments received from the public on the draft CCP and NEPA document. Determine which comments are substantive and warrant written response. Modify the document(s) as appropriate. Prepare a summary of the public comments received and a statement of the disposition of concerns expressed in those comments, noting where we have changed the document(s) or why we did not make such changes. Incorporate the summary and statement of disposition into the final document(s) (usually in the NEPA document or a CCP appendix).

(b) Final CCP and NEPA Document(s). Identify our preferred alternative and prepare the final CCP and appropriate NEPA documentation. The preferred alternative can be the proposed action, no action alternative, or another alternative discussed in the draft CCP and NEPA document. Following completion of the final CCP/NEPA document, the product of the CCP process is a stand-alone CCP (the preferred alternative for the planning unit). During the process of preparing the final plan, refer to Exhibit 3 to ensure that you include all required elements.

(c) Internal Review. Submit the final document(s) for internal review within the region according to established regional procedures. Consider all comments received from the internal review and make appropriate changes to the final document(s).

(d) Decision Document. The decision document will certify that agency

compliance requirements are met and that the CCP, when implemented, will achieve the purposes of the refuge and will contribute to fulfilling the System mission.

(i) CCP with an EA and FONSI. The Refuge Manager and Planning Team Leader submit the final CCP and the FONSI through line supervision for concurrence and approval by the Regional Director. The Regional Director will sign and date both the FONSI and the final CCP. Following approval, print and distribute the final documents and appropriate appendices. Provide the FONSI to all interested and affected parties. Concurrent with distribution of the FONSI, provide the final, approved CCP or a summary to all interested parties. In some cases we may require a 30-day public review period for the FONSI (see 550 FW 3.3 B(4)(c)). In these cases, we may not sign or release the final CCP until the end of the 30-day review.

(ii) CCP with an EIS and ROD. The Refuge Manager and Planning Team Leader submit the final CCP/EIS through line supervision for concurrence and approval to release these documents to the public. Provide the final EIS to interested and affected parties for at least 30 days prior to issuing a ROD. After a minimum of 30 days, submit the ROD through line supervision for concurrence and approval by the Regional Director. The Regional Director will sign and date both the ROD and the final CCP. Following approval, print the final documents and appropriate appendices. Provide the ROD or notification of its availability to all interested and affected parties. Concurrent with the release of the ROD, provide or make available the final, approved CCP or a summary to interested parties. Effective with the signing and release of the ROD, implement the CCP.

(iii) The final product of the CCP process is a stand-alone CCP (the preferred alternative for the planning unit).

(e) Public Notice. Prepare a Notice of Availability of the final approved CCP and NEPA document(s) and publish it in the **Federal Register**. Notify the affected public of the availability of the final document(s) and through other appropriate means, as identified in the Public Involvement/Outreach Plan. Send copies of all final documents to the regional and Washington Office Planning Coordinators. Make copies of the final approved CCP and NEPA document(s) available to appropriate elected officials; Federal, State, and local agencies; Tribal governments; organizations; libraries; adjacent

landowners; and individuals requesting them.

(7) Implement Plan, Monitor, and Evaluate. Following formal adoption of the CCP and public notification of the decision, implementation of the management strategies identified in the CCP may begin. Allocate funding and staff time to the priority management strategies as defined in the CCP. Initiate the monitoring and evaluation process identified in the CCP to determine if we are making progress in achieving the planning unit purpose(s), vision, goals, and objectives. Through adaptive management, evaluation of monitoring

and research results may indicate the need to modify refuge objectives or management strategies.

(8) Review and Revise Plan

(a) Plan Review. Review the CCP periodically to decide if it requires any revisions. Modify management activities periodically if monitoring and evaluation determine that we need changes to achieve planning unit purpose(s), vision, goals, and objectives.

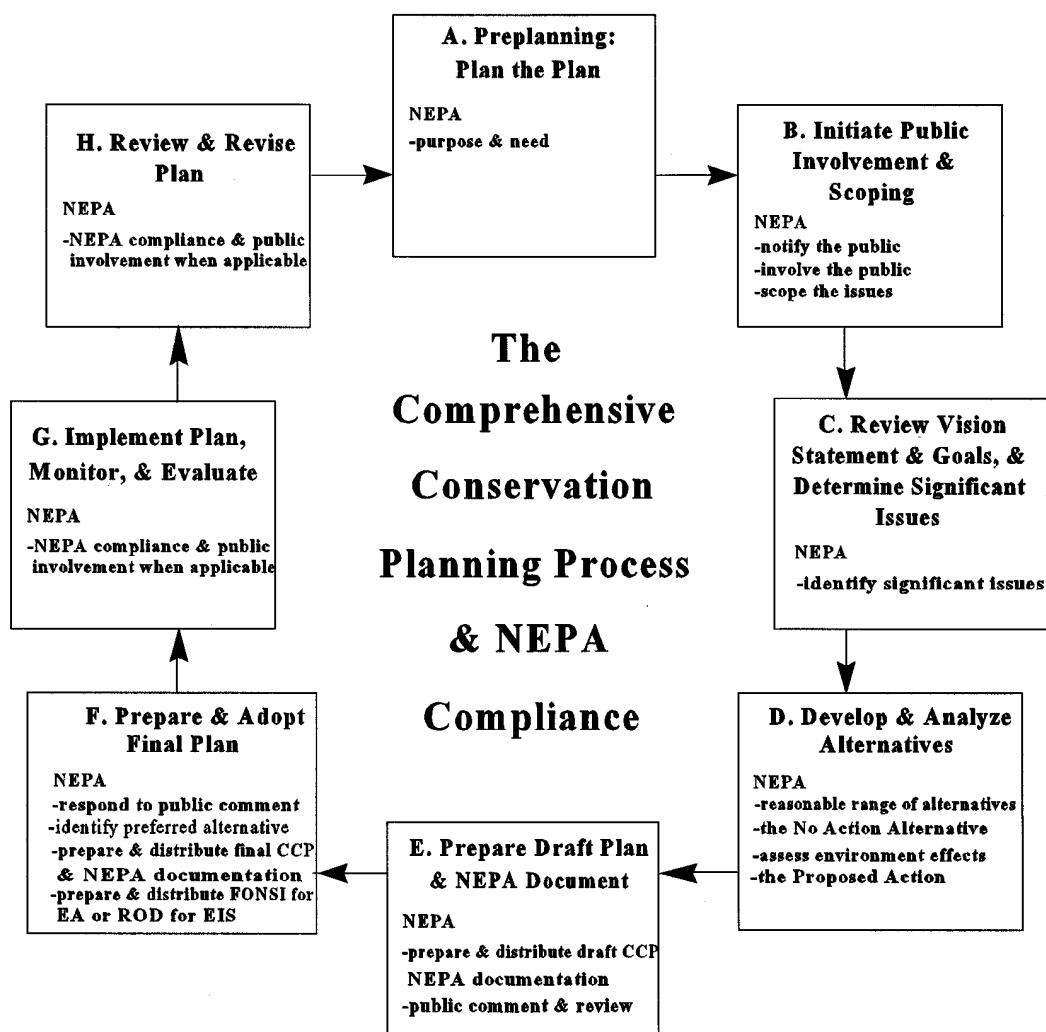
(b) Plan Revision. As set forth in the Refuge Administration Act, periodically review and revise the CCP at least every 15 years. Make minor plan revisions

generally through the use of a categorical exclusion, if applicable. Document minor plan revisions that meet the criteria of a categorical exclusion in an Environmental Action Statement, in accordance with 550 FW 3.3C. Contact the Regional NEPA Coordinator for an up-to-date list of categorical exclusions. If the plan requires a major revision, then the CCP process starts anew at the pre-planning step.

(c) Ongoing Public Involvement. Continue informing and involving the public through appropriate means.

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Exhibit 1



Note: Although the steps are sequential, CCP planning and NEPA documentation are iterative processes. It is normal to cycle through some of the steps more than once or to have several steps occurring simultaneously. Actions within each of the eight steps may not be sequential either.

EXHIBIT 2—MANDATES TO CONSIDER DURING COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLANNING

	Applicable Yes/No
Statutes	
Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, as amended	_____
American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978	_____
Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990	_____
Anadromous Fish Conservation Act of 1965, as amended	_____
Antiquities Act of 1906	_____
Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974	_____
Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended	_____
Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940, as amended	_____
Clean Air Act of 1970	_____
Clean Water Act of 1974, as amended	_____
Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended	_____
Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986	_____
Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended	_____
Farmland Protection Act of 1981, as amended	_____
Federal Cave Protection Act of 1988	_____
Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1990	_____
Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956	_____
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958	_____
Fishery (Magnuson) Conservation and Management Act of 1976	_____
Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended	_____
Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929	_____
Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act of 1934	_____
Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended	_____
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969	_____
National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended	_____
National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended	_____
Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990	_____
Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, as amended	_____
Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899	_____
Water Resources Planning Act of 1965 (sole-source aquifers)	_____
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1972, as amended	_____
Wilderness Act of 1964, as amended	_____
Executive Orders	
Executive Order 11644, Use of Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands	_____
Executive Order 11987, Exotic Organisms	_____
Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management	_____
Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands	_____
Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice for Minority Populations	_____
Executive Order 12996, Management and General Public Use of the National Wildlife Refuge System	_____
Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites	_____
Executive Order 13084, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	_____

Exhibit 3—Checklist of Required Comprehensive Conservation Plan Elements

- _____ Short description of the refuge to include:
- _____ Size
 - _____ Establishment date
 - _____ Regional setting (include area map)
 - _____ Status of acquisition
 - _____ Current management (including a map)
 - _____ Current staffing
 - _____ Existing partnerships
 - _____ Purpose(s) for which we established the refuge
 - _____ Refuge System mission and goals.
 - _____ Ecosystem goals and objectives.
 - _____ Goals and objectives for other landscape level plans.
 - _____ National goals and objectives for species, species groups, or programs (e.g., shorebirds, an endangered

species, priority public use program).

- _____ Identify any relevant mandates that apply to the area or the proposed plan.
- _____ Description of the refuge environment:
 - _____ the distribution, migration patterns, and abundance of fish wildlife, and plant populations within the planning unit;
 - _____ the archaeological and cultural values of the planning unit;
 - _____ refuge land status map;
 - _____ description of refuge (planning area) vegetation types (map required);
 - _____ description of vegetation/land cover and wildlife habitat relationships;
 - _____ description of wildlife habitat and species relationships;
 - _____ describe the context of the refuge in meeting the habitat needs of fish,

wildlife, and plants, as they occur throughout their natural ranges;

- _____ describe the natural and historic role of fire and other ecological processes;
- _____ identify any existing special management areas (e.g., wilderness, wild and scenic rivers);
- _____ the relationship between the planning unit and other refuges and protected areas.

Exhibit 3

- _____ Document and describe the following:
 - _____ the need for administrative sites or visitor facilities and areas within the planning unit that are suitable for such sites;
 - _____ significant problems that may adversely affect the populations and habitats of fish, wildlife, and plants within the planning unit and the actions necessary to correct or

- mitigate such problems;
- _____ summary of management history;
- _____ water quantity and quality requirements and issues;
- _____ identify all known or suspected sources of environmental contaminants and their potential impacts (i.e., Contaminant Assessment Program);
- _____ opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses;
- _____ other significant issues of management or public concern;
- _____ the potential for special management areas (e.g., wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, research natural areas).
- _____ Refuge Vision Statement
- _____ Refuge goals for at least the following areas:
 - _____ habitat management (including land protection needs as appropriate);
 - _____ fish, wildlife, and plant populations management;
 - _____ wildlife-dependent recreation;
 - _____ others as needed to meet relevant mandates (e.g., wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, cultural resources, etc.).
- _____ Objectives for each goal, including objectives to monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife and plants which will evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.
- _____ Strategies to achieve each objective.
- _____ Map(s) of desired future conditions (e.g., habitat management areas, facilities, wildlife-dependent recreation sites, etc.).
- _____ Identify step-down management plans required to fully implement the plan.
- _____ Prioritized list of projects and estimated project costs (update priorities and cost estimates annually).
- _____ Staffing required to implement the plan.
- _____ Potential partnership opportunities.
- _____ Monitoring plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and project implementation, including monitoring of target fish, wildlife, and plant populations and their habitats.
- _____ Summary of public involvement process, comments, and consultation and coordination with other Federal agencies, State conservation agencies, and adjacent landowners.
- _____ Compatibility determinations.
- _____ Wilderness review.
- _____ Habitat/Land Protection Plans (if applicable).

_____ NEPA documentation.

Note: Some of these required elements may not be available. In these cases, you need to develop objectives or strategies in the plan to acquire that information.

Exhibit 4—Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Recommended Outline

- Cover Sheet
- Title/Approval Page
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- Summary
- I. Introduction/Background
 - Refuge Overview: History of Refuge Establishment, Acquisition and Management
 - Purpose of and Need for Plan
 - NWRS Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles
 - Refuge Purpose(s)
 - Refuge Vision Statement
 - Legal and Policy Guidance
 - Existing Partnerships
- II. Planning Process
 - Description of Planning Process
 - Planning Issues
- III. Summary Refuge and Resource Descriptions
 - Geographic/Ecosystem Setting
 - Refuge Resources, Cultural Values and Uses
 - Special Management Areas
- IV. Management Direction
 - Refuge Management Direction: Goals, Objectives and Strategies/Projects
 - Refuge Management Policies and Guidelines
- V. Implementation and Monitoring
 - Funding and Personnel
 - Step-down Management Plans
 - Partnership Opportunities
 - Monitoring and Evaluation
 - Plan Amendment and Revision
- Appendices
 - Glossary
 - Bibliography
 - RONS List
 - MMS list
 - Compatibility Determinations
 - Habitat/Land Protection Plan(s)
 - Compliance Requirements
 - NEPA Documentation
 - Summary of Public Involvement/Comments and Consultation/Coordination
 - Mailing List
 - List of Preparers
 - Others, as appropriate

Exhibit 5—EA or EIS Incorporating Elements of a CCP Recommended Outline

- Cover Sheet
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- Summary
- I. Introduction, Purpose of and Need for Action

- Purpose of and Need for Plan
- NWRS Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles
- History of Refuge Establishment, Acquisition and Management
- Legal and Policy Guidance
- Refuge Purpose(s)
- Refuge Vision Statement
- Refuge Management Direction: Goals
- Refuge Management Policies and Guidelines
- Step-down Management Plans
- Description of Planning Process
- Planning Issues
- Plan Amendment and Revision
- II. Alternatives, Including the Service's Proposed Action
 - Description of Each Alternative
 - Refuge Management Direction: Objectives and Strategies
 - Funding and Personnel
 - Partnership Opportunities
 - Monitoring and Evaluation
 - Alternatives Considered, but Eliminated from Detailed Study
 - Summary Comparison of Alternatives
- III. Affected Environment
 - Geographic/Ecosystem Setting
 - Refuge Resources, Cultural Values and Uses
- IV. Environmental Consequences
 - Environmental Effects of Each Alternative
- V. List of Preparers
- VI. Consultation and Coordination with Others
 - Summary of Public Involvement/Comments
 - Mailing List
- Appendices
 - Glossary
 - Bibliography
 - RONS List
 - MMS List
 - Compatibility Determinations
 - Habitat/Land Protection Plan(s)
 - Compliance Requirements
 - Others, as appropriate

Refuge Management

Part 602 National Wildlife Refuge System Planning

Chapter 3 Step-Down Management Planning

602 FW 3

3.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides guidance on step-down management planning.

3.2 What is our policy for step-down management planning? Prepare step-down management plans when required by policy or identified in Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) and when they may be necessary to provide additional detail for achieving objectives or implementing management strategies identified in

CCPs. Step-down management plans should include public involvement and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance documentation, as appropriate. Develop step-down management plans following the planning process guidance in 602 FW 2. (Consult your NEPA Coordinator.)

3.3 What is the applicability of step-down management planning and its relationship to Comprehensive Conservation Plans?

A. Step-down management planning is the formulation of detailed plans that describe management activities necessary to achieve objectives or implement management strategies identified in the CCP.

B. Step-down plans describe the specific management actions we are to follow, "stepping down" from general goals, objectives, and strategies. The preparation of new step-down plans or substantial changes to existing step-down plans typically will require further compliance with NEPA and other policies, and opportunity for public review. For public use plans or other step-down plans dealing with proposed uses of the refuge, prepare and append compatibility determinations to the plan.

C. The CCP will identify which step-down management plans are necessary and provide a schedule for their completion. While we require certain step-down plans for all refuges, we may require others, such as fire management and pest management depending on refuge resources, specific program requirements, or the need for additional details to implement management strategies identified in CCPs. In the absence of an approved CCP, we may develop step-down plans to describe goals, objectives, management strategies, and details necessary to implement a management program.

D. As an alternative to separate step-down management plans, we may

address management programs in detail during the preparation of the CCP. Determining which programs we can address in detail in the CCP depends on several factors, including the degree of public interest, the amount of available information, and the complexity of the issues.

3.4 How do we combine step-down management plans? Address management subjects individually or combined into a single, integrated step-down plan. This decision rests with the Refuge Manager. Base the decision on management strategies defined in the CCP, the relationship between management program areas, and the complexity of the programs under consideration. Some program areas, such as fire management and habitat management, logically suggest an integrated approach.

3.5 What is the list of potential step-down management plans? Following is the current list of potential refuge step-down management plans. Consider all of these plans during the CCP process. The CCP will document which plans we require for the station.

Step-down management plans	Service manual reference
Occupational Safety and Health (required).	(Part 240)
Safety Program	(240 FW 1-9)
Safety Operations ...	(241 FW 1-8)
Industrial Hygiene ...	(242 FW 1-13)
Emergency Spill Response Plan.	(242 FW 6.1)
Compliance Requirements.	(Part 561)
Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan.	(561 FW 3)
Pollution Prevention Plan.	(560 FW 1 and 560 FW 2)
Hazardous Waste Contingency Plan.	(561 FW 6)
Special Management Areas.	(Part 611)
Research Natural Areas.	(611 FW 1)

Step-down management plans	Service manual reference
Public Use Natural Areas.	(611 FW 2)
Wild and Scenic Rivers.	(611 FW 3)
National Trails Wilderness Area Management.	(611 FW 4) (Part 610)
Man in the Biosphere Reserve.	(National Park Service)
Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserves.	
Ramsar Convention	(International Legal Materials 11:963-976)
Minerals Management Minerals and Mining	(Part 612)
Oil and Gas	(612 FW 1)
Long-Range Water Management Plan.	(612 FW 2)
Cultural Resources Management.	(403 FW 1.4)
Habitat Management Plan (HMT).	(Part 614)
Fire Management	(Part 620)
Wildlife-dependent Recreation.	(Part 621)
Hunting (required) ...	(Part 605)
Fishing (required) ...	(605 FW 2)
Wildlife Observation	(605 FW 3)
Wildlife Photography	(605 FW 4)
Environmental Education.	(605 FW 5)
Interpretation	(605 FW 6)
Law Enforcement	(605 FW 7)
Populations Management	(Parts 440-459)
Wildlife Inventories ..	(Part 701)
Propagation and Stocking.	(701 FW 2)
Marking and Banding.	(701 FW 3)
Disease Prevention and Control.	(701 FW 4)
Fishery Management	(701 FW 7)
Trapping	(Part 710)
Pest Management ...	(631 FW 4)
Exotic Species Management.	(562 FW 2)
Air Quality Management	(Part 751)
	(563 FW 2)

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