

Type of Review: Extension (without change).

Affected Public: Businesses, Individuals, Institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 325,000.

Estimated Time per Respondent: 14 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 79,500.

Estimated Total Annualized Cost on the Public: N/A.

Dated: August 9, 2006.

Tracey Denning,

Agency Clearance Officer, Information Services Branch.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Great Dismal Swamp and Nansemond National Wildlife Refuges: Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces that the final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is available for Great Dismal Swamp and Nansemond National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). Prepared in conformance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife System Improvement Act of 1997, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the plan describes how the Service intends to manage the refuges over the next 15 years. A Finding of No Significant Impact was approved by the Regional Director.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the CCP is available on compact diskette or in hard copy, and may be obtained by writing Deloras Freeman, Great Dismal Swamp NWR, 3100 Desert Road, Suffolk, Virginia 23434, or by e-mail at deloras_freeman@fws.gov. This document may also be accessed at the Web address <http://library.fws.gov/ccps.htm>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Deloras Freeman, Refuge Planner at the above address, by phone at 757-986-3705, or by e-mail at deloras_freeman@fws.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The 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 *et seq.*), requires the Service to develop a CCP for each refuge within the system. The purpose of developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife science, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and habitats, a CCP identifies wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. The CCP will be reviewed and updated at least every 15 years in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1969, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, as amended).

Established in 1974, Great Dismal Swamp NWR encompasses 111,203 acres, the largest intact remnant of a vast habitat that once covered more than 1 million acres of southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. Nansemond NWR, established December 12, 1973, is an unstaffed satellite refuge encompassing 423 acres.

Our Final CCP includes management direction for each of the refuges, and details habitat management and public use programs based on the vision for the refuge at the time of its establishment in 1974. We have included the restoration of 8,000 acres of Atlantic white cedar habitat, the restoration of 10,000 acres of red-cockaded woodpecker habitat, and the restoration of a remnant marsh to its original 250 acres from its present 30 acres. We would establish a neotropical migratory bird focus area near Jericho Lane, in which we would focus habitat management and modeling, population surveys, and education and interpretation related to neotropical migratory bird populations. We will implement a limited bear hunt. This hunt will occur on a total of 2 days during November and December, with a total maximum of 100 permits issued. We anticipate a harvest of 11 bears with a harvest limit target of 20 bears. If 10 or more bears are taken the first day, various parameters will be evaluated and the second hunt day may be cancelled. As with the deer hunt, dogs will not be allowed as a means to hunt bears. The bear hunt is currently authorized in the Code of Federal

Regulations (50 CFR Part 32), but has never been implemented.

We have also targeted building projects, such as the development of an environmental education site at Jericho Ditch in Suffolk, Virginia. We will also develop an exhibit to be situated at the downtown visitor center that is run by the City of Suffolk. Additionally, we propose the conversion of the current administrative building for a concession operation that will rent kayaks and outdoor equipment and run tours of the swamp, the construction of a new visitor center and headquarters between the old and new Route 17 in Chesapeake, Virginia, and the construction of new trails, observation and photography platforms, or towers. The CCP proposes to enhance environmental education and outreach, and to establish hunter safety and youth hunting programs.

- The Service solicited comments on the draft CCP/EA for Great Dismal Swamp and Nansemond NWRs from March 13 to April 24, 2006 (March 13, 2006, 71 FR 12709). We developed a list of substantive comments that required responses. Editorial suggestions and notes of concurrence with or opposition to certain proposals were noted and included in the decision making process, but did not receive formal responses. The Final CCP includes responses to all substantive comments.

Based upon comments that we received, we have chosen management alternative B, with the following modifications:

- *Land Protection:* A number of comments expressed support for protection of the Great Dismal Swamp ecosystem, including surrounding lands. Additionally, a comment voiced concern that the wording of Goal 3 did not adequately reflect the refuge purpose as stated in the Dismal Swamp Act. The refuge addressed these comments with the following actions:

- (1) Addition of the following strategy to Goal 3: "Develop sound working relationships with adjoining landowners, nearby neighboring landowners, and other key landowners within the ecosystem to protect the integrity of the refuge boundary and further the protection of the ecosystem." The refuge will take advantage of partnership opportunities around the refuge.

- (2) Goal 3 was broadened to better reflect the intent of the enabling legislation and reworded as: "Provide protection and restoration of those areas within Great Dismal Swamp ecosystem that are remnants of the Great Dismal Swamp and/or are restorable to Great Dismal Swamp habitat while providing

support to the protection and restoration of all its components and adjacent habitats that directly affect the vitality and viability of the ecosystem.”

- **Wildlife Observation:** A suggestion was made to develop a through-swamp canoe/kayak trail. This suggestion was adopted. A through-swamp canoe/kayak trail will be developed in Washington Ditch from the existing parking area to Lake Drummond and then via the Feeder Ditch to the Dismal Swamp Canal, and a partnership will be sought to oversee maintenance of the trail.

- **Road Improvements:** A number of comments about the amount of road paving that was proposed were received. The refuge decided to reduce the amount of paving. The proposed auto tour route and the access to Lake Drummond will remain as gravel roads. Paving will only occur on highest use access roads at Washington Ditch and Jericho Ditch.

Dated: July 26, 2006.

Michael G. Thabault,

Acting Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hadley, Massachusetts.

[FR Doc. E6-13553 Filed 8-16-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability: draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA). It describes how we intend to manage Rachel Carson NWR during the next 15 years. We prepared this Draft CCP/EA in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended.

DATES: The Draft CCP/EA is available for public review and comment. We must receive your comments on or before September 18, 2006. During the 30-day comment period, we plan to host public meetings in the local area. We will post the details of each meeting at least 2 weeks in advance to our project mailing list in local papers, at the refuge, and at

our Web site, <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/rachelcarsonrefuge/>.

ADDRESSES: You may obtain copies of the draft CCP/EA on compact disk or in print by writing to Carl Melberg, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Northeast Regional Office, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, Massachusetts 01035-9589, or e-mailing northeastplanning@fws.gov. You may also view the draft on the Web at <http://library.fws.gov/ccps.htm>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Carl Melberg, 413-253-8521.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The 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 *et seq.*), requires the Service to develop a CCP for each refuge. The purpose of developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), in conformance with the sound principles of fish and wildlife science, natural resources conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and habitats, CCPs identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental interpretation and education. The Service will review and update each CCP at least once every 15 years, in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4370d) (NEPA).

This Draft CCP/EA identifies goals, long-range objectives, and strategies for achieving the purposes for which this refuge was established. The document poses three management alternatives:

Alternative A (Current Management):

This alternative is the no action alternative required by NEPA.

Alternative A defines our current management activities, including those planned, funded, or under way, and serves as the baseline against which to compare the other two action alternatives. It would maintain our present levels of approved refuge staffing and the biological and visitor programs now in place. Three new facilities are incorporated in this alternative to support current and approved management, staffing, and administrative obligations. The refuge would continue to acquire the 3,833

acres remaining within its current approved boundary.

Alternative B (the Service-preferred alternative): This alternative represents the combination of actions that we believe will most effectively achieve the purposes and goals of the refuge and address the major issues. It builds on the programs identified under current management. Funding and staffing would need to increase to adequately support the program expansions we propose. We propose to expand the refuge by 5,558 acres beyond its current approved boundary of 9,126 acres. We would add acreage to Brave Boat Harbor, Upper Wells, Spurwink, Biddeford, Mousam River, Little River, and Moody Divisions, and we would establish a new York River Division, encompassing the largest undeveloped salt marsh south of Portland. Alternative B also includes removing 101 parcels totaling 164 acres from the current approved boundary that are no longer suitable for Service acquisition. The refuge would continue to acquire the 3,833 acres remaining within its current approved boundary. This proposal increases the protection and management of migratory wildlife, endangered and threatened species, and other species of concern by protecting additional aquatic and upland habitat. It includes expanded management and additional public use opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation such as hunting and fishing, as well as wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation. A new administrative complex, including office space, maintenance facilities, and visitor contact station, will be built. This alternative includes combining the Moody, Lower Wells, Upper Wells, and Mousam River Divisions into one, the Wells Bay Division. This alternative will also increase the number and quality of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, and allow us to use Rachel Carson NWR's proximity to Portland and urban communities to better promote NWRS principles and improve public support for national wildlife refuges.

Alternative C is the same as alternative B, however, it proposes to expand the refuge by 11,397 acres beyond the current approved boundary. That 11,397-acre expansion includes the 5,558 acres in Alternative B. It would add acreage to Brave Boat Harbor, Upper Wells, Spurwink, Biddeford, and Moody Divisions, and would establish a new York River Division, encompassing the largest undeveloped salt marsh south of Portland. This alternative will also increase the number and quality of wildlife-dependent recreational