

Chapter 2. Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process

2.1 Planning Process Overview

This comprehensive conservation plan/environmental impact statement (CCP/EIS) for the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Refuge Complex) was prepared in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) planning policies and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This chapter describes the planning process for CCP development. Key steps in the planning process are shown in Figure 2.1 and include

- forming the planning team and conducting preplanning,
- initiating public involvement and scoping,
- identifying issues and developing vision and goal statements for each refuge,
- developing alternative management actions and assessing their environmental effects,
- publishing the draft CCP/EIS,
- revising the draft CCP/EIS and publishing the final CCP/EIS,
- publishing the record of decision, and
- implementing the CCP/EIS and monitoring.



Figure 2.1. The Planning Process

2.2 Agency and Tribal Coordination

This CCP/EIS was developed by a core interdisciplinary planning team of Service employees, several consultants, one cooperating agency, and an extended planning team of other federal and state agencies. Meetings were held throughout the process to discuss various planning issues and develop vision statements, goals, objectives, strategies, and alternative management actions. The draft CCP/EIS was prepared with the assistance of third-party contractors including North State Resources, Bigfoot Consulting, and Total Quality NEPA. The Service served as lead agency and independently reviewed, modified, and approved the contractors' work.

The Service has a unique relationship with the Klamath Tribes that involves a trust responsibility unlike that of the general public. The Klamath Tribes include the Klamath, Modoc, and Yahooskin Peoples. The Service has engaged in meetings with representatives of the Klamath Tribes and solicited comments throughout the planning process. During the initial scoping period, the Service invited the Klamath Tribes to a separate meeting to discuss the planning process and any concerns from the tribes as required in government to government consultation. Although representatives from the Klamath Tribes indicated they had no concerns that required a special session, coordination meetings with the Service and the Klamath Tribes were held periodically between 2010 and present. At these meetings, Service staff acquainted tribal representatives with the refuges and the planning process and obtained input on planning issues. The Klamath Tribes were provided the opportunity to review the administrative draft document and the cultural resources overview prepared in support of the environmental document.

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has been designated a formal cooperating agency for the CCP/EIS in accordance with Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1501.6. As a cooperating agency, Reclamation's scope of involvement is limited to those areas of special expertise and/or lands, waterbodies, facilities, or programs administered by Reclamation that may be affected by the alternatives developed in the CCP/EIS. Reclamation has "jurisdiction by law" and/or "special expertise" regarding particular Klamath Reclamation Project facilities that fall adjacent to or within the boundaries of four of the national wildlife refuges (refuges) (Lower Klamath, Clear Lake, Tule Lake, and Upper Klamath Refuges) addressed in this CCP/EIS.

An extended planning team comprised of other agencies has also contributed to the development of the Draft CCP/EIS and had the opportunity to review of the administrative Draft CCP/EIS. The extended planning team includes staff members from the following agencies: National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

2.3 Public Involvement

Public involvement is an essential component of the CCP and NEPA process. Preliminary planning for the CCP/EIS for the Refuge Complex began in 2009. The official planning process for the CCP/EIS commenced with public scoping during spring 2010. Briefing materials and requests for input were posted to the website, circulated via newspapers and radio programs, and mailed to known interested parties. On April 29, 2010, the Service published a notice of intent in the Federal Register for the preparation of the CCP/EIS for the Refuge Complex. The notice of intent provided details for public participation in the scoping process, including the location and timing

for public scoping meetings. Public scoping meetings were held in Tulelake, California (May 10, 2010); Medford, Oregon (May 11, 2010); Redding, California (May 12, 2010); and Klamath Falls, Oregon (May 13, 2010). Approximately 72 people attended the four meetings, and written comments were recorded. Additional comments were received via letters, emails, and comment cards. The scoping comment period ended on June 28, 2010.

In May 2010, the Service mailed letters to elected officials to describe the CCP planning process, describe the CCP and refuge management issues of concern, and to offer briefing meetings. Elected officials included Klamath County Commissioners, Modoc County Supervisors, Siskiyou County Supervisors, California Representative Herger, California Representative McClintock, Oregon Representative Wyden, California Senator Boxer, California Senator Feinstein, Oregon Senator Merkley, and Oregon Senator Walden. Senator Feinstein's staff requested a briefing and the meeting was held in June 2010. The Service also met with Senator Merkley's staff about refuge management on several occasions throughout 2010 and 2011.

Planning updates were also distributed throughout the planning process and published on the Refuge Complex website.

One of the most important aspects of the CCP process is the development of vision statements, goals, and strategies for each refuge to guide the development of management alternatives for analysis in the CCP/EIS. These key terms are defined below.

2.4 Development of Refuge Vision Statements

Chapter 2. A vision statement, which is developed or reviewed for each individual refuge unit as part of the CCP process, is defined as "A concise statement of what the planning unit should be, or what we hope to do, based primarily upon the Refuge System mission and specific refuge purposes, and other mandates" (Service Manual, 602 FW 1.5[Z]). The refuge vision statement provides a descriptive picture of how the refuge will look in the future and describes the desired future conditions in the long term (more than 15 years). The vision statements for each of the five refuges are presented below.

2.4.1 Vision Statement for Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge

Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge will be an actively managed refuge with an abundance of productive and functional wetlands. We will demonstrate land and water management that exemplifies proper waterfowl management. Working with our conservation partners, we will employ current land management techniques and science to inform habitat management and restoration actions. We will establish a variety of native wetland plant communities and high-energy agricultural crops to support the highest degree of diverse migratory birds in North America. We will manage for a matrix of shallow freshwater marshes, open water, grassy uplands, and intensively managed agricultural croplands to provide essential year-round feeding, resting, nesting, and brood-rearing habitat for waterfowl and other birds and wildlife. We will support a majority of Pacific Flyway migrants during annual spring and fall migrations; as well as provide habitat for the more than 400 species that use this refuge throughout the year, including sandhill cranes; thousands of shorebirds; bald eagles; various water birds including white-faced ibis, great blue and black-crowned herons, great and snowy egrets; western, Clark's, and eared grebes; American white pelicans; several species of terns and gulls; and reptiles, amphibians, and mammals.

Establishing reliable water and the ability to cost-effectively and efficiently deliver it throughout wetland units on Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge is paramount to the Service's ability to provide diverse wetlands, protect native habitats and wildlife diversity throughout the year, reduce populations of invasive plants, and respond to changing environmental and climatic conditions. Thus, as our highest priority for Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, we will continue to seek solutions for securing and delivering consistent water.

The Service will also continue to promote sustainable agricultural practices that complement proper waterfowl management and benefit local economies. We will integrate diverse high-energy agricultural crops with productive wetlands to support migratory birds, reduce depredation on private lands, and seek solutions to reduce the use of pesticides.

By maintaining productive wetlands and agricultural habitats that support a wide variety of birds and wildlife, we hope that Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge will continue to be a favorite destination for current and future generations to enjoy rich cultural and natural values. The Service will increase high-quality wildlife-dependent visitor services by maintaining diverse hunting opportunities and expanding environmental education, interpretation programs, wildlife observation, and wildlife photography opportunities.

We will employ adaptive management techniques that will allow us to best respond to changing environmental and climatic conditions. It is our hope that successful implementation of management actions will result in premier habitats for millions of birds and wildlife and high-quality wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, as President Theodore Roosevelt intended when he established Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge as the nation's first waterfowl refuge more than one century ago.

2.4.2 Vision Statement for Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge will demonstrate a managed landscape with a full suite of Great Basin sage-steppe habitat features. Working with our conservation partners, we will employ current land management techniques and science to inform habitat management and restoration actions. Healthy habitats will contain native plant populations, which will enable resiliency to fire.

Resulting healthy sage-steppe vegetation communities will support many wildlife species. In particular, rocky islands will provide an important nesting site for American white pelicans, as well as double-crested cormorants and other colonial nesting birds. Uplands will provide quality fawning habitat for pronghorn antelope. Uplands will also support an increasing population of the last remaining lek of sage-grouse in northeastern California and perhaps also support new pioneering leks.

By maintaining productive sage-steppe habitats that support a variety of birds and wildlife, we hope that Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge will provide opportunities for visitors to learn about the area's rich cultural and natural resources. Visitors will enjoy environmental education and interpretation programs, select hunting opportunities, as well as opportunities for high-quality wildlife observation and photography.

We will employ adaptive management techniques that will allow us to best respond to changing environmental and climatic conditions. It is our hope that successful implementation of

management actions will result in premier wildlife habitat and high-quality wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities on this remote refuge.

2.4.3 Vision Statement for Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge will be an intensively managed refuge with productive and functional wetlands. We will demonstrate land and water management that exemplifies proper waterfowl management. Working with our conservation partners, we will employ current land management techniques and science to inform habitat management and restoration actions. We will employ adaptive management techniques that will allow us to best respond to changing environmental and climatic conditions. We will provide essential year-round feeding, resting, nesting, and brood-rearing habitat for waterfowl and other birds, especially white-fronted, snow, Ross, and cackling Canada geese. We will support more than 400 species that use this refuge throughout the year, including sandhill cranes; thousands of shorebirds; bald eagles; various water birds including white-faced ibis, great blue and black-crowned herons, great and snowy egrets; western, Clark's, and eared grebes; American white pelicans; several species of terns and gulls; and reptiles, amphibians, and mammals.

We will also work within this strong agricultural community to showcase and promote sustainable agricultural practices that complement proper waterfowl management, and benefit local economies. We will integrate diverse high-energy agricultural crops with productive wetlands to support migratory birds, reduce depredation on private lands, and seek solutions to reduce the use of pesticides.

By maintaining productive wetlands and agricultural habitats that support a wide variety of birds and wildlife, we hope that Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge will continue to be a favorite destination for current and future generations to enjoy rich cultural and natural values. The Service will increase high-quality wildlife-dependent visitor services by maintaining diverse hunting opportunities and expanding environmental education, interpretation programs, wildlife observation, and wildlife photography opportunities.

We will employ adaptive management techniques that will allow us to best respond to changing environmental and climatic conditions. It is our hope that successful implementation of management actions will result in premier habitat for millions of birds and wildlife and opportunities for high-quality wildlife-dependent recreation.

2.4.4 Vision Statement for Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge

Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge will provide important marsh habitat in Upper Klamath Lake. Working with our conservation partners, we will employ current land management techniques and science to inform habitat management and restoration actions. We will seek opportunities to increase wocus, improve wetland habitat, increase summer refugial habitat for endangered suckers, and improve fish passage for native redband trout.

Resulting healthy marsh wetlands will benefit many wildlife species including a variety of waterfowl, grebes, American white pelican, bald eagles, different heron species, native redband trout, endangered sucker species, and others.

By maintaining diverse wetland and marsh habitats that support a variety of birds and wildlife, we hope that Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge will remain a favorite destination for a variety of visitors. We will provide opportunities for visitors to learn about the area's rich cultural and natural resources including environmental education and interpretation programs, a variety of hunting opportunities, and opportunities for high-quality wildlife observation and photography.

We will employ adaptive management techniques that will allow us to best respond to changing environmental and climatic conditions. It is our hope that successful implementation of management actions will result in premier wildlife habitat and opportunities for high-quality wildlife-dependent recreation.

2.4.5 Vision Statement for Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge will be an actively managed forested refuge. We will strive to manage for mature stands of mixed-conifer forest conditions composed of Douglas fir, incense cedar, and some white fir; open stands of old growth ponderosa pine with grassy understory; and flourishing aspen riparian stands.

Resulting healthy forest conditions will certainly meet the nesting and winter roosting needs of the largest concentration of bald eagles in the lower 48 states. Healthy forest conditions will also attract neotropical migrants, provide habitat for other birds and wildlife, and restore fire tolerance and reduce wildfire severity throughout the refuge and on adjoining properties.

By maintaining healthy forest conditions and supporting an incredible winter population of bald eagles, we hope that Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge will remain a favorite destination for a variety of visitors. We will continue to provide high-quality wildlife-dependent visitor services by expanding environmental education programs and providing outreach to increase youth in the outdoors; expanding environmental interpretation to include media and programs; maintaining select hunting opportunities; and maintaining opportunities for high-quality wildlife observation and photography. In addition, we will work with willing adjacent landowners to seek opportunities to increase public access for wildlife observation.

We will employ adaptive management techniques that will allow us to best respond to changing environmental and climatic conditions. It is our hope that successful implementation of management actions will result in premier habitat for bald eagles and other wildlife, and opportunities for high-quality wildlife-dependent recreation.

2.5 Development of Refuge Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goals are the unifying elements of successful refuge management. They identify and focus management priorities, provide a context for resolving issues and concerns raised during the scoping process, guide specific projects, provide rationale for decisions, and offer a defensible link among management actions, refuge purpose(s), Service policy, and the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) mission. In developing goals, objectives, and strategies, there is a natural progression from the general to the specific. Goals define general targets in support of the refuge vision, while objectives address the incremental and measurable steps to be taken to achieve the goals. Finally, strategies identify specific tools, actions, or techniques that would be implemented to accomplish project objectives.

The goals and objectives provide long-term guidance to refuge managers and staff and help integrate science, improve management practices, and justify compatible use decisions. The NWRS defines goals as a “...descriptive, open-ended, and often broad statement of desired future conditions that conveys a purpose but does not define measurable units” (Service Manual, 602 FW 1). The goals for each of the five refuges are presented below.

Each goal is subdivided into one or more objectives. Objectives are defined as “concise statements 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” (Service Manual, 602 FW 1). The number of objectives per goal can vary depending on the number needed to satisfy a particular goal. Strategies are the specific actions, tools, or techniques that are necessary to accomplish each objective. The objectives and strategies for each of the five refuges are presented in Appendix F.

2.5.1 Goals for Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge

- Goal 1. Provide wetland and agricultural habitats that meet food and cover requirements sufficient to support migratory waterfowl and non-game waterbird population objectives throughout the annual cycle while promoting the highest possible natural biological diversity of refuge habitats.
- Goal 2. Support recovery and protection efforts for federally and state-listed threatened and endangered species and sensitive species that occur within the refuge.
- Goal 3. Provide a range of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities that emphasize the natural setting and the functions of the Lower Klamath Refuge.
- Goal 4. Manage, conserve, evaluate, and interpret the cultural heritage and resources of the Refuge Complex while consulting with appropriate Native American groups and preservation organizations, and complying with historic preservation legislation.

2.5.2 Goals for Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge

- Goal 1. Protect, maintain, and restore sagebrush-steppe and associated upland and wetland communities characteristic of the Great Basin ecosystem.
- Goal 2. Protect and maintain islands in Clear Lake Refuge to provide nesting habitat for colonial nesting waterbirds.
- Goal 3. Provide a range of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities that emphasize the natural setting and the functions of the Clear Lake Refuge.
- Goal 4. Manage, conserve, evaluate, and interpret the cultural heritage and resources of Clear Lake Refuge while consulting with appropriate Native American groups and preservation organizations, and complying with historic preservation legislation.

2.5.3 Goals for Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge

- Goal 1. Provide wetland and agricultural habitats that meet food and cover requirements sufficient to support migratory waterfowl and non-game waterbird population objectives throughout

the annual cycle while promoting the highest possible natural biological diversity of refuge habitats.

- Goal 2. Support recovery and protection efforts for federally and state-listed threatened and endangered species and sensitive species that occur within the Refuge.
- Goal 3. Provide a range of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities that emphasize the natural setting and the functions of the Tule Lake Refuge.
- Goal 4. Manage, conserve, evaluate, and interpret the cultural heritage and resources of Tule Lake Refuge while consulting with appropriate Native American groups and preservation organizations, and complying with historic preservation legislation.

2.5.4 Goals for Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge

- Goal 1. Restore and maintain the composition and structure of existing and historic wetland communities of Upper Klamath Lake to meet the needs of migratory waterfowl, waterbirds, and sensitive species.
- Goal 2. Provide a range of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities that emphasize the natural setting and the functions of the Upper Klamath Refuge.
- Goal 3. Manage, conserve, evaluate, and interpret the cultural heritage and resources of Upper Klamath Refuge while consulting with appropriate Native American groups and preservation organizations, and complying with historic preservation legislation.

2.5.5 Goals for Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge

- Goal 1. Promote open stands of ponderosa pine with grass understory to restore the historic fire regime.
- Goal 2. Maintain existing areas of late successional forest conditions and actively manage to promote sustainability of this forest type.
- Goal 3. Restore riparian habitats along the length of Bear Creek with an emphasis on aspen and willow establishment.
- Goal 4. Provide a range of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities that emphasize the natural setting and the functions of the Bear Valley Refuge.
- Goal 5. Manage, conserve, evaluate, and interpret the cultural heritage and resources of Bear Valley Refuge while consulting with appropriate Native American groups and preservation organizations, and complying with historic preservation legislation.

2.6 Development of Alternatives

As indicated earlier, each CCP must comply with the provisions of NEPA, which requires the analysis of environmental effects resulting from a reasonable range of alternatives or approaches to refuge management that could be reasonably undertaken to achieve refuge goals and refuge purposes; help fulfill the NWRS mission; maintain and, where appropriate, restore the ecological

integrity of each refuge and the NWRS; and resolve identified issues. NEPA also requires analysis of a “no action” alternative, which constitutes a continuation of current conditions and management practices. To facilitate this NEPA compliance, the analysis of environmental effects has been integrated directly into the overall CCP process.

The process of developing alternatives involves analyzing current conditions, comparing these conditions to a desired future as laid out in the vision and goals, and identifying various means to achieve this future. Input provided during the public scoping process and other information gathered during subsequent meetings and workshops and from various interested individuals, agencies, and organizations is used to help in identifying distinct approaches and actions that become the alternatives.

In Chapter 4 of this draft CCP/EIS, a range of alternatives for each of the five refuges is presented. The alternatives for each refuge described in Chapter 4 differ in the extent and focus of the wildlife and habitat management actions to be implemented on the refuge, as well as in the types and levels of public use opportunities to be provided. Chapter 5, Affected Environment, describes the existing physical and biological environment, cultural resources, visitor services, and socioeconomic conditions; and provides descriptions of the regional and refuge-specific environments. This setting represents baseline conditions for the analysis provided in Chapter 5. Chapter 6, Environmental Consequences, describes the potential impacts of each of the alternatives on the resources, uses, and conditions outlined in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 also provides a description of cumulative impacts.

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