

special mailings, newspaper articles, and other media outlets will be used to announce opportunities for input throughout the planning process.

We will conduct the environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1968, as amended (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); NEPA regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508); other appropriate Federal laws and regulations; and our policies and procedures for compliance with those laws and regulations.

St. Johns NWR, in Brevard County, Florida, is managed as a unit of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Other refuges in the Complex include Merritt Island, Lake Wales Ridge, Pelican Island, Archie Carr, and Lake Woodruff. The refuge has two main management units: State Road 50 and Bee Line.

The refuge was established in 1971 to provide protection for threatened and endangered species and native diversity. The primary purpose is to “conserve fish or wildlife which are listed as endangered species or threatened species * * * (or) plants * * *” (16 U.S.C. 1534, Endangered Species Act). A secondary purpose provides for native species diversity and applies to specific refuge tracts for the “conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans” (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2), National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act).

St. Johns NWR was originally envisioned to provide habitat for threatened and endangered species, specifically for the conservation of the dusky seaside sparrow, first discovered in 1872. Historic flood control projects, including channelization and interbasin diversions, helped drain wetlands for development purposes throughout Florida. These actions significantly altered dusky seaside sparrow habitat throughout the State. In 1967, the dusky seaside sparrow was listed as endangered by the Department of the Interior and by 1979, surveys determined that it had declined to 20 individual males. The last known sighting of this species in the wild was 1980. Despite our efforts to protect and recover the species through regulations, land acquisition, and land management efforts specifically targeting the needs of the dusky seaside sparrow, the species never recovered and was declared extinct in December 1990.

St. Johns NWR was named for and is part of the southern headwaters of the St. Johns River—a river system that runs south to north, eventually flowing into

the Atlantic Ocean in northeastern Florida. The refuge is connected through surface and groundwater to the 310-mile-long St. Johns River and plays an important role in the river’s health and integrity. Over time, the refuge’s hydrologic setting has been altered through various dredge and fill activities both on the refuge (prior to refuge establishment) and off (prior to and after refuge establishment), which today poses considerable management challenges. Off-refuge hydrologic inputs are conveyed from the residentially developed areas surrounding the refuge through channelization and may lead to an overall decrease in refuge water quality. In addition, off-site inputs may alter water quantity, timing, and flows, thus impacting wetland composition and value for the benefit of fish and wildlife. Flood protection provided by existing channels and levees continues to be a valued commodity and is continually in demand as lands surrounding the refuge are converted to residential and commercial settings.

Today, the 6,194-acre St. Johns NWR is home to at least 20 Federal- and State-listed species, including the federally listed wood stork, crested caracara, eastern indigo snake, and American alligator. It is managed to benefit a diversity of species and a wide array of wetland habitats, including spartina marsh, the predominant habitat type found on the refuge. Its wetland marshes provide valuable resources for marshland species, including black rail and other secretive marsh birds. Refuge marshlands are managed primarily through the application of prescribed fire to maintain mosaics of marsh habitat.

Public Availability and Comments

Before including your address, phone number, email address, and/or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authority

This notice is published under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105–57.

Dated: October 30, 2009.

Mark J. Musaus,

Acting Regional Director.

[FR Doc. E9–29639 Filed 12–11–09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–55–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R2–R–2009–N210; 20131–1265–2CCP–S3]

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, Cameron and Willacy Counties, TX

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability: draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of a draft comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental assessment (EA) for the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge, NWR) for public review and comment. In these documents, we describe alternatives, including our preferred alternative, to manage this Refuge for the 15 years following approval of the final CCP.

DATES: To ensure consideration, please send your written comments by February 12, 2010. We will announce upcoming public meetings in local news media.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments or requests for copies or more information by any of the following methods. You may request hard copies or a CD-ROM of the documents.

E-mail: mark_sprick@fws.gov. Include “Laguna Atascosa Draft CCP and EA” in the subject line of the e-mail.

Fax: Attn: Mark Sprick, Natural Resource Planner, 505–248–6874.

U.S. Mail: Mark Sprick, AICP, Natural Resource Planner, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Division of Planning, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103–1306.

In-Person Drop-off: You may drop off comments during regular business hours (8:00 am to 4:30 pm) at 500 Gold Avenue, SW., 4th Floor, Room 4005, Albuquerque, NM 87102.

Internet/Web site: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/Plan/index.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Sonny Perez, Wildlife Refuge Manager, Laguna Atascosa NWR, CCP–Project, 22817 Ocelot Road, Los Fresnos, TX 78566, or by phone at 956–748–3607, or

fax at 956-748-3609; or Mark Sprick, AICP, Natural Resource Planner, by phone at 505-248-7411.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Introduction

With this notice, we continue the CCP process for Laguna Atascosa NWR. We started this process through a notice in the **Federal Register** July 19, 2004 (69 FR 43010).

Laguna Atascosa NWR is located in Cameron and Willacy Counties, Texas, and encompasses 97,007 acres of brush lands, coastal prairies, freshwater and brackish pothole wetlands, estuarine wetlands, lomas (clay ridges), wind tidal flats, and barrier island beaches and dunes. Management efforts focus on protecting, enhancing, and restoring Refuge habitats and water management for the benefit of important fish and wildlife resources. The Refuge is a premiere birdwatching destination with 415 recorded bird species, more than any other national wildlife refuge. A total of nine federally listed endangered or threatened species occur within the Refuge, including four species of sea turtles. The largest United States population of endangered ocelot cats is located on the Refuge, making it the center for ocelot conservation and recovery.

Laguna Atascosa NWR was formally established by the Migratory Bird Commission on October 31, 1945, and the first tract forming the Refuge was acquired on March 29, 1946. The purposes of the Refuge are: “[F]or use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds” (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 (16 U.S.C. 715d), as amended); “for wildlife conservation purposes if

the real property has particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program” (Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife Conservation Purposes Act of 1948 (16 U.S.C. 667b-667d), Public Law 80-537, as amended); “for the development, advancement, management, conservation and protection of fish and wildlife resources” (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742(a)(4), as amended); and “for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude” (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742(b)(1), as amended).

Background

The CCP Process

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee) (Administration Act), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, requires us to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose for developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year plan for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and our policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, CCPs identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography,

and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Administration Act.

Public Outreach

To begin the CCP process, we opened a 60-day comment period on July 19, 2004 (69 FR 43010). We made draft documents and other relevant information available for public review at the Refuge headquarters. In February and June 2004, we held internal preplanning meetings at the Refuge to discuss concerns, issues, and opportunities for the future of the Refuge. We held four “open-house” public scoping meetings between February 28 and March 8, 2005, at Raymondville, Brownsville, Harlingen, and South Padre Island to solicit initial public input and involvement during the early stages of CCP development. We also invited the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to participate as a partner in the planning process. We have considered and evaluated all of these comments received, and have incorporated many of them into the various alternatives we addressed in the draft CCP and the EA.

CCP Alternatives We Are Considering

During the public scoping process with which we started work on this draft CCP, we, other governmental partners, Tribes, and the public raised several issues. Our draft CCP addresses them. A full description of each alternative is in the EA. To address these issues, we developed and evaluated the following alternatives, summarized below.

	A: No-action alternative	B: Proposed action alternative	C: Optimize public-use alternative
Issue 1: Habitat Management Activities.	Biological program and habitat management would continue under existing plans; any expansions would occur opportunistically.	Integrated biological and habitat management efforts with landscape level and ecosystem level plans; emphasis on protection and monitoring of Federal trust species and priority species and their habitats.	Same as No-Action Alternative (Alternative A).
Issue 2: Improvements to public use opportunities.	Limited to current public use under existing plans; Any expansions would occur opportunistically.	Improvement of priority public uses, particularly hunting, fishing and wildlife observation, to meet demand when compatible with wildlife needs and Refuge purposes; expansion of research efforts and dynamic partnerships.	Expand and emphasize all priority public uses, particularly hunting and fishing and access to all Refuge areas to the maximum extent when compatible, based on public comments.

	A: No-action alternative	B: Proposed action alternative	C: Optimize public-use alternative
Issue 3: Staffing, Facilities, and Infrastructure.	Existing staffing (17 permanent positions) and facilities; any additional staff and facility expansions would occur opportunistically.	Addition of 11 staff to existing base; addition of over 6 miles of hike/bike trails; one auto tour route; 2 separate parking areas; new visitor center at Laguna Atascosa Unit. Visitor contact and research station at Bahia Grande.	Base funding and staffing would increase by 4 positions (Outdoor Recreation Planner and 3 Park Rangers); several additional miles of auto tour routes, 7 hike/bike trails and associated parking areas; visitor contact station; all primarily at Bahia Grande.

Public Availability of Documents

In addition to any methods in ADDRESSES, you can view or obtain documents at the following locations:

- At the Laguna Atascosa NWR Headquarters Office, 22817 Ocelot Road, Los Fresnos, TX 78566, 18 miles east of Rio Hondo, on Farm-to-Market Road 106, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

- On our Web site: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/Plan/index.html>.
- At the following public libraries:

Library	Address	Phone number
City of Brownsville Public Library	2600 Central Blvd., Brownsville, TX 78520-8824	956-548-1055
Harlingen Public Library	410 '76 Drive, Harlingen, TX 78550	956-427-8841
Laguna Vista Public Library	1300 Palm Blvd., Laguna Vista, TX 78578	956-943-7155
Los Fresnos Public Library	402 W. Ocean, Los Fresnos, TX 78566	956-233-5330
Port Isabel Public Library	213 Yturria St., Port Isabel, TX 78578	956-943-2265
Willacy County/Reber Memorial Library	190 N. 4th. St., Raymondville, TX 78580	956-689-2930
Rio Hondo Public Library	121 N. Arroyo Blvd., Rio Hondo, TX 78583	956-748-3322
San Benito Public Library	101 W. Rose St., San Benito, TX 78586	956-361-3860

Submitting Comments/Issues for Comment

We consider comments substantive if they:

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of the information in the document;
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of the EA;
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those presented in the EA; and/or
- Provide new or additional information relevant to the EA.

Next Steps

After this comment period ends, we will analyze the comments and address them in the form of a final CCP.

Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Dated: November 4, 2009.
Brian A. Millsap,
Acting Regional Director, Region 2.
 [FR Doc. E9-29637 Filed 12-11-09; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WY-923-1310-FI; WYW150316]

Notice of Proposed Reinstatement of Terminated Oil and Gas Lease, WYW150316, Wyoming

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of proposed reinstatement of terminated oil and gas lease

SUMMARY: Under the provisions of 30 U.S.C. 188(d) and (e), and 43 CFR 3108.2-3(a) and (b)(2), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received a petition for reinstatement from G2 Petroleum LLC, Inc. for non-competitive oil and gas lease WYW150316 for land in Fremont County, Wyoming. The petition was filed on time and was accompanied by all the rentals due since the date the lease terminated under the law.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bureau of Land Management, Julie L. Weaver, Chief, Branch of Fluid Minerals Adjudication, at (307) 775-6176.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The lessee has agreed to the amended lease terms for rentals and royalties at rates of \$5 per acre, or fraction thereof, per year and 16²/₃ percent, respectively. The lessee has paid the required \$500 administrative fee and \$163 to reimburse the Department for the cost of this **Federal Register** notice. The lessee has met all the requirements for reinstatement of the lease as set out in Sections 31(d) and (e) of the Mineral Lands Leasing Act of 1920 (30 U.S.C. 188), and the BLM is proposing to reinstate lease WYW150316 effective May 1, 2009, under the original terms and conditions of the lease and the increased rental and royalty rates cited above. The BLM has not issued a valid lease affecting the lands.

Julie L. Weaver,
Chief, Branch of Fluid Minerals Adjudication.
 [FR Doc. E9-29695 Filed 12-11-09; 8:45 am]
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WY-923-1310-FI; WYW172439]

Notice of Proposed Reinstatement of Terminated Oil and Gas Lease, WYW172439, Wyoming

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.