

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Schedule – Estimated Dates

Planning Phase	Estimated Dates
✓ Conduct Preplanning	Summer 2001 - September 2002
✓ Initiate Public Scoping (Open House)	September 21, 2002
✓ Conduct Public Scoping	September 2002 - November 2002
✓ Conduct Intergovernmental Scoping	September 2002 - August 2003
→→→ Prepare Draft CCP	December 2002 - June 2004
Conduct Internal Review	June 2004 - August 2004
Request Public Review & Comment	September 2004 - November 2004
Develop Final CCP	November 2004 - December 2004
Sign Finding of No Significant Impact	January 2005
Begin Implementation	January 2005



US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
MERRITT ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX
PO Box 6504
TITUSVILLE, FL 32782-6504



*Libraries, Governments, Centers,
Educational Facilities, & Businesses:* **PLEASE
Post**

To submit comments or for more information



**To Mail Us: Merritt Island CCP
PO Box 6504
Titusville, FL 32782**



To Fax Us: 321.861.1276



To Call Us: 321.861.0667



To Email Us:

MerrittIslandCCP@fws.gov

To Visit Us – in person or on the web:

Merritt Island National Wildlife
Refuge Visitor's Center,
Exit #220 on I-95, 5 miles east
of Titusville on SR 402

<http://merrittisland.fws.gov>

Want to be on the mailing list?

If so, we need your written permission, since federal government mailing lists are subject to release under the Freedom of Information Act. If you are not already on the list, please fill out this form and return it to the listed address.

Signature _____ Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zipcode _____

Organization _____

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Planning Update #2 – Fall 2003



Keeping You Updated!!!

The Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP):

- ◆ Is a Refuge management plan for the next 15 years;
- ◆ Involves the public, partners, and other governmental agencies;
- ◆ Is a multi-year effort with implementation expected in early 2005;
- ◆ Serves the purposes of the Refuge;
- ◆ Describes the desired future conditions of the Refuge;
- ◆ Provides consistency and continuity in Refuge management; and
- ◆ Provides long-range guidance and

Highlighted Accomplishments:

- ★ Final Refuge Public Use Review
- ★ Draft Refuge Wilderness Review
- ★ Draft Refuge Wildlife & Habitat Management Review
- ★ Priority recommendations from the Intergovernmental Coordination Planning Team
- ★ >1,500 written public scoping comments received

Primary Refuge Purpose

"...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 USC §715d
Migratory Bird Conservation Act



Secondary Refuge Purpose

(applies to Turnbull/NW Indian River Lagoon area)
"...(1) to protect, enhance, restore, and manage an appropriate distribution and diversity of wetland ecosystems and other habitats for migratory birds and other fish and wildlife in North America; (2) to maintain current or improved distributions of migratory bird populations; and (3) to sustain an abundance of waterfowl and other migratory birds consistent with the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the international obligations contained in the migratory bird treaties and conventions and other agreements with Canada, Mexico, and other countries." 16 USC §4401(2)(b)
North American Wetlands Conservation Act



Refuge & Seashore Planning

It's a little confusing. Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) and Canaveral National Seashore (Seashore) are both located on and near NASA's Kennedy Space Center. Although the Refuge and the Seashore are both under the US Department of Interior, they are separate agencies with different missions. The Refuge is part of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, while the Seashore is a unit of the National Park Service. The Refuge encompasses about 140,000 acres, while the Seashore has about 60,000 acres - where the two share an overlap of just over 34,000 acres in Mosquito Lagoon.

The Refuge and the Seashore are currently involved in planning for the future management of these federal lands and waters. The Refuge is developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) and the Seashore is updating its General Management Plan (GMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). These two planning activities are separate, but coordinated for adjacent and overlapping concerns.

For more information on the Refuge's CCP, contact the Refuge at MerrittIslandCCP@fws.gov or **321.861.2368** and/or visit the Refuge at <http://merrittisland.fws.gov> or the **Visitor Information Center** on SR 402, 5 miles east of Titusville, Florida. For more information regarding the Seashore's GMP, contact the Seashore at **321.267.1110** and/or visit the Seashore at <http://www.nps.gov/cana> or the **administrative offices** at 308 Julia St. in Titusville, Florida.



Summary of Intergovernmental Priorities

The Intergovernmental Coordination Planning Team for the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge CCP includes a variety of governmental partners from the local, regional, state, and national levels. This team identified a wide range of issues, ideas, and concerns regarding future management of the Refuge and listed the top priorities as issues to be addressed during the 15-year life of the Refuge's CCP.

1. **Endangered, Threatened, and Other Species of Management Concern** - protect endangered, threatened, and management concern species of the Refuge and coordinate with governmental partners to monitor and protect these species across the landscape.
2. **Aquatic Habitats and Seagrass Beds** - protect the aquatic habitats and seagrass beds of the Refuge and coordinate with governmental partners to help protect aquatic habitats and seagrass beds of the Indian River Lagoon System.
3. **Exotic, Invasive, and Nuisance Species** - control the spread of exotic, invasive, and nuisance species; limit their impacts on native wildlife and habitats; and coordinate with the partners to control the spread and impact of these species.
4. **Environmental Education** - address the low awareness of users and the negative impacts of public use activities on wildlife and habitat resources and coordinate with the environmental education partners to increase environmental education activities.
5. **Fire Management** - continue to conduct necessary habitat management and restoration through fire management activities and coordinate with the partners to facilitate fire management activities of the Refuge and adjacent protected lands.
6. (tie with 5) **Partnerships** - increase coordination with the partners to enhance Refuge management activities.
7. **Impoundments** - manage Refuge impoundments for waterfowl and estuary benefits.
8. **Biological Staff** - increase Refuge biological staff on the ground by adding a diversity of backgrounds (one Biologist is insufficient).
9. **Visitor Services** - address current and anticipated impacts of and on growing public use of the Refuge to provide quality public use opportunities.
10. **Landscape Linkages** - coordinate with the partners to explore landscape level connections for wildlife.
11. **Carrying Capacity and Sustainable Use** - gather data and conduct and foster research to determine the carrying capacity and sustainable use of the resources of the Refuge.
12. **Landscape Trail Connections** - increase interpretative trails on the Refuge to help change negative behaviors and work with the partners to connect the Refuge to adjacent conservation and recreation lands (e.g., consider connecting the City of Titusville to Canaveral National Seashore).
13. **Habitats Management and Interconnectivity of Habitats** - manage large blocks of upland/wetland mosaic tracts on the Refuge and restore and preserve the upland/wetland/aquatic linkages to support the biological integrity of the Refuge.
14. **Hunting and Harvest Considerations** - consider increasing hunting opportunities on the Refuge (e.g., increase the number of species hunted).
15. **Lagoonal Fishing** - address negative impacts to the wildlife and habitats resources of the Refuge's lagoonal waters, address the anticipated declining quality of the lagoonal fishing experience, and coordinate with the partners regarding lagoonal fishing management and regulation.
16. **Fish Resources** - assess fish stocks of the Refuge, gather needed data and conduct and foster research regarding fisheries and public use, and coordinate with partners to protect the fisheries resources of the Refuge and adjacent waters.
17. **Regulations/Restrictions** - coordinate with governmental partners to ensure consistency between regulations and restrictions (e.g., for Mosquito Lagoon) and to develop new regulations and restrictions for the Refuge.
18. **NASA Development** - increase coordination with NASA Planning, develop habitat constraints for facility siting at Kennedy Space Center, and address stormwater drainage into aquatic systems of the Refuge.
19. **Beach Management** - address the impacts, especially on protected and management concern species, of beach renourishment activities taking place to the north of the Refuge and consider the impacts and responses to the possible natural formation of a new inlet into Mosquito Lagoon.
20. (tie with 19) **Archaeological Resources** - coordinate with the partners to ensure the long-term protection of archaeological resources of the Refuge from loss, damage, and vandalism.
21. **Citrus Groves** - evaluate the historic and wildlife values of remaining citrus groves and develop a plan to phase out citrus groves and restore these areas to native habitat.
22. **Mosquito Lagoon** - evaluate and address the quality of the Mosquito Lagoon wildlife resources, habitats, and fishing experience.
23. (tie with 22) **Commercial Uses** - address commercial uses of the Refuge, including the impacts of commercial uses and the conflicts between commercial uses and recreational uses.
24. **Littering** - address the littering problem on the Refuge.
25. (tie with 24) **New Uses and User Groups** - coordinate with governmental partners to get out ahead of new uses and user groups with methods to deal with these new technologies and groups in a manner consistent with adjacent publicly managed lands and waters.
26. (tie with 24) **Biological Assessment of the Resources** - ensure that recommendations in the CCP are biologically based.

US Fish & Wildlife Service

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Planning Update #2 – Fall 2003



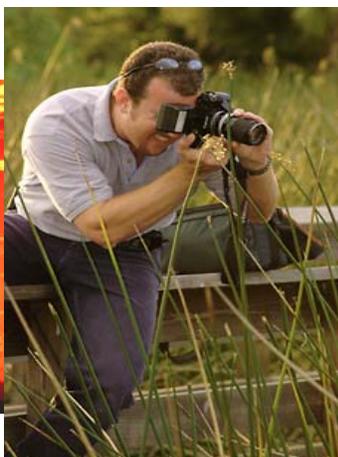
Summary of Public Scoping Comments

The Refuge received a wide range of comments, ideas, issues, and concerns from the public regarding future management of the Refuge. Two examples showing the dichotomy of the comments submitted are listed.

For example during the 15-year life of the CCP, some want the Refuge to open more hunting areas and allow additional species to be hunted, while others want the Refuge to eliminate hunting entirely.

Another example involves the recommendation for the elimination of the Banana River No Motor Zone versus the recommendation to better enforce this existing zone and establish additional no motor zones.

The full range of public scoping comments received by the Refuge are too numerous to be included here (~27 pages worth), but they can be viewed on the web or at the Refuge's Visitor Center, or they can be obtained by contacting the Refuge.



Categories of Public Scoping Comments

The public scoping comments are arranged into the seven listed categories.

General

Fish, Wildlife, & Plant Populations

- West Indian Manatee

Habitat Management

- Impoundments
- Waterfowl Habitat
- Rookery Islands
- Scrub Habitat
- Exotic, Invasive, & Nuisance Species
- Spoil Islands
- Aquatic Habitats
- Habitat Research

Land Protection & Conservation

- Law Enforcement

Refuge Administration

- Funding & Staffing
- Regulations
- Partnerships
- Incidental Business Permits
- Feral Hog Removal Contracts

Archaeological & Cultural Resources

Education & Visitor Services

- Recreation in General
- Hunting in General
- Waterfowl Hunting
- Lagoonal Fishing
- No Motor Zones
- Catch & Release Areas
- Poling Only/Trolling Only Zones
- Fishing in General
- Environmental Education
- Interpretation
- Wildlife Observation
- Black Point Wildlife Drive
- Manatee Observation Deck
- User Fees
- Access
- Trash/Litter
- User Conflicts
- Personal Watercraft
- Turnbull/NW Indian River Lagoon Area
- Public Use Related Research