

## **Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Summary of Priority Issues - Intergovernmental Coordination Planning Team**

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. (For a list of the agencies involved in the planning process for the Refuge, contact the Planning Team Leader at 321.861.2368 or [MerrittIslandCCP@fws.gov](mailto:MerrittIslandCCP@fws.gov).) The Intergovernmental Coordination Planning Team identified a wide range of issues, ideas, and concerns regarding future management of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. The Intergovernmental Coordination Planning Team recommended the listed 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 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.