

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge



South Dakota

August 2001

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Help Shape the Future of Your National Wildlife Refuge!

Greetings,

We are preparing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for conservation of natural resources and public use of the Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Sharing your ideas and concerns will help us prepare a plan that is sensitive to your needs.

We are soliciting your input through open houses to be held in local communities during September 2001 and by the enclosed Issues Workbook. Details are provided elsewhere in this document. The open houses will be announced in local newspapers and on radio. The purpose of the open houses is to let people know what we are doing and to learn how people feel about this important conservation area and how they think it should be managed. If you are interested in the Sand Lake NWR, we invite you to participate in this project.

The Refuge staff are also available to meet with individuals or groups at any time. If you would like a special presentation to your group, or would like to make an appointment to meet individually, just call the Sand Lake office to make arrangements.

We look forward to working with you throughout this most important planning process.

Sincerely,

John Koerner
Refuge Manager

Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Part of the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the only Federal agency with the specific mandate to conserve the nation's fish, wildlife, and plants for the benefit of the American people.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Mission



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission is, working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

National Wildlife Refuge System

The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, the largest collection of lands set aside specifically for the protection of fish and wildlife populations and habitats. The Refuge System began in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt designated a pelican and heron rookery in Florida as the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. Today, over 530 national wildlife refuges are spread from Alaska to Puerto Rico and Maine to Hawaii.

National wildlife refuges provide important habitat for native plants and many species of mammals, birds, fish, insects, amphibians, and reptiles. They also play a vital role in preserving endangered and threatened species. Refuges offer a wide variety of recreational opportunities and many have visitor centers, wildlife-observation trails, and environmental education programs. Nationwide, more than 30 million visitors annually hunt, fish, observe, and photograph wildlife or participate in interpretive activities on refuges.

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission



The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of

the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

National Wildlife Refuge System

Four Guiding Principles

- ✓ **Habitat.** Fish and wildlife will not prosper without high-quality habitat, and without fish and wildlife, traditional uses of refuges cannot be sustained. The Refuge System will continue to conserve and enhance the quality and diversity of fish and wildlife habitat within refuges.
- ✓ **Public Use.** The Refuge System provides important opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.
- ✓ **Partnerships.** America's sportsmen and women were the first partners who insisted on protecting valuable wildlife habitat within wildlife refuges. Conservation partnerships with other Federal agencies, State agencies, Tribes, organizations, industry, and the general public can make significant contributions to the growth and management of the Refuge System.
- ✓ **Public Involvement.** The public should be given a full and open opportunity to participate in decisions regarding acquisition and management of our national wildlife refuges.

Sand Lake NWR Background

Congress established Sand Lake in 1935 to preserve critical habitat for nesting and migrating waterfowl. This 21,498-acre Refuge is a key area in the national effort to preserve waterfowl. Every year, hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese, and other migratory birds pause at Sand Lake to rest and feed. The Refuge's diverse habitats, including marsh and open water, woodland, grassland, and cropland, attract these birds and many other animals. Because of the uniqueness of the habitats and the importance the Refuge has for migratory birds, the Refuge has been designated a "Wetland of International Importance,"

and a "Globally Important Bird Area." Sand Lake has achieved national and international recognition as one of the premiere National Wildlife Refuges in the entire Refuge System.

The Sand Lake NWR Planning Process

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is required to manage all refuges in accordance with an approved Comprehensive Conservation Plan, which, when implemented, will achieve refuge purposes; help fulfill the Refuge System mission; maintain and, where appropriate, restore the ecological integrity of each refuge and the Refuge System; help achieve the goals of the National Wilderness Preservation System; and meet other mandates. The CCP will guide management decisions and set forth goals, objectives, and strategies to accomplish these ends. Step-down management plans may also be required to provide additional details about meeting CCP goals and objectives and to describe strategies and implementation schedules. Each plan will be founded on principles of sound fish and wildlife management and available science, and be consistent with legal mandates and other Service policies, guidelines, and planning documents. The Service will prepare refuge plans that, above all else, ensure that **WILDLIFE COMES FIRST** on national wildlife refuges.

Want to Get Involved?

To gather as much public input and to reach as many people as possible, the Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge staff has developed several opportunities for your participation.

Open Houses

We are conducting three Open Houses, as follows:

Tuesday, September 11 7-9 pm

Hecla Community Center, Hecla, SD

Wednesday, September 12 7-9 pm

Columbia Legion Building, Columbia, SD

Thursday, September 13 7-9 pm

Brown County Courthouse annex basement
(community room), Aberdeen, SD

These Open Houses will be announced in local newspapers and on radio.

Issues Workbooks

You may also get involved by completing the attached Issues Workbook.

Issues Workbook

The workbook is provided to everyone on our mailing list and anyone who attends an open house. Additional copies will be kept at Refuge headquarters for distribution by request.

Read through each of the sections and jot down your thoughts. Let us know what issues you would like to see addressed in the CCP and any additional thoughts or concerns you may have. Your responses to these questions will help us better understand our constituents and public opinion and guide the planning process. All of the comments we receive, by whatever means, will be considered in the preparation of the CCP. However, in order to be most helpful, **please provide comments and return the Issues Workbook by October 15, 2001.**

After you have completed the workbook, simply fold it in half (with the preaddressed return mailer on the outside), tape it together (do not staple), put on the proper postage, and drop it in the mail. Thanks for your help; we really appreciate it. If you have any questions or would like more information about this project, please call **Sand Lake NWR at 605-885-6320.**

1. What makes Sand Lake NWR special or unique for you? What do you like about it?

2. For what reasons have you visited Sand Lake NWR, and what was of most interest to you?

3. Are there any issues you would like to see addressed in the plan, from either a conservation of natural resources point of view, or from a public use point of view?

4. What improvements would you recommend for Sand Lake NWR?

5. Any additional thoughts, suggestions, or comments that you would like to share with us?

6. In what town and state do you reside? _____

Important!

Would you like to be on our Mailing list?

In order to place your name and address on our CCP mailing list, we must have your written permission. This is because Federal government mailing lists must be released to the public upon request under the Freedom of Information Act. If you wish to receive future information about the Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning Project, please fill in the information requested below and return this form to the following address. (If you have already completed one of these forms you do not need to fill out another one.) If you are returning a completed Issues Workbook, you may return this form with it.

Return to: Sand Lake NWR Planning Project
39650 Sand Lake Drive
Columbia, SD 57433

Yes, I wish to be on the mailing list to receive future information about the Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning Project. I understand that names and addresses on federal mailing lists must be released to the public upon request, under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____

If you are acting in an official capacity as the representative of an organization, please complete the following two items:

Organization: _____

Title: _____

Please return the Issues Workbook and the authorization if you would like to be on the CCP mailing list. Then fold here, tape the two halves together, affix postage, and drop in the mail.



Four horizontal solid lines stacked vertically, providing space for a postage stamp.

Place
Stamp
Here

**Sand Lake NWR Planning Project
39650 Sand Lake Drive
Columbia, SD 57433**