



CELEBRATING A  
**CENTURY**  
of CONSERVATION

# ECOSYSTEM PLANNING NEWS

April, 2002

A Summary of Comprehensive Conservation Planning on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuges in the Roanoke-Tar-Neuse-Cape Fear Ecosystem of North Carolina and Virginia



## NEWS FLASH

The planning team has held scoping meetings for nine out of the eleven National Wildlife Refuges in the ecosystem. The planning staff from the Fish and Wildlife Service Northeastern Regional Office held scoping meetings for the Back Bay and Great Dismal Swamp refuges in January. The scoping meetings were an opportunity for the public to tell the refuge and planning staff what activities and management they would like to see on the refuges.

Seven of the nine North Carolina refuges had their alternative plans reviewed by the Southeastern Regional Office in October and received permission to proceed with the planning process. The other two North Carolina refuges had been reviewed previously.

The staff is developing the draft plan for the Pea Island refuge. Scoping meetings for alternatives in the Roanoke River refuge plan will be held on April 9 in Halifax and April 11 in Windsor. The National Office must review the land acquisition alternatives for the other North Carolina refuges before planning can continue.

The Northeastern Region Office planning staff will coordinate the development of alternatives for the Back Bay and Great Dismal Swamp refuges later this year.

## PLANNING PROCESS

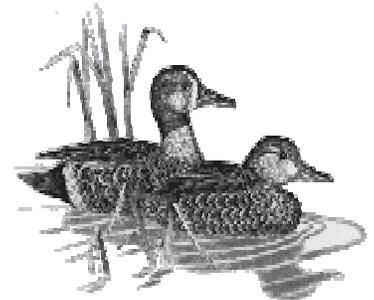
Each plan will take from two to three years to complete. The process begins with the refuge staff summarizing basic resource data about the refuge.

A first set of public forums called scoping meetings is held to solicit public input. The comments from those meetings are used to prepare alternative plans. Those alternatives are reviewed by two officials in the regional office.

They are then presented to the public at a second round of meetings. The reaction to those alternatives is used to select a preferred alternative and write a draft plan. That draft plan is reviewed by the ecological services office in Raleigh, and the regional and national office.

The draft is presented to the public in a third set of meetings and copies are made available at local libraries. Comments from those meetings are used to revise the draft plan and develop the final plan.

Each public forum is scheduled for three hours: a one-hour open house to view exhibits and talk to refuge staff, a half-hour formal presentation, and a ninety-minute facilitated discussion.



## REFUGE HIGHLIGHTS

### **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge**

The Pea Island and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuges hosted the Wings over Water festival on the first weekend in November. The event attracted 250 pre-registered participants for the tours, classes, and workshops on the refuges and in the surrounding areas. Between 2500 and 3000 local residents attended the Wildfest family day on the first Saturday in November. Wildfest featured exhibits and games by local conservation agencies and organizations, a performance by Pamlico Joe, and sales by local craftsmen. Pamlico Joe had performed for 7200 children at concerts in area schools before Wings over Water. Pamlico Joe's concerts contain songs with messages about environmental stewardship.

The Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society was selected as the 2002 Refuge Friends Group of the Year by the National Wildlife refuge Association. Refuge friends groups recruit, train, and organize volunteers for the refuge and support the refuges by raising funds and seeking other support for the refuge.

Monitoring to evaluate the effects of dredge material placement is being conducted at Pea Island.

Shorebirds are returning to Pea Island and the impoundments are being dewatered to add habitat to that on the beaches.

A contract crew planted 100 acres of hardwoods on a site at Alligator River killed by southern pine beetles. Two pairs of bald eagles are nesting on the Alligator River for the first time in years.

The fire staff has burned 1000 acres of filter strips around the cropland at Alligator River.

Ronnie Smith, fisheries assistance office biologist, and the Alligator River staff completed the field work on a year-long fish survey of the Alligator River refuge.

### **Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge**

The fire staff from the Alligator River and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuges burned 3400 acres of marsh and pine forest in February.

A new three-bay equipment building was built to store equipment securely.

The refuge exhibited at the Core Sound Waterfowl Festival on the first weekend in December.

### **Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge**

Moist soil units to support the waterfowl migration season were dry due to the drought last fall. The staff could not flood the moist soil units until January 20, the latest in 30 years. Despite the low water conditions statewide, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and Fish and Wildlife Service met their tundra swan banding quota.

There was an 85-acre wildfire in November. Fire crews from the Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina Forest Service, and United States Forest Service had the fire controlled in seven days. The fire was not considered out for two months due to the ground fire potential.

The fire staff conducted prescribed burns on 50 acres of cooperative farm field.

The exhibits for the Walter B. Jones Center for the Sounds have been designed, constructed, and delivered. The center's grand opening will be May 31.

### **Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge Swan Quarter National Wildlife Refuge**

The drought conditions forced the cancellation of waterfowl hunting on Lake Mattamuskeet. Despite the drought and the late migration, the numbers of pintails and green winged teal on the refuge were high.

The staff successfully trapped four Canada geese and equipped them with transmitters so they can be tracked by satellite during their migration.

Swan Days attracted 2,000 visitors to the refuge for tours, workshops, and exhibits the first weekend in December.

Lake Mattamuskeet fishing season opened on March 1, 2002.

The fire crews from Alligator River and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuges conducted a prescribed fire on 3900 acres of marsh at Swan Quarter national Wildlife Refuge.



*Our mission is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance, fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit to the American people.*

## Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge

The refuge staff is working with the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey to develop a protocol to sample invertebrates. The initial phase of the project will involve collecting data from 4 200 meter X 200 meter survey plots for 4 weeks of trap nights throughout a year.



The refuge will hold its second annual youth turkey hunt on April 13. Twice as many youth registered as did last year.

The refuge headquarters has moved to its new office at 114 West Water Street in Windsor. It is located just west of the Roanoke-Cashie River Center.

## Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge Currituck National Wildlife Refuge

Excavation of the 100-acre Kitchin impoundment has been completed at Mackay Island. The new impoundment is located close to the refuge office and will be a convenient place for the staff to conduct education and interpretation programs. It will also be an easily accessible site to watch and photograph wildlife.

Volunteers built a pole barn was built at the for equipment storage at the Mackay Island shop. They contributed 992 hours of service. A

bridge is being built over Back Creek for access to the impoundments at Mackay Island.

The fire staff conducted prescribed burns on 1085 acres at Mackay Island and 500 acres at Currituck.

Waterfowl hunting was poor on the Currituck Sound, but waterfowl numbers were high in the moist soil units at the Currituck refuge.

The bald eagles have returned to Mackay Island and are nesting again.



### Ecosystem Planning Staff

Robert Glennon, Resource Conservation Planner  
D A Brown, Habitat Protection Biologist  
Vicki Waters, Office Automation (Secretary)

## Personnel Changes

John Stanton has moved from his position as the wildlife biologist at the Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge to private lands biologist for eastern North Carolina.

John is stationed at the Wildlife Habitat Management Office in Manteo.

Kelley Hays has joined the staff at the Alligator River National Wildlife refuge as the wildland urban interface assistant. Kelley was a biologist with Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas.

Vince Carver was hired as the fire management officer at the Pocosin Lakes refuge. Vince was previously the land manager for the Tall Timbers Research Station in Tallahassee, Florida.

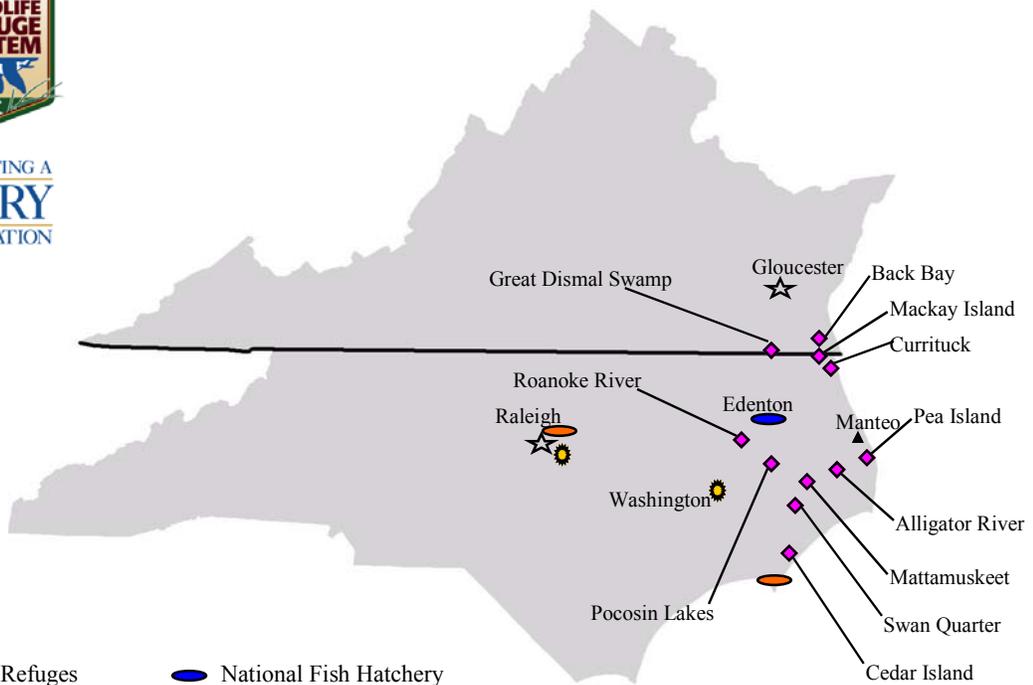
Elliott Astupenas, manager of The Edenton National Fish Hatchery, and David Cole, assistant manager of the Edenton National Fish Hatchery, retired. Ronnie Smith, fisheries management assistance Biologist, is acting Hatchery manager.



**U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
 RTNCF Ecosystem Planning Office  
 1106 West Queen Street  
 Edenton, NC 27932**



CELEBRATING A  
**CENTURY**  
 of CONSERVATION



- ◆ National Wildlife Refuges
- ★ Ecological Services
- ▲ Wildlife Habitat Mgt Office
- National Fish Hatchery
- ☀ Law Enforcement Offices
- Fisheries Resource Coordination Offices