



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

News Release

USFWS Begins Planning Process for Nantucket NWR and Announces Oct 15th Meeting for Public Input

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pleased to announce that we are beginning the development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Nantucket NWR is located at the tip of the Coskata-Coatue peninsula on the eastern side of Nantucket Island, known as Great Point. The 24-acre Nantucket refuge was established in 1973 when the Service acquired the property under the Act Authorizing the Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife or other purposes from the U.S. Coast Guard.

Although diminutive in size, its value to wildlife is anything but small. The Refuge was established for its particular value to migratory birds. It supports a variety of waterbirds including piping plover and common and least terns. Most recently it has become home to a protected marine mammal, the gray seal, as they haul out on the tip and feed in the waters around Great Point.

According to the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997, each refuge within the National Wildlife Refuge System is required to create a CCP by 2012. The CCP for Nantucket NWR will establish management goals and objectives for all refuge programs over the next 15 years, while providing opportunities for compatible, wildlife-dependent public uses. We will evaluate refuge wildlife, habitat, and land protection and visitor service priorities during the planning process.

The first step in the planning process is to select a core planning team that consists of representatives from the refuge staff, the State, and affected Tribes. This core team will organize the information underlying the plan. Next, partners, stakeholders and public involvement is sought to help identify issues that need to be addressed in the plan. This feedback will be incorporated as management alternatives are developed and analyzed, including current management. The plan can then be written, with additional opportunities for public involvement throughout the year-long process.

Including the local community, our partners, and other stakeholders throughout the planning process is vital to the ultimate success of the plan. In particular, we hope to engage local residents and community leaders in discussing ways the refuge could become a more integral part of the community. If you are interested in helping us plan this refuge's future, we encourage you to participate. You can call, write or email us at any time to provide input. Please visit the website for updates and news at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/refugeCCPs.html>. We will also schedule public meetings at various stages of the planning process to facilitate your input.

The first meeting will be held on October 15, 2008 in the Town Annex Building (37 Washington St.) from 7-9 pm. There, you will have the opportunity to meet the staff, learn about current refuge management, help us identify issues and concerns, and make recommendations about future refuge programs. We hope to see you there!

For further information, please contact Carl Melberg, Refuge Planner, Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 73 Weir Hill Road, Sudbury, MA 01776, (978) 443-4661, northeastplanning@fws.gov.