

# Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update #1/Spring 2010

## Comprehensive Conservation Planning Begins this Spring

### Greetings from the Refuge Manager



Tundra swans on Lower Klamath NWR. Photo: Dave Menke

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is about to embark on an important multi-year process to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for five refuges in the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex: Lower Klamath, Tule Lake, Clear Lake, Upper Klamath, and Bear Valley Refuges. This CCP will guide overall Refuge management for the next 15 years. Your ideas and comments will be an important part of the process, so I'd like to invite you to participate. (Note: A separate CCP planning process was initiated for Klamath Marsh Refuge, the 6th refuge in the complex, in 2008 and is now nearing completion.)

I'd like to provide background about the refuges' history and current management. You'll also find some information about the National Wildlife Refuge System and how comprehensive conservation planning fits into the overall picture of refuge management.

Please feel free to contact me or Michele Barry, Refuge Planner, if you have any questions. See page 7 to learn about the CCP and page 8 for our phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

*Ron Cole*

Ron Cole  
Refuge Complex Manager

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### What is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

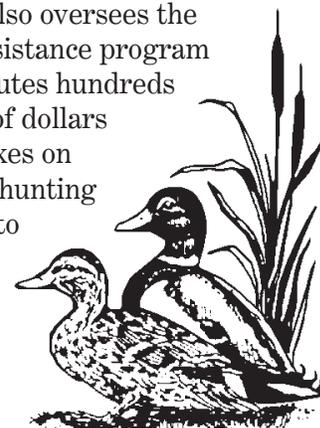
The FWS manages the 150-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 550 refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas.

It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices, and 78 ecological services field stations.

The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered

Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their wildlife and habitat conservation efforts.

The FWS also oversees the Federal Assistance program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.



## What is the National Wildlife Refuge System?



National Wildlife Refuges are places where “wildlife come first.”

In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt protected an island with nesting pelicans, herons, ibis, and roseate spoonbills in Florida’s Indian River from feather collectors who were decimating their colonies. He established Pelican Island as the nation’s first bird sanctuary and went on to establish many other sanctuaries for wildlife during his tenure. This small network of sanctuaries continued to expand, later becoming the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System).

Today, over 100 years later, Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex comprises six of 551 National Wildlife Refuges encompassing more than 150 million acres nationwide. The Refuge System is the largest system of lands in the world

primarily dedicated to the conservation of wildlife. It is spread across 50 states, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Johnston Atoll, Midway Atoll, and several other Pacific Islands. About 20.6 million acres in the Refuge System are managed as wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

In 1997 Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Act), legislation that provides clear guidance for the management of the Refuge System. This law directs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife System (FWS) to manage the Refuge System as a national system of land and waters devoted to conserving wildlife and maintaining the biological integrity of ecosystems. This law also directs the FWS to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

## What’s in a name?

Many people confuse state and federal fish and wildlife agencies because their names are similar. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Interior. The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) are state agencies.

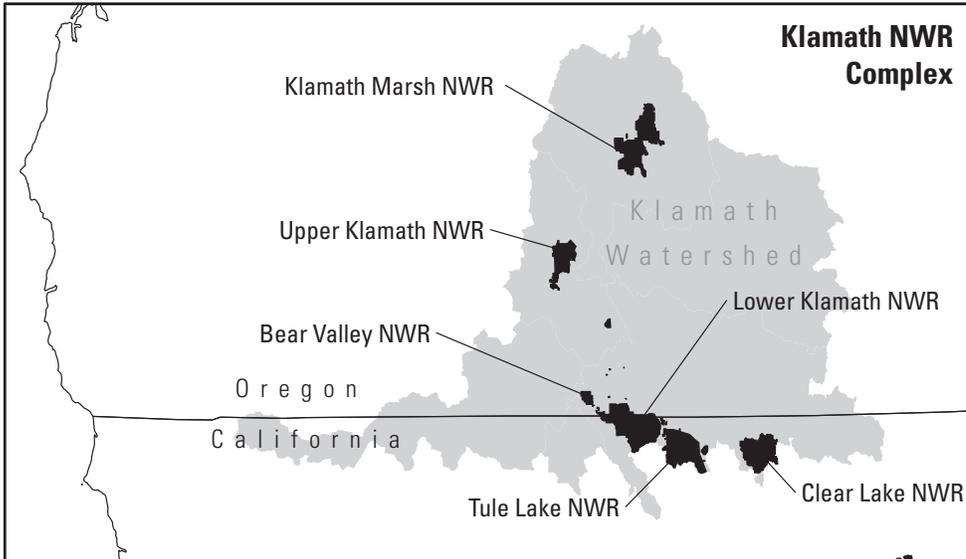
Our names are similar and so are our missions: all three agencies are dedicated to wildlife conservation for the benefit of present and future generations. Our jurisdictions are different. The FWS is the lead agency responsible for federally-listed species and migratory birds, whether they are located on federal, state, or private lands. CDFG and ODFW have primary responsibility for resident fish and wildlife on state and private lands and oversees state-listed species. The Klamath Basin Refuges are managed by the FWS, which coordinates with CDFG and ODFW on a variety of natural resource management issues.



Mixed goose flock on Tule Lake NWR. Photo: Dave Menke

*“Wild beasts and birds are by right not the property merely of people who are alive today, but the property of unknown generations whose belongings we have no right to squander.”*

President Theodore Roosevelt



## The Klamath Basin Refuge Complex

The Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex consists of six refuges (see map above): Upper Klamath, Lower Klamath, Tule Lake, Clear Lake, Bear Valley, and Klamath Marsh Refuges. Historically the Klamath Basin was dominated by approximately 185,000 acres of shallow lakes and freshwater marshes that supported peak populations of over six million water birds. Today, less than 25 percent of the historic marshes and shallow wetlands remain.

The Refuge Complex was established to conserve much of the Klamath Basin's remaining wetland habitat. However, Upper Klamath, Lower Klamath, Tule Lake, and Clear Lake Refuges exist within the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Klamath Project and were subject to conversion from wetland habitats to farmland. Under the Kuchel Act of 1964, wetland reclamation was stopped and the refuges were, "... dedicated to wildlife conservation and for the major purposes of water fowl management, but with full consideration to optimum agricultural use that is consistent therewith." In partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Reclamation administers a Public Lease Lands program on Lower Klamath and Tule Lake refuges.



Checking waterfowl hunters on Lower Klamath NWR. Photo: Dave Menke

*"Here lay the land of my dreams. After nearly 20 years of waiting, I was looking out over this place of mystery that lay far beyond the southern rim of my home hills...."*

William Finley, while exploring Lower Klamath and Tule Lakes in 1905

## Lower Klamath NWR

Lower Klamath Refuge was established in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt as the nation's first waterfowl refuge. Lower Klamath Refuge is located in rural northeastern California and southern Oregon. This 46,000-acre refuge is a varied mix of shallow freshwater marshes, open water, grassy uplands, and croplands that are intensively managed to provide feeding, resting, nesting, and brood rearing habitat for waterfowl and other birds. Approximately 5,000 acres are leased by cereal grain farmers within the Public Lease Lands program administered by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Permit holders farm another 5000-7000 acres of grass hay in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Lower Klamath Refuge is one of the most biologically productive refuges within the Pacific Flyway. Approximately 80 percent of the flyway's total migrating waterfowl pass through the Klamath Basin on both spring and fall migrations, with 50 percent of those birds using the Lower Klamath Refuge. This refuge provides habitat for 25 species of special concern listed as threatened or sensitive by California and Oregon. The refuge is also a fall staging area for 20

## Lower Klamath NWR

*continued from page 3*

to 30 percent of the central valley population of sandhill crane. From 20,000 to 100,000 shorebirds use refuge wetlands during the spring migration. Wintering wildlife populations include 500 bald eagles and 30,000 tundra swans. Spring and summer nesting wildlife include many colonial water birds, such as: white-faced ibis; great blue and black-crowned herons; great and snowy egrets; double-crested cormorants; western, Clark's and eared grebes; American white pelican; and several species of terns and gulls.

All refuge waters are delivered through a system of diversion or irrigation canals associated with the Reclamation's Klamath Project. Consequently this leaves the refuge vulnerable to periodic water shortages due to an over-allocated system.

Lower Klamath Refuge is open to both waterfowl and pheasant hunting. In addition this refuge has a marked 10-mile auto tour route which allows visitors year round access to great wildlife viewing opportunities. The refuge also has a number of photo-blinds which are strategically situated for great early-morning photography.



*Western pond turtle on Lower Klamath NWR. Photo: Dave Menke*



*Bald eagle on nest site, Lower Klamath NWR. Photo: Dave Menke*

## Tule Lake NWR

Tule Lake Refuge is located in the fertile and intensely farmed Tule Lake Basin of northeastern California. It was established in 1928 by President Calvin Coolidge as a, "preserve and breeding ground for wild birds and animals." This 39,116-acre refuge is mostly open water and crop land. Approximately 17,000 acres are leased by potato, onion, horse radish, alfalfa, and cereal grains within the Public Lease Lands program administered by the U.S Bureau of Reclamation. Permit holders farm an additional 1,900 acres in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

The endangered Lost River and shortnose suckers live in or use this refuge. The refuge is a significant staging area for migrating waterfowl during spring and fall migrations. It is used primarily by white-fronted, snow, Ross, and cackling Canada geese, all of which nest in the Arctic tundra.

Tule Lake hunting opportunities consist of two large marsh units accessible by boats, a spaced-blind hunt in dry fields, and open free-roam areas offering field hunts over harvested grain and smaller marsh units. A 10-mile auto tour route allows for wildlife observation throughout the year.

## Clear Lake NWR

Clear Lake Refuge was established by President William Taft in 1911 as a "... preserve and breeding ground for native birds" (Executive Order 1332). Located in northeastern California, the refuge consists of approximately 20,000 acres of open water surrounded by over 26,000 acres of upland bunchgrass, low sagebrush, and juniper habitat. Small, rocky islands in the lake provide nesting sites for American white pelicans, double-crested cormorants, and other colonial nesting birds.

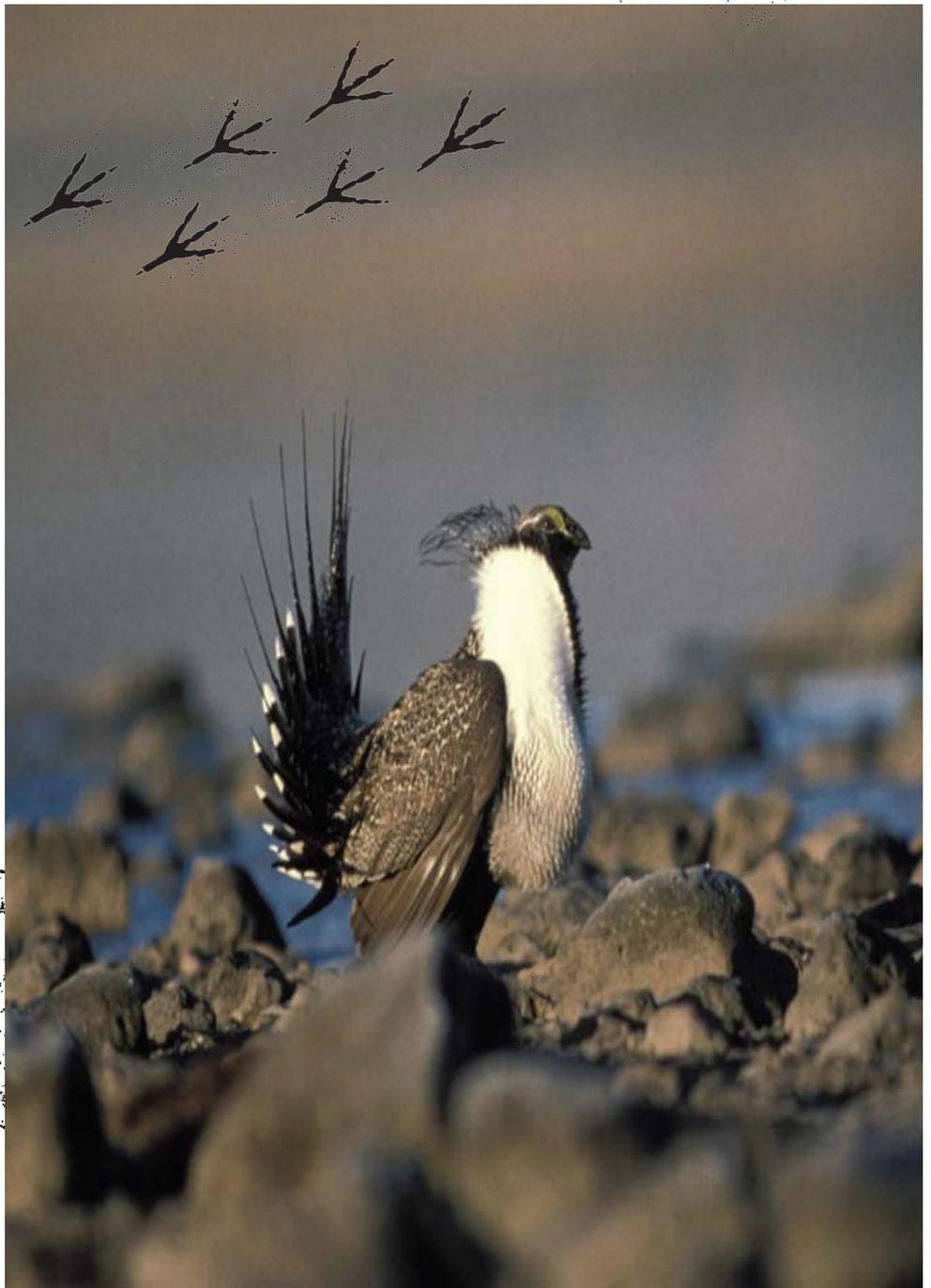
The upland areas provide habitat for pronghorn antelope, mule deer, and sage grouse. The Clear Lake Reservoir is the primary source of water for the agricultural program of the eastern half of the Klamath Basin, with water levels regulated by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Except for limited waterfowl and pronghorn antelope hunting during the regular California State seasons, the refuge is currently closed to all public access to protect fragile habitats, cultural resources, and to reduce disturbance to wildlife.



*"There is probably no more important waterfowl area in the country than these refuges in the Upper Klamath Basin ... [The Refuges] act like the waist of an hourglass... [so] all the birds in the Pacific Flyway funnel through this area in their annual migrations...."*

Secretary of the Interior,  
Stewart Udall, 1962



*Greater sage grouse on lek at Clear Lake NWR. Photo: Dave Menke*

## Upper Klamath NWR

Upper Klamath Refuge was established by President Calvin Coolidge in 1928 as a “refuge and breeding ground for birds and wild animals.” The refuge comprises 15,000 acres, mostly bulrush-cattail marsh and open water, and approximately 30 acres of forested uplands. These habitats serve as excellent nesting and brood rearing areas for waterfowl and colonial nesting birds, including the American white pelican and several different heron species. Bald eagles and osprey nest nearby and can sometimes be seen fishing in refuge waters.

Upper Klamath Refuge consists almost entirely of marsh and is accessible only by boat. A 9.5 mile self-guided canoe trail meanders through the Upper Klamath refuge and is an ideal way to observe marsh habitats and birds. The trail has four segments: Recreation Creek, Crystal Creek, Wocus Cut, and Malone Springs, and can be accessed by the Rocky Point or Malone Springs boat launches. Hunting is permitted near Rocky Point on the west side of Upper Klamath Lake and on Hank’s Marsh on the east side of Upper Klamath Lake.

## Bear Valley NWR

Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1978 to protect a major night roost site for wintering bald eagles in Southern Oregon. The refuge consists of 4,200 acres, primarily of old growth ponderosa pine, incense cedar, and white and Douglas fir.

These mature stands of trees have open branching patterns of large limbs which allow easy eagle access and can support many birds. Located on a northeast slope, the roost also shelters these raptors from the harsh and prevailing winter winds. In recent years, as many as 300 bald eagles have used the roost in a single night.

Bear Valley Refuge also serves as a nesting habitat for several bald eagle pairs. To reduce disturbance to the birds, this refuge is currently closed to all public entry except for walk-in deer hunting before November 1.



*Clark's grebes on Upper Klamath NWR. Photo: Dave Menke*

## What is a CCP?

When Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, it incorporated an underlying philosophy that “wildlife comes first” on refuges.

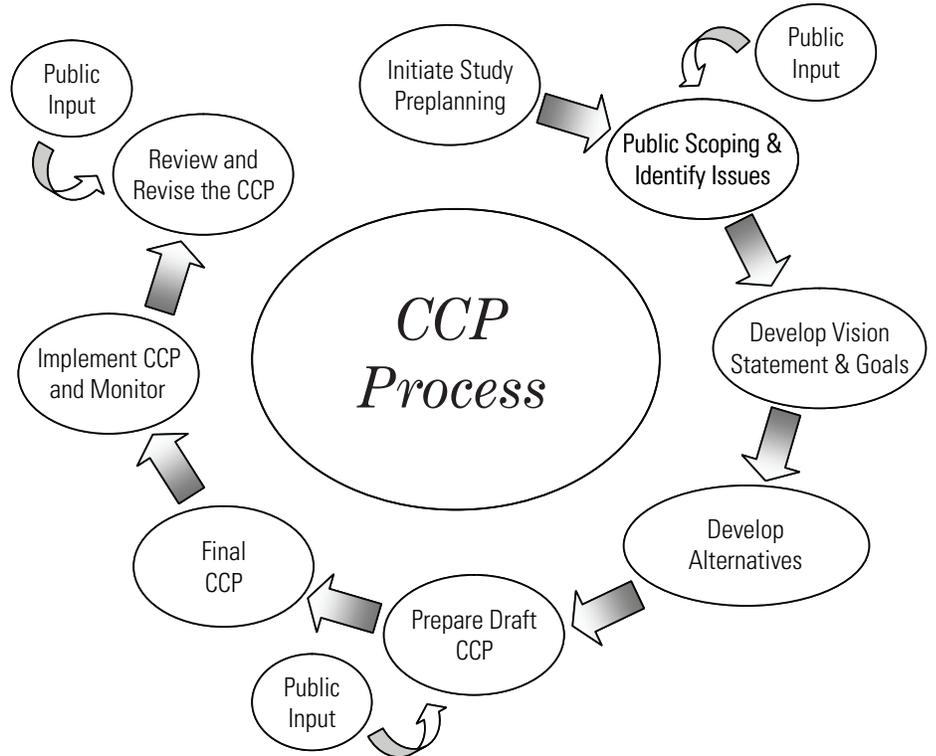
The Act provides the FWS with guidance for managing refuges to ensure the long-term conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. Three important principles of the Act are to maintain biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the refuge and facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation.

Every refuge is required to have a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) completed by 2012. The CCP will outline refuge goals, objectives, and management strategies. It is a flexible, “living” document that will be updated every 15 years.

The CCP:

- Ensures that management of the refuge reflects the purposes of the refuge and the mission, policies, and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- Provides the public with an understanding of the reasons for management actions on the refuge;
- Provides a vision statement for the refuge;
- Ensures the compatibility of current and future uses of the refuge with its purposes;
- Provides long-term continuity in refuge management; and
- Provides budget justification for operation and maintenance and facility development requests.

The CCP will provide broad management direction and guidance for the refuge, contingent upon future funding and resources. The accompanying environmental document, required by the National



Environmental Policy Act, will describe the alternatives considered and their environmental effects. You will have an opportunity to review and comment on the draft CCP and environmental document.

In May 2010 we will hold our first public scoping meetings to help identify issues and gather information. The key planning steps are listed above and will be listed in future updates so you can track our progress through the planning process.



Public meeting. Photo: FWS

## Public Meeting Schedule

**Monday, May 10, 2010**  
(6:00 - 8:00 pm)

Tulelake-Butte Valley  
Fair and Museum of  
Local History  
Home Economics Building  
800 Main Street  
Tulelake, CA 96134

**Tuesday, May 11, 2010**  
(6:00 - 8:00 pm)

Medford Red Lion Hotel  
Douglas Fir Room  
200 North Riverside Avenue  
Medford, OR 97501

**Wednesday, May 12, 2010**  
(6:00 - 8:00 pm)

Redding Oxford Suites  
Shasta Lassen Rooms  
1967 Hilltop Drive  
Redding, CA 96002

**Thursday, May 13, 2010**  
(6:00 - 8:00 pm)

Oregon Institute of Technology  
College Union  
Mt. Scott Room  
3201 Campus Drive  
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

## Help us plan the future

You are invited to participate in a series of meetings sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to gather ideas and suggestions concerning the long-term management of the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Please come listen to a presentation about current refuge management and the CCP process, and then share your ideas and concerns with FWS staff. Your participation is essential to the success of this planning effort!

## Please feel free to contact us!

Your participation in this process is most welcome. Please feel free to contact us with any questions, comments, or concerns.

For more information, visit our website at:  
[www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges](http://www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges)

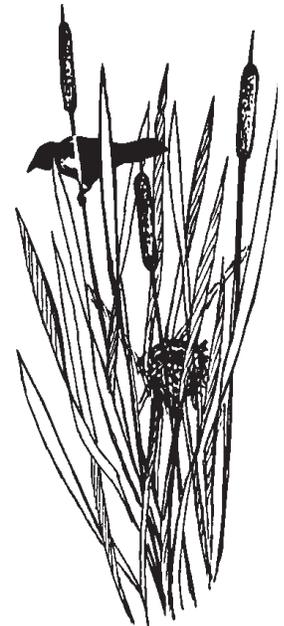
**Michelle Barry, Refuge Planner**

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**Phone: (530) 667-2231  
Fax: (530) 667-8337  
R8KlamathCCP@fws.gov**

**Office hours:  
Monday - Friday  
8:00 am to 4:30 pm**

**[www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges](http://www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges)**



*Canada goose brood. Photo: USFWS*



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