



Proposed Green River National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to establish Kentucky's second national wildlife refuge to protect high quality wildlife and fish habitats near the confluence of the Green River and Ohio River.

With support and direction from the U.S. Congress, the Service is set to establish the proposed Green River National Wildlife Refuge in Henderson County. The Green River Bottoms area has long been valued for its diverse system of bottomland hardwood forests, wetlands, upland bluffs, and agricultural lands that provide high quality habitat for waterfowl, migratory birds, and sport fish.

The proposed Green River National Wildlife Refuge has numerous goals:

- Establish a second national wildlife refuge in Kentucky to support conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants;
- Provide high-quality hunting and sport fishing opportunities;
- Provide opportunities for public use and environmental education and interpretation;
- Collaborate with partners to protect and enhance water quality and quantity within the Ohio River and Green River watersheds, benefiting both humans and wildlife; and
- Ensure healthy wildlife populations for the benefit of Kentuckians and all Americans.



The Ohio River borders the north end of Henderson County. The bottomland hardwood forests and wetlands found in the Ohio River's floodplains provide important habitat for migratory birds and waterfowl, credit USFWS/Kristen Peters.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the proposed Green River National Wildlife Refuge?

The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System—a national network of public lands and waters devoted to the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. The National Wildlife Refuge System includes Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge near Benton, Kentucky. In 2018, Congress directed the Service to establish Kentucky's second national wildlife refuge in Henderson County. The Service has initiated the planning process for this addition to the Refuge System and is referring to it as the Green River National Wildlife Refuge.

What is the process for establishing the refuge and opportunities for public input?

The Service will follow a two-step process to establish the refuge. A draft Land Protection Plan (LPP) and an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be developed and made publicly available. The LPP informs landowners and interested stakeholders of the proposal to establish the refuge. The Service prepares the EA as required by the National Environmental Policy Act to

analyze different strategies for land protection in the area.

Why did the Service choose Henderson County for the refuge?

The Service has recognized the Green River area in Henderson County as providing diverse habitat for waterfowl and migratory birds since 1958. In 2001 and 2010, the Service submitted proposals to establish the Green River National Wildlife Refuge, but these proposals were ultimately unsuccessful due to higher priorities nationally.

How will the refuge be created if approved?

The Service and its partners will work with willing landowners to establish the Green River National Wildlife Refuge through several methods, including purchasing land at fair market value and development rights through conservation easements. The Service is developing a Conservation Partnership Area in Henderson County where it will focus efforts to protect lands for the benefit of fish and wildlife. The planning target is to protect approximately 24,000 acres for the refuge.

What is a Conservation Partnership Area (CPA)?

A CPA is the area within which the Service would have the ability to work with willing sellers or partners to purchase or protect approximately 24,000 acres of land.

My land is within the CPA, what does that mean?

The rights of a private landowner are not affected by the designation of the CPA or the establishment of the refuge. The Service will work with willing sellers to acquire lands as opportunities and funding allow. Landowners have no obligation to sell their land or otherwise participate in the proposed refuge at any time.

How does the Service acquire land for the refuge?

These land protection strategies will occur by working with willing sellers of lands within the CPA only. Neither the CPA boundary nor the establishment of the refuge affects the rights of private landowners. The Service will buy land from willing sellers only. Conservation easements will also be considered if desired by a landowner.

What if the Service wants to buy my land, and I do not want to sell?

You don't have to sell your land as part of this proposal. You would be unaffected by the establishment of the refuge.

What is the timeline for completing the refuge?

This is a long-term effort that may take decades to complete. The number of willing sellers and availability of funding will determine the timeline for completing the purchase of approximately 24,000 acres for Green River National Wildlife Refuge.

What types of activities will be allowed on the refuge?

The Service supports wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

How does the refuge's establishment affect the proposed I-69 Ohio River crossing project?

The Service is working closely with the Federal Highway Administration and the Kentucky and Indiana transportation agencies to minimize any potential issues or conflicts with the proposed I-69 Ohio River crossing project.

How would tax revenue be affected if lands become part of the National Wildlife Refuge System?

The Federal Government does not pay property tax. However, the Service annually reimburses counties to compensate for lost revenue, based on a formula that is the greater of: 75 cents per acre; three-fourths of one percent of the fair market value; or 25 percent of the net receipts collected from operation and management of the refuge. Use of these funds must first be approved by Congress. Also, Congress may appropriate additional funds to compensate local governments. Other economic benefits typically associated with refuge lands include tourism, improved property values adjacent to the refuge, and access to federal grants to name a few.

Where does the money come from to buy private land in a time of tight budgets?

The Service anticipates funding for this project will be provided through the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These funding sources are not derived from traditional tax revenues but are collected from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps, entrance fees from certain national wildlife refuges, import duties on arms and ammunition (Migratory Bird Conservation Fund), and from the sale of offshore oil leases (Land and Water Conservation Fund). Funding from these sources is intended to support conservation of land across the nation.

What are the next steps?

In 2019, the Service will present the public with the Draft LPP and EA, complete with maps showing where the Service would like to create the proposed refuge. The Service will provide an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the proposal. Once the public review and comment period ends, the Service will evaluate the comments and make any changes needed before developing a final plan, which will be approved by the Service Director.

Schedule for Establishing the Proposed Green River National Wildlife Refuge *Develop Draft Land Protection Plan and Environmental Assessment* Fall 2018-Winter 2019

Conduct Public Review and Comment on Proposal Spring 2019

Evaluate the Comments and Develop Final Plan for Approval Summer 2019

Establish the Refuge Fall 2019

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