

# Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Services Plan



**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Northeast Region  
2013**

# Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Services Plan

May 2013

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# Table of Contents

<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Refuge Purpose	6
B. Visitor Services Program Purpose and Scope of Plan	7
C. History of the Refuge Visitor Services Program	7
D. Visitor Services Issues, Concerns, and Factors To Consider	8
E. Themes, Messages, and Topics	10
F. Visitor Facilities	11
G. Visitor Services Maps	19
H. Refuge Visitation Trends	22
I. Visitor Capacity	25
<b>II. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES</b>	<b>25</b>
Table 2.1: CCP Goals and Objectives Summary	25
Standard 1: Develop a Visitor Services Plan	28
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	28
<b>Standard 1 Goals, Objectives, Strategies</b>	28
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	29
<b>MONITOR AND EVALUATE:</b>	29
Standard 2: Welcome and Orient Visitors	29
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	29
<b>Standard 2 Goals, Objectives, Strategies</b>	30
Standard 3: Hunting	32
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	32
<b>Standard 3 Goals, Objectives, Strategies</b>	34
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	35
Standard 4: Fishing	35
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	35
<b>Standard 4 Goal(s), Objective(s), Strategies</b>	37
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	37
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	37
Standard 5: Wildlife Observation and Wildlife Photography	38
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	38
<b>Standard 5 Goal(s), Objective(s), Strategies</b>	39
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	39
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	39
Standard 6: Environmental Education	40
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	40
<b>Standard 6 Goal(s), Objective(s), Strategies</b>	40
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	42
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	42
Standard 7: Interpretation	42
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	42
<b>Standard 7 Goal(s), Objective(s), Strategies</b>	43
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	43
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	43

Standard 8: Manage for Other Recreational Use Opportunities	43
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	44
<b>Standard 8 (Goals), Objective(s), Strategies</b>	44
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	45
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	45
Standard 9: Outreach	45
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	45
<b>Standard 9 Goal(s), Objective(s), Strategie(s)</b>	47
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	48
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	48
Standard 10: Volunteers and Friends	48
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	48
<b>Standard 10 Goal(s), Objective(s), Strategies</b>	49
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	49
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	49
11: Recreation Fee Program	49
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	49
Standard 11 Goal(s), Objective(s), Strategies	49
<b>Significant Program Changes:</b>	50
<b>Monitor and Evaluate:</b>	50
12: Concessions	50
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	50
13: Commercial Recreational Uses	50
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	51
14: Wilderness	51
<b>Current program discussion:</b>	51
<b>III. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE</b>	<b>53</b>
Table X: Strategies Implementation Schedule	53
<b>IV. PROJECT COST</b>	<b>54</b>
Table X. Project Cost	54
<b>V. VISITOR SERVICES ANNUAL WORK PLAN</b>	<b>55</b>
Table X. Visitor Services Annual Work Plan	55
<b>VI. VISITOR SERVICES ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP PLANNING</b>	<b>56</b>
Table X. Visitor Services Annual Partnership Planning	56
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>60</b>
APPENDIX A: List of Preparers	60
APPENDIX B: List of other visitor services related documents	60
APPENDIX C: Appropriate Use Determinations	60
APPENDIX D: Compatibility Determination	61
APPENDIX E: Staffing Chart.....	62
APPENDIX F: U.S. F.W.S Customer Service Standards.....	63

# Summary

This VSP was written to provide the reader with information about the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge- its purpose, goals, and mission. It discusses visitor services issues, outreach, and themes specific to the refuge. The VSP provides the reader with useful information about refuge facilities, history, and history of visitor services. Readers will learn important themes and issues specific to the refuge, and how the visitor services program at Rachel Carson NWR intends to inform and educate the public.

This VSP will address the fourteen standards set forth by the National Wildlife Refuge System:

- *Standard 1. Develop a Visitor Services Plan*
- *Standard 2. Welcome and orient visitors*
- *Standard 3. Provide quality hunting opportunities*
- *Standard 4. Provide quality fishing opportunities*
- *Standard 5. Provide quality wildlife observation and photography opportunities*
- *Standard 6. Develop and implement a quality environmental education program*
- *Standard 7. Provide quality interpretation of key resources and issues*
- *Standard 8. Manage for other recreational use opportunities*
- *Standard 9. Communicate key issues with off-site audiences*
- *Standard 10. Build volunteer programs and partnerships with Friends organizations*
- *Standard 11. Recreation Fee Program*
- *Standard 12. Concessions*
- *Standard 13. Commercial uses*
- *Standard 14. Wilderness*

The Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge works in cooperation with many partners in order to achieve its goals. These partners include the Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Maine Audubon Society, state agencies, and local land trusts, among countless others. A more comprehensive list is located in section VI of the VSP.

In the spirit of Rachel Carson, our refuge seeks to inform and educate the public. Rachel Carson was an important scientist and author of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her revealing book, *Silent Spring*, informed the American public about the unspoken consequences of pesticide use. Rachel Carson transformed the focus of environmental science, sparked the global conservation movement, and her work led to the formation of the EPA. The publishing of her book was met with strong opposition by pesticide companies and some of the American public. The controversy of her book has been pervasive since it was first published, though much environmental policy change can be accredited to her book. Carson is credited with jumpstarting the modern environmental movement.

Our mission, and the mission of the Wildlife Refuge System, is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. This VSP explores and defines the visitor's services dimension of our refuge- our goal is to ensure that the American public understands our mission, and its importance.

# **I. Background Information**

## **A. REFUGE PURPOSE**

Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge was originally founded in 1966 with the creation of the Coastal Maine National Wildlife Refuge, under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. It was then renamed in 1970 in honor of scientist and author Rachel Carson. The refuge is comprised of 10 divisions along the southern Maine coast: Brave Boat Harbor, Lower Wells, Upper Wells, Mousam River, Goose Rocks, Spurwink River, Goosefare Brook, Little River, Moody, and Biddeford Pool. These divisions stretch 50 miles along the coast, and include more than 5,000 acres of land, which protect coastal salt marshes and the wildlife they contain from residential and commercial encroachment.

The refuge is part of a greater National Wildlife Refuge System, the purpose of which is to protect fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. The Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge operates under the authority of this national system to achieve its goals. The purpose of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge is defined within several laws:

### ***Migratory Bird Treaty Act***

- Use as an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds
- For any other management purpose of migratory birds

### ***Refuge Recreation Act***

#### ***Refuges are suitable for-***

- Incidental fish and wildlife oriented recreational development
- Protection of natural resources
- Conservation of endangered or threatened species

### ***Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986***

- To conserve wetlands in the United States in order to maintain the public benefits they provide
- To conserve wetlands that help us fulfill international obligations contained in various migratory bird treaties and conventions

### ***Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956***

- To develop, advance, manage, conserve, and protect the fish and wildlife resources encompassed by the refuge
- For the benefit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to perform its activities and services

## **B. VISITOR SERVICES PROGRAM PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PLAN**

The purpose of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) visitor services program is to foster understanding and instill appreciation of fish, wildlife, plants and their conservation by providing the public with safe, high quality, appropriate, and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational and educational programs and activities. In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act (Improvement Act) which clearly states that on national wildlife refuges, wildlife comes first. The Improvement Act also identified six priority wildlife-dependent public use activities and programs compatible with the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. These uses include hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

This Visitor Services Plan (VSP) was prepared based upon these guidelines. With the adoption and implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and this step-down plan, all visitor service activities and programs on the Refuge will be in conformance with national guidelines, and will ensure their compatibility with the refuge's overarching wildlife mission and purposes.

The purpose of the VSP is to establish priorities and identify improvements, which will guide the Refuge's visitor service program over the next fifteen years. Visitor services goals, objectives, and strategies have been identified within the Chapter IV of the CCP for Rachel Carson NWR. The Hunt Plan, a step-down plan from this VSP, has also been prepared ([Appendix \\_ of the VSP](#)). This VSP addresses compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses on the refuge, including hunting, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation (Appendix G of the CCP). Bicycling, a form of non-wildlife dependent recreation, in designated areas has also been determined to be compatible (Appendix G of the CCP). The VSP addresses volunteer programs, partnerships and resource protection goals.

## **C. HISTORY OF THE REFUGE VISITOR SERVICES PROGRAM**

This VSP is the first Visitor Services Plan set in place at the Rachel Carson NWR. The Refuge previously attempted to develop and implement a Public Use/Visitor Services Plan (1990, 1993, 1994) but none were completed. Despite this, there are numerous opportunities available to the public in the form of visitor services and programs, including internships. Partnerships with other organizations have also yielded successful events. Both interns and refuge staff run activities and programs, primarily in the summer months. Every third Friday of the month refuge staff holds volunteer work days. These work days include anything from native shrub planting, greenhouse maintenance, and trail cleanups, to bird surveys and New England cottontail tracking. Opportunities for volunteering increase in the spring and summer months, but volunteers work year round at the refuge to assist our staff with their duties. A volunteer coordinator at the refuge is responsible for managing volunteers and matching up necessary refuge work with interested groups and individuals.

[History of these programs?](#)

The refuge opened for hunting in 1980, and fishing in 2000. Since 2000, it has been estimated that the average number of yearly hunters on the refuge is around 400 individuals, for an estimated 6,000 total days spent by hunters on the refuge. An estimated 1,600 total days were spent on the refuge by anglers.

Several refuge partners have remained an important facet in supporting the goals at our special location. The Friends of Rachel Carson group was established in 1988. This group has been instrumental in achieving refuge goals and fostering support in the communities in which the refuge is contained. The Friends assist the refuge in wildlife management activities and monitoring, public awareness, and obtaining funding under the guidance of refuge staff. The Friends group has the following purpose:

- *Support acquisition funding*
- *Assist in pursuit of acquisitions*
- *Increase public awareness of needs and benefits of the refuge*
- *Provide refuge division monitoring*
- *Comment on activities which affect the refuge*
- *Identify other similar areas which warrant refuge type protection*
- *Assist with refuge projects as they arise*
- *Identify means and location(s) for educational/visitor center*

#### D. VISITOR SERVICES ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge has the opportunity to attract thousands of visitors to our unique and beautiful location. Many visitors to southern Maine are likely to encounter the refuge at some point along the coast, but will only see a sign that says "unauthorized entry prohibited". RCNWR intends to increase visitor opportunities and participation by expanding current interpretation and environmental education programs. The refuge seeks to expand the number of information kiosks and signs at some of the trailheads, in order to improve understanding of refuge habitats and boundaries, convey the refuge's message, build support, and attract wildlife-oriented volunteers. The refuge relies on one full time law enforcement officer and a variety of symbolic signage to enforce regulations on refuge property. While many parts of the refuge are open to the public and going off the trails may be tempting, it is critical that visitors respect posted areas in order to most effectively protect the wildlife within. This will allow visitor services to maintain a sustainable presence within the National Wildlife Refuge System. Though Rachel Carson NWR has had successful outreach programs without implementing a VSP, there are concerns and issues that this VSP will address.

##### *Funding*

Funding has a great impact on visitor services programs at both Rachel Carson NWR and wildlife refuges across the country. A lack of funding means that visitor's services likely suffer. Informational brochures get outdated or depleted, staff shortages occur, and trails may suffer from a lack of maintenance. With a lack of funding, educational and interpretive programming is sparse. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service estimates that 20% of the work done on refuges is performed by volunteers- an invaluable resource that would suffer should there not be enough staff present to organize and oversee volunteers. The Visitor Services Plan will try to accommodate for changes in funding, but budget cuts could make visitor services less of a priority. NEPA, the National Environmental Protection Act, requires a "No-Action Alternative". This means that \_\_\_\_\_. In accordance with the \_\_\_\_\_, wildlife comes first.

### *Outreach and Connecting People with Nature*

There is a need to both expand and enhance interpretation opportunities on the refuge. The current interpretation program relies heavily on interns to perform interpretive walks, which are limited to the summer months and dependent on funding. Increased visitor activity means increased importance for our partnership with the Leave No Trace program of Maine- and its enforcement on the refuge. Leave No Trace is a program that has been adapted by the refuge for refuge use, and is detailed in Standard 1 of the VSP. Visitation to the refuge has consistently increased over the last several years, and this trend is expected to continue. Increasing urbanism drives people to seek nature, and the refuge is one of several opportunities in the southern Maine area that both locals and tourists seek to experience. Increased recreational use of the refuge creates additional costs for maintenance and repair of trails, observation platforms, parking lots, and signage. Costs are also incurred in the printing of brochures, trail guides, and maps. Interpretive programs are crucial to raising visibility and improving public opinion of the refuge and of conservation principles.

Maintaining and increasing opportunities for volunteers and internships will be important to the refuge for retaining committed and well-trained volunteers. The refuge currently hosts a variety of internships and seasonal job opportunities for those interested in hands on experience. During the summer, Rachel Carson NWR is full of seasonal workers. Interns assist with natural resource work, outreach, Land Management and Research Demonstration (LMRD), salt marsh integrity, and other necessary responsibilities during the busy summer months. Along with interns, the refuge also hosts up to two Maine Conservation Corps- Americorps members, individuals from the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). Volunteers traveling in RVs also have a place out our refuge, and usually work during the summer months. Longer term staff includes contractors through the Wells National Estuarine Reserve and Maine Audubon Society, plus biological technicians. Research teams from University of Maine may also call Rachel Carson NWR home during the summer, in addition to Wildlife Services employees through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. . In addition to these partnerships, the refuge also has its own volunteer organization. The Friends of Rachel Carson was established in 1988 and works closely to the refuge to achieve conservation goals. It is a small group of volunteers that has been effective in supporting the protection of coastal habitats in the refuge. Volunteers have been an important part in fostering support for the refuge and helping achieve. The need for a committed, geographically dispersed volunteer force is especially important to Rachel Carson, as the refuge is spread across 50 miles of coastline.

The community generally supports Rachel Carson NWR, but many are unaware of its presence and its work. Some members of the public are unaware of the refuge boundaries, or unaware that certain parts of the refuge are not open to the public, and sometimes enter prohibited areas of the refuge. Most visitors to the refuge are aware of its purpose (NWRVS 2012) and almost half of visitors are local. There has not been any significant opposition to the refuge and its mission.

Attracting and retaining the interest of young people is important. The average visitor to our refuge is in his or her mid 50's, according to the *National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey, 2012*. To successfully achieve refuge mission and goals, the education of young people is critical. This ensures that the refuge is recognized for its importance, indefinitely.

## **E. THEMES, MESSAGES, AND TOPICS**

- New England cottontail are listed as endangered in Maine, therefore actively managing their habitat is of critical importance. Only 500 are estimated to be present in the state. The refuge works hard to create more early successional habitat for not only our native New England cottontail, but for other shrubland loving species such as the woodcock, Eastern towhee, and prairie warbler. Rachel Carson NWR works with contractors to selectively clear areas of forest to encourage early successional growth, in addition to researching effectiveness of natural regeneration and native shrub planting with the goal of creating viable shrubland habitat. Least terns are also surveyed at our refuge with the help of seasonal technicians and volunteers.!
- Piping Plovers face the threat of human encroachment and sea-level rise. Actively protecting and managing their habitats, controlling predators, protecting beaches, and educating the public are methods that have been employed to restore plover populations in the state. A goal of 1.5 chicks per nesting pair has recently resulted in improved population numbers.
- Rachel Carson NWR has an impressive expanse of productive salt marsh area. Staff work hard in monitoring salt marsh integrity, in addition to the monitoring of the salt marsh and Nelson's sparrow—native birds that call the salt marsh home.
- Invasive species have remained another major point of interest for the refuge. In the past, an invasive species technician worked to monitor, mitigate, and track the spread of invasive flora and fauna.

The refuge is currently focused on the protection of New England cottontail and piping plovers, and this focus includes educating the public to ensure protection of these two endangered species.

#### *New England Cottontail*

New England Cottontail is an endangered species in Maine; only an estimated 500 cottontails remain in the state of Maine. Cottontails prefer early successional forests- young forests with shrubs, vines, grasses, young trees, and other greenery. Cottontails do not travel more than 16 feet outside of this habitat- they naturally fear predators. Early successional habitats have a broad canopy and open understory that enables the cottontail to move freely while being protected. Shrublands help the cottontail to protect themselves, but also provide the greenery they require for food. Older forests limit this type of growth. When remnant patches of cover get isolated (from bulldozing or development) or too thin, these forest patches become fragmented. Large areas of shrublands are needed for cottontail. When shrublands became fragmented, local populations of cottontail can become isolated, reducing the ability of males and females to find each other for breeding. About 25 acres of this habitat is preferable for cottontail populations, but local populations of 3 to 4 rabbits in southern Maine are generally located on areas less than 7.5 acres. The rabbits also face predation from domestic and wild animals. Small habitats add to the ease that predators have in exploiting the rabbits. Cottontail cannot survive in forested habitats. Clearing of mature forests with various methods (clearing, forestry, prescribed burns, etc.) all help shrubs to grow. Natural causes also help limit mature forest growth (salt marshes, wind and salt spray from oceanfronts).

#### *Piping Plovers*

Piping Plovers face many threats to their habitat which increase as human development increases. Habitat loss and degradation are being caused by commercial, residential, and recreational development on coastal beaches- plover's nesting grounds. Dams and other water-control structures change the water level of inland nesting sites, by either flooding plover's nesting grounds, or allowing vegetation to grow on nesting beaches. Nest disturbance and predators threaten plovers. Parents abandon their nests when they feel threatened by predators or humans. Sometimes people accidentally crush eggs or chicks when they use beaches that have nests. Foxes, gulls, crows, and raccoons sometimes prey on chicks or eggs.

There are several representative areas in the refuge that host habitats and wildlife populations that are unique, if not exclusive, to the entire state of Maine. Fifty to seventy-five percent of the Maine piping plover population nests at sites on or near the refuge. Rachel Carson NWR has assumed responsibility for managing nests that are found near, but not located on refuge lands. This involves cooperation with the Maine Audubon Society, state partners, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, and private landowners. In Maine, Roseate terns only nest on three or four islands. Two of these islands are located just off the refuge, in Biddeford and Kennebunkport. Should a catastrophic event occur, these populations would be adversely affected. The number of nesting pairs has increased, but the geographic distribution of these pairs is of concern. Other migratory birds find refuge at Rachel Carson NWR. Salt marshes are some of the most ecologically diverse ecosystems in the world, and the refuge hosts most of the states salt marsh areas. Salt marshes are of great value to the wildlife they contain, and the communities that surround them. Ensuring that people understand the importance of this and other habitats is a priority of the refuge.

## F. VISITOR FACILITIES

*The current visitor facilities are as follows:*

The main facility on the refuge is 'headquarters', also home of the refuge's visitor center. It is located at 321 Port Road in Wells. The refuge did not originally have staff offices located in Wells when it was first created in 1966. At this time, the refuge was run out of a satellite office of the Parker River Refuge in Newburyport, Massachusetts. A small cabin off of Drakes Island Road in the Lower Wells Division was the first staffed position on the refuge in 1977. A combined office and residence was built in 1980 at the current headquarters location, off of Route 9 on the Upper Wells division. From 1989 to 1990, a new office building was constructed to hold three staff members, with private offices for a manager and assistant manager. A general work area for staff and a small visitor contact center were included in this building. A garage and workshop was also built.

As staff continued to grow, more space was needed. In 1997, the maintenance area was converted into offices, and an additional space of 18'X30' was built for staff space. There is one restroom, inadequate space for staff, filing, storage, and a lack of space for staff, visitor, and work vehicles.

Some visitors and locals get confused by the refuge's close proximity to the Wells National Estuarine Reserve. The refuge is not affiliated with the Reserve, but occasionally the two join as partners to achieve shared conservation goals.



### **Visitor Contact Station**

The contact station for visitors is located at headquarters, in the Upper Wells division. Here, visitors can contact staff members, get hunting and fishing permits, obtain informational brochures and maps, and learn from the small exhibits located in the contact station. Headquarters is adjacent to the Carson Interpretive Trail; many visitors stop by the contact station to say hello to staff and ask questions. Headquarters is open to the public from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. The public may contact personnel in person, by telephone, or by email.

To ensure visitor safety, and the protection of wildlife and habitat on the refuge, visitors are asked to follow these general rules during their visit. Additional rules may apply to each division, which will be listed accordingly. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact refuge staff *before* your trip. *All* of the rules below apply to *each* part of the refuge.

#### **A few simple rules:**

- Public use of designated trails within the refuge for nature study, hiking and photography is permitted from sunrise to sunset.
- In an effort to protect delicate habitats, and avoid ticks and poison ivy, we ask that you stay on designated trails.
- Firearms by permit only, during designated hunts, and are **prohibited** from federal buildings.
- Pets - Leashed dogs are allowed on the Carson Trail in Wells. Otherwise, domestic pets, including horses, are not allowed on the refuge.
- Plants, Animals, and Artifacts - Disturbing or collecting is **prohibited**. Please don't feed wildlife.
- Use Leave No Trace Principles during your visit:
  - Plan ahead and prepare.
  - Travel on durable surfaces.
  - Dispose of waste properly.
  - Leave what you find.
  - Respect wildlife.
  - Be considerate of other visitors

### **Brave Boat Harbor**

This division encompasses **707 acres** in fee title and an additional **41 acres** managed under a conservation easement. Oak-pine forest with vernal pools and old field upland habitats surround salt marsh and estuary habitat. This area was nominated for inclusion in the Maine Ecological Reserves program because of its saltmarsh ecosystem, the presence of oak-pine forest, exemplary white oak-red oak forest and perched hemlock-hardwood swamp, acidic fen, shrub swamp, and vernal pool communities. It also lies within a Maine Beginning With Habitat Focus Area (Greater Brave Boat Harbor/Gerrish Island) known to harbor rare natural communities. It also falls within the Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative. Located in York and Kittery.

#### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

Cutts Island Trail is 1.8 miles long, and offers a scenic upland hiking route. This trail is located in Kittery, located on Sea Point Beach Road. A restroom and kiosk are located at the head of the trail. The trail is handicap accessible for approximately 200 yards of the trail, including the wayside and an observation platform, with a turnaround point.

Please remember these rules:

- Open from **sunrise to sunset**, for foot traffic only.
- Stay on designated trails.
- No dogs allowed.
- Take your trash with you.
- Hunting by permit only. (Hunting locations and regulations can be found in Standard 4 of this VSP)

#### *Roads*

The main road of access to the refuge is route 103.

#### *Parking*

Parking is available for public fishing off of route 103. Parking is also available at Chauncey Creek for Cutts Island Trail users.

#### *Signs and Kiosks*

The Cutts Island Trail has several signs, including a salt marsh interpretive panel, and the stone wall interpretive panel.

#### *Moody*

Moody encompasses 343 acres in fee title, and manages an additional **4 acres** under a conservation easement. The Ogunquit River flows through it. It is almost entirely salt marsh, with some old field and coastal scrub-shrub habitat.

Located in Ogunquit and Wells.

#### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

A footbridge and wayside are located on a portion of the Moody division. A handicap accessible platform is present, with benches along the beach that are owned and maintained by the town of Wells. Another wayside exhibit and lookout are present to the north of the division. Public fishing is available behind the Ogunquit Inn, and just off Bourne Avenue. An additional viewing location and kiosk are located near Furbish Road. This located also has a handicap accessible platform and interpretive sign. Fishing locations and regulations can be found under *Standard 4* of this VSP.

#### *Roads*

Main points of access for the public are through town parking lots located near the beach. Bourne Avenue, Spring Street, and Furbish Road are main roads of access.

#### *Parking*

Parking is available in town lots adjacent to the refuge, and at a pullout spot on Furbish Road. There is parking for fishing access located on the Spring Street extension. There is very limited parking for the fishing access point located near Bourne Avenue.

### *Signs and Kiosks*

Interpretive signs are located on each of the public access points. ‘Public Fishing’ signs are located at both fishing access points on this division.

### **Lower Wells**

Lower Wells division is 997 acres in fee title, with an additional 6 acres under easement with the town of Wells. This division is almost entirely salt marsh, with some maritime forest edges, coastal shrublands, and open fields. This division includes the Webhannet salt marshes, one of the largest salt marsh systems in the state.

Located in Wells.

### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

Public fishing is located near the Mile Road, on the west bank of the Webhannet River. The fishing area extends 400 feet, until the first tidal creek.

A wayside exists next to the parking lot of Billy’s Chowder House. The north of this division is a popular spot for birding, but there are currently no waysides or viewing platforms in place.

### *Roads*

The public can access fishing by the Mile Road.

### *Parking*

Visitors park on the street.

### *Signs and Kiosks*

A sign needs to be replaced at the current wayside.

### **Upper Wells Division**

Upper Wells encompasses 653 acres in title and an additional 14 acres in land easements. About half of the division consists of mixed pine and hardwood forest, and the remainder consists of salt marsh, beach dune, old field, and shrub habitat. Little River, Merriland River, and Branch Brook run through the division. Crescent surf beach lies within this division, and usually supports the largest concentration of nesting least terns in Maine. Several pairs of federally listed threatened piping plovers have nested on the beach

### *Exhibits*

Currently, the contact station has these exhibits: *Rachel Carson: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Silent Spring*, *Invasive Pests*, *Getting Things Done for America* (Americorps), pesticide runoff, tern and plover habitats, *Rachel Carson Across America*, and *Rachel Carson: The Legend*. Other posters include information about volunteering at the refuge, and more information about Rachel Carson.

### *Publications Available*

- *Wildlife Needs Shrublands- Conserving Habitat in Maine*, Rachel Carson NWR, Wells National Estuarine Reserve
- *Share the Beach*, U.S.F.W.S.
- *Pest Alert- Emerald Ash Borer*, USDA- Forest Service
- *What is the Emerald Ash Borer?*, USDA- Forest Service

- *It Could Happen to You! How to Protect Your Home! Wildfire Strikes Home!*, USDA-Forest Service
- *Land Management Research and Demonstration Areas: Modeling Sound Habitat Stewardship*, U.S.F.W.S.
- *Get the Lead Out: Protect Our Waterbirds*, Maine Audubon Society, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- *Moving Firewood Can Transport Forest Insects and Diseases*, DontMoveFirewood.org
- *Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge: Amphibians and Reptiles*, U.S.F.W.S.
- *Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge: Birds*, U.S.F.W.S.
- *Fishing Is Fun for Everyone: It's Easy to Learn How*, U.S.F.W.S., Bob Schmidt
- *Cats and Dogs and Birds on the Beach: A Deadly Combination*, U.S.F.W.S.
- *You Can Help Protect: The Piping Plover*, U.S.F.W.S., Region 5
- *Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge*, U.S.F.W.S.
- *Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge*, U.S.F.W.S.

#### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

The Carson Interpretive Trail is located adjacent to headquarters. This trail is one mile long and handicap accessible. Sanitary composting restroom facilities are available on site. Interpretive and informational signs are present. Visitors may also view small exhibits and speak to staff inside the contact station, which is adjacent to the trail. This trail has numerous opportunities for viewing birds, other wildlife, and various salt-marsh habitats. An accompanying guide for the trail can be found at [http://www.fws.gov/northeast/rachelcarson/pdf/rachelcarson\\_trails.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/rachelcarson/pdf/rachelcarson_trails.pdf) and at headquarters.

Please remember these rules:

- This trail is open 7 days a week, **during daylight hours only**.
- Visitors must stay on durable surfaces.
- Dogs must be leashed.

The Bridle Path is owned by the town of Wells, but the refuge is located on either side of the path. Visitors may park at a pull-off along route 9. A wayside spot was available for visitors in the past, but a property conflict has led to the temporary removal of the wayside.

#### *Roads*

The main road of access to refuge headquarters is the Port Road, located off route 9.

#### *Parking*

Parking is very limited at headquarters. Few visitor vehicles can actually park at the headquarters station parking lot. Staff and refuge vehicles park in a back lot adjacent to headquarters, but there is a lack of space for these vehicles as well.

#### *Signs and Kiosks*

Several road and highway signs point to the direction of the refuge. There are signs located on Route 9 to direct visitors to the refuge, and a sign on the Port Road at the entrance of the refuge. Interpretive and informational signs are located at headquarters and the Carson Interpretive Trail.

## **Mousam River Division**

Mousam River encompasses about 500 acres in fee and title, 16 acres under conservation easement. The division is primarily forested uplands with abundant vernal pools. The rest of the habitats include salt marsh, river, estuary, open field, and scrub-shrub.  
Lies in the town of Kennebunk.

### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

Fishing is permitted east of Route 9, on the north side of the river. Access will be from the bridle path along the first tidal creek. Fishing is currently allowed on the opposite bank, and at the mouth of the Mousam River.

### *Roads*

Route 9 is the main access point.

### *Parking*

No refuge parking is available for fishing- park on route 9.

### *Signs and Kiosks*

## **Goose Rocks Division**

Goose Rocks Division encompasses 541 acres in fee title and 1 acre under easement. Habitats include salt marsh, river, beach, estuary and coastal shrubland, Smith Brook, Batson River, Goose Rocks Creek, and Sampson Cove.

Lies in the town of Kennebunkport.

### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

A pull-off point for viewing the refuge is located at Marshall Point.

### *Roads*

### *Parking*

A pull-off at Marshall Point is the only location for parking. Visitors may park on the street.

### *Signs and Kiosks*

There is no signage except for public hunting signs.

## **Little River Division**

Little River encompasses 207 acres in fee title and 59 acres in conservation easement. 60% of this division is tidal, with the remainder of the division including forested upland and scrubland. The Little River runs through this division. A recent addition to this division is Timber Point, purchased by the refuge for \$2 million dollars with the help individuals, businesses, and other organizations. Timber Point consists of 97 acres of peninsula, and 13 acres of island. It is a quality habitat for migratory birds, waterfowl, and other wildlife.

Located in Biddeford and Kennebunk.

### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

A wayside is located on Granite Point Road, overlooking Little River. Car-top launch public fishing access is pending compatibility assessment.

Timber Point trail is a newly acquired parcel of land located on Timber Point Island. The public visit the trail, and walk out to the island portion of the trail during low-tide.

Visitors are advised to follow these rules:

- Timber Island is accessible by a land bridge at low tide, but be mindful of the tides as you **cannot return** during high tide.
- The trail is open from **sunrise to sunset** for foot traffic only.
- Please stay on the designated trail, as the remainder of the peninsula is preserved for wildlife habitat.
- No pets or bikes are allowed on the trail.

#### *Roads*

Visitors can access **Timber Point** and the public fishing area by Granite Point Road, off of route 9.

#### *Parking*

Only 6 parking spots are available at the Timber Point location. Visitors often park on nearby streets.

#### *Signs and Kiosks*

A sign exists next to the wayside of the Timber Point trail, on Granite Point Road.

### ***Biddeford Pool Division***

This division in Biddeford encompasses **121 acres** in fee title and **5 acres** under easement. This division protects some of the state's most important estuarine habitats. Most of the area is salt marsh, coastal shrublands and grasslands with some pitch pine forest.

#### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

#### *Roads*

#### *Parking*

#### *Signs and Kiosks*

### ***Goosefare Brook Division***

This division consists of **494 acres** in fee title and **8 acres** under easement. It consists of a small beach, salt marshes, and several hundred acres of pitch pine and mixed pine/hardwood forest. Goosefare Brook runs through this area. One pair of nesting piping plovers commonly use this beach.

Located in Saco and Old Orchard Beach.

#### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

The **Atlantic Way Trail** is located on Goosefare Brook.

A trail to a platform overlooking the marsh is available. The access is through a summer camp-there is no parking or signage. It is not very visible or well-known.

Public fishing is available at the mouth of Goosefare Brook, though this area is not marked as refuge property. Anglers may fish on the south side of the Goose Brook outlet.

#### *Roads*

#### *Parking*

A public parking lot is located at the end of Bayview Road.

#### *Signs and Kiosks*

A kiosk, maintained by Saco Bay Trails, is located on Wildwood Avenue. The platform, fishing area, and Atlantic Way trail do not have signs or kiosks.

### **Spurwink River**

Spurwink River encompasses 493 acres in fee title and 27 acres under easement. It is centered along the Spurwink River, Pollack Creek, and several other small waterways. It consists of high-quality salt marsh with high densities of sharp-tailed sparrows, upland shrublands supporting a population of New England cottontail, fields, and some mature forest.

Located in Scarborough and Cape Elizabeth.

#### *Trails, platforms, and public access points*

A public fishing pier is located north of the bridge on rte. 77, on the west bank of the Spurwink River. It extends for about 1000 feet, and ends near the fork in the river.

The Cape Elizabeth Greenbelt is located on part of the refuge.

#### *Roads*

Access points for the fishing pier and refuge are located north of the route 77 bridge. Limited parking is available just off rte. 77.

Part of refuge in conjunction with town- Winnick Woods?

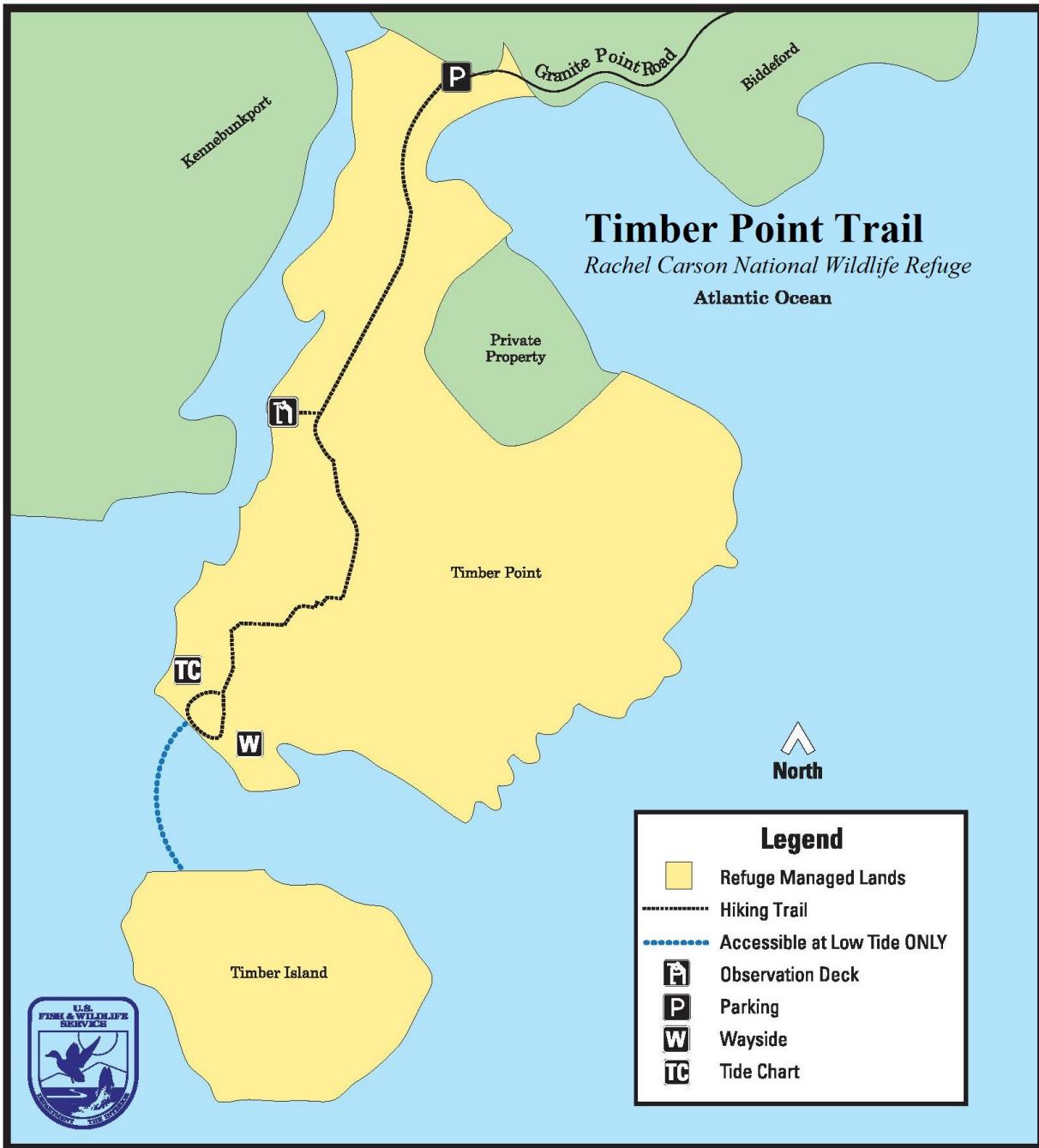
#### *Parking*

#### *Signs and Kiosks*

### **G. VISITOR SERVICES MAPS**

Maps of current facilities

Map of proposed facilities



Ted Wells Memorial Trail  
Goosefare Brook trails

#### **H. REFUGE VISITATION TRENDS**

Visitor trends are important to consider in the writing of the VSP. We continue to learn how visitors become aware of the refuge, its opportunities, and why the refuge is important. Rachel Carson, our namesake, is a reason visitors are drawn to the refuge- but the opportunities the refuge has to offer ensure that visitors return to enjoy wildlife-dependent recreation. According to the National Wildlife Visitor Survey of 2012 (NWVS 2012), most visitors found out about the refuge from family and friends (36%). Other visitors became aware of the refuge from road/highway signs (33%), and people in the local community (22%). Most visitors used vehicles to travel around the refuge (79%). 33% indicated they walked or hiked, and 6% used bicycles. A portion of surveyed visitors reported visiting the refuge once in the last year (48%) while a larger proportion of individuals (52%) responded that they had visited the refuge more than once (for an average of 18 times) in the last year. Non-local visitors were more likely to report visiting the refuge as an incidental stop (46%) during a trip to the area, while local visitors noted that visiting the refuge was their primary intention (74%). Thus, to retain and attract local visitors, outreach is crucial. Signage is equally important to attract out of state visitors, whose average distance traveled was 583 miles. 49% of non-local visitors placed visiting the refuge as neither incidental nor the primary purpose of their trip; rather, it had equal importance in their travel itinerary. This indicates that local outreach may likely have an effect on tourists. Locals

are likely to recommend visiting the refuge to tourists, who may then make repeat visits in the future. Tourists looking to enjoy the outdoor recreational opportunities that Maine offers have great opportunities at the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.

Visitors to the Rachel Carson NWR are good for the local economy. On average, non-local visitors spent \$112 per person, per day when they visited the refuge. These visitors stayed in the area for an average of 2 days. Local people spent an average of \$32 per person, per day. Major categories of spending could include food, gas, lodging, and other supplies. Considering the 250,000+ annual visits to the refuge, it is easy to see the economic benefits that wildlife refuges have on their local communities. Non-local visitors account for 48% of visitors, while locals (those who live within 50 miles of the refuge) make up 52% of visitors to the refuge.

The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation (2001) showed that 778,000 residents and non-residents participated in wildlife watching in Maine, spending \$345 million that year on related activities and equipment (USFWS 2002). Tourism and recreation is one of Maine's largest industries, and thus the refuge influences these activities in addition to benefitting from them. The Maine Office of Tourism estimates two thirds of the 7 million visitors to the state each year will visit coastal areas. Many of the refuge's coastal lands have trails or platforms for visitors to engage in several wildlife-dependent activities. The refuge is important to the tourism industry in southern Maine. Visitor's services are important to attract and retain tourists to the area.

Trails are the most commonly used part of the refuge by the public. Wheelchair-accessible trails include the Carson Trail and the Timber Point trail, which provide better access for the refuge's 250,000+ annual visitors. New observation decks at the Goosefare Brook Division (2002), Cutts Island Trail on the Brave Boat division (2003), and the Mousam River Division (2004), allow visitors to observe wildlife on the Refuge and engage in wildlife photography. The Refuge's newest trail, Timber Point (2011), is among several other trails at the Rachel Carson NWR visited by the public.

Interpretation on the refuge and trails is a popular activity for visitors. Interpretive signs that educate visitors about salt marsh restoration, shorebirds, waterfowl, wading birds, and wetlands are present at only a few divisions. Visitors to the refuge can participate in a self-guided tour year-round, and limited guided tours are provided by interns in the summer at the Wells division.

An increase in visitors has led to increased costs on the refuge's part (maintenance of trails, inadequate restrooms, and additional signage) for visitors to enjoy the refuge. These costs are likely to increase with the increase of visitors. For the past few years, visitors have been increasing in number each year. Visitors are most likely to visit during only one season of the year (54%), but many visit during more than one season (29%) or year-round (17%). Though not noted in the Survey, the refuge is most commonly visited in the summer, during the tourist season. The refuge is also popular in the fall and late spring; winter sees the fewest number of visitors.

### *Demographics*

Maine has an estimated 1.3 million people (US Census, 2012). The average population density is 43.1 persons per square mile, with Cumberland (337.2 people/sq. mile), Androscoggin (230.2 people/sq. mile), and York (199.0 people/sq. mile) being the most densely populated counties. The Maine State Planning office noted that between 1970 and 1990, land development in Maine increased at four times the rate of population increase. This indicates urban sprawl- southern Maine is notorious for its 'bedroom communities' that feed into the Greater Portland Area and

Greater Boston job markets. The desire to leave cities and live closer to the countryside can have negative impacts on the environment if not managed properly. Productive agricultural and natural areas are under threat when these lands are converted to urban lands. Development of areas surrounding the refuge is characterized by sporadic development, strip malls, and traffic congestion. Many parts of refuge lands are next to commercial zones, particularly near Route 1. Surrounding areas such as Kennebunk are mostly rural in nature, with some historic villages and recreational land use. Tourists and summer residents occupy residences concentrated near the coast. Old Orchard Beach hosts extensive tourist attractions, hotels and seasonal residences, and theme parks. Several recreational beaches near the refuge include Scarborough Beach, Old Orchard Beach, and Ferry Beach. Areas near Portland and Biddeford/Saco are characterized by suburban development, and these populations are growing quickly. Several attractions such as York's Wild Animal Kingdom, Rachel Carson NWR, and Wells Estuarine Reserve draw visitors to the area.

Most visitors to the refuge have middle-to-high income, and/or college degrees. 66% of visitors surveyed in the NWVS 2012 were female, 34% were males. The average age for male visitor respondents was 55, and the average age for female visitor respondents was 54.

#### ***Highest Level of Education Attainment of Visitor Survey Respondents***

Elementary School	Junior High School	High School	College/technical school	Graduate/professional school
0%	0%	6%	49%	45%

NWR Visitor Survey 2012

#### ***Highest Level of Education Attainment of Maine Residents (Age 25-64)***

Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> , no diploma	High School/GED	Some college, no degree	Bachelors or Associates	Graduate/Professional
1.78%	4.81%	33.44%	21.22%	30.29% 10.36%(Associates) 18.93%(Bachelors)	9.47%

Lumina Foundation (*A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education*, 2012)

#### ***Income Level of Visitor Survey Respondents (Before Taxes, USD)***

>10,000	10,000-24,999	25,000-34,999	35,000-49,999	50,000-74,999	75,000-99,999	100,000-149,999	150,000-199,999	200,000 or more
1%	5%	3%	10%	21%	20%	20%	11%	8%

NWR Visitor Survey 2012

#### ***Income Level of Maine Residents (Before Taxes, USD)***

>10,000	10,000-24,999	25,000-34,999	35,000-49,999	50,000-74,999	75,000-99,999	100,000-149,999	150,000-199,999	200,000 or more
6.9%	6.5%	12.1%	14.9%	19.8%	12.5%	10.4%	3%	2.4%

2007-2011 American Community Survey Estimates

Refuge visitors (both local and non-local) tend to have higher incomes and education levels than the Maine population. Visitors who participate in activities such as birding, wildlife observation, and photography tend to be older than the average person in southern Maine. Visitors are also much more likely to be female than male. The demographic of southern Maine and surrounding communities is getting younger, as more economic opportunities are available in southern Maine and surrounding regions. Attracting the interest of young people is very important to the mission of the Rachel Carson NWR. Southern Maine has a greater portion of

the young Maine population. A multitude of universities in the New England areas surrounding Rachel Carson NWR may also lead to an increase in college-age visitation. Many students in the natural resource field inquire about visiting the refuge for either recreation or volunteering. Some of these universities include University of New Hampshire, University of Southern Maine, and University of New England.

#### *Visitor Spending*

Visitors who answered the NWVS 2012 were asked how much more they would pay to visit the refuge should travel costs (gasoline, hotels, airline tickets) increase. 20% of respondents said they would pay \$0, 52% fell between \$10-\$50 (\$10-21%, \$20-%13, \$35-%16, \$50-%16), and 27% indicated they would pay amounts falling between \$75 and \$250 (\$75-3%, \$100-10%, \$125-2%, \$150-2%, \$200-3%, \$250-7%). This indicates that refuge visitors would generally be willing to pay more money to experience the refuge, though the status of the economy would be a likely factor in the decision for non-local visitors.

#### *Characteristic of Visits to the Refuge*

The average amount of time spent by visitors to the refuge surveyed was 2 hours. The modal (most frequent) response was 1 hour, by 40% of respondents. 83% of visitors indicated they were part of a group (97% family or friend groups, 3% organized school/club group, 1% other).

#### ***Top Activities of Visitors Surveyed at Refuges in the Last 12 Months***

Hiking	Wildlife Observation	Bird Watching
73%	59%	56%

NWRVS 2012

#### ***Primary Reason for Recent Visits to Wildlife Refuges of Visitors Surveyed***

Hiking	Wildlife Observation	Bird Watching
58%	12%	10%

NWRVS 2012

28% of visitors used the Visitor Center during their trips to refuges (70% to view exhibits in the centers); 45% of those people indicated that they had stopped to ask information from staff or volunteers, and 42% of those who stopped used the facilities.

#### *Public Perception*

81% of visitors to the refuge surveyed think that wildlife refuges offer unique experiences that cannot be found on other public lands. This indicates the quality of the refuge system in particular, and the quality of Rachel Carson NWR. Refuge visitors recognize that these lands are invaluable. This indicates the quality of the refuge experience, and the opportunities provided, compared to other public lands.

### **I. VISITOR CAPACITY**

Balancing the needs of visitors and the goal of protecting and managing resources can be challenging. In addition to resource protection, visitor capacity also impacts quality of experience for visitors. Visitor capacity is not always about limiting numbers of visitors. It is also about visitor experience and limiting impacts to resources.

At the present time, the refuge does not have an established visitor capacity. This may change in the future, as increasing urbanism in southern Maine and surrounding areas makes it difficult for people to connect to nature; however, this population increase may also increase the number of visitors to the refuge. An increasing number of visitors may make it difficult for people to enjoy certain aspects of the refuge, but this is not currently an issue. Leave No Trace principles are important to managing the impact of human activity on the refuge, and are listed

in full under Standard 2 of this VSP. With proper knowledge of these principles, the negative impacts of recreational activities will be minimized. Compatibility assessments ensure that the wildlife-dependent recreation allowed on the refuge minimally disturbs natural and historical resources. With these management practices, the visitor experience retains a high quality.

## II. Implementation Strategies

This section uses the format of the fourteen Visitor Services Standards in correlation with the relevant CCP goals and objectives. Visitor Services related objectives may be found within other CCP goals (i.e. Fish and Wildlife Populations, Habitat Management, Resource Protection, and Refuge Administration). This process will identify existing CCP strategies and develop additional strategies that form the basics of the Visitor Services Plan.

Table 2.1 lists all CCP goals and objectives that are relevant to Visitor Services:

**TABLE 2.1: CCP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SUMMARY**

<b>GOAL 4-</b> Develop the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge as an outstanding center for research and demonstration emphasizing land management techniques for restoring and sustaining healthy estuarine ecosystems in concert with the National Land Management Research and Demonstration (LMRD) program.	<i>Objective 4.1- Research</i> Identify high-priority estuarine ecosystem management research needs, develop research proposals, and facilitate and implement research projects.
	<i>Objective 4.2- Demonstration (Internal and External Audiences)</i> Demonstrate advances in habitat management techniques to other refuges and land managers, the scientific community, and the general public, to promote the wider application of estuarine ecosystem restoration and sustainable management.
	<i>Objective 4.3- Integration</i> Integrate the LMRD program with the refuge operations, management programs and actions, and use adaptive management in responding to new research findings or applied management techniques.
<b>GOAL 5-</b> Increase appreciation and stewardship of coastal Maine wildlife and their habitats by providing positive wildlife-dependent experiences for refuge visitors.	<i>Objective 5.1- Interpretation</i> Starting in 2015, at least 90 percent of refuge visitors will be exposed to interpretive information about the refuge and its significance for wildlife conservation. They will be introduced to at least one action that benefits refuge habitat types, migratory birds and other trust resources.
	<i>Objective 5.2- Environmental Education</i> Within 10 years of completing this plan, and by working with our neighbors and schools in the 12 towns near the refuge, 50 percent of all 4 <sup>th</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> graders, landowners, and elected officials in those communities will perceive (1) the refuge as a local and national treasure, (2) the refuge as a place where wildlife comes first, and (3) the refuge as part of a national system, the world's largest collection

	of land and water managed specifically for wildlife.
	<p><b>Objective 5.3- Hunting</b>  Provide high-quality hunting opportunities that minimize conflicts with neighbors and refuge programs and ensure that at least 90 percent of the hunters have a positive experience.</p>
	<p><b>Objective 5.4- Fishing</b>  Provide high-quality sport fishing opportunities that minimize conflicts with neighbors and refuge programs and ensures that at least 90 percent of the anglers have a positive experience.</p>
	<p><b>Objective 5.5- Wildlife Observation and Photography</b>  Create and enhance opportunities for high-quality wildlife observation and photography on the refuge, while ensuring that at least 90 percent of our visitors have a positive experience.</p>
	<p><b>Objective 5.6- Furbearer Management</b>  In conjunction with the state, review existing furbearer trapping opportunities within the new expansion areas and, when compatible, establish a furbearer management program within those areas.</p>
<b>GOAL 6-</b> Foster off-refuge cooperative actions and partnerships to promote wildlife conservation and further refuge goals.	<p><b>Objective 6.1- Landscape-Scale Conservation</b>  Provide expertise annually to at least two landscape- or watershed-scale projects that benefit the coastal ecosystems of the Gulf of Maine watershed.</p>
	<p><b>Objective 6.2- Habitat Management</b>  Provide technical expertise on wildlife habitat management annually to private or public landowners, including individuals, towns, organizations and businesses in each of the 12 communities of the refuge.</p>
	<p><b>Objective 6.3- People</b>  Increase public understanding and support of wildlife conservation, habitat management, and land and water stewardship in the 12-community region of the refuge.</p>

## THE TEN VISITOR SERVICES PROGRAM STANDARDS

*"U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policy establishes 10 visitor services standards that, when appropriate and compatible, should be a part of most National Wildlife Refuge visitor services programs throughout the country. Service employees, volunteers, concessionaires, and others should conform to these standards when planning, conducting, and evaluating visitor services activities, and when developing and maintaining visitor services facilities on National Wildlife Refuges. While staffing, funding, and the opportunities to enjoy a variety of wildlife-dependent recreational activities will vary from field station to field station, we should meet the visitor services standards whenever possible."*

The following are the 10 visitor services standards. You can find this list and their definitions in 605 FW 1, General Guidelines for Wildlife-dependent Recreation.

■ **Standard 1. Develop a Visitor Services Plan**

- *Standard 2. Welcome and orient visitors*
- *Standard 3. Provide quality hunting opportunities*
- *Standard 4. Provide quality fishing opportunities*
- *Standard 5. Provide quality wildlife observation and photography opportunities*
- *Standard 6. Develop and implement a quality environmental education program*
- *Standard 7. Provide quality interpretation of key resources and issues*
- *Standard 8. Manage for other recreational use opportunities*
- *Standard 9. Communicate key issues with off-site audiences*
- *Standard 10. Build volunteer programs and partnerships with Friends organizations*

While these 10 visitor services standards are the foundation of a visitor services program on a field station, there are many other elements to a visitor services program that are also important including these additional four standards:

- *Standard 11. Recreation Fee Program*
- *Standard 12. Concessions*
- *Standard 13. Commercial uses*
- *Standard 14. Wilderness*

The 14 standards and other elements are not listed in priority order. Wildlife-dependent recreational priorities will vary from one field station to another." (*USFWS Draft Visitor Services Standards 2010*

# **STANDARD 1: DEVELOP A VISITOR SERVICES PLAN**

## **Policy (605 FW 1.14 A)**

*Refuge managers will develop a VSP that addresses all compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses on their refuge.*

### **CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

In 2007, the refuge completed a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). The refuge has attempted to create a Visitor Services Plan several times (1990, 1993, 1994), but none were completed until this VSP. Despite the lack of a VSP, some visitor opportunities and programs have been implemented. This programming has been successful with visitors, but the writing of a VSP has been a priority to the refuge. Current opportunities for the public at the refuge include internships that provide services to visitors in the summer months, as well as interpretive signs, volunteer events, and educational outreach. Programming is provided by staff intermittently, depending on staff workload and interest. There is a tri-weekly volunteer day held on Fridays by refuge staff in which a variety of activities may be scheduled including wildlife tracking, invasive plant removal, and habitat restoration. The refuge records an average of 250,000+ visits yearly, in the six priority areas of wildlife-dependent recreation: wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, hunting and fishing, and interpretation. Visitors also engage in snowshoeing, skiing, and boat launching on the refuge. Staff depending, there is usually a volunteer coordinator appointed that organizes events, work days, and opportunities for interested individuals and larger groups. The volunteer coordinator is responsible for volunteer and visitor outreach, scheduling, and matching up willing parties with work needed by refuge staff.

A Visitor Service Plan creates the framework that continues to guide the refuge and form a contingency plan regarding changes in funding and other issues as they arise.

### **NEPA documentation**

## **STANDARD 1 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES**

### **GOAL**

- 1.1 A Visitor Services Plan will clearly establish plans to improve and maintain the wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the refuge. Write a visitor services plan that emphasizes these six priority areas and goals specific to the refuge, such as the Leave No Trace program.

### **Objective**

Develop and implement a Visitor Services Plan that addresses visitor services available at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, and includes strategies to enhance and improve these visitor services.

### **Strategies**

- 1.1.1 Develop and Implement a Visitor Services Plan (VSP) in 2013.
- 1.1.2 Maintain individual management plans (such as the Hunt Plan) for inclusion in the Visitor Services Plan.
- 1.1.3 Coordinate with staff members in order to write and edit the VSP.
- 1.1.4 Update the VSP every 10 years as required, with changes made as necessary.
- 1.1.5 Update the VSP when other regularly scheduled plan updates (e.g. Hunt Plan, CCP) will create a necessary change in the VSP.

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

- Addition of a Visitor Services Plan (VSP) in 2013.

**MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- Management plans are reviewed according to the review timeline established for each plan.
- The Visitor Services Plan is updated every 10 years, with self-evaluations and updates as necessary.

## **STANDARD 2: WELCOME AND ORIENT VISITORS**

***Policy (605 FW 1.14 B)***

*We will assure that our Refuges are welcoming, safe, and accessible. We will provide visitors with clear information so they can easily determine where they can go, what they can do, and how to safely and ethically engage in recreational and educational activities. Facilities will meet the quality criteria defined in 605 FW 1, Section 1.6 of the Service Manual. We will treat visitors with courtesy and in a professional manner.*

**CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

Providing refuge visitors with positive first impressions of the refuge are important. Visitors must find the facilities to be clean, accessible, and well-maintained. Visitors should find it easy to discover where they can go, what they can do, and the safe and ethical principles they should follow while engaging in recreational and educational activities on the refuge. Providing visitors with pamphlets, maps, and other information is important to orienting our visitors. Interpretive signs and welcome kiosks are available to visitors at some, but not all parts of the refuge. Installing more interpretive signs is a priority, as well as maintaining and improving parking lots, restroom facilities, and trails. These services provided to visitors ensure that the refuge is fulfilling its obligation to provide wildlife-dependent recreation.

The refuge has an obligation to create high quality wildlife-dependent recreation in six areas. Unfortunately, human impacts are a consequence of the countless opportunities for wildlife recreation on the refuge. The Leave No Trace program is a high priority for the refuge. These principles show us how to minimize our impact on the environment, and how to preserve the natural environment. With increased visitation to the refuge, instilling these practices in our visitors is of the utmost importance to maintain the refuge for public use.

These are the Leave No Trace principles, which have been modified for the refuge:

- *Plan Ahead and Prepare*
- *Travel on Durable Surfaces*
- *Dispose of Waste Properly*
- *Leave What You Find*
- *Be Careful with Fire*
- *Respect Wildlife*
- *Be Considerate of Other Visitors*

#### *Signs, Directional sign; Roads and Parking*

Most visitors use personal vehicles to get to the refuge (79%, NWRVS 2012). There are some directional signs along I-95 and Route 1 that direct visitors to headquarters in Wells. In the summer months these are the most commonly traveled routes for tourists in the area. Parking at headquarters is limited for visitors.

#### *Visitor Center*

The Visitor Center is located at headquarters in Wells within the Upper Wells Division of the refuge. The facility is where most of the staff offices are located. The visitor center is open to the public from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Headquarters is the primary location for staff contact with the public. There is a visitor services window where the public may enter the building to speak with staff, buy hunting and fishing permits, get brochures (such as trail maps, educational materials), and view several small exhibits about Rachel Carson, piping plovers, and invasive species, among others. The visitor center is also located next to the Rachel Carson Interpretive Trail.

The visitor center (also headquarters) was built in 1980. The refuge was originally run out of a satellite office of the Parker River Refuge in Newburyport, Massachusetts. More details on the history of the facilities can be found in *Section I. Part F (Visitor Facilities)* of the VSP.

#### *Publications*

The refuge has numerous publications available for the public. These publications are located both at headquarters and on the refuge website. Publications include Leave No Trace, wildlife identification and tracking, trail maps, environmental education pamphlets, invasive species information, and hunting and fishing maps. A full list is available under section **I. F. Visitor Facilities, Upper Wells Division.**

#### *Website*

The refuge has its own website, located at [www.fws.gov/rachelcarson](http://www.fws.gov/rachelcarson). The website has information about Rachel Carson, the history of the refuge, visitor maps, and educational materials about the refuge. The public can access information regarding the refuges current management goals, partners, volunteer and internship opportunities, and points of contact for questions about the refuge. The refuge also stays connected to the public using Facebook. Hundreds of people follow the refuge on this page, and a staff member regularly updates with photos, events, and volunteer opportunities.

#### *Financial Considerations*

As with any government agency, programs that the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge is able to provide depend upon available funding. Visitor Services is a component of the National Wildlife Refuge System that is vulnerable to the status of government funding. Visitor Services suffer with a lack of funding. The refuge maintains visitor services to the best of its ability during difficult financial times, but this can mean that fewer visitor services will be available to the public.

## **STANDARD 2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES**

### **GOAL**

2.1 Instill 'Leave No Trace' principles in our visitors, to ensure the future viability of the refuge for both visitors and the resources we protect.

#### **Objective**

Leave No Trace Ensures that visitors and the impacts associated with human activity will not adversely affect the refuge or its resources. By following these basic outdoor ethics, visitors will be able to continuously enjoy the refuge's beauty for generations to come. Mitigating the

impacts of human activity on the refuge is of critical importance to providing access to the refuge for the public.

**Strategies**

- 2.1.1 Provide 'Leave No Trace' pamphlets at headquarters. Educate visitors about these principles with interpretive signs, educational pamphlets, and personal interaction with visitors.
- 2.1.2 Hire a GS-5/7 Park Ranger/Law Enforcement Officer. **Completed**
- 2.1.3 Hire a Visitor Services Assistant.
- 2.1.4 Enforce 'Leave No Trace' practices with visitors in all recreation areas- Hunting, Fishing, Wildlife Observation, Wildlife Photography, Environmental Education, and Interpretation; as well as other compatible recreation areas (snowshoeing/skiing, boat launching, etc.).

**GOAL**

- 2.2 Analyze the potential for positive visitor experience while protecting the refuge's purpose and carrying out the mission of the refuge system.

**Objective**

Identify resource opportunity areas and evaluate among several dimensions.

**Strategies**

- 2.2.1 Hire a Park Ranger (or someone to maintain the visitor's log).
- 2.2.2 Continue to count annual numbers of visitors with Trail Counter.
- 2.2.3 Continue to request visitor feedback, volunteer feedback, and interactions with members of the community and our partners. Following most volunteer days, the Maine Conservation Corps consistently asks for feedback regarding the volunteer's experiences and ideas for improvement. This information is monitored and used in shaping future volunteer work experiences.
- 2.2.4 Use social media to enhance outreach, and ensure that the public is aware of opportunities to connect with the refuge.
- 2.2.5 Ensure that the refuge website is up to date- including contact information, links, maps, events, and current refuge focus information.
- 2.2.6 Continue to maintain and make improvements to public facilities- trails, platforms, parking and restroom facilities, as funding allows.
- 2.2.7 Continue to host non-residential Youth Conservation Corps camps to build trails, control invasive species, and achieve maintenance standards (CCP Objective 5.1 strategy).

**GOAL**

- 2.3 Ensure that visitors understand rules and regulations that apply to their visit to the refuge.

**Objective**

Visitors need to understand what they can and can't do on the refuge. Visitors need to be able to easily locate these rules, and to understand how it applies to them.

**Strategies**

- 2.3.1 Ensure all signage on the refuge includes rules and regulations that apply to visitors and the activities they may engage in during their visit.
- 2.3.2 Ensure that visitors understand that wildlife comes first- visitors must understand where public access is allowed on the refuge, and where it is not.
- 2.3.3 Collaborate with refuge Law Enforcement Officer to ensure the refuge is exposing visitors to these regulations.

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

- Addition of new trails (Timber Point Trail) and accompanying kiosks and signs
- Addition of public composting restrooms at the Carson Interpretive Trail

**MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- Continue to monitor the quality of wildlife-dependent recreational programs at Rachel Carson NWR.
- Monitor visitor logs to count annual numbers of visitors, and the activities they participate in.
- Monitor comments left in the visitor sign-in book.
- Self-evaluation with the Visitor Services Survey.

## STANDARD 3: HUNTING

***Policy (605 FW 2)***

*Hunting is an appropriate use of wildlife resources of the National Wildlife Refuge System, when compatible. Hunting programs will be of the highest quality, conducted in a safe and cost-effective manner, and to the extent practicable, carried out in accordance with State regulations.*

**CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

Hunting has been identified as an appropriate wildlife-dependent public use of Rachel Carson NWR. Hunting on refuges helps other local, federal, and state government permit fee programs- it expands the area people can partake in hunting activities. Hunting helps control deer populations- which can be a problem in the state of Maine. Overabundant deer rapidly reduce food sources, suffer from starvation, and increase conflict with local residents and landowners (MDIFW). The refuge will continue to use hunting in order to keep deer populations at or below carrying capacity. This will hopefully limit the spread of Lyme's disease, vehicle strikes, and damage to habitat biodiversity through excessive deer browsing. The current fee program (raised by revenues from hunting and fishing) provides approximately \$4,000 annually in revenues for the refuge.

Hunting was deemed a compatible use of the refuge beginning in 1980. Hunting on the refuge is allowed between September 1<sup>st</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup> (except falconry, which has a longer time window), with some stipulations:

- Deer: Firearm and Archery (Fox and coyote may be taken with bow or shotgun with Deer permit during Firearm Deer Season)
- Migratory Birds- (Ducks, Geese, Woodcock, Snipe) with valid Duck Stamp
- Upland Game Birds- (Ruffed Grouse, Pheasant, Quail) with valid stamp
- Special Falconry Season

**Open migratory bird hunting and falconry areas**

- Brave Boat Harbor Division
- Lower Wells Division
- Upper Wells Division
- Mousam River Division
- Goose Rocks Division
- Spurwink River Division

**Open deer and upland game hunting areas**

- Brave Boat Harbor Division
- Lower Wells Division
- Upper Wells Division
- Mousam River Division

- Goose Rocks Division
- Goosefare Brooke Division
- Spurwink River Division

Open deer (Archery) hunting areas

- Little River Division

Refuge lands closed to all hunting

- Moody Division- Refuge lands south of Eldridge Road, Wells, to mouth of Ogunquit River
- Biddeford Pool Division- Refuge lands adjacent to the Biddeford Pool in Biddeford

*Managing Conflicts and Visitor Safety*

The area immediately adjacent to the Carson Trail at the refuge headquarters is closed to hunting. This area is frequently utilized by birders and other recreational groups throughout the year, and is closed to prevent any conflicts. Other trails used by the public cross the refuge on Brave Boat Harbor, Little River, Goose Rocks, Goosefare Brook, and Spurwink Divisions. The refuge will continue to warn the public using these trails. Where a public use trail exists, we recommend that non-hunters wear at least one article of fluorescent orange from September 1 through December 31 each year. Atlantic Way trail along a R-O-W in Saco is maintained by Saco Bay Trails, a non-profit group in Saco. They have been informed of their responsibility of alerting trail users about hunters through the use of signs.

*Permits and Costs*

Permits can be purchased at refuge headquarters. There is currently no limit placed on the number of permits per year- there has not yet been the need to take this action. On average, about 400 permits per year are granted, and this number has been consistent for years. There has been no need to limit permits due to overhunting or biological concerns. Information collected for permits is in accordance with OMB approved hunting forms (control number 1018-0140).

**Permit fees are as follows:**

\$10	Big Game: Deer and Wild Turkey
\$10	Migratory Birds
\$5	Upland Birds
\$5	Falconry
\$5	Seniors.
\$5	Youth under the age of sixteen

The cost for law enforcement, permitting, and boundary marking comes out to about \$5,000 annually. The costs break down to \$3,000 for law enforcement and posting and approximately \$2,000 for planning and permit issuing. Rachel Carson NWR maintains an active law enforcement presence. One full-time officer works regularly to make sure hunting restrictions are honored and that those using the refuge for recreation are safe. As shown above, law enforcement and posting account for over 50% of the program costs.

*Providing Visitor Information*

Visitor information is available on the refuge website and at headquarters in Wells. The Visitor Center is staffed from 8 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Hunting permits can be purchased at headquarters. Maps and other information about hunting on the refuge are also available. Visitors with questions about regulations can contact the refuge Law Enforcement Officer.

*Check Stations*

Harvested deer are required to pass through a check station, and data is monitored by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Rachel Carson works in cooperation with private and public landowners in order to keep deer populations in check, and harvest data represents land within Wildlife Management District 24.

#### **Special Hunts**

There are certain areas of the refuge designated as Youth Hunting Areas. These areas are available to youth ages 10 to 15 with a refuge hunt permit. Youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age. There will also be designated youth hunting days, set by the State, during the upcoming season. Adults may hunt in the youth hunt area only when accompanying the youth.

During the 2008 refuge hunting season, youth hunters accounted for approximately 8% of all refuge hunters. Rachel Carson NWR first designated specific youth hunting areas ten years prior. These areas (at Brave Boat Harbor, Lower Wells and Goose Rocks divisions) were open to specific types of hunting by individuals who had not attained their 18th birthday in the current calendar year. Starting in 2009, the refuge was no longer able to collect information regarding the age of hunters. However, given the data from 2008 we can estimate that youth hunters presently comprise around 10% of permits sold at headquarters. Following the 2011 hunting season, MDIFW reported a state-wide increase in the Youth Day Harvest, implying that more Maine youth expressed active interest in hunting than in previous years. With the area's population increasing and the refuge opening up additional recreational opportunities, we believe that the amount of youth hunters on the refuge have increased and will continue to grow in the coming years.

## **STANDARD 3 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES**

### **GOAL**

- 3.1 Increase appreciation and stewardship of coastal Maine wildlife and their habitats by providing positive wildlife-dependent experiences for refuge visitors. **CCP Goal 5**

### **Objective**

- 5.3 Provide high-quality hunting opportunities that minimize conflicts with neighbors and CCP refuge programs, and ensure that at least 90 percent of the hunters have a positive experience.

### **Strategies**

- 3.1.1 Carry on with annual refuge hunt program with the MDIFW (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife)
- 3.1.2 Manage hunt program adaptively each year to ensure safety and consistency with good wildlife and habitat management
- 3.1.3 Carry on with annual seek opportunities to provide hunting experiences for disabled and youth hunters
- 3.1.4 Open all land that can biologically, ecologically, and safely accommodate hunting within state guidelines
- 3.1.5 In partnership with state and local groups, host a hunter education class annually
- 3.1.6 Coordinate with the MDIFW to participate in a local hunter education program annually
- 3.1.7 Hire a GS-5/7 Park Ranger/Law Enforcement Officer. Completed \_\_\_\_\_. (Also Strategy 2.1.2)
- 3.1.8 Hire a GS-5/7 refuge Operations Specialist

### **MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- The Hunt Plan is adjusted annually- the refuge remains open for hunting unless there are biological or safety concerns.
- Conduct satisfaction surveys and/or talk to visitors about how they rate their hunting experience.

## STANDARD 4: FISHING

### **Policy (605 FW 3)**

*Fishing is an appropriate use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, when compatible. Fishing programs will be of the highest quality, conducted in a safe and cost-effective manner, and to the extent practicable, carried out in accordance with State regulations.*

#### **CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

Fishing has been determined to be a compatible wildlife-dependent form of recreation at Rachel Carson NWR. In 20XX, visitors spent an average of 1,600 days fishing on the refuge in one year. **Fishing on refuges helps other local, federal, and state government permit fee programs- it expands the area people can partake in activities such as fishing.**

#### *Managing Conflicts and Visitor Safety*

The refuge has one full-time Law Enforcement Officer who regularly patrols refuge lands. **Fishing has not been determined to have adverse effects on wildlife-dependent recreation. Conflicts between the hunting and fishing programs are expected to be minimal if any occur at all, due to the location of the designated fishing areas.**

#### *Permits and Costs*

Permits can be purchased at refuge headquarters. There has been no need to limit permits due to overfishing or biological concerns.

#### *Providing Visitor Information*

Visitor information is available on the refuge website and at headquarters in Wells. The Visitor Center is staffed from 8 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Fishing permits can be purchased at headquarters. Maps and other information about fishing on the refuge are also available. Visitors with questions about regulations can contact the refuge Law Enforcement Officer.

#### *Special Events-Fishing*

Currently, there are no regularly scheduled events or tournaments at the refuge.

#### **Fishing on the Refuge**

The sites listed below may be used by anglers. All Maine fishing regulations apply. Use of all areas is contingent upon user cooperation.

- *Refuge regulations require use of non-lead jigs and sinkers to prevent water bird poisoning.*
- *Areas open dawn until dusk only.*
- *Anglers must attend their lines at all times.*
- *The collection of bait fish is prohibited on the refuge.*
- *Carry out all litter, including monofilament, which can be dangerous to birds and other wildlife.*
- *Obey refuge signs and private property.*
- *Locations are described from south to north.*

**Chauncey Creek - Kittery**

Carry-in boat access only at the intersection of Cutts Island and Seapoint Roads. Note that tidal changes in this area may cause previously navigable channels to become treacherous or impassable. Please park adjacent to the site, on Seapoint Road.

**Brave Boat Tidal Creek - York**

Fishing is permitted on north side of stream bank from Brave Boat Harbor Road to the first trestle downstream, approximately 1000 feet. Please park at pull-off northeast of Brave Boat Harbor Road, south of Payne Road, adjacent to creek. No refuge parking is available at this location.

**Ogunquit River - Ogunquit/Wells**

Anglers may fish on the north bank of the Ogunquit River, east of Route 1. Access is limited to the marked and posted areas at the refuge boundary corner behind the Ogunquit River Plantation Hotel east (downstream), on the Wells side of the river, for approximately 500 feet. No refuge parking is available at this location.

**Stevens Brook - Wells**

The east side of Stevens Brook is open for fishing from Bourne Avenue to the point where Stevens Brook approaches Ocean Avenue (approximately 1/4 mile). Approach from the public parking lot on Ocean Avenue.

**Webhannet River - Wells**

Fishing is permitted along the west bank of the Webhannet River. The area begins at the north side of Mile Road and continues approximately 400 feet north (downstream), ending at the first tidal creek.

**Merriland River/Skinner Mill - Wells**

Anglers may fish from the refuge boundary, east (downstream) for approximately 1000 feet, which includes use of the oxbow. Access is by an existing trail on the south side of the river across private property. Park on Skinner Mill Road; there is no refuge parking available.

**Mousam River - Kennebunk**

Fishing is permitted east of Route 9, on the north side of the river, west to our posted boundary and east to the point opposite Great Hill Road (approximately 3/10 mile). Access will be from the bridle path along the first tidal creek. Fishing is currently allowed on the opposite bank, and at the mouth of the Mousam River. Park on Route 9; there is no refuge parking available.

**Goosefare Brook - Saco**

Anglers may fish on the south side of the Goosefare Brook outlet. There is very little parking in the immediate area; use the public parking lot at the end of Bayview Road.

**Spurwink River - Scarborough**

Fishing is permitted along the west bank of the Spurwink River, north of the Route 77 bridge. The area extends approximately 1000 feet, ending at a point near the fork in the river. Limited parking available just off Route 77

**Shellfishing**

The refuge tidal flats offer opportunities for recreational shellfishing. Town licenses are required and all refuge, state, and town shellfishing regulations apply. Access is limited to 1 person per license, from sunrise to sunset.

### **Canoeing and Kayaking**

There are three areas within Rachel Carson NWR where non-motorized canoes and kayaks can launch and land in support of wildlife observation and fishing, during daylight hours only.

These areas are designated by "Carry-In Boat Access Only" signs, and are located at:

- Chauncey Creek, on Seapoint Road in Kittery, Maine
- Little River, at the end of Granite Point Road in Biddeford, Maine
- Spurwink River, at the fish pier on Route 77 in Scarborough, Maine

Please be mindful that while traveling through the refuge we ask that you remain in your boats and do not venture onto land which is vital habitat for migrating birds and other creatures. Please plan ahead and know the tides, as much of the marsh is not navigable during low tide. Marine charts will help identify the main channels and prevent you from getting lost in the maze of creeks and channels. Public Fishing areas on the refuge are **not** car top launch sites

## ***STANDARD 4 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES***

### **GOAL**

- 4.1 Increase appreciation and stewardship of coastal Maine wildlife and their habitats by providing positive wildlife-dependent experiences for refuge visitors. **CCP Goal 5**

### **Objective**

Provide high-quality sport fishing opportunities that minimize conflicts with neighbors and refuge programs and ensures that at least 90 percent of the anglers have a positive experience

### **Strategies**

- 4.1.1 Require lead-free jigs and sinkers at fishing sites
- 4.1.2 By 2013, host a second fishing event annually in partnership with the state and other groups
- 4.1.3 We will continue to provide access for bank fishing at designated areas at the Brave Boat Harbor, Moody, Lower Wells, Upper Wells, Mousam River, and Spurwink Divisions. Goosefare Brook Division, which offer saltwater fishing. All of the divisions allow fishing from boats in tidal waters.

### ***SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:***

None

### ***MONITOR AND EVALUATE:***

- The Fish Plan is updated yearly; evaluations and changes occur as necessary.
- Conduct satisfaction surveys and/or talk to visitors about how they rate their fishing experience.

# **STANDARD 5: WILDLIFE OBSERVATION AND WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY**

## ***Policy (605 FW 4 and 604 FW 5)***

*Wildlife observation and wildlife photography are appropriate wildlife-dependent recreational uses of Refuge System lands, when compatible. Visitors of all ages and abilities will have an opportunity to observe and photograph key wildlife and habitat resources of the refuge. Viewing and photographing wildlife in natural or managed environments will foster a connection between visitors and natural resources.*

## **CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

### *Programs*

Currently, only self-guided interpretive walks are available throughout the year. Summer interns provide interpretive lectures, but these positions are dependent on funding. Visitors have use of platforms and **photography blinds** for viewing and photographing wildlife. The refuge encourages photographs from members of the public for refuge use- including posting on the refuge website and Facebook pages. The refuge is popular for birding. Some visitors come in tour groups (not affiliated with the refuge system) to tour the Maine coast and take part in wildlife observation and photography. Rachel Carson NWR is one of many stops these groups make on public lands.

### *Program Facilities*

The facilities available on the refuge vary according to location. At Headquarters, there is a visitor's services center available, and restrooms for visitors who use the Carson Interpretive Trail, adjacent to the main building. Trails built by the refuge have kiosks and signage, though some trails on refuge lands that have been acquired from municipal or state lands may not be marked clearly.

### *Accessibility*

The Carson Trail is wheelchair accessible, with twelve passing points located along the trail as required by law. There are also side boards built into the trail platform for use by seeing-impaired visitors who require use of canes along the trail. Part of the Cutts Island trail is wheelchair accessible, with a platform for quality viewing of wildlife.

### ***Habitat Enhancements***

#### *Specialized Equipment*

Platforms for viewing wildlife are present at most divisions that allow public access. Pulloffs and waysides are present at several divisions.

#### *Providing Visitor Information*

Information about species present on the refuge is available at headquarters. Materials are available in the form of informational brochures. Trail maps, which include locations of platforms and photography blinds, are also available. Along the trails are interpretive signs which may explain certain species of animals, birds, fish, and plants that can be seen at the refuge. Refuge visitors may come into contact with staff between 8 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, at headquarters.

## **STANDARD 5 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES**

**GOAL**

- 5.1 Increase appreciation and stewardship of coastal Maine wildlife and their habitats by providing positive wildlife-dependent experiences for refuge visitors. (CCP Goal 5)

**Objective**

- 5.5 Create and enhance opportunities for high-quality wildlife observation and photography on the (CCP) refuge, while ensure that at least 90 percent of our visitors have a positive experience.

**Strategies**

- 5.1.1 Provide trail information annually at kiosks
- 5.1.2 Invite participation periodically in photo contest(s)
- 5.1.3 Continue to solicit high-quality wildlife photos of the refuge
- 5.1.4 Begin installing interpretive structures (kiosks or signs) at the Mousam River, Lower Wells, Little River, and Moody divisions.
- 5.1.5 Improve the tread and interpretative signs on Cutts Island Trail at the Brave Boat Harbor division.
- 5.1.6 Build an observation platform and small parking area at Marshall Point at the Goose Rocks Division
- 5.1.7 Partner with others to install an interpretive panel and wildlife viewing area at Biddeford Pool.
- 5.1.8 Develop interpretive programs that incorporate information from regional conservation plans (e.g. Bird Conservation Regions) and refuge documents. (Objective)
- 5.1.9 Provide interpretative materials at headquarters, including a general refuge leaflet, a Carson Trail guide, and lists of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. (Objective)
- 5.1.10 By 2013, build a photography blind and interpretive trail at the Upper Wells Division.
- 5.1.11 Develop trails on newly acquired land (Objective )
- 5.1.12 Link northwest and southeast Kennebunkport by extending the Conservation Trust Trail through Goose Rocks division. (Objective)
- 5.1.13 Provide water access on York River Division, explore municipal open space plans and, where possible, link trails and wildlife conservation messages with conservation partners. (Objective)
- 5.1.14 Maintain and improve trails
- 5.1.15 Maintain and improve facilities and restrooms

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

- Installation of several new trails and interpretative signs.

**MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- We will periodically monitor the plan to ensure that its strategies and decisions are being accomplished, we will use the data collected in routine inspections or programmatic evaluations to continually update and adjust the management activities.
- Use trail counters to collect visitor numbers.
- Monitor wildlife behavior and habitat response near observation areas.

## **STANDARD 6: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

***Policy (605 FW 6)***

*Through formal, curriculum-based environmental education tied to national and state education standards, we will advance public awareness, understanding, appreciation, and knowledge of key fish, wildlife, plant, and their habitats. Each refuge staff person will assess their potential to work with schools in providing an appropriate level of environmental education. We may support environmental education through the use of facilities, equipment, educational materials, teacher workshops, and study sites that are safe and conducive to learning.*

#### **CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

Environmental education is critical in supporting the mission of Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. Public awareness of the refuge, its mission, and the importance of the work of the refuge are supplemented by environmental education. **Establishing the refuge as a leader in research and land management** provides a model for other organizations or individuals to follow, and leads to more partnerships with organizations who share our environmental education goals. **The furthering of our LMRD in turn creates more opportunities for visitors to the refuge.**

#### *Program Facilities*

Currently, there are no facilities set aside with the specific purpose of environmental education. A facility (Wildwood, as noted in the CCP) was being considered in Saco, but is no longer being considered for use by the refuge.

## **STANDARD 6 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES**

#### **GOAL**

- 6.1 Strengthen current educational and interpretive opportunities at the refuge.

#### **Objective**

It is important for communities to perceive the refuge as a local treasure where wildlife comes first, as part of a national system.

#### **Strategies**

- 6.1.1 Host summer interpretive programs, and expand them once the new contact station is built.
- 6.1.2 Maintain and expand the refuge internship program. Explore cost-sharing staff positions, such as a shared volunteer coordinator, with the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve.
- 6.1.3 Continue to host non-residential Youth Conservation Corps camps to build trails, control invasive species, and achieve maintenance standards.
- 6.1.4 Develop interpretive programs that incorporate information from regional conservation plans.
- 6.1.5 Establish new partnerships, and maintain current partnerships.
- 6.1.6 Provide service curriculum annually to schools when possible. Maintain relationships with educators.
- 6.1.7 Use existing refuge facilities to host educational and interpretive programs.
- 6.1.8 Provide outdoor classroom study guides on species of concern and their habitats

#### **GOAL**

- 6.2 *Increase appreciation and stewardship of coastal Maine wildlife and their habitats by providing positive wildlife-dependent experiences for refuge visitors. (CCP Goal 5)*

Educating students fosters their appreciation of the important role the refuge plays in wildlife and habitat conservation. Our goal is to inspire students to make responsible environmental decisions now and in the future. To achieve that, we will work with the communities, increase outreach to teachers, and ensure high-quality supplements for Maine elementary and secondary curricula.

#### **Objective**

- 5.2 Within 10 years of completing the CCP, and by working with our neighbors and the schools in (CCP) the 12 towns near the refuge, 50 percent of all 4th to 6th graders, landowners, and elected officials in those communities will perceive (1) the refuge as a local and national treasure, (2) the refuge as a place where wildlife comes first, and (3) the refuge as part of a national system, the world's largest collection of land and water managed specifically for wildlife.

**Strategies**

- 6.2.1 Provide service curriculum annually to local schools by request and as opportunities arise Support regional environmental education programs annually, including the 'Envirothon'.
- 6.2.2 Maintain and establish new partnerships with organizations who will lead environmental education programs on refuge lands.
- 6.2.3 Use the conference room in the new administrative facility for public meetings and educational programs.
- 6.2.4 Support and Sponsor annual, regional, environmental education programs, including 'Envirothon'.
- 6.2.5 Integrate refuge-specific lessons into school curriculums in collaboration with local teachers for their use in schools or at the refuge.
- 6.2.6 Reach out to and interact with teachers to ensure that refuge-related lessons meet Maine Learning Results and teacher needs.
- 6.2.7 Provide outdoor classroom study guides on species of concern and their habitats.

**GOAL**

- 6.3 *Increase appreciation and stewardship of coastal Maine wildlife and their habitats by providing positive wildlife-dependent experiences for refuge visitors. (CCP Goal 5)*

**Objective**

Provide information to help refuge visitors understand the reasons for certain rules and regulations that protect wildlife and the habitats that contain them. Help visitors to understand what they can do to protect the resources at Rachel Carson NWR and other wildlife refuges.

**Strategies**

- 6.3.1 Annually provide information to beachgoers, clammers, and other beach/dune users about environmentally sustainable use of these habitats. (CCP Objective 1.2 strategy)
- 6.3.2 Ensure that refuge publications are up to date, well stocked, and relevant to visitor needs and refuge needs.
- 6.3.3 Recruit and train volunteer plover stewards.
- 6.3.4 Provide information to beachgoers, clammers, and other beach/dune users about piping plovers.
- 6.3.5 Conduct on-site and off-site educational programs focused on piping plover habitat
- 6.3.6 Recruit and train volunteer tern stewards.
- 6.3.7 Conduct on-site public outreach and education on nesting beaches.
- 6.3.8 Continue fencing and signing nesting areas.
- 6.3.9 Develop and distribute educational information on the ecology and wildlife use of tidal rivers, estuaries, and coastal watersheds.

**GOAL**

- 6.4 *Increase appreciation and stewardship of coastal Maine wildlife and their habitats by providing positive wildlife-dependent experiences for refuge visitors. (CCP Goal 5)*

**Objective**

- 5.1 Starting in 2015, at least 90 percent of visitors will be exposed to interpretive information (CCP) about the refuge and its significance for wildlife conservation. They will be introduced to at

least one action that benefits refuge habitat types, migratory birds and other trust resources.

#### **Strategies**

- 6.4.1 Provide interpretive materials at headquarters, including general refuge leaflet, a Carson Trail guide, and lists of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.
- 6.4.2 Provide weekly interpretation programs in the summer.
- 6.4.3 Update the kiosk at Carson trail head.
- 6.4.4 Install interpretive signs or kiosks along roadsides at each of the 11 divisions.
- 6.4.5 Interpret trust resources and refuge management actions on all trails.
- 6.4.6 Continue to host non-residential Youth Corps Conservation Corps camps to build trails, control invasive species, and achieve maintenance standards.

#### **SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

The Wildwood facility, which was proposed as a possible environmental education center in the CCP, is no longer being considered.

#### **MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- Regular contact with educators ensures that teachers are receiving materials that are relevant and to their curriculum. This also helps staff at the refuge to update or change programming to reflect the needs of teachers.
- Observe visitor behavior and how it changes over time.
- Pre- and post- test for identified education concepts when presenting educational material to intended audiences.

## **STANDARD 7: INTERPRETATION**

#### **Policy (605 FW 7)**

*We will communicate the most important fish, wildlife, habitat, and other natural resource issues to visitors of all ages and abilities through effective interpretation. We will tailor messages and delivery methods to specific audiences and present them in appropriate locations. Through heightened awareness, we will inspire visitors to take positive actions supporting refuge goals and the Refuge System mission.*

#### **CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

Interpretation is one of the most important ways we can raise our visibility, convey our mission, and identify the significant contributions of the Refuge System and this refuge to wildlife conservation. Public understanding of the Service and its activities in the State of Maine is generally low. Many people in the state don't know the refuge exists. Greater awareness will lead to more support of wildlife conservation both on and off the refuge. The refuge currently hosts an interpretive program in the summer, provided by seasonal interns. Year-round, self-guided interpretive signs are available at most divisions.

#### **Audiences and Issues**

It is important for the public to understand and value wildlife and habitats contained in national wildlife refuges, and work performed by the refuge system. When people come to the refuge, it is our responsibility to educate them, and to provide opportunities for them to learn about the refuge and its resources.

#### **Strategies**

Self-interpretive walks are offered at all trails on the refuge. Summertime interpretive interns are available as funding allows.

*Program facilities*

There is currently no facility set aside for interpretation at the refuge, but there are various signs and kiosks with information at various points on the refuge.

**Interpretive Tools**

## **STANDARD 7 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES**

### **GOAL**

7.1 Expand and enhance interpretation opportunities on the refuge.

#### **Objective**

Interpretation is one of the most important ways to raise visibility, convey our mission, and identify the significant contributions of the refuge system and wildlife conservation.

#### **Strategies**

- 7.1.1 Provide interpretive materials at headquarters (Wells) including refuge leaflet, Carson Trail Guide, and lists of birds and other mammals
- 7.1.2 Provide weekly interpretation programs in the summer, as funding allows
- 7.1.3 Hire a park ranger (or someone to fill the visitor services roll)
- 7.1.4 Expand internship and volunteer opportunities.

#### **SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

- Addition of interpretative signs on several trails. New brochures developed for visitor use at headquarters.

#### **MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- Ask visitors how they rate their interpretive experience when possible.
- Distribute visitor satisfaction surveys when available.
- Continue to use published visitor service results as they are available.

## **STANDARD 8: MANAGE FOR OTHER RECREATIONAL USE OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Policy (605 FW 1 and 603 FW 1)**

*The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, states that compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses are the priority public uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation) and will receive enhanced consideration over other general public uses. Volunteers, partners, recreation fees, and concessions are tools available to assist in managing these uses. We will only permit other uses when we determine that they are legally mandated, provide benefits to the Service, occur due to special circumstances, or facilitate one of the priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses.*

#### **CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

High quality, wildlife-dependent recreation is a priority of the Refuge System and of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge has defined several activities which have been deemed compatible with refuge goals. These uses have little to no impact to the natural or historical resources of the refuge. Compatible uses include:

- Boat Launching
  - Mosquito Control
  - Research Conducted by Non-Refuge Personnel
  - Skiing and Snowshoeing
  - Hunting\*
  - Fishing\*
  - Wildlife Observation\* and Photography\*, Environmental Education\*, Interpretation\*
- (\* = Six priority uses)

Activities which have compatible use with the refuge are subject to certain stipulations and restrictions as required by law, to protect the resources of the refuge, and for visitor safety. In accordance with the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System, wildlife comes first.

Rachel Carson NWR has determined that the refuge has several other possible uses in addition the six priority uses of the refuge. These include mosquito control, boat launching, skiing and snowshoeing, fur bearer management, and research conducted by non-refuge personnel. The refuge follows the Appropriate Refuge Uses Policy when determining whether or not to allow a proposed use on the refuge. A proposed use must be found to be an appropriate use before undertaking its compatibility review. Current compatible uses that are not contained in the six-area priority uses have been evaluated by the refuge manager to ensure that these uses have the greatest benefit for refuge resources and to the public. Not all uses that are determined compatible may be allowed; the refuge manager has the discretion to allow or deny any use based on other considerations (e.g. public safety, policy, or available funding).

Non-wildlife dependent, compatible uses of the refuge will be re-evaluated every 10 years. Wildlife-dependent, compatible recreation uses will be re-evaluated every 15 years. However, the refuge manager may reevaluate the compatibility of a use at any time (602 FWS 2, parts 2.11 and 2.12). A decision may be revisited sooner if new information reveals unacceptable impacts or incompatibility with refuge purposes.

#### *Programs*

Several visitor opportunities other than the standard six wildlife-dependent activities exist. Boat launching, snowshoeing, and skiing are allowed on the refuge. Information about where these activities are allowed can be found at refuge headquarters, or on the refuge website.

## **STANDARD 8 (GOALS), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES**

### **GOAL**

8.1 Ensure that recreational activities are evaluated for the potential for inclusion at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.

### **Objective**

Regularly evaluating recreational activities for inclusion at the refuge ensures that visitors receive the highest quality of recreational programming.

### **Strategies**

8.1.1 Review and update compatibility assessments as necessary.

8.1.2 Respond to public requests for evaluation of activities for inclusion in the refuge.

8.1.3 Ensure that the public understands the purpose of the refuge- Wildlife Comes First. The public will be exposed to the refuge's purpose during their visit.

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

None at this time.

**MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- Keep a list of all compatibility determinations, with a list of dates to be renewed.
- Keep a database of public requests for additional recreational use opportunities.
- Monitor wildlife behavior and habitat response near public recreation areas.

## **STANDARD 9: OUTREACH**

**Policy (605 FW 1.14I)**

*Effective outreach depends on open and continuous communication between the refuge staff and the public. This communication involves determining and understanding the issues, identifying audiences, crafting messages, selecting the most effective delivery techniques, and evaluating effectiveness. Achieved results will further the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and purpose(s) of the refuge. See the National Outreach Strategy: A Master Plan for Communicating in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and America's National Wildlife Refuge System: 100 on 100 Outreach Campaign.*

**CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

Meeting wildlife conservation challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and fulfilling the System mission and vision requires planning and partnerships. The need for partnerships is especially relevant for the Rachel Carson NWR. In the heart of the Gulf of Maine watershed, and in a region of great biological diversity in Maine, the refuge sits at a critical place in the increasingly developed and fragmented region. To fulfill its promise to preserve wildlife and habitat for its own sake and for the benefit of the American people, the refuge must collaborate with its neighbors, local communities, landowners, and conservation partners.

The Refuge hosts intermittent outreach programs such as the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Competition, which boasted 425 entries in 2004. The refuge also recently hosted a *Silent Spring* Essay Competition for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Silent Spring* for seventh grade students in 2012. 257 entries were judged by staff at the refuge, with several prizes for the four winners.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are one of the ways the refuge can increase and improve outreach to the public, while simultaneously achieving conservation goals. Partnering with conservation groups who share similar goals is an important asset in the distribution of the refuge message. Partnerships with land trusts, Youth Conservation Corps, the Audubon society, and other organizations have been fruitful. We

provide opportunities for the public and volunteers to assist us with our joint projects. Providing interpretive walks and environmental education is made easier and more effective by collaborating with our partners. A full list of partners is available in the Appendices.

### **Social Media**

Social media is an increasingly important method of outreach. In the last few years, use of social media to connect with organizations, businesses, and individuals has increased exponentially. The refuge currently makes use of Facebook and a refuge website to disseminate information to visitors and volunteers. These pages are updated regularly. The Facebook website features regular photographs by staff and the public, volunteer opportunity postings, and other information relevant to the refuge. The page is well-maintained and has a strong following on the internet. This is also a particularly useful strategy for gauging visitor interests, spreading the refuge message, and evaluating success in outreach and programming. Maintaining a connection in the everyday lives of the public is vital to gain support of the Rachel Carson mission.

The refuge website: [www.rachelcarson.fws.gov](http://www.rachelcarson.fws.gov)

The refuge Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/RachelCarsonNWR](http://www.facebook.com/RachelCarsonNWR)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website: [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

### **Relationships with other agencies**

The refuge regularly interacts with other state agencies, such as the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, municipal and state governments, among others, to achieve shared conservation goals and co-host programs such as fishing and hunting. The refuge also works with local governments to achieve conservation goals and gives local governments revenue shares.

#### ***Rachel Carson revenue sharing payments in fiscal year 2004***

Town/City	Payment
Biddeford	\$5,665.00
Cape Elizabeth	\$94.00
Kennebunk	\$16,137.00
Kennebunkport	\$5,321.00
Kittery	\$6,178.00
Ogunquit (precinct of)	\$104.00
Old Orchard Beach	\$118.00
Saco	\$9,872.00
Scarborough	\$4,399.00
Wells	\$7,883.00
York	\$2,246.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$58,019.00</b>

## **STANDARD 9 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIE(S)**

### **GOAL**

- 9.1 We will enhance our outreach and partnerships with local communities, expand the role and number of our friends group, and strengthen our relationships with our neighbors and elected officials to build support for our management priorities in surrounding communities.

**Objective**

All of our management strategies support partnerships to the fullest extent possible. They are vital in successfully managing all aspects of the refuge, from land protection to habitat and species management to public use.

**Strategies**

- 9.1.1 Continue to seek potential partnerships with organizations with similar goals
- 9.1.2 Partner with other conservation organizations, such as land trusts and NGOs, for land conservation (Objective 6.1)
- 9.1.3 Maintain social media, and stay up-to-date on social media trends which will enable the refuge to maintain relationships with the public

**GOAL**

- 9.2 Establish Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge as an outstanding center for research and demonstration emphasizing land management techniques for restoring and sustaining healthy estuarine ecosystems in concert with the National Land Management Research and Demonstration (LMRD) program. **CCP Goal 4**

**Objective**

- 4.2 Demonstrate advances in habitat management techniques to other refuges and land (CCP) managers, the scientific community, and the general public, to promote the wider application of estuarine ecosystem restoration and sustainable management.

**Strategies**

- 9.2.1 Develop annual programs of workshops and courses designed to educate other land managers about the methods demonstrated at the refuge. (Objective 4.2 CCP)
- 9.2.2 Use the internet to disseminate relevant habitat management information. (Objective 4.2 CCP)
- 9.2.3 Establish library materials accessible to resource practitioners and researchers. (Objective 4.2 CCP)
- 9.2.4 Pursue funding each year to bring on a graduate student, two additional seasonal field assistants, and an intern. (Objective 4.2 CCP)
- 9.2.5 Continue to use the internet to disseminate relevant habitat management information. (Objective 4.2 CCP)
- 9.2.6 Provide information to landowners and the public about working with the refuge to manage land for public benefit.

**GOAL**

- 9.3 Foster off-refuge cooperative actions and partnerships to promote wildlife conservation and further refuge goals. **CCP Goal 6**

**Objective**

- 6.1

**Strategies**

- 9.3.1 Continue to participate with conservation organizations such as the Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Initiative, Saco Bay Partners, and Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve to achieve conservation goals. (Objective 6.1, CCP)
- 9.3.2 Partner with other conservation organizations, such as land trusts and NGO's, for land conservation. (Objective 6.1, CCP)

- 9.3.3 By 2013, facilitate watershed-wide or multi-town management efforts, such as purple loosestrife control using beetles, or the management of federal-listed threatened or endangered species. (Objective 6.1, CCP)
- 9.3.4 Provide expertise annually to at least two landscape- or watershed-scale projects that benefit the coastal ecosystems of the Gulf of Maine watershed. (Objective 6.1, CCP)

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

The addition of social media (Facebook) to engage the public regularly and increase knowledge and interest in the refuge.

**MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

Track positive and negative media (newspaper, television, internet) response to the refuge when possible.  
Track the number of articles about the refuge (newspaper, internet) as they become available.  
Review Visitor Surveys and comments as they become available to gauge outreach success.

## **STANDARD 10: VOLUNTEERS AND FRIENDS**

***Policy (605 FW 1.14J)***

Volunteer and refuge support groups fortify refuge staffs with their gift of time, skills, and energy and are integral to the future of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Refuge staff will initiate and nurture relationships with volunteers and refuge support groups, and will continually support, monitor, and evaluate these groups with the goal of fortifying important refuge activities. The National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-242) strengthens the Refuge System's role in developing effective partnerships with various community groups. Whether through volunteers, refuge support groups, or other important partnerships in the community, refuge personnel will seek to make the refuge an integral part of the community, giving rise to a stronger Refuge System.

***CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:***

The Friends of Rachel Carson NWR is a group of committed volunteers who assist the refuge with vital projects in wildlife tracking, invasive species management, and habitat management. The Friends group is vital to maintain support from community members and to sustain the public's interest in refuge issues and offerings, as well as issues that refuge's face across the country. Volunteers have given the refuge thousands of hours of work to achieve its goals. Partnerships with local nonprofit agencies have also rendered countless hours of volunteer work. Maintaining and expanding current volunteer opportunities is a priority of the refuge because of the incalculable value they provide.

***Annual Numbers of Volunteers***

***Administration, staff***

## **STANDARD 10 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES**

## **GOAL**

- 10.1 This CCP will continue our successful volunteer program. Volunteers perform thousands of hours of work in administration, public use, and the biological program, and have enhanced our ability to complete many tasks associated with refuge management. (p. 4-3, CCP)

## **Objective**

Strong program management, guidance from refuge staff are the keys to building and sustaining a committed, well trained volunteer force. (p. 2-5, CCP)

## **Strategies**

- 10.1.1 Recruit and train volunteer plover stewards. (Objective 1.3, CCP)
- 10.1.2 Seek volunteers to complete minimal waterfowl and shorebird surveys. (Objective 1.5, CCP)
- 10.1.3 Continue successful Third Friday volunteer events
- 10.1.4 Continue to seek new opportunities for volunteers
- 10.1.5 Continue to seek partnerships with local volunteer organizations who share similar goals

## **SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

None

## **MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- Continue to request feedback from volunteers at the end of each volunteer event. This will help us in our evaluations, and changes can be made as necessary. We can gauge what activities volunteers would be interested in doing for the refuge, as well as skills they would like to learn.
- Attend Friends Group meetings when possible.

# **11: RECREATION FEE PROGRAM**

***Policy (261 FW 1; 263 FW 1); Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-447); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidance on the Recreation Fee Program – September 2008***

*“The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (FLREA) allows land management agencies, such as the National Wildlife Refuge System, to charge fees for entry and certain amenities (user fees). The charging of entrance and user fees at national wildlife refuges can be a helpful management tool if the program is well-managed and implemented.”*

## **CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

A refuge-wide recreation fee program has been proposed, but has not implemented. The refuge extends over 10 different towns, and is geographically dispersed between 50 miles of coast. This would make staffing kiosks to collect fees very difficult, and not worthwhile. Currently, there are some fees in place at the refuge. Hunting fees collected from permits bring the refuge an average of \$4,000 dollars per year, which goes towards signage and law enforcement costs.

## **STANDARD 11 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES**

## **GOAL**

- 11.1 Maintain current fee programs (hunting and fishing permits).

**Objective**

Fees help to support law enforcement necessary for the safety and protection of hunters, fishers, and the resources Rachel Carson NWR seeks to protect.

**Strategies**

11.1.1 Evaluate fee programs regularly for effectiveness in achieving refuge goals.

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:**

- Evaluations concluded that it would be too costly to incorporate a staffed fee collection program because of the geographic dispersal of the refuge.

**MONITOR AND EVALUATE:**

- Evaluate fee programs yearly with the yearly update of the Hunt and Fishing plans.
- Continue to monitor fees collected and make changes as necessary. Compare costs of fee collection to actual amount collected.
- Collect comments from users who paid fees.

## 12: CONCESSIONS

**Policy (50 CFR Part 25.61) and Director's Order No.139**

*Concession Contracts, discusses the Service's current policy for concession management and provides guidance for permitting and administering concession operations on Service lands. We use concessions to assist us in providing wildlife-dependent recreation activities to the visiting public. The concessions are managed through contracts between the Service and a private entity, where the private entity is allowed to charge a fee for services provided at a field station to the visiting public.*

**CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

*Not applicable for the refuge at this time.*

Currently, the refuge does not engage in concession activities. No requests have been made for services, and no requests for activities which would require concessions have been made. In congruence with Federal laws, wildlife comes first at the refuge. In the past, suggestions have been made by members of the public for possible uses of the refuge, but these have not been found suitable for refuge. The compatible use policy requires that each proposed use be evaluated formally, and those uses not found compatible will not be allowed on the refuge. None of the current compatible uses require the use of concessions with private entities.

## 13: COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL USES

**Policy (50 CFR 29.1; 50 CFR 27.97; 8 RM 16; 603 FW 1; 605 FW 5)**

*A commercial recreational use is a use that generates revenue or that results in a commodity which is or can be sold for income or revenue. Before considering compatibility, the use must be determined to contribute to the achievement of the refuge purpose or the mission of the Refuge System, as outlined in Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations, 29.1.*

To be allowed on a refuge, a commercial use must go beyond the "not materially interfere with..." requirement and must contribute to the achievement of the refuge purpose or mission of the Refuge

System. The contribution must be clearly defined in the justification section of the compatibility determination for any commercial use.

Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, 27.97, Private Operations, prohibits an unauthorized commercial enterprise on any national wildlife refuge. Thus, commercial tours are required to apply for a special use permit (SUP) from the Refuge Manager. By establishing a SUP system, the refuge staff is able to set sustainable limits on the number of permits issued.

In determining if a commercial recreational use is compatible, one way to connect it to the mission of the System is to determine if the commercial recreation use will facilitate one of the wildlife-dependent priority public use activities which are "directly related to the mission of the System." (Refuge Improvement Act – 1997)

**CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

*Not applicable for the refuge at this time.*

There are currently no commercial uses of the refuge. In congruence with Federal laws, wildlife is the first priority of the refuge. The compatible use policy requires that each proposed use be evaluated formally, and those uses not found compatible will not be allowed on the refuge. None of the current compatible uses require the use of commercial entities, nor have any requests been made.

## **14: WILDERNESS**

**Policy (Wilderness Act of 1964 (U.S. C. 1131-1136) Public Law 88-577, September 3, 1964)**

*The Wilderness Act of 1964 directs the Secretary of the Interior, within 10 years, to review every roadless area of 2,024 or more hectares (5,000 or more acres) and every roadless island (regardless of size) within national wildlife refuges and national parks, and to recommend to the President the suitability of each such area or island for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System by later special Acts of Congress. The Act provides criteria for determining suitability and contains provisions related to activities that can be undertaken on a designated area.*

*The Wilderness Act establishes additional purposes for the designated wilderness areas within refuges (50 CFR 29.12), which "shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness." Proposed wilderness areas are managed so as to protect their wilderness values pending action by Congress.*

**CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

*Not applicable for the refuge at this time.*

The refuge currently has no designated wilderness areas.

### *III. Implementation Schedule*

This table allows the refuge to view all the strategies together as it relates to the project completion time frames which is the life of the CCP.

**TABLE X: STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE**

## *IV. Project Cost*

This table is designed to view all the refuge visitor services project costs as it relates to the standards used by the refuge.

**TABLE X. PROJECT COST**

Project Cost Table					
Projects	Targeted Completion Date	Cost	Funding Source (RONS, SAMMS, VFE, Partnership Funds, Etc.)	Date of Cost Estimation	Comments
Example - 2.9: Install 3 welcome kiosks at BLC	2013		1263 - Annual Operations	2009	
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>					

## V. Visitor Services Annual Work Plan

This table allows the individual responsible for the visitor services program to see at a glance what are the plans for the year and associated deadlines for the task.

**TABLE X. VISITOR SERVICES ANNUAL WORK PLAN**

Visitor Services Annual Work Plan - Fiscal Year 2013														
Category	Event	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	Comments
Annual Events	National Wildlife Refuge Week										X			
Required Reporting	Fee Recreation Report													
	RAPP													
	Annual Narrative													
	SAMMS													
	RONs													
Required Training														
Annual Meetings														
Routine Activities	Post events, pictures, etc. on Internet (e.g. Facebook, refuge website)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Friday volunteer event	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Special Projects	Write Visitor Services Plan	X	X	X	X	X								

## VI. Visitor Services Annual Partnership Planning

This table tracks the Refuge's formal and informal partnerships. This table could also cross reference with the Project Cost Table to help identify potential project funding opportunities.

**TABLE X. VISITOR SERVICES ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP PLANNING**

Visitor Services Annual Partnership Planning - Fiscal Year (2013)							
Name of Partnership	Type of Partnership (Academia, Non-profit, Agency, etc.)	Agreement Type (Grant, Challenge Cost Share, Cooperative, MOU, Donation, Programmatic, etc.)	Partnership's Goal for Refuge	Type of Contribution		Time Frame of Project	Comments
				In-kind (materials, labor)	Monetary		
Friends of Rachel Carson NWR	Non-Profit	Cooperative	Support Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge	Labor		Ongoing (permanent)	
Youth Conservation Corps	Non-Profit	Programmatic, Cost-share	Help refuge maintain trails	Labor		Summer months Annual	Dependent on funding
Maine Conservation Corps	Non-Profit						
Maine Audubon Association	Non-Profit	Programmatic?	Piping Plover habitat management, education, and outreach	Labor		Summer months Annual	

Wells National Estuarine Reserve	Non-Profit						
Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Initiative	Non-Profit						
Saco Bay Trails	Non-Profit						Agreed to Ted Wells Memorial Trail to be built on refuge land
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife	Agency						
Biddeford Pool Improvement Association	Non-Profit						
Cape Elizabeth Land Trust	Non-Profit						
The Conservation Fund	Non-Profit						
Great Works Regional Land Trust	Non-Profit						
Kennebunk Land Trust	Non-Profit						
Kennebunkport Conservation Trust	Non-Profit						
Kittery Land Trust	Non-Profit						
Laudholm Trust	Non-Profit						

Maine Coast Heritage Trust	Non-Profit						
National Park Service Rivers and Trails	Non-Profit						
The Nature Conservancy	Non-Profit						
Saco Bay Partners	Non-Profit						
Saco Land Trust	Non-Profit						
Saco Valley Land Trust	Non-Profit						
Scarborough Land and Conservation Trust	Non-Profit						
The Trust for Public Land	Non-Profit						
York Land Trust, Inc.	Non-Profit						
York Rivers Association	Non-Profit						

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF PREPARERS

Kaitlyn Perham, Volunteer Intern at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, University of Southern Maine.  
Janet Gorman, Maine Conservation Corps Member, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF OTHER VISITOR SERVICES RELATED DOCUMENTS

*Below is a list of related visitor services documents and their locations.*

*Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment*, June 2007. Fish and Wildlife Service. Available at RCNWR Headquarters.

*National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey 2012: Individual Refuge Results for Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge*, 2012. A. Dietsch, N. Sexton, L. Koontz, S Conk. Commissioned by the USFWS Division of Visitor Services and Communications Headquarters Office, and the DOT Federal Lands Highways Program. Available at RCNWR Headquarters.

*2013-2014 Hunt Plan, Rachel Carson NWR*. J. Gorman. Available at Headquarters.

*2013-2014 Fishing Plan, Rachel Carson NWR*

## APPENDIX C: APPROPRIATE USE DETERMINATIONS

*Below is a list of approved appropriate uses on the refuge. Additional information related to the appropriate use can be found in the CCP.*

- Wildlife Observation and Photography, Environmental Education, Interpretation
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Snowshoeing, Skiing (Appendix D-9)

- Boat Launching (Appendix D-3)
- Mosquito Control (Appendix D-5)
- Research by Non-Refuge Personnel (Appendix D-7)

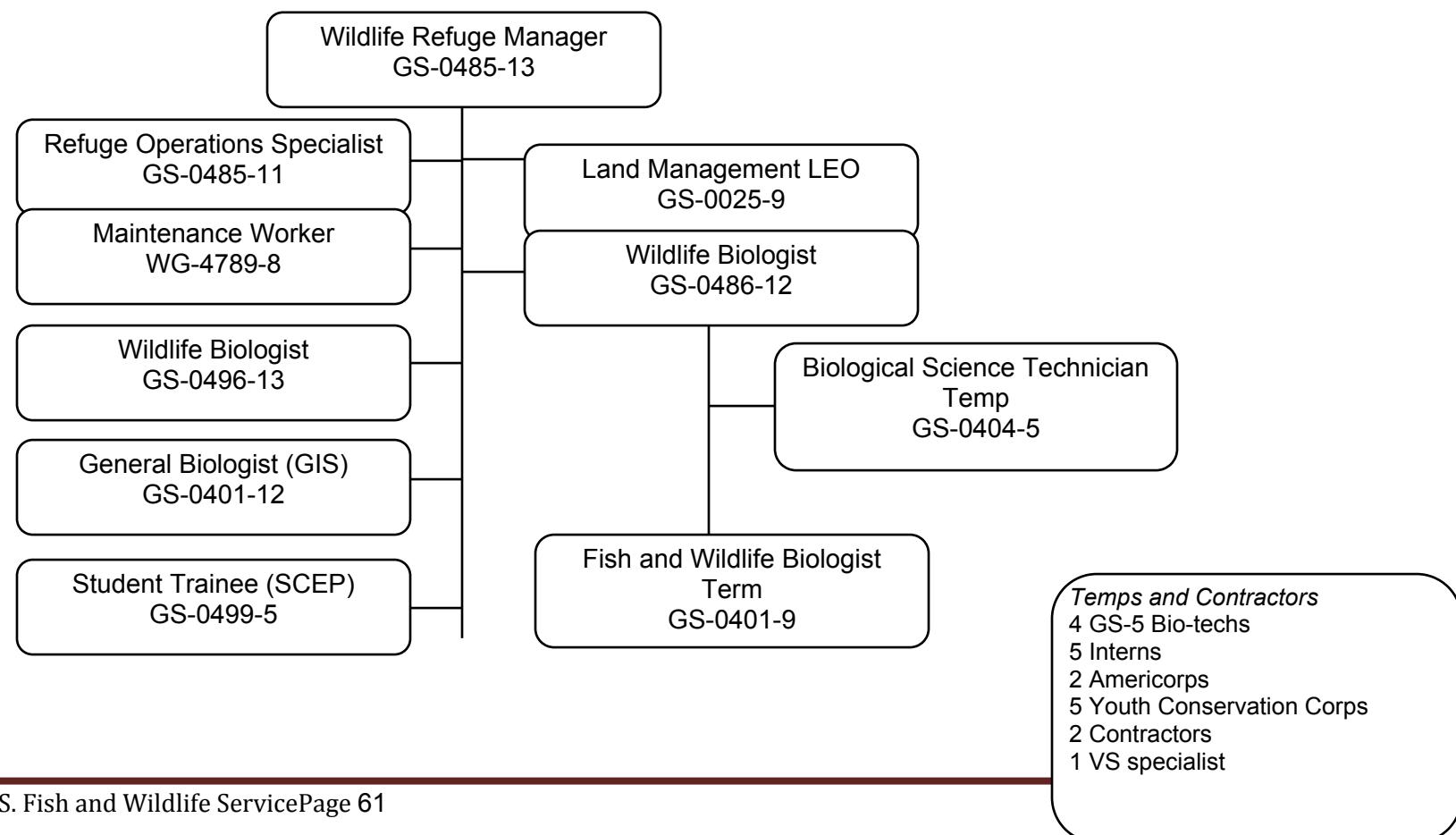
## **APPENDIX D: COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION**

*Below is a list of approved compatibility determinations on the refuge. Additional information related to the compatibility determinations can be found in the CCP.*

- Hunting (Appendix D-11)
- Fishing (Appendix D-15)
- Wildlife Observation, Photography, Environmental Education, Interpretation (Appendix D-21)
- Boat Launching (Appendix D-25)
- Mosquito Control (Appendix D-29)
- Research Conducted by Non-Refuge Personnel (Appendix D-37)
- Skiing and Snowshoeing (Appendix D-45)
- Furbearer Management (Appendix D-49)

## APPENDIX E: STAFFING CHART

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Northeast Region  
Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System  
Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge  
Staff**



## **APPENDIX F: CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS**

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. In fulfilling that mission we will provide you with the best possible service so that you can enjoy these natural resources now and in the future.

We are committed to the following standards of service:

- \* Treating you with courtesy
- \* Responding to you in a timely and professional manner
- \* Maintaining a professional appearance and positive attitude
- \* Helping you understand who we are and what we do
- \* Keeping public facilities safe, clean, and accessible
- \* Working in partnership with you to conserve fish and wildlife resources

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NPI #96-02. August 6 1996.