

|                               | A: No-action alternative | B: Custodial no active management | C: Integrated management actions and public use (selected) | D: Maximum habitat management     |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Issue 7: Hunting Opportunity. | Waterfowl and Deer ..... | Closed to Public .....            | Evaluation of additional hunting.                          | Evaluation of additional hunting. |

## Comments

We solicited comments on the draft CCP and the EA for the Washita and Optima NWRs from September 17, 2007, to November 2, 2007 (72 FR 52903). We thoroughly evaluated all received comments and included them in the CCP when possible.

## Selected Alternative

After considering the comments we received, we selected Alternative C for implementation. This alternative (now the CCP) describes how habitat objectives will be accomplished through a combination of management activities (farming, moist soil created wetlands, periodic prescribed burning, and mechanical and chemical exotic species control methods) to encourage ecological integrity, promote native prairie restoration, control invasive plant species, and provide/enhance habitat for migratory waterfowl, grassland birds, and other resident wildlife. We selected this alternative because it best meets the purposes and goals of the Washita and Optima NWR Complex. This action will not adversely impact endangered or threatened species or their habitat. Opportunities for wildlife-dependent activities such as observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation will be enhanced. Future management actions will have a neutral or positive impact on the local economy, and the recommendations in the CCP will ensure that Refuge management is consistent with the mandates of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

## Public Availability of Documents

In addition to the methods in **ADDRESSES**, you can view or obtain documents at the following locations:

- *Our Web site:* <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/Plan/planindex.html>.
- *Public Library:* Elk City Carnegie Library, located at 221 W. Broadway Ave., Elk City, OK 73644-4741, during regular library hours.

December 15, 2009.

**Thomas L. Bauer,**

*Acting, Regional Director, Region 2.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

**[FWS-R2-R-2009-N205; 20131-1265-2CCP-S3]**

### Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Aransas, Calhoun, and Refugio Counties, TX

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability: Draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental assessment; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of a draft comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and an environmental assessment (EA) for the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRRC, Refuge) for public review and comment. In these documents, we describe alternatives, including our preferred alternative, to manage this Refuge complex for the 15 years following approval of the final CCP.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, please send your written comments by April 13, 2010. We will announce upcoming public meetings in local news media.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments or requests for copies or more information by any of the following methods. You may request hard copies or a CD-ROM of the documents by any of the following methods:

*E-mail:* Roxanne Turley@fws.gov. Include "Aransas CCP" in the subject line of the message.

*Fax:* Attn: Roxanne Turley, 505-248-6874.

*U.S. Mail:* Roxanne Turley, Natural Resource Planner, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, NWRS, Division of Planning, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103-1306.

*In-Person Drop-off, Viewing, or Pickup:* Call 505-248-6636 to make an appointment during regular business hours. You may drop off comments during regular business hours at 500 Gold Avenue, SW., 4th Floor, Room 4019, Albuquerque, NM 87102. For more information on locations for viewing or obtaining documents, see "Public Availability of Documents" under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dan Alonso, Complex Manager, by U.S. mail at Aransas NWRRC, CCP-Project, P.O. Box 100, Austwell, TX 77050; by phone at 361-286-3559; or by fax at 361-286-3722; or Felipe Prieto, Wildlife Refuge Specialist/CCP Planning Team, Aransas NWRRC, by phone at 361-286-3559.

## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

### Introduction

With this notice, we continue the CCP process for Aransas NWRRC. We started this process through a notice in the **Federal Register** (67 FR 55862, August 30, 2002).

Aransas NWRRC is located in Aransas, Calhoun, and Refugio Counties, Texas, and encompasses 115,931 acres of coastal prairie, oak woodland and savannah, barrier island, and salt and freshwater marshes. Management efforts focus on protecting, enhancing, and restoring Refuge habitats and water management for the benefit of important fish and wildlife resources.

Aransas NWRRC was established "as a refuge and breeding grounds for birds," by Executive Order No. 7784 on December 31, 1937. The authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 712d) establishes that each refuge in the system is "for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or any other management purpose, for migratory birds." The Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460-1) states that each refuge in the system is "suitable for incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, the protection of natural resources, and the conservation of endangered or threatened species." Additionally, Aransas NWRRC contains critical habitat for the whooping crane (43 FR 20938, May 15, 1978).

## Background

### The CCP Process

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee) (Administration Act), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, requires a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose for developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System,

consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, the CCPs identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update these CCPs at least every 15 years in accordance with the Administration Act.

**Public Outreach**

To begin the CCP process, we held a comment period beginning on August

30, 2002, and ending on October 29, 2002 (67 FR 55862). We made draft documents and other relevant information available for public review at the Refuge headquarters. Prior to opening the public comment period, Refuge staff gathered in July and August 2002 to discuss concerns, issues, and opportunities for the future of the Refuge. In January 2003, we held seven open-house-style meetings at the Refuge Headquarters and in Rockport, Port Lavaca, Corpus Christi, Refugio, and Victoria, including one Partners meeting for the Golden Crescent Nature Club in February 2003. We intended these meetings to solicit initial public input and involvement during the early stages of CCP development. We also invited

the State of Texas (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department) to participate as a partner in the planning process. We have considered and evaluated all of the comments we received, and have incorporated many of them into the various alternatives we addressed in the draft CCP and the EA.

**CCP Alternatives We Are Considering**

During the public scoping process with which we started work on this draft CCP, we, other governmental partners, and the public raised several issues. Our draft CCP addresses them. A full description of each alternative is in the EA. To address these issues, we developed and evaluated the following alternatives, summarized below.

|  | A: No-action alternative  | B: Optimal habitat management and public use (proposed action) alternative  | C: Maximal habitat management and public-use alternative  |
|--|---|---|---|
| Issue 1: Habitat Management Activities.            | Biological program and habitat management would continue under existing plans, with the emphasis remaining primarily on migratory birds, waterfowl, and Federally listed species; the status quo would prevail without the benefit of holistic, long-term, and comprehensive guidance.                                      | Ecosystem-level management actions to better protect and preserve the natural diversity of unique habitats and sensitive wildlife through a holistic, partnered, and publicly involved approach would be implemented; current and future long-term benefits for migratory and resident birds, wildlife and their habitats, and the recovery of threatened and endangered species would be provided. | Intensive management to achieve a predetermined amount of woodlands, wetlands, croplands, grasslands, shrublands, and water impoundments to benefit the highest possible variety of plants and wildlife would be implemented.   |
| Issue 2: Improvements to Public Use Opportunities. | Current public use under existing plans would continue; any expansions would occur opportunistically.   | An optimal, quality experience for the public. Priority wildlife-dependent uses would be emphasized, and other existing public uses would be allowed where appropriate.   | All priority public uses (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education and interpretation) would be expanded significantly above current levels. Visitor facilities and interpretive and environmental education programs would be improved or developed. |
| Issue 3: Refuge Land and Boundary Protection.      | Currently, there is no active land acquisition or land protection plan. However, any future acquisitions would be based on an approved land protection plan, developed as a step-down plan of the CCP. Any additional lands added to the Refuge would be purchased from willing sellers as opportunities and funding arise. | Same as Alternative A; however, additional land protection to address whooping crane flock expansion in the vicinity of the Refuge would be considered. The emphasis would remain on protecting whooping cranes and available acres of existing wetland or restorable wetland habitat and adjacent uplands in portions of Aransas, Calhoun, and Refugio Counties.                                   | Same as Alternative A.  |

**Public Availability of Documents**

In addition to any methods in ADDRESSES, you can view or obtain documents at the following locations:

- At the Aransas NWRC Headquarters Office, at 1 Wildlife Circle, near Austwell, TX, during the hours between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

- Agency Web site: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/Plan/index.html>.
- At the following public libraries:

| Library                             | Address  | Phone No.    |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Victoria Public Library .....       | 302 N Main St., Victoria, TX 77901 .....         | 361-572-2701 |
| Parkdale Branch Library .....       | 1230 Carmel Pkwy, Corpus Christi, TX 78411 ..... | 361-853-9961 |
| Calhoun County Public Library ..... | 200 West Mahan St., Port Lavaca, TX 77979 .....  | 361-552-7323 |

| Library                             | Address                                    | Phone No.    |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Aransas County Public Library ..... | 701 E Mimosa St., Rockport, TX 78382 ..... | 361-790-0153 |

**Submitting Comments/Issues for Comment**

We consider comments substantive if they:

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of the information in the document;
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of the document;
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those presented in the document; and/or
- Provide new or additional information relevant to the document.

**Next Steps**

After this comment period ends, we will analyze the comments and address them in the form of a final CCP and finding of no significant impact.

**Public Availability of Comments**

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Dated: January 7, 2010.

**Brian Millsap,**

*Acting Regional Director, Region 2.*

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Minerals Management Service**

**Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Central Planning Area (CPA) Gulf of Mexico (GOM) Oil and Gas Lease Sale 213**

**AGENCY:** Minerals Management Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Final Notice of Sale (NOS) 213.

**SUMMARY:** On Wednesday, March 17, 2010, the Minerals Management Service (MMS) will open and publicly announce bids received for blocks offered in CPA Oil and Gas Lease Sale 213, pursuant to the OCS Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1331-1356, as amended) and the regulations issued thereunder (30 CFR part 256). The Final NOS 213 Package contains information essential to bidders, and bidders are responsible for knowing the information within the documents contained in the Package.

**DATES:** Public bid reading for the CPA Oil and Gas Lease Sale 213 will begin at 9 a.m., Wednesday, March 17, 2010, at the Louisiana Superdome, 1500 Sugarbowl Drive, New Orleans, Louisiana, 70112. The lease sale will be held in the St. Charles Club Room on the second floor (Loge Level). Entry to the Superdome will be on the Poydras Street side of the building through Gate A on the Ground or Plaza Level, and parking should be available at Garage 6. All times referred to in this document are local New Orleans times, unless otherwise specified.

**Please Note:** Starting with this sale, MMS is revising the lease terms for blocks in water depths of 400 meters to less than 1,600 meters. Blocks in 400 to less than 800 meters change from an initial 8-year lease term (where a well has to be spudded within the first 5 years of the initial 8-year term to avoid lease cancellation) to a 5-year initial lease term (where spudding a well within the initial lease term would automatically extend the lease term to 8 years). Blocks in 800 to less than 1,600 meters change from a 10-year initial lease term to a 7-year initial lease term (where spudding a well within the initial lease term would automatically extend the lease term to 10 years). The MMS received 9 comments on the lease terms changes in the Proposed Notice of Sale.

**ADDRESSES:** Bidders can obtain a Final NOS 213 Package containing the NOS and the supporting documents by writing or calling the: Gulf of Mexico Region Public Information Unit,

Minerals Management Service, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394, (504) 736-2519 or (800) 200-GULF, MMS GOM Internet Web site at: <http://www.gomr.mms.gov>.

**Filing of Bids:** Bidders must submit sealed bids to the Regional Director (RD), MMS Gulf of Mexico Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana, 70123-2394, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on normal working days, and from 8 a.m. to the Bid Submission Deadline of 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 16, 2010, the day before the lease sale. If bids are mailed, please address the envelope containing all of the sealed bids as follows: *Attention:* Supervisor, Leasing and Financial Responsibility Unit (MS 5422), Leasing and Environment, Leasing Activities Section, MMS Gulf of Mexico Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394. Contains Sealed Bids for CPA Oil and Gas Lease Sale 213, Please Deliver to Ms. Nancy Kornrumpf, 6th Floor, Immediately.

**Please note:** Bidders mailing bid(s) are advised to call Ms. Nancy Kornrumpf at (504) 736-2726 or Ms. Cindy Thibodeaux at (504) 736-2809 immediately after putting their bid(s) in the mail. If the RD receives bids later than the time and date specified above, he will return those bids unopened to bidders. Should an unexpected event such as flooding or travel restrictions be significantly disruptive to bid submission, the MMS may extend the Bid Submission Deadline. Bidders may call (504) 736-0557 or access our MMS Gulf of Mexico Internet Web site at: <http://www.gomr.mms.gov> for information about the possible extension of the Bid Submission Deadline due to such an event.

**Areas Offered for Leasing:** The MMS is offering for leasing in CPA Oil and Gas Lease Sale 213 all blocks and partial blocks listed in the document "List of Blocks Available for Leasing" included in the Final NOS 213 Package. All of these blocks are shown on the following leasing maps and Official Protraction Diagrams (OPD's):

**Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Maps—Louisiana Map Numbers 1 Through 12 (These 30 maps sell for \$2.00 each)**

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| LA1 .....  | West Cameron Area (Revised November 1, 2000).                       |
| LA1A ..... | West Cameron Area, West Addition (Revised February 28, 2007).       |
| LA1B ..... | West Cameron Area, South Addition (Revised February 28, 2007).      |
| LA2 .....  | East Cameron Area (Revised November 1, 2000).                       |
| LA2A ..... | East Cameron Area, South Addition (Revised November 1, 2000).       |
| LA3 .....  | Vermilion Area (Revised November 1, 2000).                          |
| LA3A ..... | South Marsh Island Area (Revised November 1, 2000).                 |
| LA3B ..... | Vermilion Area, South Addition (Revised November 1, 2000).          |
| LA3C ..... | South Marsh Island Area, South Addition (Revised November 1, 2000). |