

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

The majority of lands that compose Coquille Valley Wildlife Area (CVWA) were acquired by the Department as the result of a voluntary land exchange in April 2013. Additional lands were obtained through purchase from willing landowners in September 2014 and December 2015. These properties provide significant opportunity to enhance overwintering habitat for migratory birds and fish and increase wildlife related recreation for the public. The current CVWA ownership and management activities will protect or enhance over 580 acres of wetland, upland and tidally influenced lands, and has the capability of providing high-quality habitats where tidal connectivity can be restored. Initial rule making related to CVWA was completed in August 2015 as a regulations component for providing public access.

The draft CVWA management plan was developed after the Department initiated acquisition of lands that constitute CVWA and as part of restoration efforts with Beaver Slough Drainage District, The Nature Conservancy and adjacent landowners. This plan will guide management of CVWA for the next five years, during which time restoration actions and a public use program will be implemented. The Department's management planning process for Wildlife Areas involves the development of broad goals for the areas, and formulation of specific objectives and management strategies to achieve those goals. The purposes of the CVWA plan are:

- To provide clear direction and continuity for management actions;
- To communicate the Department's management priorities for CVWA to its neighbors, stakeholders, visitors, and the public;
- To ensure management programs on CVWA are consistent with the original mandate to provide public access and promote restoration of key wildlife habitats;
- To ensure management of CVWA is consistent with Federal, State, and local laws and plans;
- To ensure management activities address conservation priorities and recommendations described in the 2006 Oregon Conservation Strategy, and;
- To provide a basis for budget requests to support CVWA needs for staffing, operations, maintenance, and capital improvements.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Since initiating efforts to obtain CVWA, the Department and partners have held over 300 meetings, tours, radio talk shows and presentations regarding CVWA and associated projects.

Between January and November 2013, local Department staff held 5 public review meetings with a Stakeholder Committee at local venues. The Stakeholder Committee is comprised of several local landowners, Drainage District Representatives (Beaver Slough and Coaledo), NRCS, Oregon Hunters Association, South Slough National Estuary Research

Reserve, commercial fishers, and local anglers and hunters. Restoration plans and draft wildlife area plan components were circulated to the Stakeholder Committee for input and comment. There were several key issues and concerns raised at the Stakeholder Committee the meetings including:

- Public access and private land trespass
- Benefits to wildlife and fish species
- Furbearer impacts to project work
- Budget
- Restoration design
- Maintenance
- Monitoring
- Mosquitos
- Vegetation Management

On June 18, 2015, a public general informational meeting was held in Coquille, OR to introduce initial development of CVWA Plan and present an overview of stakeholder committee meetings. This meeting was announced via local radio and news outlets and the department website.

Additional key issues and concerns raised in written correspondence included:

- Improving communication of proposed management actions between stakeholders, adjacent landowners and the public;
- Incorporating qualified hydrologist report in plan design;
- Avoiding impacts to adjacent landowners such as inundation/drainage, forage production/grazing, predators, furbearers and mosquitos;
- Incorporating an adaptive plan to address unforeseen issues in a timely manner; and
- Defining methodology for specific monitoring such as salinity, water movement, and water elevations

A summary of verbal and written comments received during the public review process for the Draft CVWA plan is provided in Attachment 3 along with copies of all written public correspondence received (Attachment 4).

ISSUE 1

REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE DRAFT COQUILLE VALLEY WILDLIFE AREA PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

ANALYSIS

Wildlife area goals are broad, open-ended statements of desired future conditions that convey a purpose but do not define measurable units. In contrast, objectives are more concise statements of what the Department wants to achieve, how much the Department wants to achieve, when and where to achieve it, and who will be responsible for the work. Objectives derive from goals and provide the basis for determining strategies, monitoring fish and wildlife area accomplishments, and evaluating the success of strategies.

Using input from each of the public review process components and internal review by staff, the Department completed the goals and objectives of the draft plan. These, along with the implementation strategies, are included in Attachment 2 (pp. 39-46). A concluding public general informational meeting is planned during the next month before Department completes the final proposed Goals and Objectives as part of the CVWA plan scheduled for April commission meeting.

OPTIONS

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

N/A – Informational only

DRAFT MOTION

N/A

EFFECTIVE DATE