

sections of land along the lower Carson River and 26 sections north of the existing Stillwater NWR. Major habitats proposed to be added to Stillwater NWR would be the lower Carson River and its delta marsh, the sand dunes along the southern edge of the Carson Sink, and the stabilized dunes and salt desert shrub habitat between the Carson River and Stillwater Marsh. The revised boundary of Stillwater NWR would exclude the northern portions of Fallon NWR and the western portions of the Stillwater WMA. Stillwater WMA would no longer be managed by the Service under an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation. Although the size of Stillwater NWR would increase, the acreage of Federal lands managed primarily for wildlife in the Lahontan Valley would decline by about 25,517 acres. The most important lands with respect to refuge purposes and wetlands protection would be retained. Under this proposal, the approved boundary of Stillwater NWR would include about 172,254 acres, of which about 137,504 acres would be Federal. The acreage of non-Federal inholdings within the boundaries of Federal wildlife areas in the Lahontan Valley would decline by about 40 percent.

Some of these boundary revisions cannot be accomplished without Congressional action. Consistent with Public Law 101-618, the Service intends to recommend that Congress, through special legislation: (1) Revoke the wildlife reservation on Bureau of Reclamation lands known as Fallon NWR; (2) abolish the name Fallon NWR; and (3) establish primary Service jurisdiction on those portions of Stillwater WMA and the former Fallon NWR which the Service proposes to include in the revised Stillwater NWR boundary.

Anaho Island NWR will be managed as it has in the past, with no intent to conduct active habitat management. Habitat management on Stillwater NWR will focus on providing a variety of native wetland, riparian, and upland plant communities through the use of water management, integrated pest management, prescribed fire, and other tools described in the Final CCP EIS. A Habitat Management Plan will be developed concurrent with initial implementation of the CCP. A draft Integrated Pest Management Plan and an approved Fire Management Plan have already been prepared.

Water management on Stillwater NWR will focus on providing spring migration and breeding habitat. However, up to 25% of the refuge's acquired water rights will be reserved for fall delivery (October-November) to

provide habitat for fall waterbird migration and for wildlife dependent recreational uses. A primary objective of water management will be to reduce salinity in wetland units located at higher elevations or in specified flow corridors to provide conditions suitable for native plant restoration.

Livestock grazing and muskrat trapping will no longer be allowed as commercial uses but can be used as habitat management tools to meet specific habitat objectives. Livestock grazing will no longer be allowed in uplands, which should aid native vegetation establishment in upland habitats. Farming will be allowed on up to 300 acres, but will require water from other sources to facilitate agricultural production. Compatibility determinations have been prepared that describe the stipulations associated with implementation of these management activities.

Priority wildlife dependent recreational uses found compatible on Stillwater NWR include hunting, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. Additionally, horseback riding was found to be compatible. Anaho Island NWR will remain closed to all public access.

Hunting will be allowed on Stillwater NWR during all State of Nevada designated seasons for big game, upland game, and migratory birds. All wetland units historically open to waterfowl hunting will remain open. Boat access options will vary depending on wetland unit, but will include areas designated for non-motorized boats, motorized boats, or air-thrust boats, as well as areas designated for no boat use.

Options for wildlife observation and photography at Stillwater NWR will be enhanced through development of a ten-mile auto tour loop within the existing sanctuary, and trails at Stillwater Point Reservoir, Timber Lakes, and the lower Carson River. Outdoor education and interpretation will be promoted through development of a visitor center and outdoor education site along the ten-mile tour loop. A sign plan is currently being developed to evaluate interpretive opportunities along refuge roads and trails.

Alternative E, selected for implementation, represents the best balance between refuge purposes, resource conservation, and compatible wildlife dependent public use.

Other Alternatives Considered

The Draft CCP EIS and Final CCP EIS evaluated four other alternatives for the management of Stillwater NWRC. Under all alternatives, Anaho Island NWR

would continue to be managed much as it has in the past for the protection of colonial nesting birds. The No Action Alternative (Alternative A) would retain the existing Stillwater NWR boundaries and baseline management as outlined in the 1987 Management Plan for Stillwater WMA and modified by the Service's water rights acquisition program. Alternative B would result in the lands within Stillwater WMA reverting back to U.S. Bureau of Reclamation management or other public land status. Management would focus on providing fall and winter habitat for waterfowl and opportunities for waterfowl hunting on Stillwater NWR, and breeding habitat for waterbirds on Fallon NWR. Under Alternative C, the Service would seek legislation to expand the Stillwater NWR boundary to include much of Stillwater WMA and Fallon NWR to conserve additional riparian and dune habitat. This alternative would emphasize the approximation of natural biological diversity with adjustments to enhance breeding habitat for waterbirds and fall and winter habitat for waterfowl, and would provide enhanced opportunities for wildlife observation and environmental education. Under Alternative D, legislation would also be sought to expand the Stillwater NWR boundary to include much of Stillwater WMA and Fallon NWR to conserve additional riparian and sand dune habitat. Management of Stillwater NWR would focus on restoring natural hydrologic patterns and other ecological processes. Visitor services management would focus on providing opportunities for wildlife observation and environmental education. These alternatives were not selected for implementation because they did not balance resource conservation goals with compatible public use as well as the selected alternative.

Public Involvement and Comments Received

Prior to release of the Final CCP EIS, the Service met with a variety of Federal agencies, the Nevada Division of Wildlife, local Native American Tribes, municipal governments, and several interest groups on a number of occasions, and held open houses to receive public comment. Seven planning updates were sent out to all on the mailing list. Fifty-four contributors provided 1,004 comments on the Draft CCP EIS. A complete history of the public involvement, comment period, and Service responses to comments are included in the Final CCP EIS.

The Service received only two comments following the distribution of