

WICHITA MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE REFUGE TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN

Help Us Plan The Future

Granite rocks of the Wichita Mountains dominate the scenery of rolling plains to form one of the most recognized symbols in southwestern Oklahoma. Combined with lakes, streams, canyons, mountains and grasslands, this highly valuable natural area provides a sanctuary for a multitude of wildlife species. The 59,020-acre Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge (WR) is situated in Comanche County, Oklahoma and serves as an oasis for both wildlife and people. Due to the foresighted planning and conservation efforts by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 with the establishment of the National Wildlife Refuge System, this protected icon has preserved a remnant of mixed-grass prairie with rock outcroppings for resident and migratory wildlife species in southwestern Oklahoma.



Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. *The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seeks help in planning the future of this unique refuge for migratory and resident wildlife species of southwestern Oklahoma.*

Over the next year, interested public, agencies, Tribes and organizations are invited to express their concerns and share their visions for the Wichita Mountains WR. This is your opportunity to help us identify issues and concerns, and for us to answer any questions you may have. Your participation is critical to the success of this planning effort. Share your ideas with us by answering the questions included in this questionnaire and **returning your responses by March 5, 2009.**



What Are Refuges All About?

The National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) is responsible for protecting nearly 100 million acres set aside specifically for wildlife and providing important habitat for native plants and animals. The Refuge System also provides important opportunities for the American public to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. National wildlife refuges are managed by the Department of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the principle federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

The Wichita Mountains WR is the oldest managed sanctuary in the Refuge System and is one of 540 refuges helping to meet the responsibilities of the Refuge System. First established in 1901 as the Wichita Forest Reserve and later renamed the Wichita Mountains WR in 1936, the purpose of the refuge is to be ***“...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place therefore”***.

What Will Planning Do?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is starting work on a long-term management plan for the Wichita Mountains WR. This plan, called a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), will serve as a guide for managing the Wichita Mountains WR over the next 15 years. This is the first in a series of updates to keep you informed of the planning process for the CCP.

Why Is This Planning Effort Starting Now?

In October 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Refuge Improvement Act). This law establishes the mission of the Refuge System, develops a new process of determining compatible public use activities on refuges, and requires us to prepare CCPs for each refuge. The Refuge Improvement Act states that first and foremost, the Refuge System must focus on wildlife conservation. The mission of the Refuge System is: ***“to administer a national network of lands, and waters for the conservation, management and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of America.”***

What Are The Planning Issues?

In preparing the CCP, a range of possible alternative management approaches will be explored. The effects of the various alternatives on the biological resources of the Wichita Mountains WR and on local communities will be evaluated in an Environmental Assessment, which will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. At this time, some preliminary issues identified include the following:

- Habitat Management
- Wildlife Management
- Invasive Species Management
- Visitor Services and Facilities
- Partners

Do You Want To Get Involved?

Your participation is critical to the success of this planning effort. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs your help to identify issues. Your input will be used to create a meaningful and effective CCP for the Wichita Mountains WR. The first step is for you to **complete the enclosed mail-in response form.**

Do you want to remain on the mailing list to receive subsequent planning updates for this project?

Yes

No

Name:

Address:

Is there anyone else you know who would like to be on the mailing list?

Name:

Address:

Name:

Address:

Do you have any additional comments at this time?

That's it! Thank you for your time.