

a VISION for *Nisqually*

Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge is a landmark in the Pacific Northwest, located where the freshwater of the Nisqually River flows into Puget Sound. The estuary created by this mixing of fresh and saltwater is the richest kind of habitat known – more than 275 species of migratory birds, many runs of salmon, and numerous other species come to rest, feed, nest, spawn, and grow. More than 100,000 visitors also come to view this special place each year, to enjoy and learn about the fish and wildlife and their habitats, and to share in the experiences of the delta.

The Refuge is in a unique position to provide leadership in habitat restoration and management, land protection, environmental education, and quality wildlife-dependent recreation. With the support of partners and the community, the Refuge will provide a focal point in the Nisqually River watershed and throughout Puget Sound to demonstrate sound land stewardship and restoration of native habitats on a large scale to benefit salmon and migratory birds.



The Comprehensive Conservation Plan

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) provides new management direction for Nisqually NWR through the year 2020. The CCP is designed to achieve Refuge purposes for migratory birds and the conservation of fish and wildlife resources, as well as fulfill the broader mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Implementing the CCP will restore a significant amount of historic estuarine habitat. The CCP attempts to balance wildlife protection and sanctuary with quality wildlife oriented recreation and educational opportunities.

The plan builds upon Nisqually's long-standing tradition of volunteerism and public involvement. Recommendations in the plan were developed with extensive community participation and input over an 8-year period, during which time the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked with Refuge neighbors, agencies, Tribes, interest groups, and the public to identify opportunities and resolve important management issues.

Goals for the Refuge

Four broad goals provide a framework for more detailed objectives and strategies.

Goal 1: Conserve, manage, restore, and enhance native habitats and associated plant and wildlife species representative of the Puget Sound lowlands, with a special emphasis on migratory birds and salmonids.

Goal 2: Support recovery and protection efforts for Federal and State threatened and endangered species, species of concern, and their habitats of the Nisqually River delta and watershed.

Goal 3: Provide quality environmental education opportunities focusing on the fish, wildlife, and habitats of the Nisqually River delta and watershed.



Christopher Ellings

Adult chinook salmon

Goal 4: Provide quality wildlife-dependent recreation, interpretation, and outreach opportunities to enhance public appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of fish, wildlife,



Aerial view of the Nisqually Valley

habitats, and cultural resources of the Nisqually River delta and watershed.

Refuge Expansion

Refuge expansion provides a unique and timely opportunity to more effectively protect the Nisqually delta and lower watershed. Expanding the potential acquisition boundary of the Refuge by 3,479 acres makes long-term protection possible for key portions of the Nisqually River corridor, riparian and bluff habitat, and freshwater wetlands. Increased land protection would result from land acquisition, easement, or cooperative agreement with willing landowners. Refuge expansion will provide habitat for many fish and wildlife species, sustain wildlife corridors and increase habitat connectivity, and help protect and maintain water and habitat quality.

Habitat Restoration

A hallmark of the CCP – and a dramatic change for the Refuge – is the restoration of natural estuarine habitat. The Service has a unique opportunity to



1904 view of the Nisqually Delta from McAllister Creek hillside prior to diking



Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Wa-he-lut Dancers

restore Nisqually NWR as an historic tidal saltmarsh system to benefit the many fish and wildlife species that depend on estuaries, including several salmon species and a wide variety of migratory birds. With the recovery of federally threatened Chinook salmon in the Nisqually watershed a regional priority, this restoration effort will also enhance the ecological functions of Puget Sound, where 80% of estuarine habitat has been lost in the last 150 years, primarily to development.

To restore the estuary, the existing Brown Farm Dike will be breached in several locations, and much of the dike will be removed down to grade. The restored area will reconnect much of the historic slough systems in the Nisqually delta to Puget Sound, creating a more complete and functional estuarine system and contributing to the restoration of a critical but vanishing habitat in the region. A new but shorter trail system will be designed for public use and enjoyment, including a boardwalk extension into the estuary.

Other important habitats at Nisqually NWR include freshwater wetlands, riparian forests, and upland areas. The CCP will protect and enhance these habitats as well, based on ecological needs and benefits to fish and wildlife.

Environmental Education & Visitor Opportunities

Nisqually NWR is located within 100 miles of more than

4 million people, providing tremendous opportunities for many to learn about and observe habitat diversity, local fish and wildlife species, and ecological restoration. A model environmental education program will reach a wide range of tomorrow's stewards and leaders, to help them learn about and participate in the protection and care of our natural areas. Environmental education is recognized as the highest priority public use for the Refuge. The objective will be to serve 15,000 students each year, about three times the number who now visit.

Quality wildlife-dependent recreation will be provided to thousands of people so they can enjoy observing the abundance of fish and wildlife species that use the Refuge either as a permanent home or as a temporary stopping point during migration. Accessible headquarters facilities provide an ideal venue for these opportunities. A diverse trail system will continue to provide access to a mosaic of habitats and great wildlife viewing opportunities.

As part of a national heritage of hunting, Nisqually NWR will be managed to provide a quality waterfowl hunt program. The program will be consistent with waterfowl hunting regulations on adjacent State lands, with a clear boundary created and enforced to eliminate confusion for visitors. During the hunting season, almost 200 acres of the Refuge will be open to a 7-day/week, 25-shell limit hunt. Including the State-managed lands, over 800 acres will be available for waterfowl hunting.

Wildlife Protection

Improved wildlife protection and sanctuary areas will be achieved through the implementation of boat speed limits, seasonal boating restrictions, and closure areas. These changes will ensure that fish, wildlife, and habitat

Michael Peters



Located along the Pacific Flyway migration corridor, Nisqually NWR provides important habitat for American wigeon and other waterfowl

are provided the long-term protection needed to sustain them.

Community Support for Implementation of the CCP

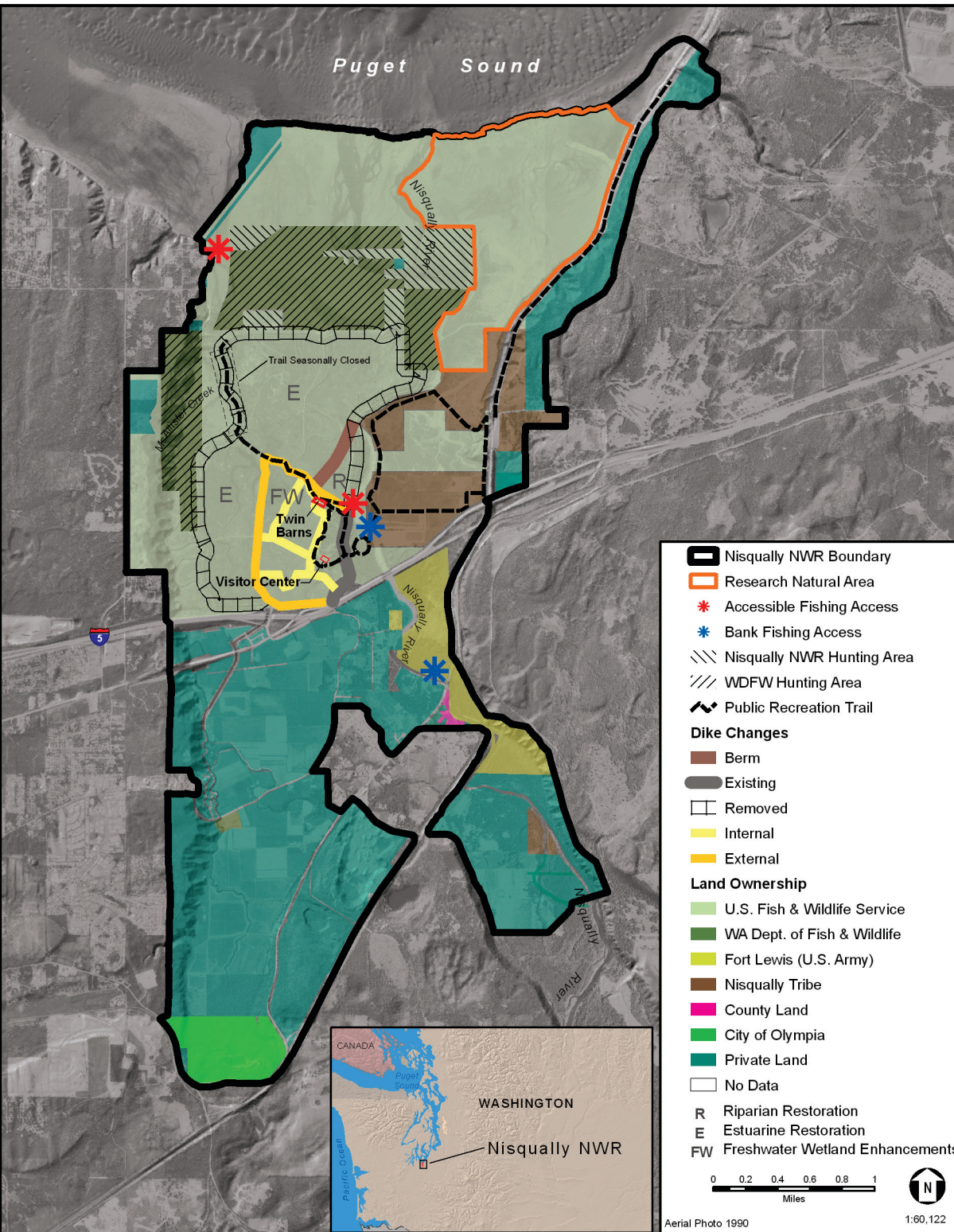
The Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Nisqually NWR is a tribute to the efforts of countless individuals who contributed to Refuge programs over the last 30 years. The CCP builds on past successes and creates a vision for the future. Achieving this vision will take time. Continued community support and participation is vital for these management recommendations to become reality.

Interested in More Information?

The new Comprehensive Conservation Plan grew out of an extensive public process, which involved preparation of a detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The CCP document and its associated EIS are available to the public at Nisqually NWR. For an electronic version of the CCP/EIS for Nisqually NWR or other Pacific Region Refuges, visit <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning/>. For more information about Nisqually NWR and the current status of CCP implementation, visit the Refuge website <http://nisqually.fws.gov/>. Please call the Refuge with any questions you may have (360-753-9467).



School group at observation deck



Any meeting of a river and a sea is a place of change...It will be proof of our ability to survive...if we learn to respect wild places like the Nisqually Delta, to trust them for their naturalness, and to love them for their power to move us.

Victor B. Scheffer, Scholar, Author, and Photographer

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Nisqually NWR

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Refuge Information

1 800-344-WILD

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Summary of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge



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