



USFWS

*Bobolink*

The Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge provides exceptional habitat for breeding migratory grassland birds and wintering raptors within the Wallkill River watershed, a major tributary of the Hudson River. The refuge was established in 1999 when 566 acres of the former Galeville Military Airstrip in the Town of Shawangunk, N.Y., were transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Service in June approved a comprehensive conservation plan for the Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge that will guide wildlife and habitat management activities, public uses, and other programs at the wildlife refuge for up to 15 years. Three alternative approaches to managing the wildlife refuge were proposed last winter.

The alternative scenarios were vetted through a two-month public review period. During that time, nearly 600 individuals and organizations submitted comments. It was determined that Alternative B (Enhanced Grasslands Management) will best achieve the management goals for the refuge as well as address the major issues identified during the planning process.

# Shawangunk Grasslands *National Wildlife Refuge* *Comprehensive Conservation Plan*

## **The Comprehensive Conservation Plan**

It was determined during the planning process that the refuge will continue to be administered by the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge in Sussex, N.J. It will be staffed seasonally, and an improved parking area and an informational kiosk will enhance visitor services. Other key elements are described below.

### *Managing Grasslands for Birds*

The Service will manage 430 acres of grasslands on the refuge to sustain high quality habitat for wintering raptors, or birds of prey, and nesting, foraging, and migrating birds. The public has expressed concern about the use of prescribed burns, herbicide application, and grazing. The Refuge Manager will use these management techniques judiciously, and will determine the extent of their use in close consultation with Service contaminants and fire experts.

### *Fishing*

The Service will open the refuge pond to fishing. This new recreational opportunity will be closely monitored to ensure that the small pond is not degraded and that wildlife is not threatened.

### *Archery Season for White-tailed Deer*

The Service will offer a fall archery hunt for white-tailed deer on the refuge. The hunt will be designed to ensure the safety of refuge visitors and neighboring residents. For example, highly visible signs will be posted along the perimeter of the hunt area well before the hunt begins.

### *Watching Wildlife*

The Service will build an interpretive trail with observation platforms and photography blinds. These new facilities will improve opportunities to observe and photograph the numerous migratory bird species that frequent the refuge.

### *Restoring Habitat*

Remnant runways and taxiways on the refuge will be removed to restore native grassland habitat for migratory birds. The original project proposal will be scaled back. Rather than mechanically digging up 30 acres of these surfaces and hauling the debris off-site, the Service will design a project of lesser scope and expense that will still meet its objectives for managing the area for grassland birds. It will seek opportunities to recycle the debris.

### *Restoring Natural Hydrology*

Natural water flow will be restored on the refuge to the extent that it does not interfere with managing grasslands for wildlife.

The comprehensive conservation plan can be downloaded from <http://library.fws.gov/ccps.htm>. Paper copies are available by contacting the refuge.

## **Contact**

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