



Planning Update

PLANNING UPDATE #2

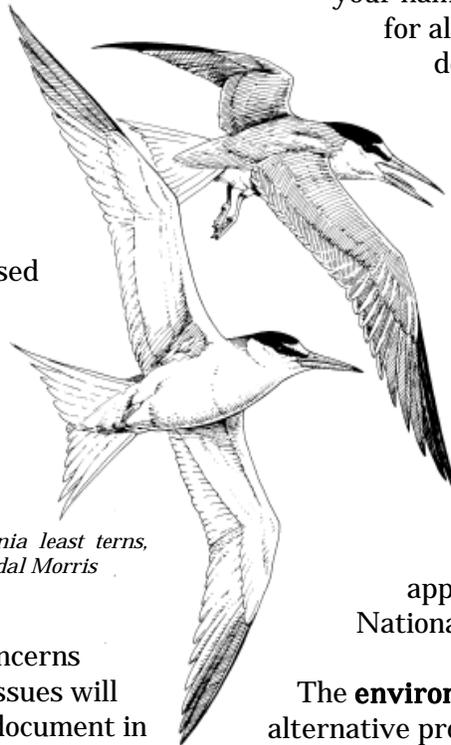
NOVEMBER 1997

WHERE WE ARE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is developing a plan for establishing and managing the proposed Alameda National Wildlife Refuge on acreage to be transferred to the Service from Naval Air Station Alameda. At the same time, the Service is preparing an environmental assessment that analyzes the environmental effects of these actions. The proposed refuge would protect a nesting colony of endangered California least terns, as well as habitat for other sensitive or rare species. This update summarizes the major issues concerning the proposed refuge, explains the next steps in the planning process, and includes a schedule of upcoming public meetings and other events. Please note that the schedule has been revised (see page 4).

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING

We would like to thank everyone who has commented on the proposed Alameda National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), whether by mail, E-mail, phone, fax, or during the public meeting held in August. Approximately 90 people attended this meeting. Based on more than 350 cards, letters, and e-mail messages received, the Service has identified biological, social, and economic concerns (listed on the next page). Major issues will be analyzed in an environmental document in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Service is preparing an environmental assessment at this time. If impacts are determined to be significant in the environmental assessment, an environmental impact statement will be prepared.



*California least terns,
by Kendal Morris*

WHAT'S NEXT

In March, the draft comprehensive conservation plan will be distributed with its companion document, a draft environmental assessment. This plan will provide an overview of the Service's proposed management approaches to wildlife and habitats, public uses and wildlife-dependent recreational activities, facilities, and public outreach within the proposed refuge.

If you are on our mailing list, you will receive copies of the draft documents when they are released. Please call (800) 662-8933 if your address changes or you would like to add or delete an address. Unless we hear from you, your name will remain on the mailing list for all future planning updates and documents.

FWS PLANNING DOCUMENTS

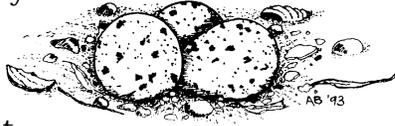
The **comprehensive conservation plan** will present an overview of the Service's proposed management approaches to wildlife and habitats, public uses and wildlife-dependent recreational activities, facilities, and public outreach in the proposed refuge. These proposed management actions would only apply to lands and waters within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The **environmental assessment** will analyze alternative proposals for protection of wildlife and habitat in the proposed refuge and the potential effects of those alternatives.

INSIDE: ISSUES, AIRFIELD, PLANNING SCHEDULE, WHO TO CONTACT

ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND OPPORTUNITIES
During the scoping period, the following issues, concerns, and opportunities were identified by individuals, groups, and agencies:

Habitat and wildlife management. Many people were concerned about the loss of wildlife habitat and felt that protecting and enhancing wildlife, especially the California least tern, should be a priority. Some felt that other wildlife species, including butterflies and marine mammals, should be considered, and that enhancement of wildlife off the refuge should be discussed. The need and methods to manage avian and mammalian predators were identified as issues. Concern was expressed about the design of the perimeter fence and any additional structures and how they would affect the appearance of the area. A comment was made that current wildlife management practices should be evaluated before any changes are made.



Public use opportunities. Many people expressed concern about public access (where, when, restrictions) to the refuge and its open water, facilities (viewing platforms, boardwalks, perimeter trail, interpretive center with closed circuit television), and types of public uses allowed (docent-led tours, self-guided wildlife observation, fishing, bicycling, jet skiing, etc.). They felt that educational and research opportunities should be considered. Suggestions included charging an entrance fee and offering transportation alternatives, such as a ferry and shuttle service or electric people mover. A couple of respondents stated that boat access through the refuge to the proposed marina must be considered.

Contaminant cleanup. Some people commented that the U.S. Navy should clean up all the contaminated areas.

Non-wildlife related uses. Many people commented that an airfield is not needed, and that it would not be compatible with the

preliminary goals of the proposed refuge, would not be economically feasible or safe, and would contribute to noise and air pollution. Other people commented that a limited-use airfield would be compatible with the refuge, provide jobs to the local community, generate revenue for the city, promote tourism, and provide security for the refuge.

Some people stated that the use of other facilities, such as the bunkers, should be considered.

Adequate funding and staff to manage the refuge. Managing the refuge requires funding and staff to effectively carry out habitat and population management activities. Some people expressed concern that the Fish and Wildlife Service would not receive sufficient funds to manage the new refuge. Several people recommended that the management plan include a budget for operations and capital improvements. Some respondents felt that building partnerships with public agencies, private organizations, and volunteers would increase the refuge's management ability.

AIRFIELD

In August, the Alameda Reuse and Redevelopment Authority (ARRA) staff requested that the Service make an initial determination regarding continued airfield operations at the proposed refuge based on safety and liability considerations.

The Service examined the benefits and the liabilities of an airfield to the proposed refuge and the community. An airfield would benefit the proposed refuge by providing fencing, security, and vegetation management at no cost to the Service. The proposed refuge would also receive an undetermined amount of funding from leasing refuge lands. The community would benefit from providing aircraft access to existing hangars, with subsequent job development, higher building lease revenues, etc. The liabilities would arise from the potential property damage or injuries due to accidents.

(cont'd on next page)



The Service's preliminary wildlife management plans conflict with several FAA regulations and advisory circulars, as well as with specific recommendations made to the Navy for reducing bird strikes at Alameda NAS.

Specific concerns are as follows: 1) The FAA recommends a minimum separation of 5,000 feet between wetlands and aircraft movement areas for piston-powered planes, and 10,000 feet for turbine-powered planes. The Service proposes to maintain and enhance two existing wetlands which are within 2,000 feet of the runway. 2) FAA regulations direct that objects unrelated to airfield operations not be located in an airfield safety area and that debris, sand, and other materials be removed from aircraft operating areas. The Service intends to maintain and expand the least tern nesting colony which will require fences, fence posts, shells, clay tiles, and other materials. 3) In a 1992 report to the Navy, UC Berkeley researchers recommended reducing winter flights and increasing summer flights for safety purposes. The Service would propose the opposite schedule to protect nesting least tern colonies. 4) The researchers also recommended that vegetation in grassy areas be kept at 8 to 12 inches in height to reduce use by flocking birds. The Service would propose to keep the vegetation shorter to reduce predator cover. 5) Both the FAA and UC researchers recommended improving drainage to prevent standing water on the tarmac and grassy areas. The Service intends to increase the amount of seasonal wetlands in the area.

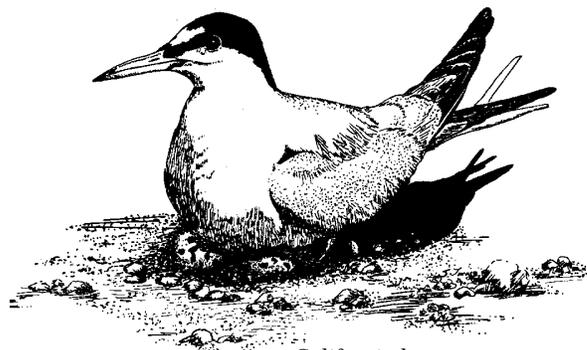
Therefore, the Service has determined that it will not allow airport operations or air shows on the north-south runway located within the proposed Alameda NWR.

The Service would consider limited use of the east-west runway (Runway 7-25) if the City of Alameda and ARRA wish to pursue that option. Most of the east-west runway lies outside of the refuge's proposed northern boundary, but a portion of the east-west runway would be

included in the refuge. This runway poses fewer potential wildlife hazards to aircraft due to its location away from the least tern colony, the breakwater, and other wildlife habitat areas. A limited number of flights could be timed to coincide with wind conditions appropriate for this runway. If this runway was used, the Service would work with ARRA to determine the appropriate leasing arrangements for its portion of the east-west runway.

WILDLIFE NEWS

Although the data has yet to be thoroughly compiled, scrutinized, and subjected to the proper statistical analyses, this much we do know: The 1997 California least tern nesting season was very successful. The number of breeding pairs (244), number of nests initiated (258), and number of fledglings (316) all increased over the 1996 season (which was itself a successful year). Close monitoring and protection of the tern colony continued during this transition period between landlords, thanks to Navy funding and the dedication of the tern biologist. Biologists were amazed to count 1,200 brown pelicans roosting on the island breakwater on July 18. This record more than doubled any previous pelican counts. During the summer, a harbor seal was seen wrestling with a 2½-foot live salmon only yards from the proposed refuge's south shore; the seal won its prize. In the spring and fall, the wetlands were visited by migratory waterfowl and shorebirds, and in the summer, the wetlands hosted one of only four Caspian tern colonies in the Bay Area.



California least tern

SCHEDULE • WHO TO CONTACT

PLANNING SCHEDULE
PROPOSED ALAMEDA NWR

<u>Planning Step*</u>	<u>Completion Date*</u>
Planning Update 2 issued	Nov. 1997
Alameda NWR Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and EA released	Mar. 1998
Public meeting	Apr. 1998
Comment period ends	May 1998
Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and EA released	July 1998
Public notice of decision for Alameda NWR	July 1998

* Unforeseen circumstances could cause changes. We will keep you posted if any major planning dates change.

PLANNING INFORMATION ON-LINE
Check out the new planning home page, now available on the World Wide Web. We will offer electronic versions of some of our planning documents, as well as a glossary and some useful links. Please note that the website address is not the one offered in the last update. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

WEBSITE ADDRESS
www.r1.fws.gov/planning/plnhome.html

E-MAIL ADDRESS
r1planning_guest@fws.gov
(Please type "Alameda NWR" in the subject line).

WHO TO CONTACT

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Information on Proposed Alameda NWR Planning

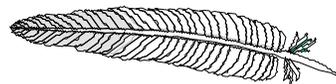
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THIS IS YOUR PLANNING UPDATE FOR THE
●PROPOSED ALAMEDA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE●



Brown pelican, USFWS



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Address correction requested