U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Addition

Planning Update 1, April 2005

Greetings

This Planning Update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides information regarding a proposal to add to the boundary of Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, in Klamath County, Oregon. A brief summary of the project, a description of alternatives under consideration, and an explanation of the planning process are provided in this issue.

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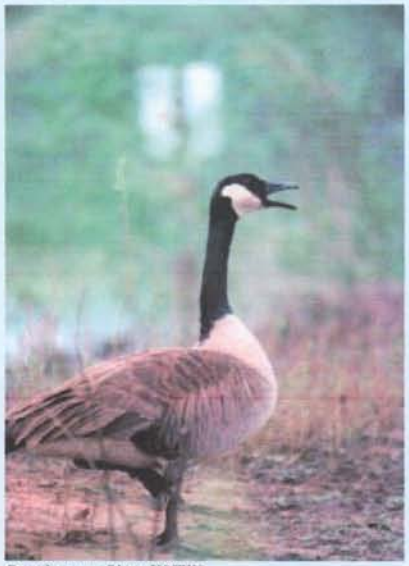


Canada goose. Photo USFWS

The Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge currently protects 15,000 acres of habitat important to the survival of two endangered fish--the Lost River sucker and the Shortnose sucker--and many species of fall and spring migrant waterfowl.
Photo: USFWS

The Refuge and the Proposed Acquisition

The Service proposes to add land to Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) by purchasing the 2,671-acre Barnes Ranch and accepting transfer of the 7,125-acre Agency Lake Ranch from the Bureau of Reclamation. In the past, the lands comprising the Agency Lake Ranch and Barnes Ranch were converted from lake and emergent wetland habitat to agricultural lands.

Agency Lake Ranch was purchased by the Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) in 1998 to increase the water storage capacity in the Upper Basin. However, the full potential of increased storage on Agency Lake Ranch was never realized, because it would flood Barnes Ranch. The Service and its partners see the Refuge addition as an important step toward implementing future habitat restoration actions for improving the water quality, quantity, and aquatic habitat conditions in Agency and Upper Klamath Lakes.

The Upper Klamath Refuge was established "...as a refuge and breeding ground for birds and wild animals...subject to the use...for irrigation and other incidental purposes, and to any other valid existing rights." (Executive Order 4851, dated April 3, 1928).

How Do I Comment on this Project?

Obtaining public comments is an integral part of planning the proposed Refuge addition. Your comments help us identify issues important to you and your community. Contact information is on page 5. The Service would like to receive comments by May 13, 2005.

The Need for Action

Bald eagle chicks

The primary need for the proposed Refuge addition is to increase storage capacity in the Upper Klamath Basin and to improve fish and wildlife habitat. The Service and its partners cannot begin proposed restoration of both properties until they are acquired. The acquisition of the privately-owned Barnes Ranch would be from a willing seller. The purchase of Barnes Ranch and transfer of Agency Lake Ranch is proposed to occur within a year.

Initial restoration actions would likely entail breaching the levees separating Agency Lake from the ranch properties and letting both properties flood to the current level of Agency Lake. Analyses have indicated that once restoration occurs, the Barnes Ranch, in combination with the Bureau of Reclamation's Agency Lake Ranch, would provide increased storage capacity for Agency Lake. Habitat restoration actions would benefit sensitive species that use the lake and the Klamath Project by providing additional water for irrigating croplands.

Gadwall duck with duckling

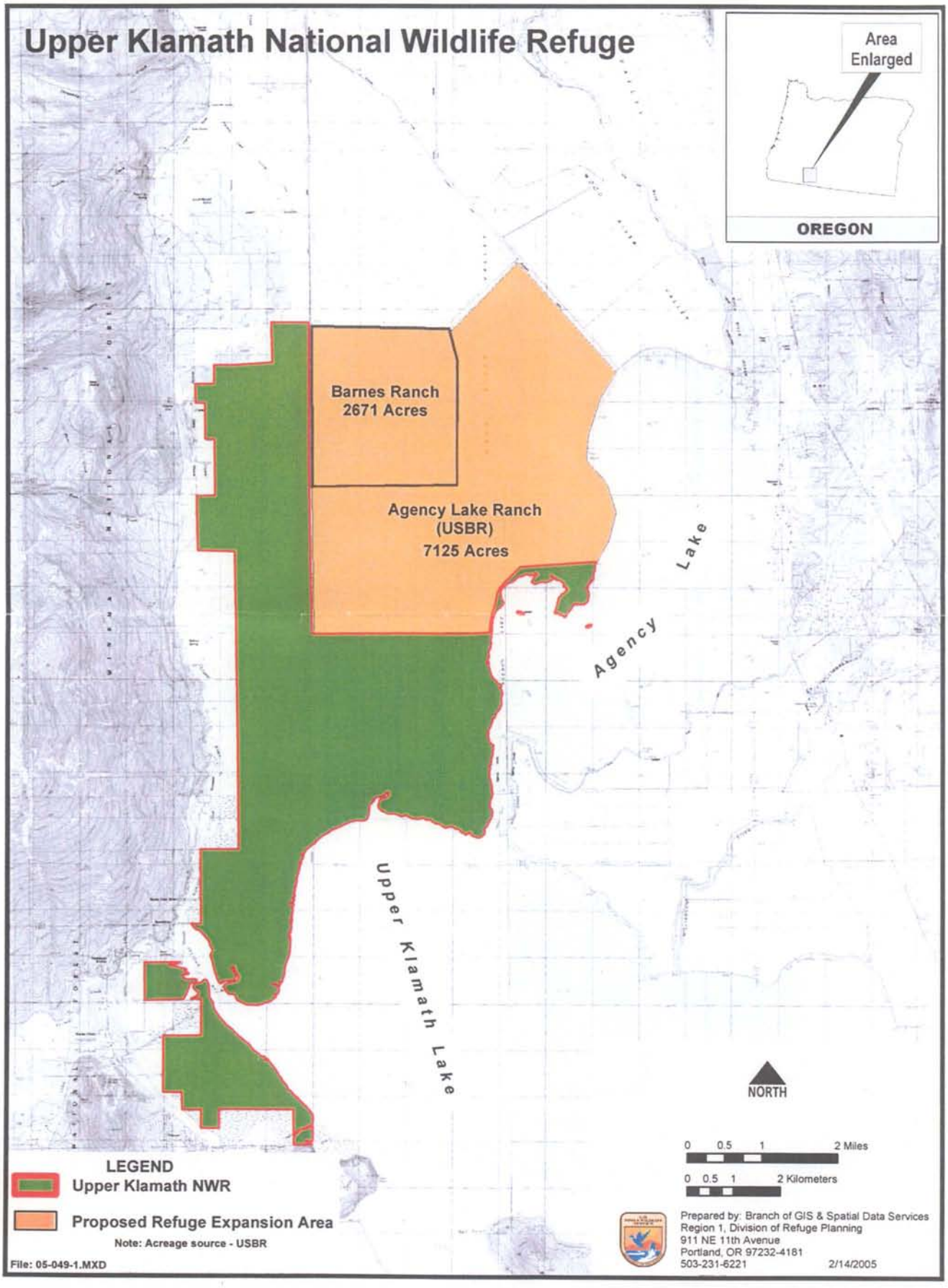
The lack of suitable larval and juvenile habitat (emergent wetland vegetation) coupled with poor water quality have had a negative effect on Lost River and shortnose sucker populations in Upper Klamath Lake. Future restoration of wetland habitats on the Barnes and Agency Lake properties would provide natural water filtration, which would reduce the algal blooms that lower oxygen in the lake to levels that can be lethal to fish. Restoring these properties to lake and emergent wetlands would reestablish the vital role that the marshes serve in filtering nutrients and providing essential habitat for larval and juvenile suckers.

In addition to improving water quality for the endangered suckers, water quantity increases would be possible with restoration, as Agency Lake's storage capacity would be enlarged. Reconnecting Agency Lake to Upper Klamath Lake could also improve water quality in Upper Klamath Lake and possibly the main stem of the Klamath River.

Many wildlife species would benefit from the proposed addition to the Upper Klamath Refuge, including those pictured on this page.

Photos: USFWS

Canada geese with goslings.


Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge
Area Enlarged
OREGON
Barnes Ranch
2671 Acres
Agency Lake Ranch
(USBR)
7125 Acres
Agency Lake
Upper Klamath Lake
NORTH
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
0 0.5 1 2 Kilometers
LEGEND
Upper Klamath NWR
Proposed Refuge Expansion Area
Note: Acreage source - USBR
File: 05-049-1.MXD
Prepared by: Branch of GIS & Spatial Data Services
Region 1, Division of Refuge Planning
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97232-4181
503-231-6221
2/14/2005

The Alternatives

The three alternatives being evaluated include the following.

Alternative 1, is the No Action alternative. Under this alternative the Service would not acquire any interest in either property, and the Bureau would continue to own the Agency Lake Ranch. The current approved Refuge boundary would not change.

Pintails

Under **Alternative 2**, the Service would acquire the Barnes Ranch and enter into an agreement with the Bureau for the Service to cooperatively manage the Agency Lake Ranch. This would allow the Service to restore and manage the two properties.

The Service's preferred alternative, **Alternative 3**, would be to expand the Refuge boundary by acquiring the Barnes and Agency Lake Ranches, and managing both properties as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

A decision on whether or not to add land to the Refuge has not been made. Based on the analysis provided in the planning documents, the Service will select the alternative that best fulfills the purposes of the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the Service's Director will determine whether or not to expand the Refuge boundary.

White pelican

The Land Protection Planning Process

With this Update, the Service has initiated the land protection planning process to study the Upper Klamath Refuge addition proposal. Proposals must demonstrate that adding habitat or lands to the National Wildlife Refuge System is the best way to achieve resource conservation goals. The process is then carried out as follows.

- The planning process integrates three components–study and planning, public involvement, and environmental compliance.
- The documentation that evolves from the process includes an environmental compliance document and a land protection plan.
- Based on the alternatives presented, Service decision makers choose an appropriate course of action.
- If the lands are approved for addition, an expanded refuge boundary is established and the planning process is complete.

The Service planning process described above will address only the proposal to acquire lands as an addition to the Refuge. Should future funding become available for habitat restoration activities, the Service and its partners would address a reasonable range of habitat restoration alternatives and their associated environmental effects in a separate environmental planning and compliance effort with full public involvement.

The proposed Refuge addition would provide high quality habitat for many species including those pictured. Photos: USFWS

Who Do I Contact?

Send Comments or Requests for Planning Information to:

Richard Smith, Natural Resource Specialist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1916
Sacramento, CA 95825
Phone: (916) 414-6502 or Fax: (916) 414-6512

Send Comments by: May 13, 2005

For Information on the National Wildlife Refuge System contact:

Ron Cole, Refuge Manager
Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex
4009 Hill Road
Tulelake, CA 96134
Phone: (530) 667-2231 or Fax: (530) 667-3299

For Information on Land Acquisition contact:

Stephen M. Dyer, Realty Officer
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825-1846
Phone: (916) 414-6445 Fax: (916) 414-6462

USE OUR E-MAIL OR WEBSITE

E-mail Comments to:
FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
(Please use "Upper Klamath Refuge" in the subject.)

Refuge Planning Web site:
http://pacific.fws.gov/planning

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
California/Nevada Operations Office
Attn: Richard Smith, Natural Resource Specialist
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1916
Sacramento, CA 95825
Address correction requested

In this issue:
Learn about a proposal to add land to Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge.

Visit the Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge Website at:
http://klamathbasinrefuges.fws.gov/upperklamath/upperklamath.html