

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Prepared by:

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May 2013

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Pacific Northwest Planning Team
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January 2013

Approved: _____

Thomson Thorson
Regional Director, Pacific Region
Portland, Oregon


Jan. 24, 2013

Date

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
Comprehensive Conservation Plan
Approval Submission**

In accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The purpose of this CCP is to specify a management direction for the Refuge for the next 15 years. The goals, objectives, and strategies for improving Refuge conditions—including the types of habitat we will provide, partnership opportunities, and management actions needed to achieve desired future conditions—are described in the CCP. The Service's preferred alternative for managing the Refuge is described in this CCP and the effects on the human environment were described in the Draft CCP and Environmental Impact Statement.

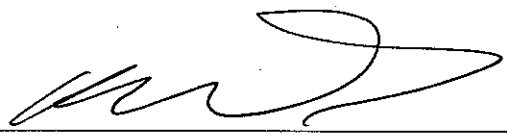
This CCP is submitted for the Regional Director's approval by:



Tim Bodeen, Project Leader
Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

1/24/13

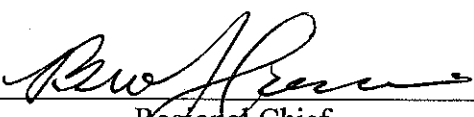
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Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Foreword

Not many years ago it was hard to imagine that the process of developing a long-term management plan for Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) would result in a broad spectrum of interests, including the local community, conservation organizations, and other government agencies, all working collaboratively together to craft the future direction of the Refuge. Today, after a three-year collaborative effort by dozens of stakeholders working closely with each other and with Refuge staff and experts, there is broad agreement on a comprehensive planning process that will restore the Refuge's aquatic health, enhance wildlife habitat, and revitalize relationships with stakeholders and the community. This process is laid out in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and the upcoming Inventory and Monitoring Plan, which describe priorities for the Refuge and how decisions will be made over the next 15 years.

The Refuge is a cherished place, widely embraced by all kinds of people for its ability to provide for wildlife, recreation, and support of local communities. However, it has also been a flashpoint for conflict and controversy over the past few decades. This controversy has created deep divisions and distrust between the Refuge and stakeholders as well as between the stakeholders themselves. In the meantime, the ecological health of the Refuge's waterways and wetlands—long recognized as some of North America's most important habitat for migratory birds—was in steep decline as common carp came to dominate most wet areas while other invasive non-native species spread throughout the Refuge.

This non-traditional and innovative collaborative planning process has helped rebuild the relationships and communication necessary to produce a remarkable consensus around the core principles embedded in the Refuge's 15-year CCP:

- Ongoing collaborative approach to implementation, built around partnerships and a shared commitment to the long-term sustainability of the Refuge and the larger Harney Basin's wildlife, habitats, and human communities;
- Commitment to science-based, active adaptive management, driven by monitoring and evaluation of results, with Refuge decision making that is transparent and informed by stakeholder involvement;
- Focus on aquatic ecosystem health and the subsequent benefits to waterways, wetlands, and upland habitats.

At many different levels the challenges moving forward will be great, although the stakeholder consensus achieved in developing this plan represents a significant achievement. We hope you will join us, the Malheur Refuge staff and the many participating stakeholders, to turn this vision into reality.

Colby Marshall, Bruce Taylor, and Matt Little
On behalf of the Collaborative Group

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	ES-i
Chapter 1. Introduction and Background	1-1
1.1 Introduction	1-1
1.2 The Significance of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge	1-1
1.3 Action	1-2
1.4 Purpose and Need for Action.....	1-3
1.5 Legal and Policy Guidance	1-4
1.5.1 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	1-4
1.5.2 National Wildlife Refuge System	1-4
1.5.3 Other Laws and Mandates	1-6
1.5.4 Summary Hierarchy of Guidance	1-6
1.6 Refuge Establishment and Purposes	1-7
1.6.1 Legal Significance of the Refuge Purpose.....	1-7
1.6.2 Purpose and History of Refuge Establishment	1-8
1.6.3 Land Status and Ownership	1-13
1.7 Relationship to Other Plans and Assessments	1-13
1.7.1 Previous and Future Refuge Plans	1-13
1.7.2 Ecosystem Plans and Assessments	1-14
1.8 Special Designation Lands	1-17
1.8.1 Important Bird Areas	1-17
1.8.2 Wilderness Status.....	1-18
1.8.3 Research Natural Areas	1-18
1.9 Planning Process and Issue Identification	1-20
1.9.1 Planning Process.....	1-20
1.9.2 Key Issues Addressed in the CCP.....	1-21
1.9.3 Issues outside the Scope of the CCP.....	1-37
1.10 Refuge Vision and Goals.....	1-37
1.10.1 Refuge Vision.....	1-37
1.10.2 Refuge Goals	1-38
1.11 References	1-39
Chapter 2. Management Direction.....	2-1
2.1 Overview	2-1
2.2 List of Goals	2-3
2.3 Summary of Management Direction	2-4
2.4 Summary of Future Management	2-14
2.5 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	2-24
Goal 1. Enhance aquatic health and habitat conditions.....	2-24
Goal 2. Protect, maintain, and rehabilitate riverine habitats.....	2-27
Goal 3. Protect, maintain, and rehabilitate riparian habitats.....	2-29
Goal 4. Enhance, protect, and maintain a diversity of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species.	2-30

Goal 5. Enhance and maintain rare and unique habitats	2-40
Goal 6. Welcome and orient visitors.....	2-43
Goal 7. Provide wildlife observation and nature photography opportunities.....	2-46
Goal 8. Provide hunting and fishing opportunities.	2-51
Goal 9. Provide wildlife observation and wildlife/nature photography opportunities	2-55
Goal 10. Manage prehistoric and historic cultural resources on the Refuge.....	2-57
Goal 11. Identify and protect prehistoric and historic resources on the Refuge.	2-59
Goal 12. Manage the Refuge’s paleontological resources	2-60
Goal 13. Gather scientific information to support adaptive management decisions.....	2-61
Goal 14. Integrate conservation-based mission with the best available science.	2-65
2.6 References	2-66
Chapter 3. Physical Environment	3-1
3.1 Major Landforms	3-1
3.2 Climate	3-1
3.2.1 Current Climate	3-1
3.2.2 Climate Change	3-5
3.3 Hydrology.....	3-13
3.3.1 Hydrologic Units	3-13
3.3.2 Rivers and Streams	3-14
3.3.3 Malheur, Harney, and Mud Lakes	3-17
3.3.4 Groundwater	3-19
3.3.5 Water Rights and Use	3-19
3.4 Topography and Bathymetry	3-21
3.5 Geologic History and Features	3-21
3.6 Soils	3-23
3.7 Fire.....	3-25
3.7.1 Objectives of Prescribed Fire in Emergent Marsh	3-25
3.8 Environmental Contaminants (Point Source)	3-27
3.9 Air Quality.....	3-27
3.10 Water Quality	3-27
3.11 Visual Quality	3-28
3.12 Surrounding Land Use.....	3-29
3.13 References	3-29
Chapter 4. Biological Environment	4-1
4.1 Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health	4-1
4.1.1 Overview	4-1
4.1.2 Wildlife and Habitat Conditions and Changes Since 1800.....	4-2
4.1.3 History of Refuge Management.....	4-4
4.1.4 Changes in Species Composition of Wildlife Populations after Refuge Establishment	4-7
4.2 Priority Resources of Concern	4-10
4.2.1 Selection Process	4-10

4.2.2 Relationship of Priority Resources of Concern to Habitat Goals and Objectives	4-11
4.3 Major Habitat Types on Malheur Refuge	4-12
4.3.1 Lacustrine (lakes).....	4-12
4.3.2 Riverine	4-15
4.3.3 Woody Riparian.....	4-16
4.3.4 Palustrine Emergent (Seasonally flooded wet meadows).....	4-18
4.3.5 Palustrine Emergent (seasonally flooded marsh associated with wet meadows).....	4-21
4.3.6 Palustrine Open Water/Emergent (semipermanently flooded wetland impoundments).....	4-22
4.3.7 Dry Meadow	4-24
4.3.8 Salt Desert Scrub	4-25
4.3.9 Sagebrush Lowland	4-26
4.3.10 Sagebrush Steppe.....	4-28
4.3.11 Dune.....	4-30
4.3.12 Playa	4-31
4.3.13 Cropland	4-32
4.3.14 Cold and Hot Springs.....	4-33
4.3.15 Cliffs, Rimrock, and Outcroppings.....	4-33
4.4 Major Species Groups	4-34
4.4.1 Migratory and Resident Birds.....	4-34
4.4.2 Fisheries.....	4-37
4.4.3 Other Wildlife and Plants	4-38
4.5 Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species.....	4-38
4.5.1 State or Federally Listed Species Known to Occur on the Refuge	4-38
4.5.2 Habitat Needs, Conditions, and Trends of Federally Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Species	4-39
4.6 Invasive and Nuisance Species	4-40
4.6.1 Exotic and Invasive Plant Species	4-40
4.6.2 Exotic Wildlife Species	4-41
4.7 Wildlife and Habitat Research, Inventory, and Monitoring.....	4-42
4.7.1 Monitoring.....	4-42
4.7.2 Refuge Research.....	4-43
4.8 Paleontological Resources	4-45
4.9 References	4-46
Chapter 5. Human Environment.....	5-1
5.1 Cultural Resources	5-1
5.1.1 Native American Overview	5-1
5.1.2 Euro-American Overview.....	5-4
5.1.3 Current Knowledge of Local Cultural Resources.....	5-11
5.1.4 Investigations.....	5-12
5.1.5 Looting of Archaeological Resources	5-15
5.1.6 Historic Resources.....	5-15

5.1.7 Museum Property.....	5-17
5.2 Refuge Facilities	5-17
5.2.1 Boundary Fences and Markers	5-17
5.2.2 Entrances and Access Points.....	5-17
5.2.3 Roads and Parking Areas.....	5-18
5.2.4 Trails.....	5-18
5.2.5 Administrative Facilities.....	5-19
5.2.6 Easements and Rights-of-Way.....	5-19
5.2.7 Dikes, Irrigation, and Water Control Structures	5-19
5.3 Public Use Overview	5-20
5.3.1 Open and Closed Areas.....	5-20
5.3.2 Annual Recreation Visits	5-20
5.3.3 Accessibility of Recreation Sites and Programs for People with Disabilities	5-24
5.3.4 Law Enforcement.....	5-24
5.4 Wildlife-Dependent Public Uses	5-24
5.4.1 Wildlife Observation and Wildlife/Nature Photography	5-25
5.4.2 Interpretation	5-26
5.4.3 Environmental Education	5-28
5.4.4 Upland Game Hunting.....	5-29
5.4.5 Waterfowl Hunting	5-30
5.4.6 Other Hunting.....	5-31
5.4.7 Fishing Program.....	5-31
5.5 Other Refuge Uses.....	5-32
5.5.1 Hiking, Horseback Riding, Bicycling, and Cross-Country Skiing	5-32
5.5.2 Commercial Public Use	5-32
5.6 Illegal Uses	5-32
5.7 Area Outdoor Recreational Opportunities and Trends	5-33
5.7.1 Nearby Recreational Opportunities	5-33
5.7.2 Regional and State Recreation Factors and Trends.....	5-34
5.8 Social/Economic Environment	5-35
5.8.1 Environmental Justice	5-35
5.8.2 Regional Economic Setting	5-36
5.8.3 Population and Income	5-36
5.8.4 Employment and Business.....	5-38
5.8.5 Local Tax Revenues	5-43
5.8.6 Lifestyle and Social Values	5-44
5.8.7 Refuge Impact on the Local Economy.....	5-45
5.9 References	5-45

Maps

Map 1: Location of Refuge	
Map 2: Land Status	
Map 3a: Public Use Facilities under Current Management	
Map 3b: Public Use Facilities (Insets), Current Management	
Map 4a: Public Use Facilities under Management Direction	
Map 4b: Public Use Facilities (Insets), Management Direction	
Map 5: Land Cover/Habitat	
Map 6: Watersheds	
Map 7: Blitzen Valley Hydrologic System	
Map 8: Double-O Unit Hydrologic System	
Map 9: Malheur, Mud, and Harney Lakes	
Map 10: Historic Sites	
Map 11: Research Natural Area Boundaries	
Map 12: Wilderness Study Area Boundary	

Figures

Figure 1-1. Hierarchy of guidance within the National Wildlife Refuge System.....	1-7
Figure 3-1. Mean and distribution of monthly temperature and precipitation for the area encompassed by Malheur Refuge for the period 1975 to 2009.....	3-3
Figure 3-2. Mean and distribution of monthly temperature and precipitation in the Blitzen River watershed above Page Springs for the period 1975 to 2009.....	3-4
Figure 3-3. Concentrations of important heat-trapping greenhouse gases over the last 2,000 years.....	3-5
Figure 3-4. Global average temperature and CO ₂ concentrations from 1880 to 2008.....	3-6
Figure 3-5. Trends in April 1 snow water equivalent in the western United States from 1950 to 1997.....	3-7
Figure 3-6. Trend in March monthly temperature for the Refuge and the Blitzen from 1950 to 2009.....	3-8
Figure 3-7. Ratio of April 1 SWE to total October-March precipitation for the historical period (1916-2006).....	3-10
Figure 3-8. Monthly mean discharge for the Blitzen River.....	3-15
Figure 4-1. Total shorebird numbers from counts conducted at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge during the Pacific Flyway Project, 1990-1994.....	4-37
Figure 5-1. Monthly visits recorded in Refuge Headquarters visitor center January to December 2010.....	5-21
Figure 5-2. Website statistics for monthly visits to the Refuge’s website, January to December 2010.....	5-26
Figure 5-3. Number of student visits for environmental education, on- and off-Refuge, 2004 to 2010.....	5-29
Figure 5-4. Violation and incidents documented, 2005 to 2009 RAPP Station Report.....	5-33
Figure 5-5. Regional minority composition.....	5-37
Figure 5-6. State of Oregon non-farm employment.....	5-39
Figure 5-7. State of Oregon nonfarm employment.....	5-40

Tables

Table 1-1. Malheur Refuge Acreage by Type of Acquisition.....	1-13
Table 2-1. Summary of Future Management.....	2-14
Table 3-1. Barrier Diversion Capacity for Structures on the Blitzen River.....	3-16

Table 4-1. Selected Priority Resources of Concern Lacustrine Habitats	4-14
Table 4-2. Riverine Habitat Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-16
Table 4-3. Woody Riparian Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-17
Table 4-4. Palustrine Emergent (seasonally flooded wet meadow) Priority Resources of Concern Species.....	4-19
Table 4-5. Palustrine Emergent (seasonally flooded marsh associated with wet meadow) Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-21
Table 4-6. Palustrine Open Water/Emergent (semipermanently flooded wetland impoundments) Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-23
Table 4-7. Dry Meadow Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-25
Table 4-8. Salt Desert Shrub Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-26
Table 4-9. Sagebrush Lowland Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-27
Table 4-10. Sagebrush Steppe Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-29
Table 4-11. Dune Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-30
Table 4-12. Playa Priority Resources of Concern Species	4-32
Table 4-13. Federally Listed Species Known to Occur on or Adjacent to Malheur Refuge	4-39
Table 4-14. Oregon Department of Agriculture Noxious Weeds Found on or Adjacent to Malheur Refuge.....	4-41
Table 4-15. Biological Surveys Conducted during the Peak of Biological Monitoring in the Late 1990s.....	4-42
Table 5-1. 2010-2011 Survey Data: Key Parameters Used in Calculating Refuge Visits	5-22
Table 5-2. Current Number of Refuge Visits Per Year, by Key Activity	5-23
Table 5-3. Website Statistics for Most Popular Pages Viewed by Visitors, January to December 2010	5-27
Table 5-4. Typical Lesson for Students in Grade 1	5-28
Table 5-5. 2008-2012 Oregon SCORP Statewide Recommendations	5-34
Table 5-6. Local and Regional Population Estimates and Characteristics	5-36
Table 5-7. Per Capita Personal Income	5-37
Table 5-8. Poverty Rates at Local, County, and State Scales	5-38
Table 5-9. Nonfarm Employment Trends by Industry, 2001 to November 2009	5-40
Table 5-10. Employment and Earnings by Industry for Harney County and Oregon	5-42
Table 5-11. Regional Income and Income Tax Statistics	5-44
Table 5-12. In Lieu of Taxes Payments to Harney County, 2002 to 2010.....	5-44

Appendices

Appendix A. Appropriate Use Findings	A-1
Appendix B. Compatibility Determinations	B-1
Introduction	B-1
Uses Evaluated at This Time	B-1
Compatibility: Legal and Historical Context	B-1
References	B-3
B.1 Wildlife Observation, Photography, and Interpretation Compatibility Determination	B-4
B.2 Environmental Education Compatibility Determination	B-20
B.3 Waterfowl Hunting Compatibility Determination	B-29
B.4 Upland Game Hunting Compatibility Determination	B-44
B.5 Fishing Compatibility Determination	B-61

B.6 Commercial Tours and Photography Compatibility Determination	B-72
B.7 Grazing and Haying Compatibility Determination	B-80
B.8 Plant Gathering of Culturally Important Plants Compatibility Determination	B-109
B.9 Research, Scientific Collecting, and Surveys Compatibility Determination	B-114
B.10 Farming Compatibility Determination	B-121
Appendix C. Implementation.....	C-1
C.1 Overview.....	C-1
C.2 Costs to Implement the CCP.....	C-2
C.2.1 One-time Costs.....	C-2
C.2.2 Annual Operational (Recurring) Costs.....	C-2
C.2.3 Partnership Opportunities	C-6
Appendix D. Wilderness Review Inventory Phase.....	D-1
D.1 Introduction	D-1
D.1.1 Refuge Overview	D-1
D.1.2 The Wilderness Review Process.....	D-2
D.1.3 Criteria for Evaluating Lands for Possible Inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System .	D-3
D.1.4 Relationship to Previous Wilderness Reviews.....	D-3
D.2 Inventory Phase of Wilderness Review	D-4
D.2.1 Lands and Waters Considered Under This Wilderness Review.....	D-4
D.2.2 Inventory Units	D-5
D.2.3 Evaluation of Unit Size.....	D-5
D.2.4 Naturalness Evaluation	D-6
D.2.5 Evaluation of Opportunities for Outstanding Solitude or Primitive/Unconfined Recreation.....	D-11
D.2.6 Inventory Summary and Conclusion.....	D-12
D.3 References	D-13
Appendix E. Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health	E-1
Appendix F. Statement of Compliance.....	F-1
Appendix G. Integrated Pest Management Plan	G-1
G.1 Background.....	G-1
G.2 Pest Management Laws and Policies	G-2
G.3 Strategies	G-3
G.4 Priorities for Treatments	G-10
G.5 Best Management Practices	G-10
G.5.1 Pesticide Handling and Mixing.....	G-11
G.5.2 Applying Pesticides	G-11
G.6 Safety	G-12
G.6.1 Personal Protective Equipment	G-12
G.6.2 Notification	G-13
G.6.3 Medical Surveillance	G-13
G.6.4 Certification and Supervision of Pesticide Applicators	G-14
G.6.5 Record Keeping	G-14
G.7 Evaluating Pesticide Use Proposals	G-15
G.7.1 Overview of Ecological Risk Assessment	G-16
G.7.2 Determining Ecological Risk to Fish and Wildlife	G-16

G.7.3 Pesticide Mixtures and Degradates	G-29
G.7.4 Determining Effects to Soil and Water Quality	G-31
G.7.5 Determining Effects to Air Quality	G-34
G.7.6 Preparing a Chemical Profile	G-34
G.8 References	G-49
Appendix H. Glossary of Terms and Acronyms.....	H-1
H.1 Glossary	H-1
H.2 Acronyms.....	H-10
Appendix I. Contributors.....	I-1
Appendix J. Public Involvement.....	J-1
Appendix K. Wet Meadow Treatment Ratios.....	K-1
K.1 Refuge Management Treatments	K-1
K.1.1 Management Treatment Acres.....	K-1
K.2 Dormant Season Haying and Grazing in Wet Meadows.....	K-1
K.2.1 South Blitzen Valley	K-2
K.2.2 Mid-Blitzen Valley	K-3
K.2.3 North Blitzen Valley	K-3
K.2.4 Double-O	K-4
K.3 References	K-4
Appendix L. The Ecology Work Group and the State and Transition Model	L-1
L.1 Adaptive Management and the State and Transition Model	L-1
L.2 The Ecology Work Group	L-1
L.3 References	L-2
Appendix M. Climate Change	M-1
M.1 Introduction	M-1
M.1.1 Global Greenhouse Gases	M-1
M.1.2 Temperature and Precipitation	M-2
M.1.3 Emissions Scenarios.....	M-4
M.2 Pacific Northwest Climate Indicators and Observed Trends.....	M-4
M.2.1 Observed Temperature and Precipitation Changes	M-4
M.2.2 Observed Snowpack, Streamflow, and Glacial Changes	M-5
M.3 Climate Change Indicators and Trends at Malheur Refuge	M-8
M.3.1 Sources and References for Refuge Climate Data.....	M-8
M.3.2 Observed Trends in Refuge Climate Data.....	M-10
M.4 Projected Climate Changes for the Pacific Northwest and Malheur Refuge.....	M-13
M.5 Observed and Predicted Ecological Response to Climate Change in the Region	M-16
M.6 Climate Change Adaptation Strategies.....	M-20
M.7 References.....	M-21
Appendix N. List of Common and Scientific Names Used in the Malheur Refuge CCP.....	N-1
Appendix O. Advancing Sustainability-Based Approaches and Practices	O-1
O.1 Sustainability Philosophy	O-1
O.2 Sustainability Actions.....	O-2
O.3 Sustainability Assessments	O-3
O.4 Sustainability Planning	O-5

O.5 References	O-7
Appendix P. Hunting Plan	P-1
P.1 Overview	P-2
P.1.1 Species Covered by this Plan.....	P-2
P.1.2 Game Species not Hunted.....	P-2
P.2 Conformance with Statutory Authority	P-3
P.2.1 Conformance with Statutory Objectives	P-3
P.2.2 Conformance with Refuge Purposes	P-3
P.3 Statement of Goals and Objectives	P-3
P.3.1 Refuge Goals	P-3
P.3.2 Refuge Objectives for Hunting	P-4
P.4 Description of Hunting Program	P-5
P.4.1 Upland Game Hunting: Proposed Program	P-5
P.4.2 Waterfowl Hunting: Proposed Program	P-7
P.4.3 Procedures for Consultation and Coordination with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.....	P-9
P.5 Measures Taken to Avoid Conflicts with Other Management Objectives	P-10
P.5.1 Measures to Avoid Biological Conflicts	P-10
P.5.2 Measures to Avoid Public Use Conflicts.....	P-10
P.5.3 Measures to Avoid Administrative Conflicts	P-11
P.6 Assessment	P-11
P.6.1 Compatibility with Refuge Objectives	P-11
P.6.2 Biological and Other Considerations.....	P-11
P.6.3 Funding and Staffing Requirements for the Hunt.....	P-14
P.7 Conduct of the Hunt	P-14
P.7.1 Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunt	P-14
P.7.2 Hunter Application Process	P-14
P.7.3 Media Selection for Publicizing the Hunt.....	P-14
P.7.4 Hunter Requirements and regulations	P-15
Appendix Q. National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey.....	Q-1
Appendix R. Improving the Aquatic Health of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.....	R-5
R.1 Executive Summary	R-1
R.2 Introduction	R-5
R.3 The Problem: Carp Impacts	R-7
R.4 Plan Goals and Management Priorities	R-10
R.5 Information Needs	R-11
R.6 The Solution: A Scientific, Strategic Approach to Aquatic Health Improvement	R-12
R.6.1 Overview of Approach.....	R-13
R.6.2 Role of Adaptive Management and Integrated Pest Management	R-13
R.6.3 Methods for Baseline Data Inventories and Ongoing Monitoring	R-14
R.6.4 Carp Population Determination.....	R-17
R.6.5 Carp Movement and Aggregation Determination	R-18
R.6.6 Carp Dynamics Modeling	R-18
R.7 Carp Control Strategies	R-19
R.7.1 Techniques and Technologies in Use.....	R-20

R.7.2 Techniques and Technologies That May Be Used to a Limited Extent	R-22
R.7.3 Techniques and Technologies That Are Unlikely to Be Used Again	R-23
R.7.4 Planned New Techniques and Technologies.....	R-23
R.7.5 Potential New Techniques and Technologies	R-24
R.8 Summary	R-26
R.9 References.....	R-26
Appendix S. Comments Received During the Public/Agency Review Period and Service Responses.....	S-1
S.1 Aquatic Health/Carp	S-1
S.2 Collaboration/Process	S-2
S.3 Meadow Management/Grazing and Haying.....	S-3
S.4 Inventory/Monitoring/Adaptive Management	S-4
S.5 Wildlife	S-6
S.6 River Function	S-7
S.7 Hunting	S-8
S.8 Fishing	S-8
S.9 Interpretation	S-9
S.10 Facilities	S-10
S.11 Wilderness.....	S-10
S.12 Water Management	S-10
S.13 General	S-11
S.14 References	S-11