

December 2015 Meeting Summary
Conference Call convened by US FWS
December 22, 2015

Draft Call Summary

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service convened a conference call of the Working Group of municipalities, land managers, and affected stakeholder groups helping to create a statewide Habitat Conservation Plan for Piping Plover management. The purpose of the call was for the FWS to update stakeholders on the status of the draft HCP and EA.

The following points, in summary, were made:

- The US FWS remains committed to working with state and stakeholders to make a permit decision in 2016.
- The stakeholders had expected a decision on the permit in time for the 2016 nesting season (roughly April 2016).
- Given the status of the draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and draft accompanying Environmental Assessment (EA), the FWS will not be able to meet that expectation.
- However, the FWS is working to make permit decision for this 25-year permit by early summer (roughly June 2106). The US FWS wants to ensure that the draft HCP and EA are as robust, thorough, and complete as possible so that the permit decision made is as high quality and legally unassailable as possible.
- The early summer timeframe for a decision is dependent on some conditions.
 - No major issues raised by FWS regional and headquarters final review (expected January 2016).
 - Conducting a public comment period for 30 days (commenters can request an extension to that time period).
 - No significant new issues are raised in the public comment that cannot be addressed expeditiously in final review and response to public comments.
- The FWS also committed to frequent communication with the state for the coming months and to update the stakeholders on a regular basis as well.
- MassWildlife noted that they are committed to working with subpermittees to help develop subpermits, known as Certificates of Inclusion. MassWildlife will need to work with interested permittees to draft those CIs prior to completion of the final permit, but must assess whether such CIs will be used this summer given the timeline since development of CIs will take lots of work for both the state and applicants.
- The state, and others, expressed the urgency of completing this work. MassWildlife asked for FWS to consider every way possible to compress the timeline. MassWildlife noted that they had expressed their concern about the timeline to the Regional Director. MassWildlife received assurances that this is a high priority for the FWS.
- The US FWS offered to schedule another Working Group call toward the end of January to provide a status report.