

# **BANKS LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE HUNT PLAN**

## **I. Introduction**

National Wildlife Refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), the purposes of an individual refuge, Service policy, and laws and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1985 pursuant to the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 for the protection and conservation of a unique environment as well as migratory and resident wildlife. The official purposes of the refuge are:

"... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources ..." 16 U.S.C. Section 742f(a)(4) "... for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude ..." 16 U.S.C. Section 742f (b)(1)  
(Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956).

"... suitable for (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species ..." 16 U.S.C. Section 460k-1 "... the Secretary ... may accept and use ... real ... property. Such acceptance may be accomplished under the terms and conditions of restrictive covenants imposed by donors ..." 16 U.S.C. Section 460k-2 (Refuge Recreation Act [16 U.S.C. Section 460k-460k-4], as amended).

The refuge lies in the Grand Bay–Banks Lake (GBBL) ecosystem, an area that comprises the second-largest freshwater wetland system in Georgia. The GBBL area contains a number of unique ecological systems that support a variety of plants and animals, including freshwater and terrestrial federally and state-listed species.

The refuge's most notable feature is Banks Lake, a shallow black water lake studded with cypress trees that supports many fish species, as well as other aquatic animals. Formed when the Carolina bay that makes up most of the refuge was dammed over 150 years ago, the refuge contains a variety of habitat types, including approximately 676 acres (273 ha) of cypress swamp, 582 acres (235 ha) of