

freshwater marsh, and 634 acres (256 ha) of open water. Scattered through these wetland areas are scrub/shrub, evergreen forest wetlands, and mixed forest habitats. Upland areas make up a very small portion of the refuge's total acreage. Many species of plants, fish, and wildlife are found on the refuge, including state and federally listed species. The refuge's habitat management activities include water level management control and herbicidal spraying for aquatic vegetation control and occasional sport fish stocking in consultation with Georgia Division of Natural Resources.

Banks Lake NWR is a satellite refuge under the care and administration of Okefenokee NWR and is unfunded. Banks Lake NWR is located in Lakeland, GA, approximately 95 miles from Okefenokee NWR administration office. Typically, the Okefenokee NWR's refuge manager maintains contacts, works with local officials and adjacent landowners, and addresses management issues as they arise.

The mission of the NWRS, as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997(16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), is to:

*"... to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."*

The NWRSA mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the System to (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4):

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the NWRS;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the NWRS are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the NWRS described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
- Ensure effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the States in which the units of the NWRS are located;
- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of each refuge;
- Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the NWRS through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
- Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Therefore, it is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Hunting has been prohibited since Banks Lake was set aside as a National Wildlife