
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 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 (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 Refuge. However due to increased information from alligator surveys and monitoring from Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the process to allow alligator hunting on Banks Lake NWR was initiated in 2019.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this proposed action is to provide compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities on Refuge. The need of the proposed action is to meet the Service's priorities and