
mandates as outlined by the NWRSA to “recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general uses of the NWRS” and “ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses.” 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4)).

While wildlife is first priority in refuge management, wildlife-dependent recreational uses or other uses may be allowed after they have been determined appropriate and compatible by the Refuge Manager. There are six priority wildlife-dependent public uses identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation. These uses are dependent upon healthy fish and wildlife populations and are to receive enhanced consideration over other public uses in planning and management. The Refuge will rely on coordination with the Georgia DNR to manage hunting opportunities to the extent practicable to promote quality-hunting programs.

The purpose of this Environmental Assessment is to introduce American alligator hunting at the Refuge. This will be the first hunting activity allowed on the refuge.

The proposed action is to implement the Hunt Plan that includes an American alligator hunt for the Refuge.

Alternatives Considered

This Chapter discusses the alternatives considered for hunting on the Refuge. The alternatives include 1) no action- alligator hunt will not be implemented on the Refuge, and 2) preferred action- implement an alligator hunt on the Refuge.

Alternative A – No Action

The refuge will not implement the Hunt Plan. Opportunities to create a new outdoor recreation experience by adding alligator hunting will be lost and hunters will pursue these species off-refuge.

Alternative B – Preferred Action- Implement the Hunt Plan

The refuge has prepared a hunt plan, which is presented in this document as the Preferred Action Alternative.

Under the Preferred Action Alternative, all acreage of the Refuge will be open to alligator hunting. All State of Georgia Regulations will apply and the season will be limited to the first two weekend hunts within the State season. This hunt will be operated and conducted in coordination with Georgia DNR.

Mitigation Measures to Avoid Conflicts:

This alternative will open the Refuge to alligator hunting opportunities as described in the Hunt Plan. This action will attract hunters currently not using the Refuge, thus affording an opportunity for the Refuge to engage new segments of the public to promote natural resources conservation, environmental education and natural resources stewardship. Opportunities to create additional outdoor recreation experiences will be consistent with goals and priority uses identified by the National