

Mitigation Measures

To minimize adverse effects of disturbance on other wildlife species as well as in some cases for public safety, the Refuge will be closed to non-hunting visitors during the hunts. Alligator hunts will occur outside of wood stork nesting season. Hunts will be limited to six days of the State season.

Monitoring

Continued annual biological monitoring of both resident and migratory wildlife and their habitats is done on the refuge in conjunction with our State partners. In addition, the station will stay apprised on the status of threatened and endangered species on the refuge through consultation and local monitoring.

Summary of Analysis

The purpose of this EA is to briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

Alternative A – No Action Alternative

As described above, Alternative A will not implement an alligator hunt at Banks Lake NWR.

Alternative B – preferred Action Alternative

As described above, this alternative will open the Refuge to alligator hunting. This opportunity is likely to attract more hunters, potentially increasing to conflicts with other users. We believe that these conflicts can be easily mitigated by limiting the hunt to up to six days out of the State alligator season. There is not likely to be an adverse effect on endangered or threatened species. Effects on wildlife and habitat at a local level will be positive overall, but these effects will be negligible at any larger scale. The local populations of the hunted species under this proposal will potentially be managed at levels more favorable for the species overall health. Predation by the hunted species will be reduced and this will have positive impacts to some non-hunted wildlife.

This alternative helps meet the purpose and needs of the Service as described above, because it provides additional wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities on the Refuge meeting the Service's priorities and mandates. This alternative also helps align Service regulations with State regulations in an effort to making hunting more accessible by the American public. The Service