
Appendix E. Environmental Assessment

Cost for Developing this Environmental Assessment- \$12,000

Environmental Assessment for Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Plan

Introduction

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to evaluate the effects associated with this preferred action and complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1509) and Department of the Interior (43 CFR 46; 516 DM 8) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (550 FW 3) regulations and policies. NEPA requires examination of the effects of preferred actions on the natural and human environment.

Proposed Action

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing to open hunting opportunities for alligators on the Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The alligator hunting will open up all portions of the Refuge covered by water. All or parts of the Refuge may be closed to hunting at any time if necessary for public safety, biological or habitat management, or administrative reason including trends of declining alligator populations.

This proposed action is often iterative and evolves over time as the agency refines its proposal and learns more from the public, tribes, and other agencies. Therefore, the final proposed action may be different from the original. The final decision on the proposed action will be made at the conclusion of the public comment period for the EA. The Service cannot open a refuge to hunting and/or fishing until a final rule has been published in the Federal Register formally opening the refuge to hunting and/or fishing.

Background

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 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
