



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge

June 2007 Planning Update 3: Environmental Assessment

#### Greetings!

This is the third in a series of planning updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) designed to inform and involve you in the process of developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). These planning updates are provided periodically as we work to develop the CCP and prepare the Environmental Assessment (EA).

The CCP is intended to provide a blueprint for how the refuge will be managed over the next 15 years. Management activities will focus on the conservation of refuge resources, particularly endangered and threatened species and their habitats, and providing opportunities for compatible public use.



*Gopher Tortoise, Photo by Todd Pounds*

#### Draft CCP & EA Nears Completion

The draft CCP/EIS for the Lake Woodruff NWR is expected to be completed this summer. The availability of the draft will be announced in the Federal Register and in a postcard to be sent to everyone who is included on our mailing list. You will be provided with 60 days to review the document and submit your comments. Specific details will be presented in the Federal Register and provided on our CCP web page.

#### Management Alternatives Proposed for Evaluation in the Draft CCP/EA



As part of the CCP process, a range of management alternatives are developed, with each alternative incorporating a different set of objectives and strategies for achieving the refuge purposes, vision, and goals. The management alternatives under development for the Lake Woodruff NWR are briefly summarized below. The various alternatives differ in the level of wildlife and habitat management to be implemented, as well as in the extent of public use opportunities to be provided. Each of the management alternatives will be described in detail in the draft CCP/EA, as will the anticipated environmental consequences of implementing the various actions described in the alternatives.

*Blue Flag, Photo by University of Florida*

## Preliminary Management Alternatives Lake Woodruff NWR

**Alternative A - No Action.** Alternative A assumes no change to past and present management activities on the refuge, resulting in no new wildlife and habitat management programs, no restoration or enhancement proposals, and no changes to the current public use program. This alternative represents the baseline from which other “action” alternatives will be evaluated.



*King Rail, Photo by USFWS*



*Freshwater Marsh, Photo by USFWS*

**Alternative B - Migratory Birds.** This alternative would focus management efforts on migratory birds, including waterfowl, shore birds, wading birds, marsh birds, and land birds. Several management actions are listed.

- maintain habitats for some listed species at current levels
- convert some marsh to impoundments, increase pumping capacities & limit disturbance to benefit migratory birds
- restore uplands through prescribed fire to support land birds
- determine adverse impacts of aquatic plant control on birds & apple snails
- develop upland exotic plant GIS database as part of control effort
- control of feral hogs would stay at current levels (managed via deer hunt); coyote would not be managed
- work with partners to ensure adequate water levels & quality to support migratory bird objectives; remove unused levees in marsh to restore hydrology
- determine migratory bird usefulness of easement properties
- archaeological & historical resource management would remain limited
- continue current efforts to provide safe railroad track passage onto refuge; determine alternative access onto refuge
- conduct turkey, quail & dove surveys & determine hunt potential
- co-manage waterfowl & alligator hunting on State-owned navigable water of refuge
- close marshes to deer hunting
- evaluate adverse impacts of wildlife photography & observation on migratory birds, limit public access as required
- focus environmental education/interpretation on migratory bird conservation
- increase & focus Friends Group/volunteer efforts to benefit migratory birds
- increase staffing (add 2 biologists, refuge officer, park ranger & 2 maintenance workers)

## Preliminary Management Alternatives Lake Woodruff NWR



*Air Plant,  
Photo by  
USFWS*

### Alternative D - Wildlife and Habitat Management (Proposed Action).

This alternative would focus management efforts on increasing biodiversity and the biological integrity of the refuge. Listed below are major proposed management activities.

- minimize upland wildfire potential & maintain habitat for existing listed species
- manage impoundments for multiple listed & migratory birds; consider seasonal closures to limit disturbance
- work with State to increase protection of manatees in State-owned waters on the refuge
- decrease marsh acreage through conversion to impoundments
- develop exotic plant GIS database as part of control program
- monitor & control feral hogs & coyote as needed
- work with partners to survey fishes & herpetological species & minimize adverse habitat management
- investigate management efforts to improve apple snail habitat
- through partnerships ensure adequate future water levels/quality to support habitats & wildlife
- breach unused levels to restore marsh hydrology
- survey refuge boundary
- work with partners to locate & protect wildlife corridors
- develop GIS database for easements to improve management
- conduct complete archaeological & historical survey
- ensure safe railroad crossing & future refuge access
- evaluate potential for turkey, quail & dove hunt
- work with State to evaluate deer herd health & impacts of hunting; evaluate alternative population control
- co-manage waterfowl & alligator hunting on State-owned water on the refuge
- evaluate need for boat ramp to improve fishing
- increase wildlife observation & photography opportunities
- expand environmental education & interpretation efforts & focus on biodiversity & biological integrity
- increase Friends Group & volunteer numbers
- increase staffing (add forestry tech, law enforcement officer, park ranger & 2 maintenance workers)

**Alternative C - Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species.** This alternative would emphasize management activities to support listed species, such as bald eagles, manatees, whooping cranes and several State-listed species. Management efforts under this alternative are listed.

- increase prescribed burning in uplands to enhance habitat for gopher tortoises, Florida pine snakes & red-cockaded woodpeckers (reintroduce if possible)
- intensively manage impoundments for woodstorks, sandhill & whooping cranes
- increase protection of manatees on State-owned waters of the refuge through partnerships
- use prescribed burning to restore marshes
- manage impoundments for multiple species migratory birds
- monitor & control exotic plants & animals that threaten listed species and apple snails
- survey fishes & herpetological species & adjust habitat management to protect & support rare species
- determine adequate water quantity & quality to support listed species; consider sub-surface pumping
- identify & protect wildlife corridors
- map easement habitats & evaluate listed species benefit
- protect people & wildlife crossing railroad tracks
- archaeological & historical resource management would remain limited
- determine adverse effects of public disturbance to listed species
- survey turkey, dove & quail and determine potential impacts to listed species
- co-manage waterfowl and alligator hunting on State-owned navigable waters on the refuge
- study the effects of deer and feral hog hunting on listed species & eliminate hunting if required; implement other population control if needed
- increase staffing (add 2 biologists, 2 law enforcement officers, forestry tech, park ranger & 2 maintenance workers)



*Little Blue Heron (immature), Photo by USFWS*

## What's Next?

The next major step in the CCP process is to finalize the draft CPP/EA and make them available for public review. If you want to be on the mailing list to receive a copy of the draft document, please submit your request using the contact information below.



For additional information or comments, please contact:

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*Whooping Crane, Photo by USFWS*

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