

## FACT SHEET

### General Recreation Regulation Changes – Background and Key Points

- The refuge was established by act of Congress in 1924 to provide a “refuge and breeding place” for migratory birds, fish, other wildlife, and plants.
- The refuge encompasses 240,000 acres in more-or-less continuous stretch of 261 miles of Mississippi River floodplain in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois.
- The refuge is the most important fish and wildlife corridor in the Midwest due to species diversity and abundance.
- The refuge is the most visited in the country with 3.7 million annual visits. It is a Congressional mandate to facilitate compatible hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation and environmental education on refuges.
- Each refuge is required by the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 to complete a Comprehensive Conservation Plan or CCP to address unique challenges and opportunities, and to guide management for a 15-year period. The CCP for the refuge was approved October 24, 2006.
- The CCP was prepared with unprecedented public and agency involvement. There were 46 public meetings and workshops attended by 4,500 people in 4 states. A new alternative was developed based on public input, and there were two comment periods of 120 days and 90 days, twice as long as required. There were also 80 other meetings with the States, other agencies, interest groups, internal leadership, and elected officials to discuss and develop the plan.
- Recreation regulations implement the goals, objectives, and strategies in the CCP pertaining to wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, environmental education, and other forms of recreation, access, and use such as boating and camping.
- The regulations codify refuge-specific recreation regulations that have been in effect for years, fine-tune the language of some regulations for clarity and ease of enforcement, and generally modernize regulations for consistency with sound fish, wildlife, and recreation management.
- The regulations establish 4 new electric motor areas totaling 1,630 acres (1 such area, Mertes Slough, Pool 6, 222 acres, already exists) and 8 new seasonal, slow, no wake areas totaling 9,370 acres.

- New Electric Motor Areas and Slow, No Wake Areas will take effect after Memorial Day, 2008. When established, they will remain open to hunting and fishing and only the means of use is restricted. These areas will provide an alternative for hunters, anglers, and wildlife observers who desire an experience with reduced noise and speed. Collectively, the 12 new areas and 1 existing area represent 8% of the water area of the refuge and 5% of the entire refuge.
- In Electric Motor Areas, watercraft may only be powered by electric motors or nonmotorized means. The possession of other motors is not prohibited, only their use.
- In seasonal Slow, No-Wake Areas, watercraft must travel at slow, no-wake speed and airboats and hovercraft are prohibited during the period March 16 through October 31.
- Electric Motor Areas and Slow, No-Wake Areas will be marked by signs and shown on maps available at refuge offices or on the refuge website:  
[www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver/](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver/)
- Other regulations stemming from the CCP include a ban of glass food and beverage containers on beach areas and other lands of the refuge; clarifying the definition and requirements for camping and campsite sanitation; clarifying rules for fire and firewood use; and clarifying rules for vehicles, boat mooring, firearms, and domestic animals on the refuge.

04/08