



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge

October 2007 Planning Update 1: CCP Process Overview

Comprehensive Conservation Planning to Begin for Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge



Banks Lake Anglers, Photo by USFWS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pleased to announce the initiation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process for Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The purpose of this planning effort is to develop a CCP that will provide the refuge with a 15-year management plan for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their related habitats, while also providing opportunities for appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. The CCP will cover the 3,559-acre Banks Lake NWR. Protected within this refuge are the open waters of Banks Lake, freshwater marsh, hardwood swamp, as well as upland habitats. In addition, the refuge supports habitat for rare species including bald eagles and round-tailed muskrats. In addition to providing a clear statement of the desired future conditions for the refuge, the CCP process is also intended to ensure public involvement in refuge management decisions. The views of individuals, the local community (including landowners and local businesses), public agencies, and interested organizations will play an important role in the CCP process. Over the next year, we will provide periodic planning updates that will inform you of our progress and provide information explaining how you can be involved in the various phases of plan development – from participating in a public meeting to submitting written comments. Public involvement is an essential component of this planning effort and we encourage your participation throughout the process.



Largemouth Bass, Photo by Florida Museum of Natural History

Public Meeting

Stay Tuned for an Upcoming Public Meeting

The refuge will hold a public meeting to provide additional information regarding the refuge and the planned CCP. The meeting will be held in the vicinity of the refuge later this year or in early 2008. The meeting time and place will be announced via several media outlets well in advance. Please check this site regularly, as details regarding the public meeting will be posted here soon.

Thank you



Great Blue Heron, Photo by USFWS

National Wildlife Refuge System: Preserving wildlife and habitat for people today, and for generations to come.

What is a National Wildlife Refuge?

A national wildlife refuge is a designated area of land or water that has been set aside for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants. Rachel Carson described a refuge as land that “has been dedicated by the American people to preserving, for themselves and their children, as much of our native wildlife as can be retained along with our modern civilization”.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is the only national network of public lands set aside specifically for the protection and conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants. Born in 1903 as a result of President Theodore Roosevelt’s order to protect a small island in Florida as a “preserve and breeding grounds for native birds”, the National Wildlife Refuge System now includes more than 540 refuges. Today, the 95 million acres of land and water provide important habitat for nearly 260 threatened or endangered species and hundreds of other fish, wildlife, insect, and plant species. More than 30 million Americans visit national wildlife refuges each year. While the needs of wildlife must come first, many refuges welcome those who want to enjoy the natural world: to observe or photograph wildlife, to hunt or fish, or to learn about wildlife and their needs.



Fishing in Cypress Swamp, Photo by Kristine Carrier

Why is a Comprehensive Conservation Plan being prepared?

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 requires that a CCP be prepared for each refuge in the Refuge System. Both the Service and the public will benefit from this requirement, as the CCP process provides many opportunities for ensuring that the long-term vision and goals for refuges will be evaluated, developed, and achieved.

Our goal is to prepare a CCP that:

- Provides a clear vision of the desired future conditions for the refuge;
- Establishes refuge management priorities for the next 15 years that are consistent with achieving the desired future conditions;
- Ensures that management decisions will fulfill the mission of the Refuge System, as well as the specific purposes for which the refuge was established;
- Thoroughly evaluates the full range of views and comments provided by those individuals, groups, and governmental agencies that participated in the planning process;
- Incorporates an ecosystem approach into the management strategies for habitat protection, enhancement, and restoration; and
- Identifies which public uses are appropriate and compatible with the purposes of the refuge and the vision and goals that are established.



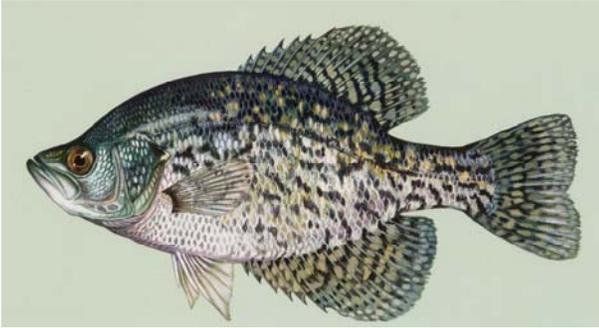
Alligator, Photo by USFWS

“The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

- National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997

Banks Lake NWR – Where Lake and Land Merge

Banks Lake NWR was established in 1985. The management boundary encompasses about 3,559 acres of water and land in Lanier County, Georgia.



Black Crappie, Artwork by USFWS

Banks Lake NWR supports various wading birds, marsh birds, and migratory waterfowl. Habitats include Carolina Bays (Pocosins), creek swamps, open water shallow lakes, ponds, and flatwoods. The freshwater habitats support a variety of sportfish, including largemouth bass, chain pickerel, crappie, bluegill, warmouth perch, flier, and catfish. Other aquatic species include turtles, alligators, amphibians and numerous invertebrates. The marshes are utilized by round-tailed muskrats, a State-listed species, while upland pine flatwoods are utilized by a variety of terrestrial species.

How You Can Help

- ◇ You can help us the most by getting involved. Give us your thoughts and ideas regarding future management of the refuge.
- ◇ Help us identify potential issues related to refuge management, wildlife-dependent recreational uses, habitat protection, and more.
- ◇ You can also assist us in exploring what opportunities or alternatives might be available to resolve potential issues.
- ◇ Join us at the upcoming public meeting; your thoughts will stimulate new ideas in other participants.
- ◇ You can also provide input by writing or e-mailing us.
- ◇ Finally, your assistance is needed to get the word out about this process. Suggest to your friends and colleagues that they too get involved.

You are an important part of the process; please join us.



Osprey Nest, Photo by USFWS



**Banks Lake NWR CCP
Route 2, Box 3330
Folkston, GA 31537**

PUBLIC MEETING: To Be Announced

Help us keep our mailing list up-to-date and tell a friend.

If you or someone you know would like to receive future planning updates for this project, please fill in the appropriate information below and return it to us at one of the open house meetings or via mail to Banks Lake NWR CCP, Route 2, Box 3330, Folkston, GA 31537. You will remain on our mailing list unless you request to have your name removed. In order to add you to our mailing list, we will need your written permission. Federal government mailing lists are subject to the Freedom of Information Act of 1974 which requires the release of these lists to the public, upon request.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ check here if you want to be removed from the mailing list

Name: _____ (Please print)

Organization: _____ (optional)

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Email: _____ (optional)

Would prefer to receive information electronically? Yes No

For questions, additional information or comments, please contact:

Banks Lake NWR CCP

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Folkston, GA 31537

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