

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
CACHE RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
26320 HWY 33 SOUTH
AUGUSTA, ARKANSAS 72006

PROSPECTUS

NO. _____

**PROPOSALS FOR GUIDED TOURS AT THE CACHE RIVER NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE**

DATE ISSUED:

1. Introduction: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is taking applications to guide the visiting public at the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) for the purposes of birding, wildlife observation and photography. Guided tours may be conducted by any of the methods listed below or a combination thereof:

- A. Guided Walking/Hiking Tours
- B. Guided Boat/Canoe Tours
- C. Guided Bus Tours
- D. Guided Vehicular Tours

General requirements and conditions for Guided Tours are contained in this Prospectus the attached Special Use Permit and Compatibility Determination.

2. Location of the Refuge: The Refuge is located in Monroe, Woodruff, Prairie and Jackson Counties and encompasses over 61,000 acres in over 200 tracts of land, and is a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System (System). The permitted operation areas are located on tracts of land and water open to the general public. Access to these areas is by either vehicle or by water depending on tract to be used for guided tour. During 2004, the Refuge recorded approximately 125,000 visitors to the Refuge.

- A. Areas closed to the general public (i.e. waterfowl sanctuaries, etc) or with limited access (i.e. IBW Managed Access Area) will not be accessible to permittees.
- B. Permittees are not permitted to approach closer than 100 meters of a rookery, bald eagle nest unless other distances are designated by the Refuge manager.

3. Special Use Permit (SUP): All rules and regulations concerning the guided tour operation including required periods of operation and reporting are provided in the SUP and this Prospectus. Guiding is a commercial enterprise and a specialized use of the Refuge which requires a SUP for authorization. All commercial activities, including guiding, are special type uses that only may be authorized when they are compatible with the purpose of the Refuge, the mission of the System, and are administered in a way that minimizes conflicts with priority uses. The special conditions, regulations and provisions contained in the SUP are to ensure compliance with legal mandates of law, including compatibility, and to limit conflicts with priority uses.

4. Period of Use: The length of the SUP will be limited to a period of one calendar year (January 1 thru December 31) renewable yearly at the managers discretion.

5. Submission of Applications: Persons or businesses having the experience and financial means to meet the minimum conditions specified in this prospectus and who desire to purchase a SUP for operation of leading guided tours may do so by submitting their application to:

Mr. Dennis Widner
Manager, Cache River National Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
26320 Hwy. 33 South
Augusta, Arkansas 72067
Ph: 870-347-2074
Fax: 870-347-2908

6. Information to be Provided in Application: All applications should at a minimum contain the following information:

A. Identify the Applicant:

Identify the individual/business submitting this application with address(s) and telephone numbers. Clearly identify both the formal structure of the primary business entity with which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be dealing, and its owner(s). Identify person(s) carrying out the service to be provided.

B. Demonstrated Business Experience:

Applicants should give specific examples of past or current business operations undertaken. Describe your business management qualifications and experience of how it relates to the operation of guided tours on Refuge lands. Include any past experience with providing services similar to these tours, special qualifications, licenses, etc which would be an asset in conducting Refuge tours.

C. Qualifications and Required Training:

(1). Provide detailed resumes for guide and assistant. Identify the specific responsibilities of the guide and assistant and how these individuals are qualified to undertake those responsibilities.

Note: This permit allows one guide to operate with one assistant. No subcontractors will be permitted to operate under this permit.

(2). Guide and assistant must be hospitable and exercise courtesy and consideration in their relations with the visitors and provide a positive image for the Refuge and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

(3). Outline the training program that you propose.

Note: At least one person (guide/assistant) must be trained in CPR and First Aid. A first aid kit will be made available by permittee during all guided activities.

Note: Permittees offering boating, canoeing or kayaking tours, both guide and assistant will be required to pass the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission or Coast Guard boater safety courses. Certificates from the trainings must be provided to the Refuge manager.

(4). Guide and assistant must be knowledgeable and present a positive attitude about the Refuge and its rules, regulations, and special programs, as well as a consistent friendly and positive attitude by which visitors are greeted.

(5). Describe any special experience or educational background that qualifies you and your assistant to inform the public regarding such environmental topics as the mission and objectives of the Refuge System, endangered species of the Refuge, specific plants and animals that inhabit the Refuge, the Bottomland Hardwood ecosystem, and wetland and habitat protection. Be specific. Identify the individual and his/her qualifications including, but not limited to, education (include all degrees), training, experience, and special recognition including awards, articles published, speaking engagements, and teaching/instruction experience.

D. Description of Public Services and Facilities Proposed:

Note: No storage facilities will be provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. All equipment must be removed from Refuge lands/waters daily.

(1). Describe all equipment that you will use for the permitted tours. Be specific. Your description should include, but not necessarily be limited, to the following:

(a). Provide description, manufacturer, model numbers, and age of

equipment/facilities.

(b). Provide photos of equipment/facilities if owned or catalog descriptions if you intend to purchase for the permit operation.

(c). Describe what steps you will take to ensure that all equipment is safe and environmentally friendly.

Note: Equipment such as canoes, boats, kayaks etc will be marked with an emblem assigned by the Refuge manager thus distinguishing it as a permit holders equipment.

(2). Describe all services that you will provide. Be specific. Your description should include (but not necessarily be limited to) the following:

(a). Describe how tours will be conducted.

(b). Describe what methods you will take to ensure that tours are conducted so as not to disturb wildlife.

(c). Describe training/instruction that you will give to all visitors embarking on guided tours.

Note: boat, canoe/kayak and hiking tours are limited to a maximum of eight (8) visitors at a time. No more than one (1) tour offered per day.

(d). Describe the type of information you intend to present during tours and what major themes you plan to use. Be specific as possible. Describe what information you plan to present pertaining to the Bottomland Hardwood ecosystem, the plants and wildlife of the Refuge, endangered species of the Refuge, preservation of habitat of the Refuge, and the mission and objectives of the Refuge.

(e). Describe what procedures you and your assistant will use to respond to emergency situations.

(f). Describe the safety procedures you intend to use.

Note: Guide, assistant and all visitors partaking in boating, canoeing or kayaking will be required to wear a regulation Personal Floatation Device (PFD) at all times while on the water.

(g). Describe what procedures you will employ to ensure that the wildlife area is not littered by visitors.

(h). Describe your intended visitor registration system (method of obtaining/documenting emergency contact and personal information of visitors on your tours).

(i). Will you provide lodging and meals as a daily package?

7. Consideration of Applications: The Service will consider all applications submitted wherein the Applicant agrees to all of the conditions of the permit and the prospectus and provides all information specified in the prospectus necessary for evaluation. Permits

will be issued on a first come first served basis. The Refuge manager reserves the right to limit guiding SUP's to prevent overcrowding and if guiding demand is high, may use a lottery system or establish a concessionaire system in the future.

8. Freedom of Information Act: All applications submitted in response to this prospectus may be disclosed by the Department of the Interior to any person upon request pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. If the offeror believes that the application contains trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552), the cover page of each copy of the application shall be marked with the following legend:

The information specifically identified on pages of this application constitute trade secrets or confidential commercial and financial information that the Applicant believes to be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. The Applicant requests that this information not be disclosed to the public, except as may be required by law.

The Applicant shall also specifically identify what it considers to be trade secret information and confidential commercial and financial information on the page of the application on which it appears and shall mark each page with the following legend:

This page contains trade secrets or confidential commercial and financial information that the applicant believes to be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, and which is subject to the legend contained on the cover page of this application.

Information so identified shall not be made public by the Department of the Interior except as may be otherwise permitted by law as determined by the Department of the Interior.

9. Criteria for Evaluation of Applicants and Selection:

A. Application Evaluation:

(1). Application evaluation is an assessment of the application and the Applicants ability to perform the permitted activity successfully. The Service shall evaluate all applications to assess their relative qualities solely on the factors specified in the Prospectus. The Service intends to evaluate applications and issue SUP's based on information supplied by applicant. The Fish and Wildlife Service reserves the right to reject any and all applications and to choose between applicants at its discretion.

(2). The Service will evaluate each application strictly in accordance with its content and will not assume that performance will include areas not specified in the Applicants application.

10. Zero Tolerance of Discrimination: The undersigned is subject to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Secretary of Interiors Zero Tolerance of Discrimination policy, February 10, 1997, and Executive Orders 11478 and 13145. The permittee will not discriminate with regard to any program activity or service, including employment.

11. Insurance: Permittees shall procure and maintain during the term of this permit and any extension thereof liability insurance in form satisfactory to the Federal Government. The name insured parties under the policy shall be the permittee and the United States of America. The amounts of insurance for the operation of the permits described shall be not less than as follows:

\$1,000,000 each person \$1,000,000 each occurrence \$1,000,000 property damage

However, should the permittee propose to operate a tour with a vessel or vehicle capable of holding more than eight (8) people, the amount of insurance for each occurrence and property damage must be increased accordingly.

Prior to issuance of permit for the work hereunder the permittee shall furnish a copy of the insurance coverage listing Cache River NWR as a certificate holder.

12. Permit Fees Payable to the Government: The Service will charge an annual fee of \$500.00 for Special Use Permits (Bus tours will be at a rate of \$100.00 per tour). The permit is granted for a calendar year (January 1 thru December 31).

Note: No special rates will be given to those permittees entering a permit in mid calendar year.

13. Reports: A report will be submitted by permittee to the Refuge manager on a quarterly basis. This report will specify how many guided tours were offered for the quarter and how many visitors were led on the guided tours and other information requested. Report forms are provided as part of the SUP.

An annual report will be submitted to the Refuge manager listing total number of tours and visitors for the permit duration. This report must be submitted no later than 30 days following termination of permit.

14. Background and Drugs: Guides and assistants will be subject to background checks prior to and at any time during permit activity. Random drug testing is also permissible at the Refuge managers' discretion. Use of alcoholic beverages by Guide or Assistant during guiding activities is strictly prohibited.

15. Right to Amend or Termination: The Refuge manager reserves the right to amend or terminate this permit at any time for any reason. No compensation due to loss of income or cost's incurred in permit will be due permittee by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.