

Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update 3: Environmental Assessment

September 2013

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 Cahaba River 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.



Marbled salamander - USFWS

Draft CCP and EA Nears Completion

The draft CCP/EA for the Cahaba River NWR is expected to be completed in late 2013. 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 30 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.



Cahaba River rapids – P. Graves

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 Cahaba River 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.

Preliminary Management Alternatives for Cahaba River NWR

The following preliminary management alternatives have been proposed for Cahaba River NWR:

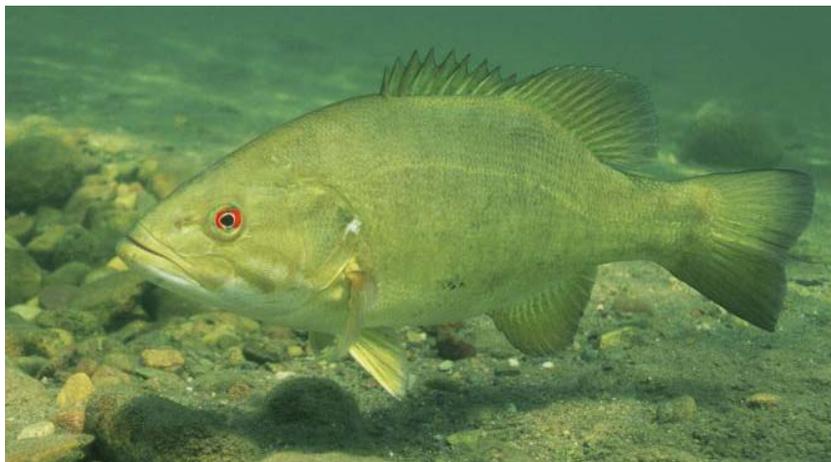
- Alternative A: No Action - Current Management
- Alternative B: Increased Habitat and Wildlife Management (Proposed Action)
- Alternative C: Emphasize the Role of Natural Processes

Alternative A: No Action

As required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the No Action Alternative must be considered when proposing a federal 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.

Alternative B: Increased Habitat and Wildlife Management

Under this alternative, the refuge would increase efforts to restore longleaf pine stands through thinning and prescribed fire. Habitat mapping and wildlife surveys/monitoring would increase. Partnerships would be established or enhanced to improve water quality and aid in the reintroductions of listed aquatic species. Wildlife observation and photography opportunities would be improved.



Smallmouth Bass – USFWS

Alternative C: Emphasize Natural Processes

Under this alternative, the refuge would not restore longleaf pine. Habitats would not be managed, except to prevent wildfires that could threaten adjacent properties. Exotic species would not be controlled. Partnership projects to reintroduce listed aquatic species would be pursued. Some water quality improvements could be achieved through more active stakeholder engagement and partnerships within the watershed. Public use opportunities would not be increased. Wildlife observation and photography opportunities could decline due to worsening conditions on River Trace Road.



Wild turkey – B. Garland

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

Contact the refuge:
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov>

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Southern pigtoe mussel -USFWS