General Refuge Regulations

Refuge Hours
Visitors are welcome to recreate in the refuge during daylight hours. The Visitor Center is open 9:00 am – 5:00 pm daily from November thru February (Closed: Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Years Day) and 9:00 am – 4:00 pm Tuesday thru Saturday from March thru October (Closed: Juneteenth, Independence Day).

In order to understand permitted and prohibited activities as well as refuge specific rules and closures on Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, you should read the following:

Permitted Activities

- We allow hunting of deer, feral hogs, squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, opossum, and quail in designated areas of the refuge in accordance with special refuge hunting regulations. You must also possess a refuge hunt permit, which is available at the Visitor Center or online. State regulations also apply to hunting on the refuge.
- We allow fishing at the refuge except in the Display Pool and the Special Events Fishing Pond. These two ponds are adjacent to the Visitor Center and are always closed to all visitors. In areas where fishing is allowed, all state regulations apply.
- We allow hiking, wildlife observation, and photography in areas that are not posted as closed to public entry.
- We allow biking on graveled roads, including on gated roads, within the refuge. Bicycles are not allowed on the 5 refuge nature trails. E-bikes (classes 1, 2, and 3) are allowed on the same roads that regular bicycles can be used on.
- We allow horseback riding on open graveled roads within the refuge. Horses are not allowed behind any closed gates or on any trails within the refuge.
- We allow pets on the refuge except in buildings. Pets are not allowed to roam out of the owner's direct control (see below for areas where leashes are required).
- We allow the use of dogs for authorized hunting activities in compliance with refuge hunting regulations.
- We allow boating, canoeing and kayaking in the Tennessee River and its tributaries, refuge impoundments and canals in accordance with the specific refuge rules, and unless specifically closed.

Prohibited

The prohibitions listed below are general regulations and represent the most common encountered on Wheeler NWR. For a full list of general refuge regulations consult Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations parts Part 25 – 32: The National Wildlife Refuge System.

- You may not take, remove, harass, injure, cut or disturb any natural material, wildlife or plants, except when engaged in lawful hunting and fishing activities or that which is allowed in the following refuge specific rules. Additionally, you may not take frogs, crayfish or turtles.
- You may possess firearms , including handguns, in compliance with Federal and State firearms laws, however you may not possess firearms in refuge buildings.
- You may not use artificial light sources to view or take wildlife.
- Launching, landing or disturbing wildlife by drones is prohibited.
- You may not release animals or plants into the refuge.
- Pets must not interfere with others or disturb wildlife.
- You may not search for, collect, or remove archaeological or historic objects and/or take artifacts or objects of antiquity. You may not use metal detectors.
- No littering, including discarding animal remains. However, hunters may field dress game animals taken as a result of authorized refuge hunting activities as long as the remains are not left within 50 yards of any roadway or trail.
- You may not use ATV's or any other motorized vehicles which are not legal to operate on the roadways of Alabama.
- You may not enter into areas which are posted as closed or are designated as closed areas.
- You may not drive around closed gates or cables or drive on roads that are closed off by closed gates or cables.
- You may not leave an unattended vehicle in front of a gate so that it blocks the free movement of other vehicles or farming equipment.
- You may not operate vehicles off of paved or graveled roads, including fields, ditches or mud holes which are along the edge of roads.
- You may not start or maintain a fire of any type.
- You may not possess alcohol in Limestone or Morgan counties.
- You may not disobey any regulatory sign.

Refuge Specific Rules

In accordance with 50 CFR § 25.31(d) and 26.22 (a), the following rules specifically apply to activities on Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge.

- You may not cut and/or collect downed wood unless you possess a valid refuge issued Downed Wood Permit, which is available at the Visitor Center.
- You may not feed wildlife.
- You may not dig or excavate.
- You may not use air-thrust vessels, inboard water-thrust vessels or may not water ski or tube outside of the main Tennessee River channel.
- You may not overnight camp.
- You must keep pets on a leash while in the Visitor Center complex or on any trail, parking area, boat ramp or boardwalk.
- You may collect berries, fruit and nuts for personal use.
- You may not possess any chemical, which is intended to be used, to unlawfully mark, deface or vandalize anything on the refuge.
- You may not use surface-drive outboard motors, such as a “go-devil” or “mud buddy”, from November 1st thru March 15th, unless engaged in authorized hunting or fishing activities.

Closures

Some areas within the refuge may be closed to public. Be aware of signs indicating closed areas as they are subject to change.

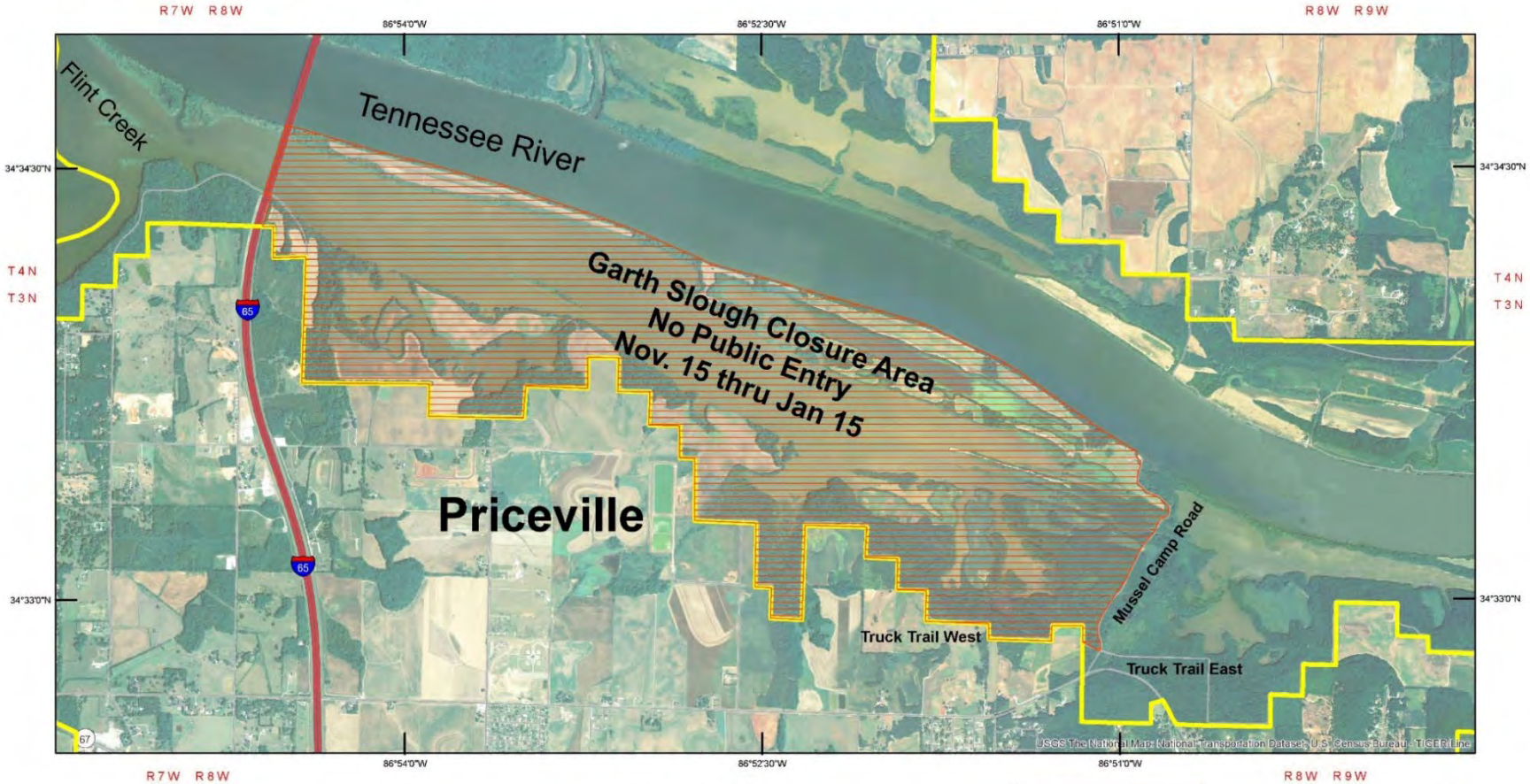
- The Garth Slough closure area is closed to all public entry, including foot travel, from November 15 thru January 15 (reopens January 15). This area includes the lands and waters south of the Tennessee River from the I-65 Bridge eastward to Mussel Camp Road and, within that extent, from the southern refuge boundary, including Truck Trail West, northward to the Tennessee River's current water line.
- NEW: The Buckeye-Thorsen Arm Unit is closed to all public entry from November 15th to February 28th. This area encompasses the levees/roads and water within the Buckeye and Thorsen Arm units.
- The Flint Creek Island closure area is closed to all public entry year-round. This area includes the lands and waters south of Point Mallard Parkway (Hwy 67) to the tree line east of Airport Road (including Airport Road itself), and westward to the shoreline of Crabtree Slough. The Visitor Center Complex, within this area, is open to public access during normal business hours. The Visitor Center Complex includes the access road, the Visitor Center and Observation building as well as the marked walking trails.
- The Refuge Office is open to public entry during normal business hours only. The area/grounds surrounding the office is closed to public access at all times.
- Crabtree Slough is closed to all entry from November 15th thru February 28th. However, you may fish from the Crabtree Slough dike year-round.
- Dinsmore Slough is closed to all entry from November 15th thru February 28th.
- The White Springs Unit is closed to all watercraft from November 15th thru February 28th. This area lies within Limestone County and extends from Highway 31 eastward to Limestone Bay and, within that extent, from Highway 20 south to the Tennessee River Backwater, then eastward along the Tennessee River to Limestone Creek.
- Hickory Hills Boat Launch is open daylight hours only (nighttime boat launching is allowed).
- The 5-mile hiking/biking trail near the Visitor Center main entrance is open daylight hours only.
- CAVE CLOSURES: All caves on Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge are closed to public access. The reason for this closure is to protect the sensitive cave species and habitats within these caves on Wheeler NWR.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

Morgan and Limestone Counties, Alabama

Garth Slough Closure Area



Produced for: the Wheeler NWR
Decatur, Alabama
Current to: 11/15/2015
Basemap (Date): 2006

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

0 0.25 0.5 1 Kilometers

Garth Slough Closure Area

No Public Entry
Nov.15 thru Jan.15

Wheeler NWR Boundary

N S

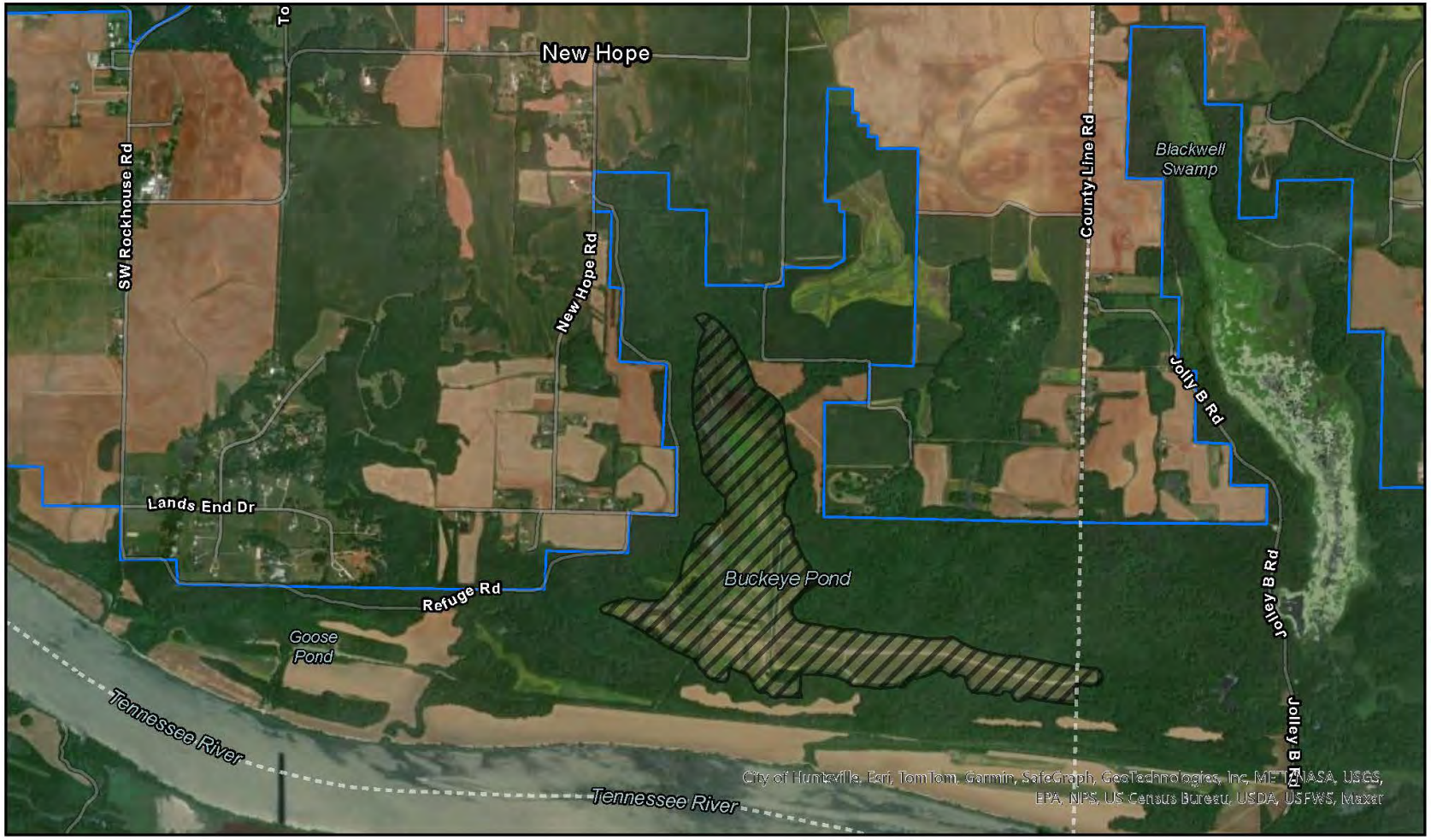
UTM ZONE 16
NAD 83

09052026

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
Decatur, Alabama

Buckeye-Thorsen Seasonal Closure
Closed to All Public Entry Nov 15 - Feb 28



No Public Entry Nov 15 - Feb 28
Wheeler NWR Boundary

0 0.4 0.8 Miles
0 0.38 0.75 Kilometers

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

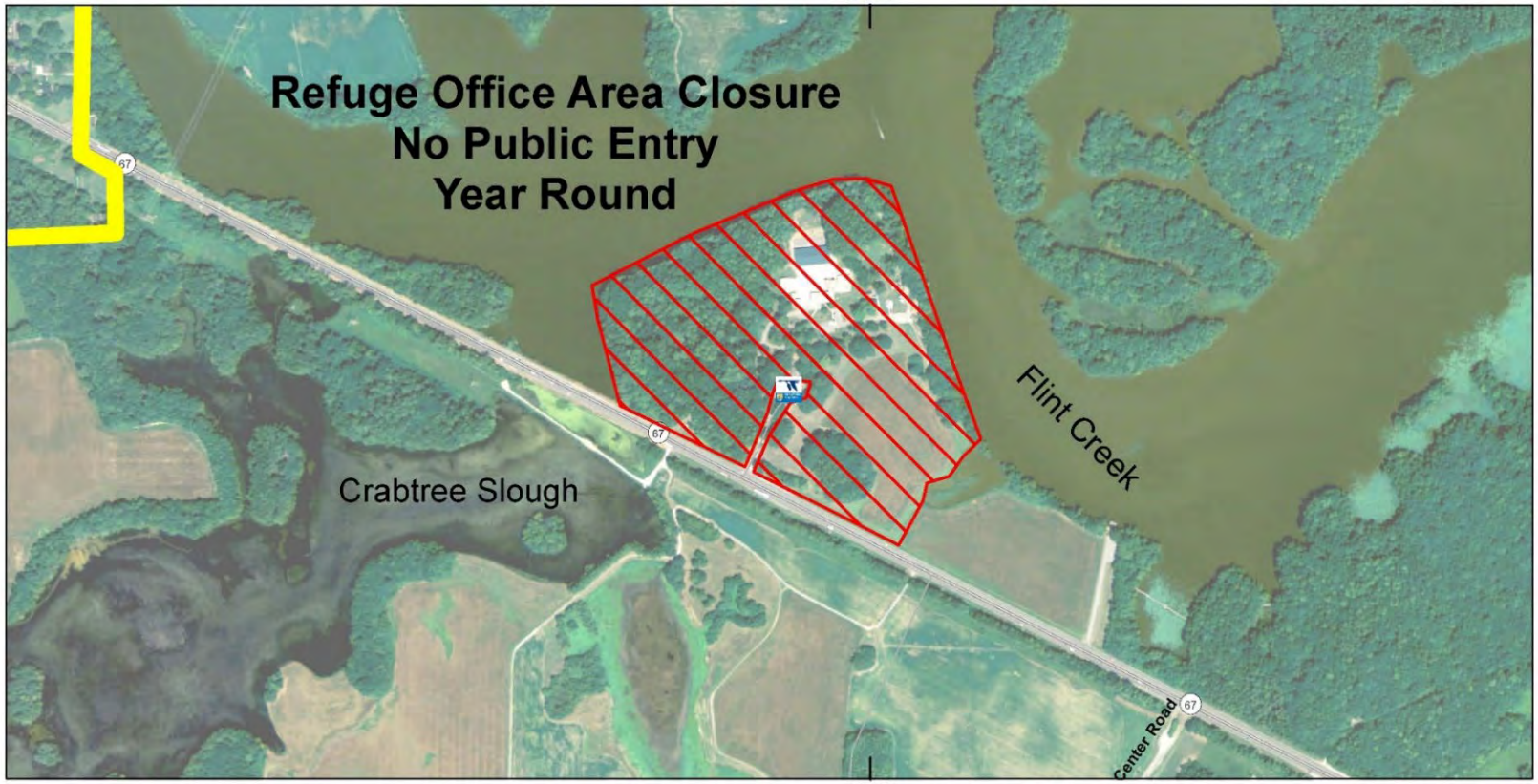
Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

Decatur, Alabama

Refuge Office Area Closure

R7W R8W R8W R9W

86°57'0"W



T4N T3N T4N T3N

86°57'0"W

R7W R8W R8W R9W

Produced for the Wheeler NWR
Decatur, Alabama
Current to: 11/15/2015
Basemap (Date): 2006

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Kilometers

Refuge Office Area Closure

Refuge Office Area Closure

Wheeler NWR Boundary

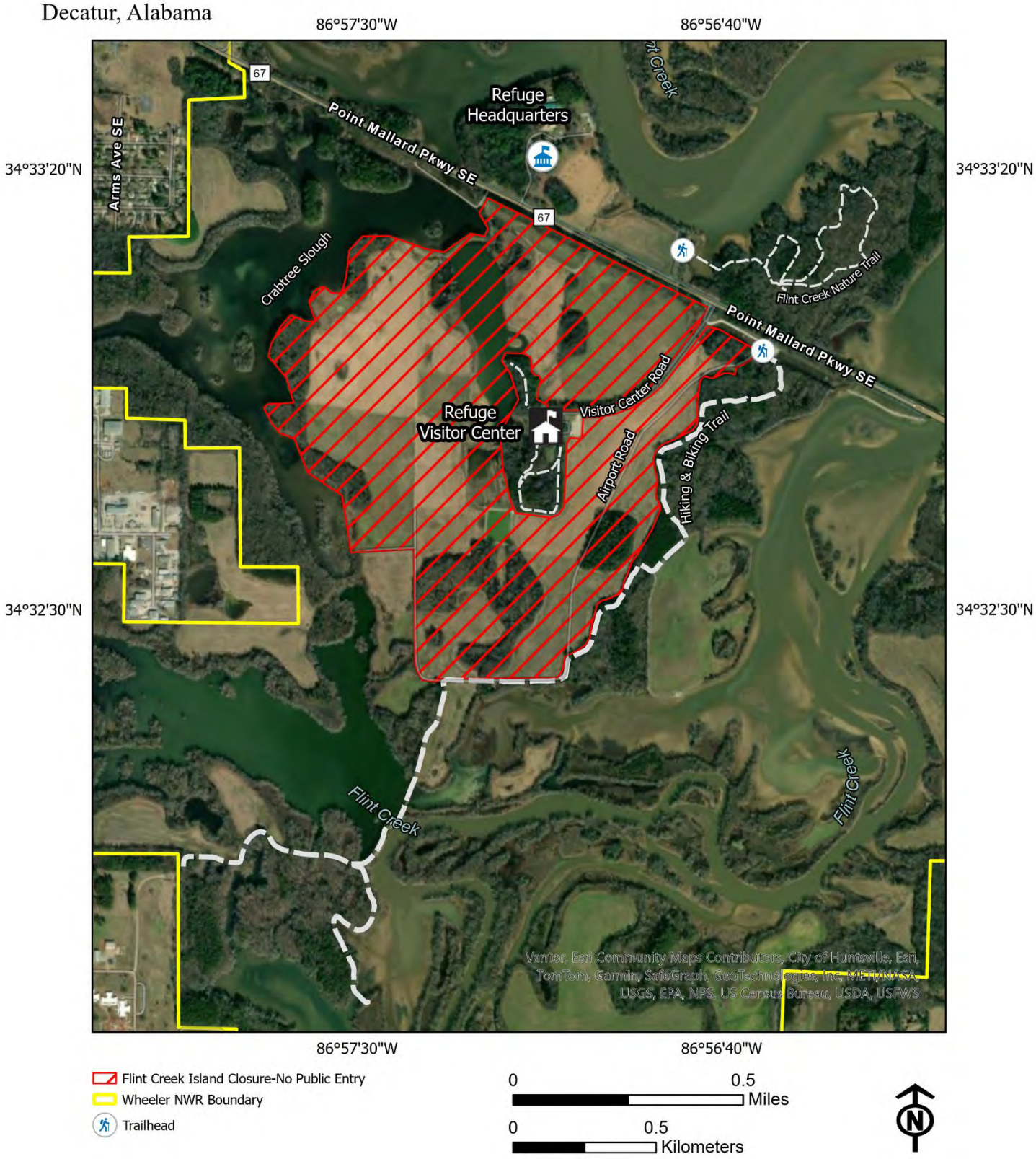
UTM ZONE 16
NAD 83

09052026

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
Decatur, Alabama

Flint Creek Island Closed Area



Flint Creek Island Closure-No Public Entry
Wheeler NWR Boundary
Trailhead

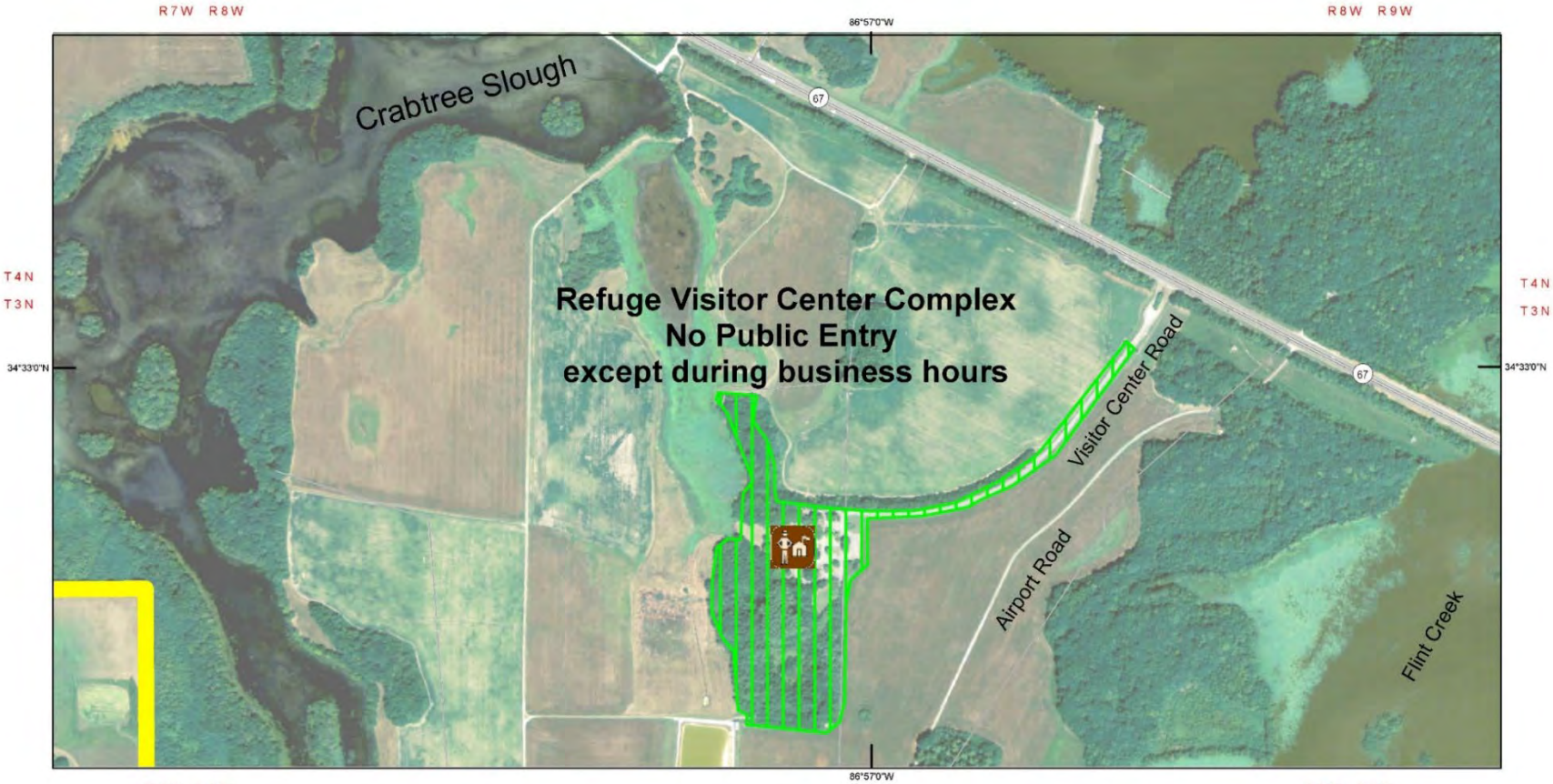
0 0.5 Miles
0 0.5 Kilometers

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

Decatur, Alabama

Wheeler NWR Visitor Center Complex



Produced for the Wheeler NWR
Decatur, Alabama
Current to: 11/15/2015
Basemap (Date): 2006

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Kilometers

Wheeler NWR Visitor Center Complex
No public entry except during business hours

Visitor Center Complex

Wheeler NWR Boundary

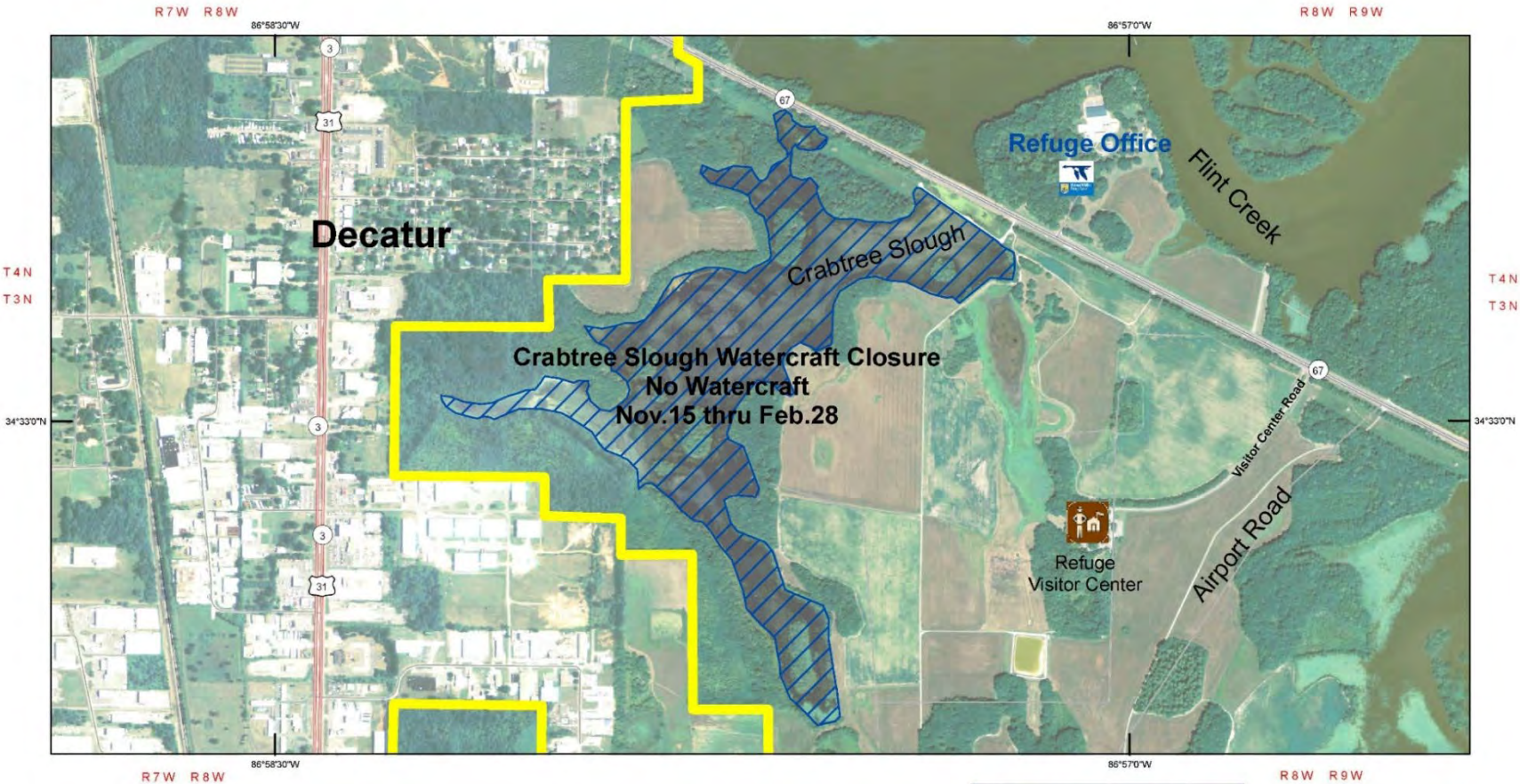
UTM ZONE 16
NAD 83

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

Decatur, Alabama

Crabtree Slough Watercraft Closure



Produced for the Wheeler NWR
Decatur, Alabama
Current to: 11/15/2015
Basemap (Date): 2006

0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Miles

0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Kilometers

Crabtree Slough Watercraft Closure

Crabtree Slough Watercraft Closure
Nov. 15 thru Feb. 28

Wheeler NWR Boundary

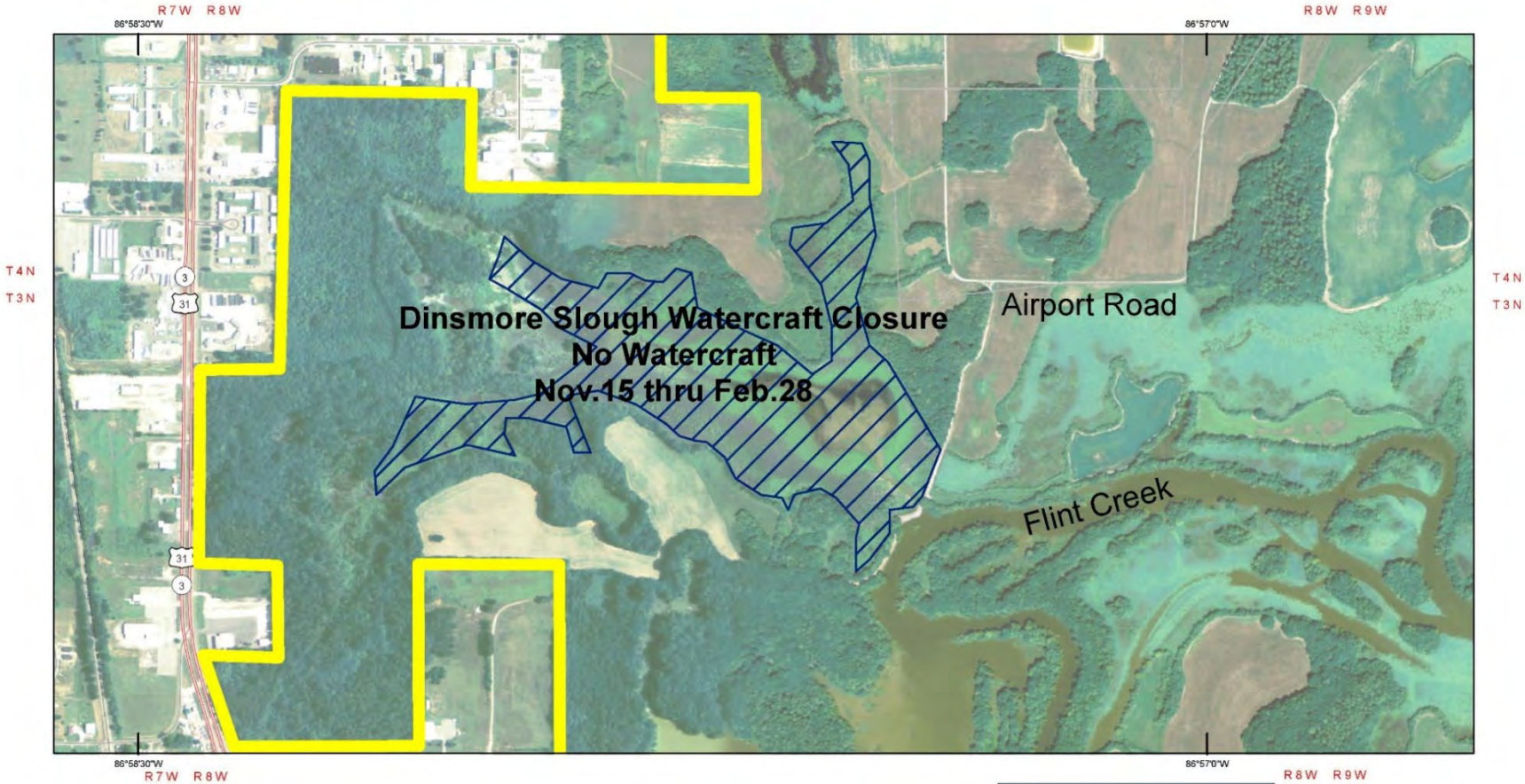
UTM ZONE 16
NAD 83

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

Decatur, Alabama

Dinsmore Slough Watercraft Closure



Produced for the Wheeler NWR
Decatur, Alabama
Current to: 11/15/2015
Basemap (Date): 2006

0 0.075 0.15 0.3 Miles

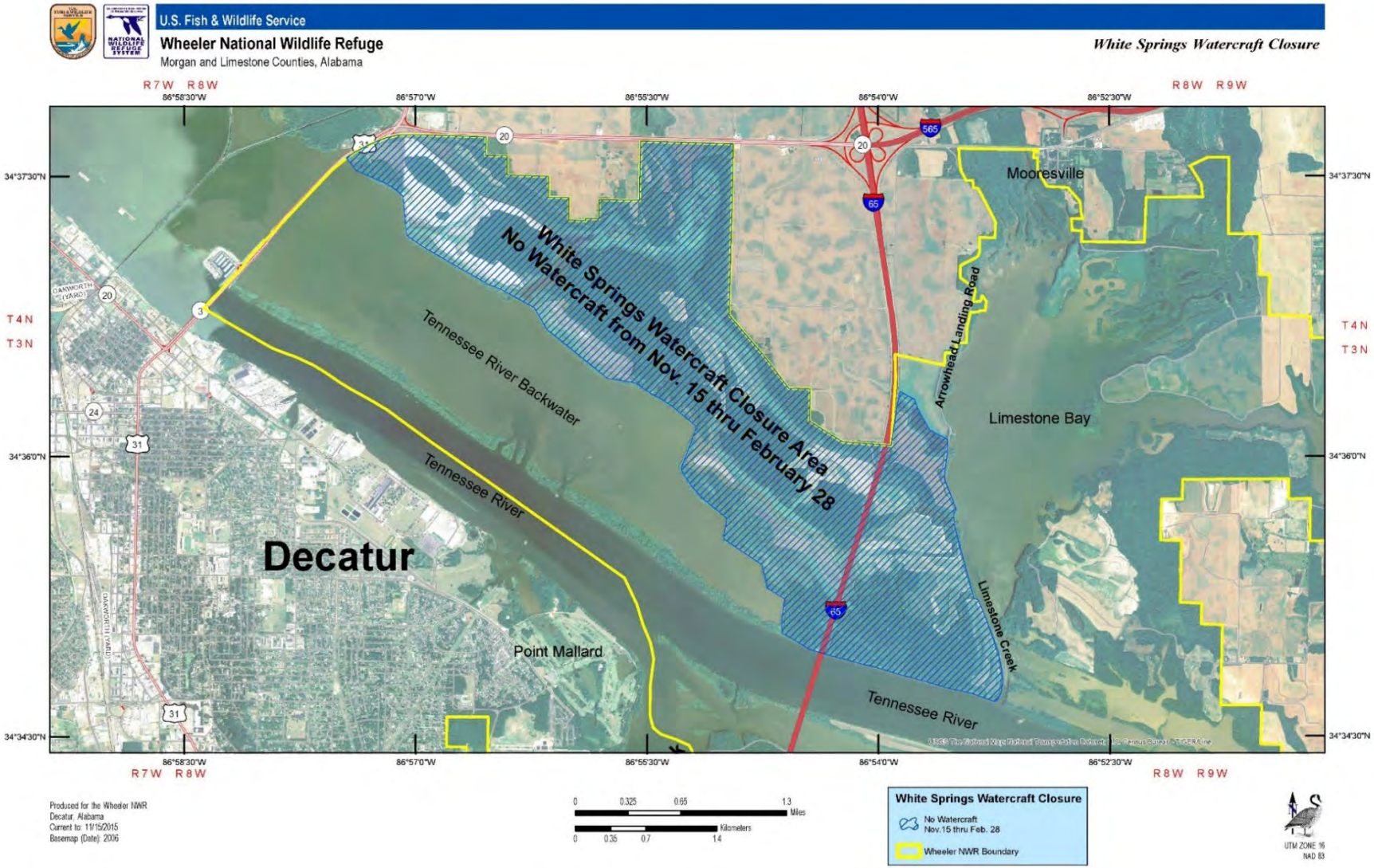
0 0.075 0.15 0.3 Kilometers

Dinsmore Slough Watercraft Closure

Dinsmore Slough Watercraft Closure
Nov. 15 thru Feb. 28

Wheeler NWR Boundary

UTM ZONE 16
NAD 83


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
Morgan and Limestone Counties, Alabama
White Springs Watercraft Closure
R7W R8W
R8W R9W
86°58'30"W
86°57'0"W
86°55'30"W
86°54'0"W
86°52'30"W
34°37'30"N
34°36'0"N
34°34'30"N
T4N
T3N
Mooresville
Arrowhead Landing Road
Limestone Bay
Limestone Creek
Tennessee River Backwater
Tennessee River
Decatur
Point Mallard
White Springs Watercraft Closure Area
No Watercraft from Nov. 15 thru February 28
Produced for the Wheeler NWR
Decatur, Alabama
Current to: 11/15/2015
Basemap (Date): 2006
0 0.325 0.65 1.3 Miles
0 0.35 0.7 1.4 Kilometers
White Springs Watercraft Closure
No Watercraft Nov.15 thru Feb. 28
Wheeler NWR Boundary
UTM ZONE 16
NAD 83

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