

DRAFT Compatibility Determination

BICYCLING associated with the Cheaha Challenge ULTRA

Refuge Name: Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge

County: Calhoun, Alabama

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

The Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003. P.L. 107-314
Additional acquisition authority: Fish and Wildlife Act 1956

Refuge Purpose(s):

Establishment purpose: "(2) The Secretary of Interior shall manage the Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge in a manner that- (A) conserves and enhances populations of fish, wildlife, and plants in the Refuge, including migratory birds and species that are threatened or endangered, with particular emphasis on the protection of the mountain longleaf pine plant ecosystem; (B) protects and enhances the quality of aquatic habitat in the Refuge; (C) provides, in coordination with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the public with recreational opportunities, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography; (D) provides opportunities for scientific research and education on land use and environmental law; and (E) is consistent with environmental restoration efforts conducted by the Secretary of the Army on the Refuge or on lands adjacent to the Refuge." 116 Stat 2710. dated Dec. 2. 2002.

Additional purposes: " ... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources , .. " 16 U.S.c. § 742f(a)(4) " ... for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude ... " 16 U.S.c. § 742f(b)(1) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"The mission of the 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."

Description of Use:

What is the use? Is the use a priority public use?

Cyclists would use Bains Gap Road as part of the Cheaha Challenge ULTRA bicycle race. Riding bicycles for transportation, pleasure or exercise legally occurs on the Refuge on roads open to vehicular traffic. Bicycle traffic associated with the Cheaha Challenge ULTRA would be limited to Bains Gap Road.

Bicycling is not one of the 6 priority public uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Where would the use be conducted?

As proposed, bicycling would only occur on Bains Gap Road. Currently it is allowed on all roads open for vehicle traffic.

When would the use be conducted?

The Cheaha Challenge ULTRA is a bicycle race that occurs annually in the spring (May). Cyclists would cross the refuge via Bains Gap Road between 11am – 4pm.

How would the use be conducted?

The race is coordinated by Northeast Alabama Bicycle Association, a non-profit group leading in promoting local cycling events, trail stewardship, and the promotion of safe cycling. Bains Gap Road will be closed to allow the cyclists to travel safely the length of the road. The refuge will not be responsible for closing the road to the community since the refuge portion of Bains Gap road is flanked by Calhoun County owned portions.

Why is this use being proposed?

Bicycling is an environmentally sound transportation method that allows users to visit the refuge without noise or air pollution associated with motor vehicles. The Cheaha Challenge bicycle ride upholds the tradition of excellence established 23 years ago when organizers' decided to create a challenging route over the highest point in Alabama - Mount Cheaha - and then back again, continues to fulfill the event's tagline promise to be "the toughest ride in the South." The new ULTRA ride, which includes Bains Gap Road, is 124 miles and will expose visitors from all across North America to the refuge.

Stimulate interest in this or other refuges

Availability of Resources:

Resources involved in the administration and management of the use:

Approximately \$500 of staff time and \$0 operations and maintenance funding will be needed to administer this use. Volunteers will staff the rest stop booth located just off Refuge to educate cyclists about the refuge and its mission.

Special equipment, facilities, or improvements necessary to support the use:

Bains Gap Road will be closed to all vehicular traffic during the ride, so use is expected to be limited to bicycles only.

Maintenance costs:

Staff Time

Monitoring or Guiding of Activities - \$500

Trash Pick-up - \$0 (this will be the responsibility of NEABA)

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short-term impacts:

Anticipated impacts from this use are littering, potential conflicts with other visitors, and disturbance to wildlife.

Long-term impacts:

No negative long-term impacts are expected on wildlife or habitat.

Cumulative:

No cumulative impacts are anticipated with this use as proposed.