

Record of Decision

FOR

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

AND

Land Protection Plan

Texas Chenier Plain National Wildlife Refuge Complex Texas

September 2008

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Wildlife Refuge System, Southwest Region
Division of Planning
P.O. Box 1306
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INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) signifies the end of the planning process for the development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Land Protection Plan (LPP) for the Texas Chenier Plain National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Refuge Complex) in Chambers, Jefferson, and Galveston Counties, Texas. The Refuge Complex consists of Moody National Wildlife Refuge (Moody NWR), Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge (Anahuac NWR), McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge (McFaddin NWR), and Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge (Texas Point NWR). The CCP will guide the management and administration of the Refuge Complex for the next 15 years; and, the LPP will expand existing refuge boundaries and authorize additional land acquisition within the expanded Refuge Complex. This ROD documents the decision of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) based upon the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released to the public on June 30, 2008, with a Notice of Availability published in the Federal Register on June 30, 2008. A Notice of Availability for this ROD will be published in the Federal Register and a news release will be sent to the media. This ROD will also be posted on the Service's Southwest Region Planning Division web-site.

THE DECISION

The Service has decided to approve and implement Refuge Management Alternative D and Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C. Refuge Management Alternative D, the preferred alternative, is approved as the CCP for the Refuge Complex and will direct the management activities on the Refuge Complex for the next 15 years. Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C, the preferred alternative, is approved as the LPP for the Refuge Complex and authorizes land acquisition from willing sellers within a designated 64,260-acre expansion area.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Draft EIS/CCP/LPP which was released for public comment on October 17, 2006, developed and analyzed two separate but related sets of alternatives: five (5) Refuge Management Alternatives and four (4) Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternatives. The comment period for the Draft EIS/CCP/LPP was open through January 16, 2007.

The set of Refuge Management Alternatives has several elements or features common to all of the alternatives in the set. These common elements consist of:

- Completion of land acquisition within current refuge boundaries.
- Conduct a wilderness review for each refuge in the Refuge Complex.
- Protection of cultural resources within the Refuge Complex.
- Protection for Research Natural Areas (RNA) within the Refuge Complex.

Similarly, the set of Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternatives has several elements or features common to all of the alternatives in the set. These common elements consist of:

- Acquisition of land from willing sellers only.
- Acquisition of land in either fee or conservation easement.
- Acquisition funding sources.
- Payments under the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act.
- Acquired lands to be managed under concepts expressed in preferred Refuge Management Alternative D.

A brief summary of each alternative for both sets of alternatives follows; and, a complete description of each alternative for both sets is provided in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS/CCP/LPP.

Summary of Refuge Management Alternatives

Refuge Management Alternative A: (NEPA No Action Alternative) Continuation of Current Management

Under this Alternative, current management programs on the Refuge Complex would continue unchanged. Management of wetland habitats including coastal marsh and prairie wetlands to benefit waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and other wetland-dependent migratory birds would continue at current levels and intensities using prescribed burning, grazing, water level and salinity management, rice farming, moist soil management, and mowing and haying. Restoration and protection of native habitats including wetlands, prairie, and woodlands would proceed at current annual acreage rates and using existing techniques. The Refuge Complex would continue to provide opportunities for all of the Refuge System's priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation through the use of existing programs and facilities.

Refuge Management Alternative B: Emphasis on Intensifying Management of Wetland Habitats for Waterfowl, Shorebirds, Wading Birds, and Other Wetland-Dependent Migratory Birds

Under this Alternative, the Refuge Complex would focus its management efforts on active management of wetland and upland habitats to benefit waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and other wetland-dependent migratory and resident birds. In marsh habitats, grazing intensity, annual prescribed burn acreage, and the frequency of burning would be increased to substantially increase the amount of marsh habitat in early successional plant communities. Two new marsh semi-impoundments totaling 7,500 acres would be constructed and water management capabilities enhanced in existing impoundments through installation of new control structures and levees. The cooperative rice farming program, moist soil management, and haying and mowing programs on Anahuac NWR

would be expanded to enhance shallow freshwater wetland habitats and adjacent upland prairies for resident mottled ducks, and for wintering and migrating waterfowl shorebirds and wading birds. The Refuge Complex would also continue to provide and promote opportunities for all six of the National Wildlife Refuge System's priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses, with an emphasis on providing more public hunting opportunities.

Refuge Management Alternative C: Emphasis on Native Habitat Restoration and Addressing Major Threats to the Ecosystem

Under this Alternative, the Refuge Complex would focus its management efforts on restoring wetlands, native prairie, and woodlots, and on reversing trends of loss and degradation of these native habitats by increasing efforts to address coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion, and loss of freshwater and sediment inflows. Restoration of native prairie and prairie wetlands would occur on all suitable upland sites. A portion of the historic fresh and intermediate component of the Refuge Complex's coastal marshes would be restored and ongoing interior marsh loss addressed by working with agencies and other stakeholders on major hydrologic restoration projects that restore freshwater inflows and further restrict saltwater intrusion across watersheds, and through refuge-specific projects. Efforts to address coastal wetland loss resulting from shoreline erosion along the Gulf, Galveston Bay, and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway would be intensified by increasing coordination among agencies and other stakeholders to develop and implement major projects aimed at stabilizing shorelines, and by implementing smaller scale projects on the Refuge Complex. The Refuge Complex would continue to provide the current level of opportunities for all six of the National Wildlife Refuge System's priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses.

[Approved CCP]

Refuge Management Alternative D: (Preferred Alternative) Emphasis on an Integrated Management Approach Combining: 1) Expanded Habitat Management and Restoration Programs, 2) New Research and Wildlife Population Monitoring, and 3) Increased Efforts to Address Major Threats to the Ecosystem

Under this Alternative, the Refuge Complex would continue and expand current habitat management and native habitat restoration programs, with increased monitoring and research to assess management actions and facilitate an adaptive management approach. Wetland habitat management activities for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wetland-dependent migratory birds including prescribed burning, controlled grazing, management of marsh semi-impoundments, and moist soil management would be refined and expanded through development of new infrastructure. Concurrently, additional restoration of native habitats including wetlands, prairie, and woodlots would be undertaken to benefit a variety of native fauna, with a focus on priority species identified as in

need of conservation actions through national and international conservation initiatives.

Additional shoreline protection and hydrologic restoration projects would be implemented on the Refuge Complex and coordination with other agencies would be expanded to address shoreline erosion and interior marsh loss on a landscape scale. Implementation of major projects that protect, restore, and enhance coastal marshes by restoring freshwater inflows, providing sediments through the beneficial use of dredge materials, restricting saltwater intrusion, and protecting shorelines would be the goal of this interagency coordination and cooperation. Through new partnerships with universities and other agencies, additional research and monitoring would be conducted to assess the impacts of relative sea level rise and to gather baseline data on fish and wildlife populations and habitat use with an emphasis on documenting the status of several sensitive or declining species. The Refuge Complex would also continue to provide and promote opportunities for all six of the National Wildlife Refuge System's priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. The Refuge Complex would seek to improve the quality of visitor services and of the visitor experience.

Refuge Management Alternative E: Emphasis on a Passive Management Approach

Under this Alternative, the Refuge Complex would change its management focus from active habitat management and restoration to a more passive management approach, in which plant communities and wildlife populations are influenced primarily by natural events such as lightning-caused fires, herbivory by native wildlife, and tidal or stream flooding. Active habitat management and restoration activities including prescribed burning, controlled cattle grazing, rice farming, and moist soil management would be discontinued. Management of water levels and salinities through active manipulation of water control structures would be discontinued. Efforts to address threats to ecosystem health would focus on monitoring rather than active restoration or protection. The Refuge Complex would continue to provide opportunities for all six of the National Wildlife Refuge System's priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation, but administrative oversight and management would occur at reduced levels.

Summary of Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternatives

Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative A (NEPA No Action Alternative) - No Expansion, Current Status

This Alternative assumes no change from the existing refuge boundaries within the Refuge Complex. This is the "no action" alternative as required under NEPA

and is considered the base from which to compare the other expansion alternatives. There would be no expansion of any of the four refuge boundaries within the Refuge Complex.

Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative B - 33,590 Acre Expansion

This Alternative continues the four refuges' historic focus on land acquisition primarily in the coastal marsh and the adjacent agricultural uplands. Acquisition would continue to focus on habitats of particular value to the waterfowl resource and other wetland-dependent migratory birds. This Refuge Expansion Alternative concentrates on high-value wintering waterfowl habitats near the coast that are contiguous to existing refuges. In addition to these high biological value wetland habitats, this alternative also includes areas identified as necessary for refuge management. Expansion is proposed for each of the four refuges in the Refuge Complex.

[Approved LPP]

Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) - 64,260 Acre Expansion*

**Please note that this alternative includes all of the lands in the preceding Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative B. Similar to Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative B, this Alternative continues the four refuges' historic focus on land acquisition primarily in the coastal marsh and adjacent agricultural uplands. Much of the acquisition would still focus on habitats of particular value to the waterfowl resource and other wetland-dependent migratory birds. The wetlands portions of this expansion alternative concentrate on high-value wintering waterfowl habitats near the coast that are contiguous to existing refuges. In addition to these primarily wetland areas, this Alternative includes two areas of important native coastal prairie with high habitat value for resident mottled ducks, many species of grassland-dependent migratory birds, and a wide variety of other native wildlife species. In addition to these two kinds of high biological value habitats, this Alternative also includes areas identified as necessary for refuge management. Expansion is proposed for each of the four refuges in the Refuge Complex.*

Refuge Boundary Alternative D - 104,120 Acre Expansion*

**Please note that this alternative includes all of the lands in the preceding Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C. Similar to Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C, this Alternative continues the four refuge's historic focus on land acquisition primarily in the coastal marsh and adjacent agricultural uplands. Much of the acquisition would still focus on habitats of particular value to the waterfowl resource and other wetland-dependent migratory birds. The wetlands portions of this expansion alternative concentrate on high-value wintering waterfowl habitats near the coast which are contiguous to existing refuges. In addition to these primarily wetland areas, this Alternative again includes two areas of important*

native coastal prairie with high habitat value for resident mottled ducks, many species of grassland-dependent migratory birds, and a wide variety of other native wildlife species. This Alternative also includes an important near-coast bottomland hardwood area, which is an acquisition target new to this Refuge Complex. The primary habitat type in this area is forested wetlands which provide high quality wintering, migrational, and nesting habitats for waterfowl and other wetland-dependent migratory bird species and important migration and nesting habitat for neotropical migratory songbirds. And finally, in addition to these various kinds of high biological value habitats, this Alternative also includes areas identified as necessary for refuge management. Expansion is proposed for each of the four refuges in the Refuge Complex.

Basis for Decision in Selecting Approved Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)

For the reasons outlined below, the Service believes that Refuge Management Alternative D (Preferred Alternative) represents the most desirable approach to meet the establishment purposes of the refuges in the Refuge Complex, the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the conservation of Trust fish and wildlife species including migratory birds and Threatened and Endangered species, while recognizing the need to address emerging threats to biological integrity, biological diversity, and ecosystem health. This alternative focuses on protecting and enhancing existing wetland and upland habitats on the Refuge Complex through active management, continues and expands efforts to enhance and restore native tallgrass coastal prairie and woodland habitat on suitable sites, continues and expands efforts to address major ecosystem threats, uses additional scientific monitoring and studies to guide an adaptive management approach with increased emphasis on declining or sensitive species, and expands wildlife-dependent recreational uses with an emphasis on enhancing the quality of the refuge visitor experience.

The intensive management of wetland habitats on the Refuge Complex proposed under Refuge Management Alternative D is needed to counter habitat changes and losses that have occurred on a landscape scale in the region. Moist soil management and rice farming replace many benefits historically provided by natural prairie wetlands, which have almost completely disappeared in the region, and provide concentrated food resources and other habitat benefits for migratory birds and other wetland-dependent wildlife. Similarly, by replacing former natural disturbance regimes which would otherwise not occur due large-scale conversion of surrounding habitats to other land uses, prescribed burning and controlled grazing help maintain biological diversity in both plant and animal communities in Refuge Complex wetlands, and enhance habitat values for waterfowl and many other migratory bird species. Use of actively-managed water control structures or passive structures such as rock weirs helps maintain the historic continuum of fresh, intermediate, brackish, and saline marshes in support of maintaining natural biological diversity, enhancing habitat values for waterfowl

and other migratory birds, and reducing the negative impacts of saltwater intrusion into non-tidal or micro-tidal fresh and intermediate marshes.

The Service fully recognizes the importance of restoring and managing native coastal prairie on the Refuge Complex. It is estimated that less than 1 percent of the over 9 million acres of the western Gulf Coast's native tallgrass prairie that existed at the turn of the 20th century now remains. The Service believes that the proposed objectives and strategies for native prairie restoration under Refuge Management Alternative D represent the most feasible approach to restoring prairie on the Refuge Complex over the next 15 years. The techniques required to restore native prairie on the upper Texas coast are extremely labor intensive and expensive. Other limiting factors to prairie restoration on the Refuge Complex include limited site suitability due to hydric soil conditions, the availability of a viable seed supply, alterations of soil chemistry and soil microbial communities resulting from previous conversion to rice agriculture, and extreme competition from non-native invasive grasses and woody plant species.

The stated objectives and strategies for protecting and enhancing existing and restoring woodland habitats on the Refuge Complex under Refuge Management Alternative D take into account several factors. Historically, the limited upland habitats currently found on the Refuge Complex consisted of native tallgrass coastal prairie with the possible exception of the riparian woodland habitats that naturally occurred on higher elevation bayou banks and the chenier ridges along the northern boundary of Texas Point NWR. Naturally occurring fires and grazing by native ungulates such as bison helped maintain this native grassland community. The Service believes that managing existing prairie remnants and restoring prairie on suitable upland sites such as fallowed croplands on Anahuac NWR is critical to maintaining the region's overall biological diversity and biological integrity given the extremely rare and threatened status of this habitat type in the region. This approach is also consistent with the Service's Refuge System Biological Integrity policy which establishes the restoration of historic habitat conditions where feasible as the ideal. Proposed objectives for protecting existing and restoring additional woodland habitat on the Refuge Complex under Refuge Management Alternative D also considered site suitability. Site-specific conditions including soil chemistry, soil salinity, hydrology, and elevation dictate site suitability for woodland habitat restoration. Suitable sites for creating woodlots on the Refuge Complex are extremely limited.

The Service believes that objectives and strategies proposed under Refuge Management Alternative D are critically important to address existing and emerging threats to biological integrity, biological diversity, and environmental health on the Refuge Complex. These threats include sea level rise and land subsidence that are exacerbating coastal erosion and loss of important coastal habitats, decrease in sediment supply to littoral zones, shorelines, and marshes, altered hydrological systems affected by decreased freshwater inflows and increased saltwater intrusion, expansion of invasive species including non-native

plants such as Chinese tallow and deep-rooted sedge, contaminants affecting water quality, and new oil and gas exploration and development. Recent scientific information on global climate change suggests that the less conservative projections for sea level rise along the Gulf Coast warrant serious consideration. Even the most conservative estimates of projected sea level rise in this region will result in increased rates of coastal erosion and habitat loss on the Refuge Complex. Expanded coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other Federal, State, and local agencies proposed under this Alternative will be needed to address these threats. Beneficial use of dredge material is one of the most practical solutions available to reduce rates of habitat loss, and use of nearshore sand supplies to restore barrier beaches and dunes along the Gulf of Mexico must also be evaluated. Similarly, expanded interagency coordination on landscape-scale hydrological restoration projects under this Alternative will restore and maintain biological integrity and biological diversity on the Refuge Complex. Expanded efforts to control invasive species plants and animals using Integrated Pest Management under the Preferred Alternative will be critical in the face of existing and emerging threats from a wide-range of invasive plants and animals. Threats from contaminants will be reduced through water quality monitoring and by enhancing response capabilities to protect resources from off-refuge accidental releases. Finally, the Service will continue to manage oil and gas activities related to exploration and development of privately owned minerals underlying the Refuge Complex under this Alternative so as to minimize environmental impacts by requiring use of best management practices and restoration following cessation of activities.

The Service believes that the objectives and strategies proposed under Refuge Management Alternative D represent the most feasible approach to managing public uses on the Refuge Complex over the next 15 years in a manner which ensures that these uses remain compatible with the establishment purposes of the refuges and mission of the Refuge System, and consistent with protection of public safety. Under Refuge Management Alternative D (the Preferred Alternative), the Service will enhance and expand all wildlife-dependent recreational programs on the Refuge Complex. This includes implementation of several strategies, which expand and enhance opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

Basis for Decision in Selecting Approved Land Protection Plan (LPP)

In selecting Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C as its approved Land Protection Plan, the Service considered ecological values, benefits to management of existing refuges, levels of threat, and feasibility as affected by land ownership patterns and projected availability of funding. Under Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C (Preferred Alternative), the Service is proposing to include areas containing the largest remaining tracts of native coastal prairie on the upper Texas coast, in addition to important areas of coastal marsh adjacent to existing refuges, within new approved refuge boundaries. This would allow the Service to acquire lands or interests in lands from willing sellers within those areas (subject to availability of funds).

The “Wetland Preservation Program, Category 8 – Texas Gulf Coast” was a joint effort between Federal, State, and private participants to identify high-value wintering waterfowl habitat along the Texas Coast that required little or no additional development. Within the Chenier Plain region of the upper Texas Gulf Coast, the “Category 8 Plan” identified the following five high-value wintering waterfowl habitats: (#1) Oyster Bayou Marsh, (#4) Lake Surprise area, (#5) McFaddin Marsh, (#7) Sea Rim Marsh, and (#10) Robinson Bayou Marsh. (The numbers indicate that area’s “Preservation Effort Priority” ranking.) All of these five high-value wintering waterfowl habitats are included in Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C, the Service’s Preferred Alternative.

In 1990, Region 2 published its Regional Wetlands Concept Plan addressing the wetland issues of each State within its region separately. The Regional Wetlands Concept Plan steps down the National Plan to the local, site-specific level and discusses the wetland functions, values, threats, and other issues on a state by state basis. The Regional Plan contains a list of priority wetlands sites that have been evaluated through the wetlands assessment threshold criteria of the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan and qualify for acquisition under the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act. Within the Chenier Plain region of the upper Texas Gulf coast, the Regional Plan identified the following four areas as “Texas Priority Wetlands for Acquisition Consideration”: 1) Middleton Marsh, 2) Horseshoe Marsh, 3) Lower Marsh, and 4) Robinson Bayou Marsh. Each of these four wetland sites meets all threshold criteria and qualifies for acquisition consideration under provisions of the National Wetlands Conservation Plan. All four of these wetlands sites are included in Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C.

In addition to these primarily wetland areas, this Alternative includes two areas of important native coastal prairie with high habitat value for resident mottled ducks, many species of grassland-dependent migratory birds, and a wide variety of other native wildlife species. The primary habitat type for these areas is non-saline prairie, of which a significant component is prairie/grassland, which is a

unique community type within the Texas Chenier Plain region. One of these areas, "Middleton Prairie", is probably the largest remnant native coastal tallgrass prairie remaining on the Upper Texas Coast.

Over 9 million acres of native tallgrass prairie once occurred along the western Gulf Coast in Texas and Louisiana. Based on remnant stands of native grasslands, prairies on the upper Texas coast were characterized by little bluestem, brownseed paspalum, and Indiangrass or eastern gammagrass and switchgrass associations, depending on hydrology. It is now estimated that 99.8 percent and 99.6 percent of little bluestem prairies and eastern gamma grass/switchgrass prairies, respectively, have been lost in Texas. The Nature Conservancy's Gulf Coast Marshes and Prairies Ecoregional Conservation Plan identified the "Middleton Prairie" and "Robinson-Oyster Bayou" areas in Chambers County as important conservation areas because they contain remnants of both "Critically Imperiled" prairie plant communities. Both of these areas are included in Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C.

Besides the two above-described types of high biological value habitats, Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C includes areas identified by refuge management as necessary for the following reasons: lands that "fill in the gaps" in earlier single-ownership based expansions and complete logical biological/geographical boundaries; lands which are hydrologically linked to adjoining already-acquired refuge lands; and lands whose acquisition would contribute to more effective management of the already acquired lands.

The Service recognizes that the forested wetlands along Taylor's Bayou and woodland and wetland habitats on the Bolivar Peninsula are extremely important to neotropical-nearctic migrant songbirds and other native wildlife species. Both of these areas were proposed for acquisition under Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative D. As identified in Appendix C of the EIS/CCP/LPP, there are many additional Federal, State, and private conservation programs available to assist private landowners, and the Service believes that these programs currently provide the most feasible approach for achieving conservation objectives along Taylor's Bayou and on the Bolivar Peninsula. As noted in the Land Protection Plan, the Service will continue to work with landowners, other agencies, and conservation organizations to promote habitat conservation, restoration, and management in these important habitat areas and throughout the region.

Finally, we think that Refuge Boundary Expansion Alternative C provides the very best opportunity to achieve additional habitat protection with minimal, if any, increase in operational costs. Each year the Service must request the funding necessary for operations and maintenance of its Refuge land base within the context of the total national budget.

Public Comments on the Final EIS/CCP/LPP

The Final EIS/CCP/LPP was released to the public on June 30, 2008, the same day a Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published its Notice of Availability and receipt of the Final EIS/CCP/LPP in the Federal Register (Vol. 73, P. 41351) on July 18, 2008; and, established August 18, 2008, as the end of the 30-day waiting period.

After an extensive distribution, the Draft EIS/CCP/LPP received very few comments (less than 25); and, the Final EIS/CCP/LPP received no comments.

Measures to Minimize Environmental Harm

No mitigation measures are proposed for implementation of the two approved plans (CCP and LPP) because the EIS does not identify any significant environmental impacts for either of the two preferred alternatives. Both of the approved plans are designed to minimize environmental harm and maximize positive benefits to the environment.

The portions of the EIS addressing the development of the CCP are comprehensive or “programmatic” in nature and address a conceptual broad agency program. This “programmatic” EIS does not attempt to provide NEPA compliance for site-specific projects which may be undertaken in the future to implement the CCP strategies. Specific mitigation measures needed for any site/project-specific impacts will be determined in future detailed project planning, some of which may occur in step-down management plans.

The portions of the EIS addressing the development of the LPP determined that all of the impacts to the environment from this plan were positive except for the negative impact to the tax base. This negative impact was found to be very small and is more than off-set by payments under the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act and the benefits to the local economies derived from eco-tourism and refuge management activities.

Appendix E of the Final EIS/CCP/LPP contains Compatibility Determinations (CDs) for all of the public uses permitted in the CCP; and these CDs contain stipulations to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any environmental impacts associated with the uses. The refuge managers will be responsible for ensuring that the stipulations are followed.

The Intra-Service Section 7 Biological Evaluation, included in the document as Appendix J, determined that implementation of the two preferred alternatives would have: 1) No effect on listed endangered species or their critical habitat; 2) No effect on proposed endangered species or their critical habitat; and

3) No effect on candidate endangered species. These determinations were concurred with by the USFWS Clear Lake Ecological Services Field Office.

Availability of the Plans and Record of Decision

The Final EIS/CCP/LPP and ROD are both available on the following website:
<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/Plan/docs/LINKS.pdf>.

Copies of the Final EIS/CCP/LPP and ROD can also be obtained by contacting the Texas Chenier Plain Refuges Complex Office, 509 Washington St., Anahuac, Texas 77514 (409-267-3337); or by e-mailing Doug St. Pierre at doug_stpierre@fws.gov.



Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Acting

16 Sept. 2008

Date