

**Public Review  
Draft Sport Hunting**

**Decision Documents**

for

**Lacassine NWR  
Draft 2009**

**Contents**

1. Draft Hunting Plan
2. Draft Environmental  
Assessment

Draft Sport Hunting

Decision Documents

for

**Lacassine NWR**  
Sport Hunting Plan

**DRAFT SPORT HUNTING PLAN**  
**UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
**LACASSINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
**2009**

Recommended by \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Refuge Manager

Reviewed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Refuge Supervisor

Concurrence by \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Chief, NWRS

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Director

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## I. INTRODUCTION

During 2007 the U S Fish and Wildlife Service completed the Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge (LNWR) Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (LCCP). The LCCP took nearly 5 years to complete and went through an extensive public scoping and public comment process. This major planning initiative lead the way for the development of the Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex Visitor Services Plan (VSP) which integrates the goals, objectives and strategies found in the LCCP related to hunting and the LNWR Hunting Plan. The Hunting Plan addendum was prepared to conform with current U S Fish and Wildlife Service Policy and collectively supersedes the former 1984 LNWR Hunting Plan.

LNWR is located in Cameron Parish Louisiana. and straddles the border of the Pleistocene Prairie and the Chenier Plain marshes. It occupies 34,724 acres including a 653-acre School Section leased from the Cameron Parish School Board. The refuge is almost entirely fresh marsh and open water with only a few natural ridges, spoil banks, and levees and three relatively small areas of farm land. The refuge is bisected by the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and Bayou Lacassine. It is bordered on the east by the Mermentau River and on the west by the Bell City Drainage Canal. The southern border of the refuge is formed by Lake Misere, Bayou Misere, Mud Lake and Grand Lake.

The LNWR was administratively combined with nearby Cameron Prairie and Sabine National Wildlife Refuge in 2004 and is now part of the Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge serves as the Headquarters for the Complex.

Although established to provide wintering habitat for waterfowl, LNWR supports many communities of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. The refuge lies at the interface of higher agricultural land and the coastal marshes and includes considerable acreage of marsh and agriculture within its boundaries. It has high plant and animal species diversity due to its variety of elevations and water depths. In this flat part of the country, elevation differences are measured in inches and feet rather than hundreds or thousands of feet. Wildlife species on the refuge are those indigenous to the marshes of coastal Louisiana. Several nesting colonies of wading and water birds, such as ibises, roseate spoonbills (*Ajaia ajaja*), and egrets are found here. A large population of alligators and furbearers, such as nutria (*Myocastor coypos*) and raccoons, are on the refuge. Several hundred thousand ducks and geese historically utilize the refuge as wintering habitat. Wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*), mottled ducks (*Anas fulvigula*), fulvous (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) and black-bellied (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) whistling ducks nest here during the breeding season.

Habitat on the refuge may support transient Louisiana black bears, a federally-listed species. No known Louisiana black bears are on the refuge on a regular basis nor have there been any recent sightings.

The paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*) is a Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 4, species of management concern. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF)

personnel have identified Lacassine Bayou and the Mermentau River as extremely important areas for paddlefish. Paddlefish populations have declined throughout much of their historic range in North America due to habitat changes and over-fishing, mostly to supply the caviar market. Due to their scarcity, and to threats posed from over-harvest, no harvest of paddlefish is currently allowed in Louisiana.

LNWR provides nesting and feeding areas for large numbers of wading and marsh birds. Historically, Blue Grove, located in the southern portion of the pool, and Unit C were the main rookery sites. Smaller rookeries in cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), giant bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*), willow trees (*Salix nigra*) and shrubs have also been located around Lacassine Pool. White-faced (*Plegadis chihi*) and white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), great (*Ardea alba*), cattle (*Bubulcus ibis*), and snowy (*Egretta thula*) egrets, great blue (*Ardea herodias*), Louisiana (*Egretta tricolor*), and little blue herons (*Egretta caerulea*), anhingas (*Anhinga anhinga*), roseate spoonbills, and neotropical cormorants (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) are a few of the more common species found on the refuge.

Southwest Louisiana's strategic location is enhanced by a diversity of habitat types favored by shorebirds, including beaches, marsh, estuarine tidal flats, rice fields, and crawfish ponds. The refuge provides resting and feeding habitat mainly for spring migrating shorebirds.

Raptors of LNWR include many species of hawks, owls, and vultures. Year-round residents include the black (*Coragyps atratus*) and turkey (*Cathartes aura*) vulture, osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), sharp-shinned (*Accipiter striatus*), red-shouldered (*Buteo lineatus*), red-tailed (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and Cooper's (*Accipiter cooperii*) hawks, Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), and barn (*Tyto alba*), great horned (*Bubo virginianus*) and barred (*Strix varia*) owls (USFWS 2002). Additionally, the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), a state-listed rare species, has been routinely recorded on Lacassine Refuge and vicinity.

LNWR is not as heavily used by migrating neotropical birds as the coast proper of Louisiana which is the first landfall the birds reach following their migration across the Gulf of Mexico. The encroaching, non-native Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*) has decreased the value of the refuge habitat to neotropical birds. The refuge has limited acreage that can support the preferred species of trees and other vegetation important to neotropical migratory birds.

LNWR provides suitable habitat for armadillos, rabbits, nutria, mink (*Mustela vison*), muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*), skunks, opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*), otters (*Lutra canadensis*), raccoons, coyotes, and whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). It is estimated that the deer population on the refuge is 300 individuals. Approximately 50 percent of the refuge or 16,000 acres can be considered habitat suitable for deer. The LDWF estimates that excellent freshwater marsh habitat can support a potential density of one deer per 30 acres. On Lacassine Refuge, deer are concentrated on the spoil banks and agricultural fields found throughout the refuge. Deer utilize marsh areas primarily for

feeding and escape cover. Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) and swamp rabbits (*Sylvilagus aquaticus*), are found on the refuge in abundance. A recent study shows that species breed throughout the entire year at this latitude and the number of young produced annually is greater than that of rabbits in more upland habitats. Even though many predators prey on rabbits, their population numbers are considered high. An annual harvesting of rabbits from the refuge would have no negative impacts on the population and would allow opportunities for recreational hunting.

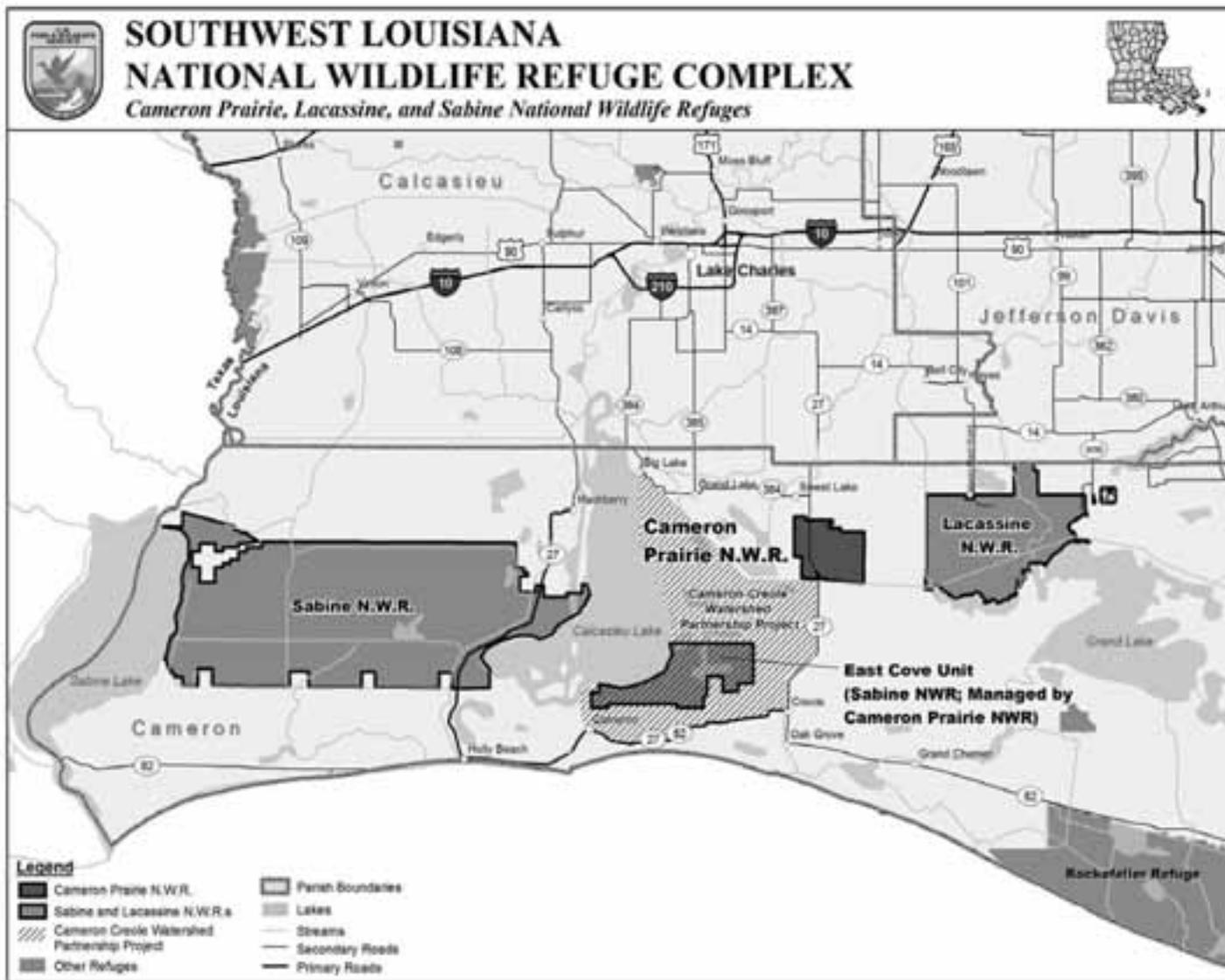
LNWR freshwater marshes support many species of reptiles and amphibians, however little is known about their populations. The American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) is the only member of this group that is managed.

Refuge fish species include catfish, bowfin, bass, bream, crappie, mullet and gar. Fish populations have periodically suffered from the negative effects of drought, especially in Lacassine Pool.

#### Land cover/habitat types on Lacassine Refuge

Habitat/Cover	Approximate Acres
Impounded Fresh Marsh (Lacassine Pool)	16,000
Natural (Unimpounded) Fresh Marsh	14,700
Forested wetlands	352
Shrub wetlands	348
Open Water	1,048
Managed Fresh Marsh (moist-soil plant impoundment)	307
Coastal Prairie	334
Croplands (rice and fallow)	1,109
Roads, levees, miscellaneous	526
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>34,724</b>

Source: USFWS 2003



## II. CONFORMANCE WITH STATUTORY AUTHORITY

LNWR was established on December 30, 1937, as Lacassine Migratory Waterfowl Refuge by the following: 1) Executive Order 7780, "...as a Refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife...;" 2) the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, "... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or any other management purpose, for migratory birds," (USC 715d). Additional lands were added to the refuge under 3) Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 "...for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources..." [16 USC 742f(a)(4)] and 4) "...for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services" [16 USC 742f(b)(1)].

This plan supports the priority public use provisions of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Hunting as specified in this plan is a wildlife-dependent recreational use and the law states that as such, it “shall receive priority consideration in national wildlife refuge planning and management.” The Secretary of Interior may permit hunting on a refuge if he/she determines that such use is compatible with the refuge purpose for which it was established. The hunting program would not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the purposes of the Refuge or mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (603 FW).

Public hunting on the LNWR is an appropriate and compatible form of wildlife oriented public recreation which is compatible with the purpose for which the refuge was established. Hunting, being a viable management tool when used wisely, often inhibits the overpopulation of species within a given habitat community and can provide for greater wildlife diversity. In this way the environment is preserved for the benefit of a variety of wildlife. The hunting program is designed to minimize potential conflicts with Refuge purposes. Hunting of big game (whitetail deer,) and migratory birds, ducks, gallinules, coots, and geese) are permitted except within designated closed areas.

Annual hunt administration costs including salary, equipment, waterfowl boundary, sign maintenance, fuel, etc. total \$25,000. Less than one full time employee equivalent is expended in conducting hunt-related activities. Funds are available to meet the conditions set forth in the Refuge Recreation Act. It is anticipated that funding would continue to be sufficient to continue the hunting program in the future. In summary, funds are available to continue the existing hunt program and proposed hunting activities should not interfere with the primary purposes for which the refuge was established.

### **III. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES**

During Comprehensive Conservation Planning the following priorities were established:

#### **Refuge Priorities**

1. Develop and manage the refuge for migratory birds, with special emphasis on waterfowl (especially northern pintail and mottled ducks).
2. Develop and manage the refuge for native flora and fauna common to the marshes in Louisiana and rare and endangered species/habitat types;
3. Provide opportunities for research by serving as a demonstration area and outdoor laboratory for those studying the ecology of southwest Louisiana wetlands; and
4. Encourage wildlife-dependent recreation (e.g., hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental educational and interpretation) on the refuge compatible with the refuge’s mission and goals.

## Hunting Program Objectives

Offer quality hunting experiences for hunters; review the refuge hunting program on an annual basis to monitor its success and to consider ways of improving the program.

**Discussion:** LNWR has an active hunting program for waterfowl and white-tailed deer. There is not much hunting pressure during teal season; instead, winter waterfowl hunting for ducks, coots (*Fulica americana*), and geese is more popular. Currently, 10,434 acres are open to waterfowl hunting. The Unit B farm unit is a lottery hunt area for youth and senior youth hunters open only during the second split of the State waterfowl season on Saturday (youth) and Wednesday (senior). All hunters are required to obtain a hunting brochure, which also serves as the permit when signed. There is not a central check station for hunters to check in bagged birds, except for lottery hunters. Hunters are able to access the refuge from various locations, making it difficult to get hunter use numbers.

Archery-only hunting for white-tailed deer is also allowed by permit during the month of October 1 through the Friday before the LA west zone duck and coot waterfowl season. Hunters may utilize the entire refuge excluding the headquarters area. Deer hunters are requested to provide harvest information, but it is not mandatory.

### Strategies:

- (a) Allow the harvesting of white-tailed deer with archery equipment during the month of October 1 through the Friday before the LA west zone duck and coot waterfowl season to control deer numbers and maintain a healthy deer herd. Consider expanding the season to include a 1- to 2-day, modern firearm or muzzle-loader hunt for deer herd control.
- (b) Maintain waterfowl hunting schedule to coordinate with Sabine National Wildlife Refuge. Both refuges are open four days a week.
- (c) Continue the lottery waterfowl hunt for youths and seniors and general adult lottery hunt.
- (d) During the lottery hunts, place a temporary sign at head of Streeter Road that reads: "Observation Tower Closed until Noon - Hunt in Progress." Also, improve the crossovers/bridges used during the lottery hunt.
- (e) Modify lottery hunt blinds to make them safer and more accessible.
- (f) Consider participating in the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program to charge fees for the lottery hunt and the refuge hunting permit.

Continuing to conduct a well-managed hunt on the LNWR would assist the refuge in meeting one of its primary objectives, which provides the general public with quality wildlife-oriented recreational programs that are compatible with the purposes for which it

was established. It will also aid in fulfilling the U S Fish and Wildlife Services Strategic Plan, Goal 3. The special youth-only waterfowl hunt provides a unique opportunity for the refuge to introduce young hunters to the National Wildlife Refuge System and educate them on the importance of wildlife conservation. Seniors hunts give this respected segment of society easy access to hunting in a manner which allows them to continue their hunting heritage.

Refer to Decision Document Package, Environmental Assessment for additional information.

## **IV. ASSESSMENT**

### **1. Compatibility with Refuge Objectives**

Hunting is one of the six wildlife-oriented recreational uses prioritized by the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. The Secretary of Interior may permit hunting on a refuge if he/she determines that such use is compatible with the refuge purpose for which it was established. As published in the final LCCP the hunting program would not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the purposes of the Refuge or mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (603 FW). Hunting meets refuge objectives 3 and 4 by providing a wildlife-dependant recreation and also by enhancing indigenous species of wildlife.

### **2. Biological Soundness**

#### Deer

Deer hunts have proven to be not only compatible with refuge objectives but also beneficial in meeting them. Deer harvest is essential to maintain the herd at or below habitat carrying capacity. When deer are overpopulated, they overbrowse their habitat, which can completely change the plant composition of an area. Overpopulation can also lead to outbreaks of devastating diseases such as epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) and bluetongue (BTV) which have been found locally in overpopulated herds. Overpopulation leads to starvation, increased car-deer collisions and poor overall herd health.

Abomasal parasite counts (APC) are periodically conducted on deer populations throughout the state to assist in determining herd health. Blood samples and serum samples are taken from deer collected for APC or other research to monitor the occurrence of bluetongue virus (BTV) and epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD). These samples are sent to the Southeast Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) in Georgia for laboratory analyses. SCWDS also assists with other disease and parasite problems concerning species other than white-tailed deer. Samples from sick or dead wildlife also are sent to SCWDS for analysis. SCWDS provides reports to LWDF

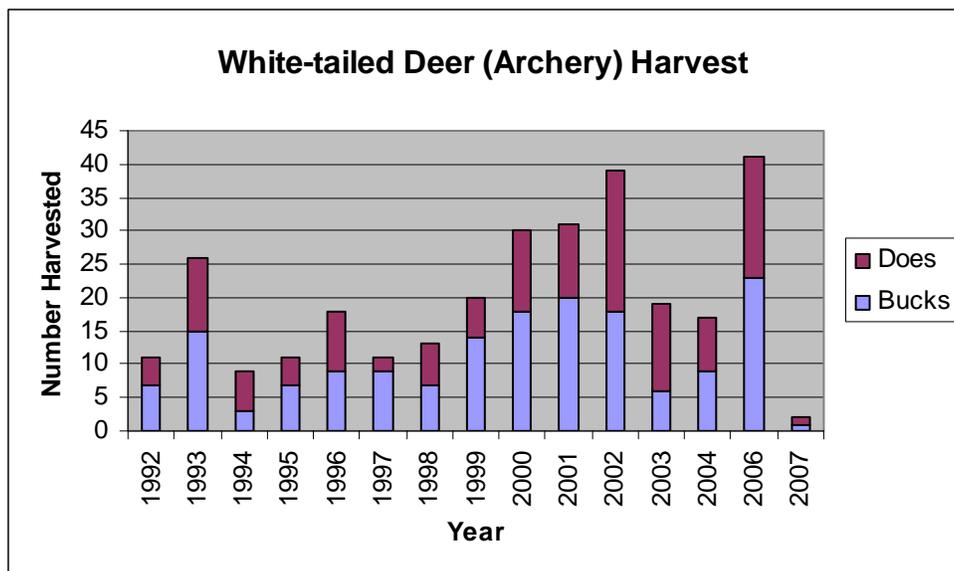
indicating the cause of death or illness along with information concerning implications to other wild animals, domestic livestock, and human health (LDWF 2007)

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a neurodegenerative disease that has been identified in deer and elk. It is a poorly understood disease that is related to other spongiform encephalopathies such as scrapie in sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease) in cattle, and Creutzfeld-Jakob disease in humans. This disease has recently become a major wildlife issue in several states. At this time, CWD is not known to occur in Louisiana (LDWF 2007).

Deer are very active during the peak of the breeding season. LDFW attempts to set hunting seasons during these times to increase hunter success. Breeding season dates are established from fetal measurements and backdating from the harvest date. A 1966 investigation indicated three-distinct breeding seasons for deer in Louisiana. Additional studies affirmed these three distinct times; however, isolated deer herds with different breeding seasons within the same hunting season area also were documented. Data collected from these two activities allow biologists to determine peak breeding activity times for the herd and recommend hunting seasons that coincide with these times. Season dates are especially important for those clubs and landowners involved with quality and trophy deer management (LDWF 2007)

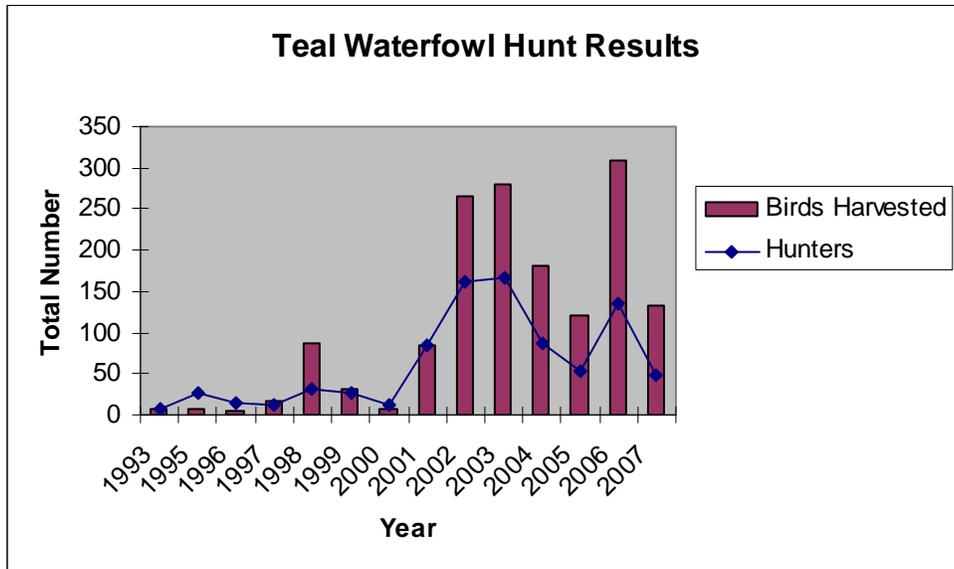
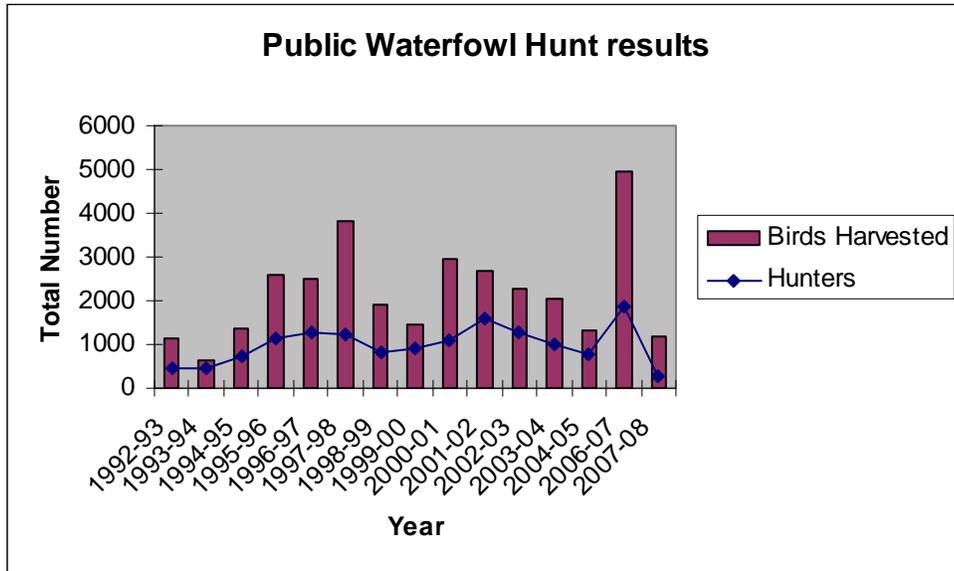
The LDWF recorded deer harvest rates from 1996-2006 from various hunting clubs within Cameron Parish. An average of 95 deer per year was harvested during the 10-year period. (*Personal comm.*).

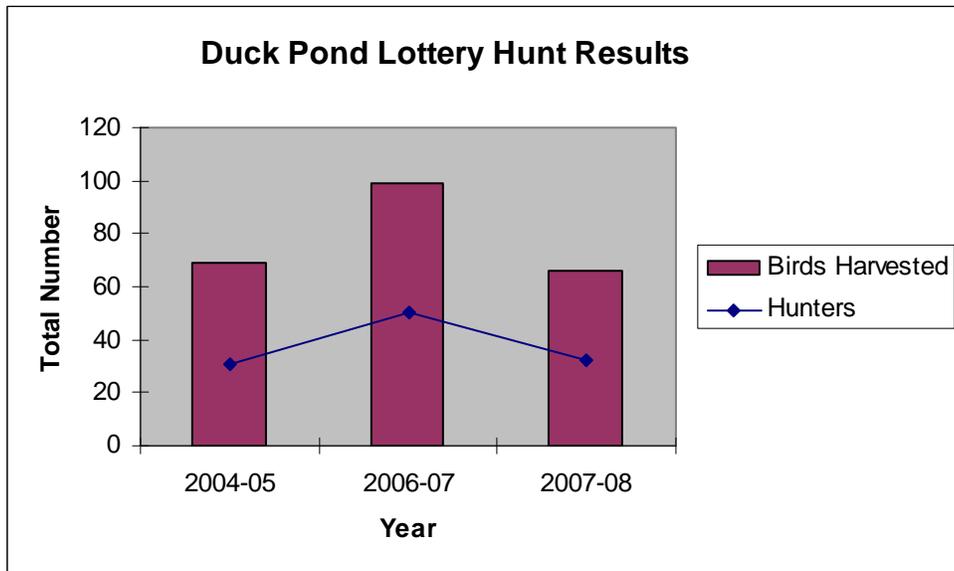
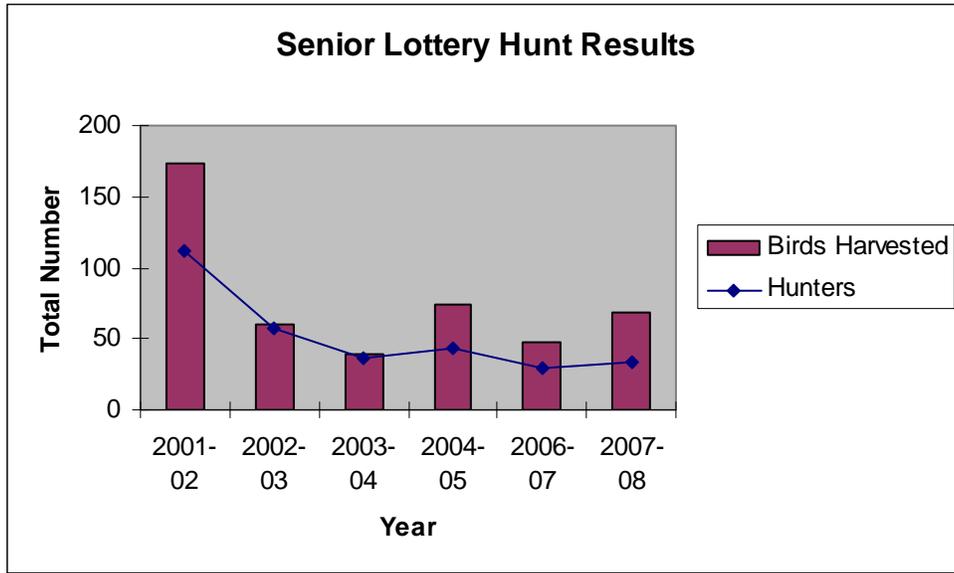
A census taken in January 1984 revealed that approximately 300 white-tailed deer are on the refuge. Approximately 50 percent or 16,000 acres of the refuge can be considered deer habitat. Although some of this acreage may be wetter than most good fresh marsh deer habitat, it does provide some habitat value. LDWF personnel estimate that excellent fresh marsh habitat can support a potential of one deer per 30 acres (Gosselink et al. 1979). On Lacassine NWR this species is concentrated on the spoil banks found throughout the refuge. The marsh itself is primarily utilized for feeding and escapes cover. A moderate quality hunting experience is possible on Lacassine for white-tailed deer.

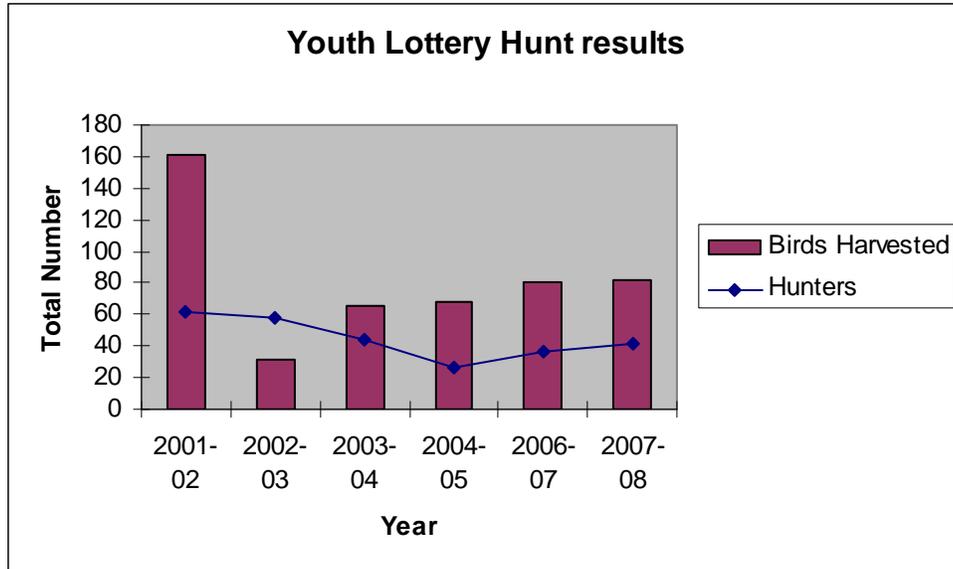


### 3. Migratory Birds

Waterfowl hunting currently occurs on 10,434 acres. Each year several hundred hunters utilize the area. The harvest rate averages between 1 to 3 ducks per hunter per day depending upon weather conditions, hunting pressure, and hunter experience. Very few geese are harvested on the public hunting area.







Mourning doves utilize the refuge throughout the year. The wooded areas on spoil banks provide limited nesting and roosting habitat for this species. Since only 600 acres of the refuge is tillable, mourning dove populations are too low to support public hunting. Current management of the 600-acre farm units call for flooding during the summer months. This management practice would not be conducive to good mourning dove management. Common moorhens and purple gallinules are present in moderate to high numbers on the refuge. The common snipe is also present in moderate numbers on the refuge, but the deep, fresh marsh areas found on the refuge do not lend themselves to providing a quality hunting experience for this species. The marsh at Lacassine is usually difficult to walk on and is usually too wet and the vegetation too rank to be considered good snipe habitat. Woodcock are also present in low to moderate numbers during the fall and winter along wooded stream banks and on brushy high areas found on the northern portion of the refuge. Since the numbers of this species are usually not of any significance, a quality hunting experience could not be provided for wood cock on LNWR

#### 4. Economic Feasibility

Annual hunt administration costs including salary, equipment, hunt area boundary and sign maintenance, hunting blind maintenance, fuel, etc. total \$25,000. The proposed hunts will be administered by refuge personnel and partners such as the LDWF. Enforcement assistance will be requested from the LDWF in the event that it is needed.

Past experience has shown that properly managed hunts are demanding of both manpower and funding. Funds are needed for administration (planning, brochures, maps, etc.), law enforcement, and biological data collection. Harvest data collected during the hunts is essential to evaluate herd health and condition. Funds are needed to meet the conditions set forth in the Refuge Recreation Act.

## **5. Relationship with other Refuge Programs**

The hunting program does not conflict with other hunts or with non-consumptive users. Archery hunting of deer opens during October 1 and continues through the Friday before the LA west zone duck and coot waterfowl season and does not conflict with other hunts. Other forms of deer hunting (modern/primitive firearms, and archery) if permitted would be of limited duration. Non-consumptive users on the refuge during the migratory bird hunting season enjoy a 26,000 acre area which is closed to hunting but open to other priority public uses. During the deer hunting season, the refuge headquarters and LNWR Pool Wildlife Drive has been closed to hunting in an effort to provide an opportunity for wildlife observation and photography during this hunt. The area immediately adjacent to the Visitor Contact Station is available to wildlife observation and photography year round.

## **6. Recreational Opportunity**

The nature of LNWR dictates that much of the area will be under-utilized as compared to other areas its size. Several factors contribute to this situation. Foremost, the refuge overlies actively managed impounded marsh land. Ground conditions make road building and upkeep difficult. Although all-weather roads have been established to help improve public access, most of the refuge is still difficult to access. Accessible ATV trails are available during hunting season to help with individuals that have special needs only, and in accordance with State of Louisiana Physically Challenged Hunter Program.

## **V. DESCRIPTION OF HUNTING PROGRAM**

As a basis on which to establish a compatible hunting program, only specific portions of the refuge are open to hunting at any given time. Species include big game (deer) and migratory birds, (gallinules, snipe, dove, coots, geese, ducks). Seasons and bag limits may be more restrictive but not more liberal than those set by the state of Louisiana.

Annual consultation with the LDWF will continue. Spring meetings are held prior to the State's finalizing their regulations to ensure that any changes are properly coordinated. Proposed hunts that are more restrictive than state regulations include waterfowl and deer. All hunts are restricted to a portion of the season. All waterfowl hunters are required to use non-toxic shot.

Public waterfowl hunting is allowed on 9,700 acres south of the Intracoastal Waterway and between Lacassine Bayou and the Mermentau River. A signed hunt brochure is the required permit to hunt on the refuge. Waterfowl hunting occurs on designated hunt days for the entire Louisiana West Zone waterfowl hunting season. Hunting is allowed for ducks, geese, coots, and gallinules. No hunting is allowed during the goose only portion of the state waterfowl season.

A lottery hunt is open for all adults 18 years of age or older. Applications are required and all randomly selected hunters may hunt on selected days for both splits of the

Louisiana West Zone waterfowl hunting season. Hunters must hunt from established blinds or designated zones. Hunting is allowed for ducks, geese, coots, and gallinules.

Another lottery hunt is open for all youth 17 years of age or younger and seniors 55 years or older. Applications are required and all randomly selected hunters may hunt on selected days during the Louisiana West Zone waterfowl hunting season. Hunters must hunt from established blinds or designated zones. Hunters will continue to be allowed to take ducks, geese, coots, and gallinules.

The entire refuge is open to public archery deer hunting except the refuge headquarters and along the LNWR Pool Wildlife Drive. A signed hunt brochure is the required permit to hunt on the refuge. Hunters may hunt October 1 to the day before the Louisiana West Zone waterfowl hunting season opens in accordance with the LDWF daily and season limits. Limited duration special firearms hunts may be offered for deer herd control.

Enforcement of hunt regulations is primarily carried out by the full-time refuge law enforcement officer, supplemented with assistance from one other refuge officer when needed. Self check-in and out stations will be used to monitor the success of the hunt unless volunteers are available. It is estimated that <1.0 full-time equivalent involving three employees or volunteers would be required to perform the minimal duties associated with refuge hunts. Cost for salaries, materials and equipment upkeep would be approximately \$25,000 annually.

## **VI. MEASURES TAKEN TO AVOID CONFLICTS WITH OTHER MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

### **A. Biological Conflicts**

Refer to the Decision Document Package attached.

### **B. Public Use Conflicts**

The refuge attracts little non-consumptive use during the hunting season. A 26,000-acre “no hunting area” has been set aside for wildlife observation and photography to minimize conflicts between hunters and non-consumptive users during migratory bird hunts. A 700 acre area (the wildlife drive and headquarters area) is closed to hunting throughout the year.

There are no known conflicts between other groups of consumptive users.

### **C. Administrative Conflicts**

Hunts will not be encumbered with unnecessary procedures requiring funds and manpower to enforce. The only considerations to be observed will be procedures to insure that the resources are not damaged, that participants are assured of safety and

experience a quality hunt. Presently, little labor intensive data is collected during the hunts. Staggered tours of duty by law enforcement personnel minimize staffing shortages.

## **VII. CONDUCT OF THE HUNT**

### **A. Federal Register Publication**

The Secretary of the Interior has previously determined that the opening of LNWR to the hunting of migratory game birds was compatible with the principles of sound wildlife management and will otherwise be in the public interest (50 CFR 32). The Secretary opened the refuge to migratory game bird hunting in 1967. Regulations for archery deer hunting were published in the Federal Register and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) in 1984 and the first archery deer hunt was held during that year.

### **A. Refuge-specific hunting regulations**

#### **General Hunting Regulations**

Hunting regulations are designed to protect the sportsman and wildlife populations. The regulations below supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on national wildlife refuges as set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations. Hunting will be in accordance with applicable State regulations subject to the following conditions.

Individuals using LNWR are subject to inspections of permits, licenses, hunting, equipment, bag limits, boats, vehicles, and their contents by refuge or state officers.

#### **Permits**

Permits are required for all hunters. When signed and in the hunters possession, the permit provided in the Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex hunting brochure serves as a permit for all refuge hunts except those requiring limited lottery drawn permits. The signed permit acknowledges the hunters understanding of the regulations contained within the brochure. Limited lottery drawn permits are required for youth and senior waterfowl hunts. If a modern weapons/muzzleloader deer hunt is implemented it will also be managed through a lottery hunt program.

Youth hunters (as defined by state and federal law) must be supervised by an adult 21 years old or older, and the youth must possess proof of completion of a hunter education course prior to applying. For waterfowl hunts, adults may supervise no more than two youths. For big game hunts, the adult may supervise only one youth.

Hunters selected for lottery hunts that are not able to use their hunt day are encouraged to contact the refuge as soon as possible so the hunting opportunity can be made available to another hunt party. A standby list will be maintained by each refuge. If an advance cancellation occurs than the refuge manager will use the standby list to fill the available hunting opportunity.

## **ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS**

### **Requirements**

Each hunting party is required to complete and return a waterfowl harvest data form to the check station or designated drop box after each hunt.

### **Disabled access**

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to contact the refuge manager for information on special accommodations which are available. Hunters with disabilities must possess a Disabled Hunter Permit issued by the LDWF. State regulations and access conditions apply.

### **Access**

Motors, including trolling motors may not be used in refuge marshes. Airboats and ATV's are not permitted on the refuges.

### **Trail marking**

Marking trails with tape, ribbons, paper, paint, etc. is also prohibited on the refuges.

### **Weapon possession**

Archery equipment and firearms in vehicles on refuge roads or in boats on refuge waterways must be unloaded and either encased or dismantled. The only weapons which may be possessed while in the field and in refuge waterways are:

- (1) archery equipment during the refuge archery deer season;
- (2) shotguns with non-toxic shot during the waterfowl season in designated hunt areas. The weapon can not hold more than three shells. Possession of any weapon or ammunition on ANY refuge in any situation not listed above is prohibited.
- (3) *Modern firearms/muzzleloaders during the experimental deer hunt.*

### **Blinds/stands**

Hunting from a permanent blind or stand is prohibited. All hunting-related equipment must be removed immediately following each days hunt. Hunting from a tree in which a metal object has been drive to support a hunter is prohibited. The use of climbing spikes is prohibited. Cutting or removing any live vegetation, limbs, etc. (except for Chinese tallow trees) and/or importing *Pragmites* species (a.k.a. Roseau cane) for blind material or covers is prohibited.

## **Youth Hunters**

Youth Hunters as defined by state regulation are subject to the following rules and regulations:

For all hunting opportunities on the refuges youth hunters must be supervised by an adult 21 years of age or older, and must remain in sight of normal voice contact of the adult. For waterfowl hunts, adults may supervise no more than two youths. For big game hunts, the adult may supervise only one youth. Any youth hunter, as defined by state regulation, must possess proof of completion of an approved hunter safety course.

## **Restricted Activities**

**The Following Activities are Restricted or Prohibited and Common to all Refuges.**

Hunting within 150 feet of any public refuge road or designated hiking trail is prohibited.

### **Littering**

Littering is prohibited on all the refuges. Please pack out all trash and leave a clean marsh.

### **Camping and overnight parking**

No camping is permitted and vehicles must be removed from the refuge at night.

### **Fires**

Do not light fires.

### **Collecting**

Do not gather or carry away any plants, flowers, firewood, artifacts, etc. Permits are issued for special activities.

### **Harassing wildlife**

All wildlife is protected on all refuges. Only hunting and fishing activities which are authorized by refuge regulations are permitted.

### **Trapping**

Only furbearer trapping authorized by refuge manager is permitted. Permits are required.

## **Vehicles**

All motor vehicles are restricted to designated roads and parking areas. Roads and trails may be closed at any time due to adverse conditions.

## **Swimming**

Swimming is prohibited on all refuges.

## **Horseback riding**

Horses are prohibited on all refuges.

## **Pets**

All pets must be kept on leashes. Hunting dogs used during refuge waterfowl hunts must be kept under control at all times.

## **Baiting or hunting over bait**

No person may possess or distribute bait or hunt over bait, including any grain, salt, minerals or other feed on all refuges.

## **Alcoholic beverages**

Consumption of alcohol is prohibited on all refuges.

## **Spotlighting**

Using lights to observe or hunt wildlife is prohibited on all refuges.

## **Disabled Access**

Individuals with all disabilities are encouraged to contact the refuge manager for information on special accommodations which are available. Hunters with disabilities must possess a Disabled Hunter Permit issued by the LDWF. State regulations and access conditions apply.

## **Target practice**

Target practice with any weapon is prohibited.

## **Parking**

Blocking gates or roadways with vehicles is prohibited. Parking is permitted only in designated areas

**Refuge-specific hunting regulations for this program:**

Deer Archery	During the month of October through the Friday before the LA west zone duck and coot waterfowl season. Bag limit – In accordance with state regulations.
Deer Other	Experimental Modern/primitive firearm hunts in accordance with state regulations and special FWS permit.
Waterfowl Youth Lottery Hunt	During select days until noon during state season Permitted by lottery drawing only
Waterfowl Seniors Lottery Hunt	During the open waterfowl season on designated days - Permitted by lottery drawing only
Waterfowl Public Hunt	Open 4 days per week during state season. Open days will be published in the Annual Hunt Brochure which also serves as a permit.

**Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunt**

The public has generally supported the refuge hunting program with exceptions usually being a demand for more hunting, more access and longer seasons. Generally, the local public desires more hunting than less on the refuge. Public reaction from surrounding communities to all refuge hunts has been very favorable and should continue to be the same in the future. Nationally, there are some anti-hunting sentiments, and many organizations are opposed to hunting on national wildlife refuges. It is possible that some objections may be voiced to some or all of the hunts within this plan even though they have been open for years. During scoping and the development of the LCCP hunting never emerged as an issue.

**C. Hunter Application Procedures**

Limited lottery hunt dates are published during September each year. Permit applications will be accepted September 1 through October 20. Applicants may contact the refuge in September for hunt dates and application requirements. Applicants will be limited to choose three dates. Duplicate or incomplete applications will be discarded. Successful applicants will be notified.

**D. Description of Hunter Selection Process**

None required for open refuge hunts.

The youth and senior hunt are selected by lottery.

The Experimental deer hunts are selected by lottery

### **E. Media Selection for Publicizing the Hunt**

All hunt-related matters will be publicized in local and regional newspapers. Information will also be posted at the refuge headquarters.

Hunters are required to possess all applicable state and federal licenses and duck stamps to hunt on the Refuge. Information regarding Refuge-specific hunting is available at the headquarters office located at Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex at 1428 Hwy. 27, Bell City, LA. The Refuge office is open Monday through Friday 7 AM to 4:30 PM. Information will be mailed upon request by calling 337/598-2216. Hunting information will also be posted on the LNWR and Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex Web site.

### **F. Description of Hunter Orientation**

No specific effort is made toward hunter orientation other than previously mentioned media coverage, brochures and personal contacts. Pre-hunt scouting is allowed since non-consumptive wildlife observation is open year round. A refuge brochure which contains maps and regulations and also serves as a permit is available to all hunters. This brochure contains maps and regulations.

### **G. Hunter Requirements**

(1) Age: Region 4 policy is adopted. In summary, all youth as defined by state regulations must complete a hunter education course and carry a relevant card or certificate. Youths must be closely supervised (in sight and in normal voice contact) by an adult at least 21 years old. An adult may supervise only one youth on a big game hunt and no more than two youths under a small game or waterfowl hunt.

(2) Allowable equipment: Boats, deer stands, blinds, decoys and other personal property must be removed at the end of each day's hunt. Vehicles are restricted to designated public use roads.

(3) Non-toxic shot is required.

(4) License and permits: Hunting permit on brochure required. The license requirements are those required by the State of Louisiana and the federal duck stamp.

(5) Reporting harvest Hunters are required to check out of the hunt area at designated locations.

(6) Hunter safety requirements: All hunters born on or after September 1, 1969 are required to complete a firearm and hunter education course.