

Mattamuskeet

National Wildlife Refuge



Lake Level Management

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has received over the years multiple requests to actively manage water control structures in order to hold lake levels at higher than normal depths throughout the year. The Service recently completed a careful review of current management and will continue its passive lake management approach to allow lake levels to naturally fluctuate across seasons until further information is available.

The Service's decision is based on its legal responsibilities to adjacent landowners; the mandate to fulfill the primary purpose for which Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge was authorized; the refuge's management history; and input from interested stakeholder groups.

Some of the details considered by the Service include:

- Language in the 1934 property deed under which land was transferred to the Service prohibits the Service from taking any action that would impede the ability of adjacent landowners to drain their lands into Lake Mattamuskeet. The Service has a legal responsibility to adjacent landowners.
- Managing wetland habitats for migratory birds is the refuge's primary purpose and mission. Wintering waterfowl survey data shows that a passive lake water level management approach has provided environmental conditions that resulted in the production of highly suitable aquatic vegetation supporting record numbers of wintering waterfowl over the last decade.
- In 80 years as a national wildlife refuge, the Service has not actively managed lake levels at Mattamuskeet Lake, which is naturally shallow that rises and falls with the rain.



Lake Mattamuskeet at Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge, credit Garry Tucker/USFWS

Next Steps

A Technical Working Group established in 2013, made up of state and federal biologists and hydrologists, will continue to develop research, monitoring and management recommendations that address current lake water quality and quantity issues as the refuge works towards developing a long-term Lake Mattamuskeet Management Plan.

The Service looks forward to working in close partnership with North Carolina Commission staff to implement several fishery and public access enhancement projects, along with other projects sponsored by the Service, on the refuge, including:

- Construction of a new boat ramp and parking area to access Rose Bay Canal. Expected completion date: July 2014.
- Construction of a new Fishing Trail around Mattamuskeet Lodge. Expected completion date: Fall 2014.

- Herbicide and mechanical treatment to reduce phragmites on the Lake Road to increase shoreline fishing areas. Start date: June 2014.
- Construction of a new Rose Bay Water Control Structure to prevent saltwater intrusion into the western side of the lake. Expected completion date: September 2014.
- Canal maintenance dredging to improve fishery habitat and boating access to the lake from the Central Canal Boat Ramp. Start date: July 2014.
- Renovation of the existing fishing bridge across from the Visitor Center. This has become a very popular fishing and crabbing location for the public. Expected completion date: Spring 2015.

For More Information

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