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News Release



For Immediate Release
Date: December 11, 2017

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Supervisory Refuge Ranger

Banks Lake Drawdown Update

Lakeland, GA... Personnel at Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge are drawing down water levels in Banks Lake this winter as a means to control aquatic vegetation. The drawdown began in November, with staff gradually reducing the water levels with the goal of lowering the water level by 7-8 feet to maximize the amount of vegetation exposed to cold temperatures. At its lowest level, 1/3 of the 900-acre lake will remain underwater, allowing fish to survive and re-populate the lake once water levels are raised.

While water levels may still be suitable for fishing, the refuge requires all largemouth bass to be catch and release ONLY until May 1, 2018. All other fish species will continue to follow state limits. No fishing tournaments permits will be issued until after May 2018. Banks Lake Outdoors concession operation is currently open on Saturday and Sunday from 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. To contact Banks Lake Outdoors, please call 229-569-0147.

Conducting drawdowns of Banks Lake was determined to be the most effective way to control aquatic vegetation after consultation with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Full pool in Banks Lake is 191.00 ft. above mean sea level (amsl). Water levels are currently 5 ft. below full pool and a half a foot above the lowest level during the 2015 drawdown. Once levels reach 7 ft. below full pool, we will monitor the release of water closely, lowering the water levels gradually toward our target of 183.00. Levels between 184.00 and 183.00 ft. amsl will be maintained through mid-February in hopes of having several cold spells to kill the exposed plants.

For questions, please contact Susan Heisey, Supervisory Refuge Ranger, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge at 912-496-7366 ex 233 or via email at susan_heisey@fws.gov.

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