

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release



For Immediate Release
Date: September 28, 2015

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Supervisory Refuge Ranger

Community Meeting Scheduled Proposed Banks Lake Drawdown

Lakeland, GA... A community meeting will be held on October 29, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. to present information on the proposed lake drawdown at Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge. The meeting will take place at the Jim and Mary Threatte Arts and Civic Center, 209 S. Hwy 221 in Lakeland where presenters will share information about the proposed Banks Lake drawdown for the winter of 2015-2016. As determined by Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR), conducting a partial drawdown on lake systems like Banks Lake are necessary to set back growth of submerged vegetation which make it difficult to navigate the lake. Drawdowns are routinely scheduled for every 3-4 years, based on vegetative coverage. The last drawdown was conducted in Banks Lake in the winter of 2011. While drawing down lake levels are a planned event to aid in vegetation control and to improve fishing opportunities, the timing of this drawdown will also allow the refuge to replace the water control structure between Banks Lake and Lake Irma. It is anticipated that limited public boating and fishing opportunities will be available throughout the drawdown.

The Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge is inviting all interested members of the community to attend this meeting scheduled for October 29. The planned schedule of activities and goals and objectives of the work will be shared with attendees. Presenters will include refuge personnel as well as GA DNR fisheries biologists who conduct annual fish surveys on Banks Lake.

For questions about the meeting or the proposed Banks Lake drawdown, 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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The Suwannee Canal Recreation Area (East Entrance) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is the main entrance managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is located 11 miles southwest of Folkston, GA off Hwy 121/23. The refuge is open daily and offers a variety of opportunities for the visiting public. Call 912-496-7836 or visit the refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee for hours of operation, upcoming events, and entrance fee information.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook pages at www.facebook.com/okefenokeewildliferefuge or www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.