

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
2700 Suwannee Canal Road
Folkston, GA 31537
Phone: (912) 496-7836
Fax: (912) 496-7991
<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee>

News Release



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Susan Heisey, 912-496-7366, ex 233
Supervisory Refuge Ranger

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel to treat invasive species At Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Lakeland, GA.....Biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will soon begin work to control the invasive plant species, water hyacinth, at Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Lakeland. Small patches of water hyacinth have recently been observed in Banks Lake. Due to its ability to rapidly grow and spread, refuge staff are taking more aggressive action to control this noxious invasive.

The treatment that will be conducted is an herbicide application of Rodeo, an aquatic herbicide that does not impact fish or other aquatic species. The biologists have set aside a two-week window to conduct the spraying, which is weather dependent. They will conduct the spraying between August 13 – 24, 2018 and it should take up to two days to treat all of the areas impacted by water hyacinth. The herbicide application will be conducted by boat and will be focused on treating areas impacted by water hyacinth, while minimally impacting other aquatic plant species.

Water hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*, was introduced to the U.S. from South America in the late 1880s. Today, it is considered a noxious weed in more than 50 countries. Because of its rapid spread, water hyacinth is illegal to possess in several states. Water hyacinth blocks waterways and limits boat traffic, flood control, and wildlife use. By producing a dense canopy at the water surface, the plant shades out native submerged plant species and can uproot native emergent species that are important to wildlife.

“Non-native species such as water hyacinth can quickly become a problem if not treated” states Refuge Manager Michael Lusk. “Please help the refuge and other local waterways in reducing the spread of these species by checking your boat motor and trailer before and after boating at Banks Lake.” One of the most common means of spread for this aquatic weed is by clinging to boats and boat trailers.

Even though FWS personnel are taking measures to ensure minimal risk to nearby areas, they do recommend that all homeowners immediately adjacent to the lake move houseplants and pets indoors during the treatment process. Do you live on the edge of Banks Lake and want to assist in the effort? Homeowners can remove any barriers that may prohibit access by the spray boat into affected areas and remove any water hyacinth observed around docks and the lake edge. For questions about Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge, please contact susan_heisey@fws.gov or 912-496-7366 ex 233. To contact the concession operation at Banks Lake for hours of operation and boat rentals, please contact Banks Lake Outdoors at 229-569-0147.

-FWS-

The Main Entrance (Suwannee Canal Recreation Area) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is 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/usfwsoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwsoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsoutheast>.