

For Release on Monday, 15 July 2019

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Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge in Chiefland, Florida is Accepting Comments on User/Permit Fees

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is accepting public comments on increasing the yearly hunter access fee for hunting on the Refuge. The current fee is \$15.00 and we are proposing a \$10.00 increase to \$25.00. The recreational fees will be retained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a part of the Recreational Fee Program and used for road maintenance as part of the administration of the hunting program. The Refuge maintains 194 miles of public driving and secondary grass roads accessible by walking or biking; these roads provide public access to some of the most remote parts of the Refuge.

Since 1981, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has had authority to collect recreation fees. Since 1997, the Service has been able to retain fees collected at the station, first under the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program and then, in 2004, under the authority of Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). The FLREA was established to provide funding for recreation program improvements. Typical projects paid for by recreation fee funds include road and parking lot maintenance, brochures, envelopes, handling and mailings of hunt information, trail improvements, and salaries for law enforcement.

A fee analysis has been done by Refuge staff and these fees are proposed based on what nearby entities and National Wildlife Refuges are requesting. The refuge is proposing to make these fee changes effective next year for the 2020-2021 hunt season.

We are interested in hearing from you regarding the proposed new fee requirement and are requesting public comments beginning 15 July through 15 August 2019. Please submit any comments by email (lowersuwannee@fws.gov; Subject Line: "Hunt Fee Comment"), phone (352.492.0238 x224), or mail (Hunt Fee Comments c/o Andrew Gude, 16450 NW 31st Place, Chiefland, FL 32626) on the proposed fee changes.

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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 us on the web at https://www.fws.gov/refuge/lower_suwannee/, our Friends of the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge website <http://www.friendsofrefuges.org/>, our Facebook pages at www.facebook.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>.