

News Release



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Management Plan Completed for Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the release of the final Habitat Management Plan as stepped down from the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

A draft HMP/EA was released in October of 2015 and underwent an extended 67 day public review period. Based on the feedback received during the review period and an analysis of the draft, the Service selected a combination of Alternative B and C, which is the preferred alternative in the final HMP.

Specifically, the most important changes in the final HMP from what was proposed in the draft HMP/EA include:

- In response to the majority of comments artificial GTR flooding will occur every other year. In years with artificial flooding of the GTR, the Service will begin flooding on Dec 15, raising water levels one tenth a day until 68' MSL is reached. A drawdown will begin around the January 14 bringing the pool back to 65 MSL by the month's end;
- The Service added Figure 12 to show the Ouachita River stages for the past eight years between November thru January;
- The refuge will close 5.8 miles of ATV trails. This is a reduction of 12.5 miles from the proposed 18.3 miles;
- The Service added a prairie/grassland area to Figure 14;
- Open pine and upland hardwood/pine acreages were revisited and updated;
- Realigned the waterfowl sanctuary and updated the sanctuary map, Figure 16;
- Due to a flaw that was discovered in open pine model, Figure 21 (Draft HMP/EA) and references to the model have been removed from the plan;
- The ATV CD was updated with the proposed change and new Figure; and

To download a final copy of the HMP, Draft HMP/EA, and comments submitted on the draft plan, please visit our web page at <http://www.fws.gov/felsenthal>

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USFWS is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American public. In addition to maintaining the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, it operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid Program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.