



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

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### DOCUMENTED REVIEW FINDS FEW INCOMPATIBLE USES ON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

An overwhelming majority of public uses on national wildlife refuges, including hunting, are compatible with refuge purposes, the Interior Department said today.

The findings are based on 70,000 pages of documents resulting from a year-long evaluation of more than 5,600 recreational, commercial, and other uses occurring on 500 refuges. Fewer than 100 uses have required correction. The written review was conducted in response to a settlement agreement resulting from a lawsuit brought by environmental groups.

During fiscal year 1994, 46 uses were either modified, discontinued, or corrected under existing regulations or long-range plans. Pending notification to Congress in January, another 23 uses are proposed to be discontinued or modified on 18 refuges during fiscal year 1995. Activities on another 30 refuges are still being reviewed or coordinated with other agencies.

No hunting programs were found to be incompatible, although hunting on a 48-acre site in Salinas National Wildlife Refuge in California is under review to determine if it impacts the endangered brown pelican. Modifications are proposed for one fishing program--"set tackle" fishing at Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma--to reduce the mortality risk to migratory birds. Currently, hunting is allowed on 272 refuges and fishing on 254 refuges.

"This review caused us to take a critical look at how we manage this country's National Wildlife Refuge System," said Mollie Beattie, Director of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which administers the refuge system. "We found some problems and we corrected them. We also gained a lot of valuable data that will help us better manage the system in the future.

"Overall, I am pleased to report to the American people that its National Wildlife Refuge System is well managed and remains a natural jewel. I hope all who care about the National Wildlife Refuge System will now close ranks and help it to flourish."

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The 23 uses proposed to be discontinued or modified during fiscal year 1995 cause disturbance to fish or wildlife or their habitat. Among the uses are grazing on three refuges where livestock compete with refuge wildlife and impact habitat, and beach use and jogging on several refuges that disrupt nesting and chick-rearing by the threatened piping plover, a small shorebird.

Reviews are continuing at 30 refuges for a number of reasons, including public comment periods, a refuge compatibility appeals process, development of a refuge management plan, or the need for a solicitor's opinion. Some activities may be discontinued or modified at these locations following a thorough analysis and written documentation.

Of the nine incompatible uses specifically cited in the original lawsuit, three have been discontinued (grazing at Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, Colorado; Camas refuge, Idaho; and Turnbull refuge, Washington), two have been modified (recreational uses at McNary refuge, Washington; and Crystal River refuge, Florida), and implementation plans are being prepared for the remaining four. The four are based on a solicitor's opinion on the Service's jurisdiction and authority to control military activities on Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona and to manage waterborne recreational activities that impact refuge resources on navigable waters at Great Meadows refuge in Massachusetts, Havasu refuge in Arizona, and Umatilla refuge in Oregon.

The compatibility review was conducted by refuge managers to comply with the requirements of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, the Refuge Recreation Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act, as well as the terms of the compatibility lawsuit settlement agreement. The lawsuit, settled in October 1993, was brought against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by several environmental groups that had charged that, contrary to the requirements of Federal wildlife refuge law, the Service was permitting activities on refuges that were not compatible with the purposes for which those refuges were established.

Under the Refuge System Administration Act and the Refuge Recreation Act, activities are not to be allowed within wildlife refuges unless they have first been found to be compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established. Refuge managers have now made those required compatibility findings in writing. As the Refuge Recreation Act also requires, refuge managers certified that adequate funds were available in FY 1994 to manage recreational programs not related to refuge purposes.

(more)

"I am proud of the quality and diversity of the wildlife-oriented recreational and educational programs offered to the American public by the refuge system," Beattie said. "I am also very proud of, and want to share, the refuge system's century-old heritage of caring for wildlife and its habitat. Refuges are special places that help ensure our ability to enjoy and appreciate wildlife."

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the largest collection of lands and waters in the world set aside for wildlife conservation. It was started in 1903 at Pelican Island, Florida, and recently dedicated the 500th unit at Canaan Valley, West Virginia. Some 30 million visits are recorded each year of adults and children who come for environmental education, to observe or photograph wildlife, hunt or fish, or just enjoy nature. The system also includes 51 coordination areas and many waterfowl production areas that together encompass some 92 million acres throughout the United States, its commonwealths, and territories.

The 70,000 pages of review documents produced for the lawsuit settlement agreement will be available for public inspection December 1, 1994, at the Department of the Interior Library at 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240. Site-specific reviews may be inspected at the affected refuges.

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Editor's Note: A state-by-state list of the activities proposed for modification or discontinuation during fiscal year 1995 is attached.

**23 ACTIVITIES ON 18 NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM UNITS  
PROPOSED TO BE DISCONTINUED OR MODIFIED DURING FISCAL YEAR 1995**

<b>REFUGE (city)</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>USE</b>
Logan Cave (Gentry)	AR	Grazing on 100 acres of the refuge impacting endangered cave resources.
Clear Lake (Tule)	CA	Grazing that competes with refuge wildlife and impacts refuge habitat.
S.B. McKinney (Norwalk)	CT	Beach use on Chimon Island that disturbs wildlife and its habitat.
St. Johns (Titusville)	FL	Grazing on 600 acres of the refuge impacting 4 species of state-listed threatened plants.
St. Marks (St. Marks)	FL	Airboat and hovercraft use within refuge marshes that disturbs wildlife and wilderness values.
Camas (Homer)	ID	Canoeing and use of other non-motorized boats in refuge marsh impoundments that disturbs wildlife.
Minidoka (Rupert)	ID	Passage of an irrigation sprinkler system wheel that destroys native vegetation and alters the refuge plant community.
Bogue Chitto (Slidell)	LA	Use of off-road vehicles to access inholdings that disturbs habitat and wildlife. Landowners will be allowed to access inholdings by boat.
Detroit Lakes (Detroit Lakes)	MN	Use of wetlands for walleye fry-rearing that disturbs migratory birds.
Amagansett (Amagansett)	NY	Jogging that disrupts wildlife-oriented recreation and disturbs wildlife.
E.A. Morton (Sag Harbor)	NY	Jogging that disrupts wildlife-oriented recreation and disturbs wildlife.
Target Rock (Huntington)	NY	Jogging that disrupts wildlife-oriented recreation and wildlife.
Wertheim (Shirley)	NY	Jogging that disrupts wildlife-oriented recreation and wildlife.

Sequoyah (Vian)	OK	Collecting pecans from refuge pecan groves that disturbs wildlife and removes wildlife food from the refuge.
Tishomingo (Tishomingo)	OK	Picnicking and remote-area camping that disturb wildlife and habitat. Alternative sites are available off-refuge.
Sachuest Point (Middletown)	RI	Jogging that disrupts wildlife and wildlife-oriented recreation.  Swimming and beach use on 3.5 miles of refuge beach protected for migratory birds.
Trustom Pond (S. Wakefield)	RI	Jogging that disrupts wildlife-oriented recreation and wildlife.  Swimming and beach use that disturbs wildlife and its habitat.
Buffalo Lake (Umbarger)	TX	Horseback riding that disturbs wildlife.

**2 ACTIVITIES ON 2 REFUGES PROPOSED TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED**

REFUGE	STATE	USE
Tishomingo (Tishomingo)	OK	Boating and set-tackle fishing (use of trotlines, juglines, droplines) that impacts refuge wildlife, including bald eagles and migratory birds. Rod-and-reel fishing will remain unchanged.
Buffalo Lake (Umbarger)	TX	General camping will be changed to wildlife-oriented youth and educational group camping.

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