

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE August 4, 2005, CONTACT: Steve Miller or Bill Garland (256) 848-7085

Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge Habitat Management Plan and Draft Environmental Assessment Available for Review and Comment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, announces the release of the Draft Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge, Calhoun County, Fort McClellan, Alabama. The 7,759 acre refuge was legislatively established on May 31, 2003 within the former military training base of Fort McClellan. On October 23, 2003, an additional 1,257 acres were contributed by the Joint Powers Authority for a total of 9016 acres.

The Service has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment for this proposal in which three alternatives and their potential impacts are evaluated. In brief, the preferred alternative would biologically restore the longleaf pine ecosystem to a condition that can be maintained through a prescribed burning program. The draft plan clearly meets the legislated purpose for establishing the refuge, which was to "enhance, manage and protect the unique mountain longleaf pine ecosystem on the property".

The significance of longleaf pine forests on the refuge can be attributed to a long and continuous history of wildfire within the former military installation of Fort McClellan. With closure of the training base in 1999, wildfires no longer occurred and forests were rapidly changing to a hardwood dominated landscape. The development and implementation of an active management plan that includes prescribed fire is considered critical to the survival of these forests. The preferred alternative and draft HMP fulfills this requirement through structural and fire restoration programs.

In order to be considered in the preparation of the final environmental assessment, your comments must be received no later than September 20, 2005. Comments or requests for further information should be directed to Steve Miller or Bill Garland, US Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O Box 5087, Fort McClellan, AL 36205; (256) 848-7085. Copies of the draft HMP and EA are also available on the web at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/mountainlongleaf/MANAGEMENTPLANS.htm>



NOTE: This news release and others can be viewed on either the Service's Southeast Regional home page on the Internet at <http://southeast.fws.gov/news> or the National home page at: <http://news.fws.gov/>. You can also sign up to receive them via e-mail at these sites.