United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R4/RF/057523

JUN 23 2014

The Honorable Mary L. Landrieu
Chair, Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Landrieu:

Thank you for your May 15, 2014, letter regarding hunting opportunities on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) in Louisiana. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is working collaboratively with our state partners to expand quality hunting opportunities throughout the Refuge System.

We appreciate your work on and support of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act). It serves as the Refuge System's guiding legislation and embodies our commitment to the compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the system: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation and education. The Improvement Act helps to ensure the enduring southern tradition of outdoor recreation that is so important to many of our citizens.

We share your support for wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities clearly defined as priority public uses under the Improvement Act. This support reflects a deep understanding by our agency and our employees who live and work across Louisiana that the state is indeed a 'Sportsmen's Paradise.' It is a way of life. Moreover, we are keenly aware of the economic impact hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching have in Louisiana as hunters, anglers, and wildlife watchers generate annual economic activity of an estimated $2 billion, according to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation for 2011 and a state-specific report issued about a year later. That same report affirmed what we know to be true already and that is that roughly 1.7 million people participated in these activities across Louisiana annually.

I am enclosing three documents that will outline hunting opportunities in two ways. Enclosure 1 details the many hunting opportunities we have added in Louisiana since passage of the Improvement Act. Enclosure 2 summarizes current hunting opportunities in Louisiana, the greatest number with respect to the 10 states in our Southeast Region. Overall, refuges open to hunting have long seasons and provide a wide variety of hunting opportunities. Enclosure 3 lays out plans for further expansions of additional hunting times, days, acreages, and species. These plans to further expand hunting opportunities were developed collaboratively with our partners at

the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. During our annual coordination meeting, we agreed that our field staff meet with their local counterparts to identify ways we can strengthen our relationship, expand hunting opportunities, and complement state regulations. For example, we are considering alligator hunting on Atchafalaya and Tensas National Wildlife Refuges and extending waterfowl hours on several others. The Service is committed to strengthening our relationship with our State partners through annual coordination meetings, as in the past, along with increasing local staff coordination. We are equally committed to expanding hunting opportunities further where we can be consistent with the Refuge System's mission and legislated purposes for individual refuges.

We also appreciate your support for funding to support feral hog eradication. Using an integrated and adaptive approach with partners, the Service was able to remove more than 2,500 destructive feral hogs from refuges in Louisiana alone last year.

Again, thank you for taking the time to share your perspective with the Service. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at (404) 679-4000, or David Viker, Regional Chief of the Refuge System, at (404) 679-7152.

Sincerely yours,

Cynthia K. Dohner
Regional Director

Enclosures

Significant Additions to Hunting Opportunities on National Wildlife Refuges in Louisiana from 2000-2013

Bayou Cocodrie NWR

- 2002 – Youth lottery hunt deer
- 2010 – Opened 1500 acres to deer hunting and small game

Bayou Sauvage NWR

- 2011 – Opened 10,000 + acres of marsh outside hurricane protection levee to youth waterfowl hunting.

Bayou Teche NWR

- 2002 – Opened 5,428 acres to archery deer, small game, and waterfowl hunting

Big Branch Marsh NWR

- 2007 – Added recreational hunting of rail, gallinule, and quail

Bogue Chitto NWR

- 2009 – Addition of 2-day youth deer gun hunt season
- 2009 – Addition of provision for replacement hunt season(s) if refuge closes during planned season
- 2013 – Addition of public feral hog trapping program through Special Use Permitting

Cameron Prairie, Lacassine, and Sabine NWR (Southwest Complex)

- 2000 – Sabine added 10,000 acres (for total of 34,000) to the waterfowl hunting area
- 2001 – Lacassine added youth and senior lottery hunts
- 2002 – Cameron Prairie added 8,238 acre dove hunt
- 2002 – Cameron Prairie added 8,238 acre snipe hunt
- 2007 – Sabine increased waterfowl hunt from 3 days to 4 days/week
- 2008 – Cameron Prairie added a Senior lottery waterfowl hunt
- 2008 – Cameron Prairie extended Archery Deer season by two weeks
- 2008 – Lacassine extended Archery Deer season by two weeks
- 2010 – all three refuges added taking of gallinules during waterfowl hunts
- 2013 – all three refuges added incidental take of feral hogs to lottery alligator hunts
- 2013 – Sabine increased motorboat access to 7,000 acres within the waterfowl hunt area
- 2013 – Cameron Prairie and Lacassine added incidental take of feral hogs during Archery deer hunts

Cat Island NWR

- 2001 – 9,500 acres made available for public hunting (deer, small game, waterfowl, and woodcock) and fishing (recreational use including crawfishing)
- 2011 – Added a third day to each of our lottery deer firearm hunts

Catahoula NWR

- 2000 – Added 2-day deer hunt
- 2001 – Opened 18,200 acres of newly acquired Bushley Bayou Unit for deer archery/gun and small game hunting
- 2002 – Opened waterfowl hunting on the Bushley Bayou Unit

Grand Cote NWR

- 2003 – Opened to deer archery, small game, woodcock, and waterfowl hunting
- 2005 – Added 460 acres for lottery waterfowl hunts
- 2006 – Added1,800 acres for archery hunting

Lake Ophelia NWR

- 2000 – Added 1,500 acres open to archery hunting
- 2001 – Increased small game hunting from 1 month to the entire state season
- 2001 – Increased archery from 1 month to November 1 to end of state archery season
- 2001-2002 – Added 3 youth gun hunts within the restricted area (4,000 acres)
- 2012 – Added youth turkey hunt
- 2012 – Added lottery alligator trapping season (33 tags)

Red River NWR

- Opened 9,100 acres to hunting over 9 years

Tensas River NWR

- 2005-2006 – Opened 500 acres of reforestation at the Mower Woods to all types of deer hunting; had previously been restricted to Archery and Muzzleloader
- 2005-2006 – Opened 950 acres of new acquisition at Andrews Bend to hunting
- 2005-2006 – Opened 350 acres of reforestation at Tendal to all types of deer hunting; had previously been restricted to Archery and Muzzleloader
- 2006-2007 – Opened 3,800 acres of new acquisition at Andrews Bend and near Indian Lake to hunting
- 2009-2010 – Opened 3,400 acres of new acquisition at Andrews Bend to hunting
- 2009-2010 – Opened 1,200 acres of new acquisition near Sharkey Road to hunting
- 2009-2010 – Opened 4,700 acres of existing Refuge north of Crystal Road east to the Stutts Field to waterfowl hunting; had previously been closed to waterfowl hunting
- 2009-2010 – Opened 3,800 acres of existing Refuge at Andrews Bend and Indian Lake to waterfowl hunting
- 2011-2012 – Opened 300 acres of new acquisition near Sharkey Road to hunting
- 2011-2012 – Opened 100 acres of existing Refuge at Bear Wallow and Little Bear Lake to waterfowl hunting.
- 2012-2013 – Opened 3,500 acres of reforestation at Mower Woods, Ezell, Chapman, McLemore, and Little Fork to all types of deer hunting; had previously been restricted to Archery and Muzzleloader
- 2012-2013 – Added a one-day general gun antlerless deer hunt.

Upper Ouachita NWR

- 2000 – Opened 3,000 acres at Mollicy Unit to all hunting
- 2001 – Opened an additional 2,670 acres to all hunting except waterfowl
- 2001 – Opened an additional 540 acres to all hunting
- 2002 – Opened an additional 2,211 acres to all hunting seasons
- 2003 – Opened an additional 1,770 acres to all hunting seasons
- 2004 – Opened an additional 5,057 acres at Mollicy Unit to all hunting
- 2006 – Opened a youth lottery turkey hunt
- 2009 – Opened an additional 5,343 acres at Mollicy Unit to all hunting
- 2013 – Opened an additional 2,155 acres at Mollicy Unit to all hunting

Current Hunting Opportunities Offered on National Wildlife Refuges in Louisiana

Bayou Cocodrie NWR

- Deer 97 days
- Waterfowl 36 days
- Small Game 149 days

Bayou Sauvage NWR

- Waterfowl, Teal Season 44 days (started in 2011)

Bayou Teche NWR

- Deer Archery 118 days
- Deer Gun 3 days
- Deer Youth Gun 2 days
- Small Game Squirrel and Rabbit 118 days
- Waterfowl 59 days
- Woodcock 45 days

Big Branch Marsh NWR

- Deer and Hog Archery 118 days (State season)
- Waterfowl, Teal, and General 44 days
- Snipe 62 days (State season)
- Woodcock 104 days (State season)
- Quail 104 days (State season)
- Gallinule and Rails 31 days (State season)
- Squirrel and Rabbit 147 days (State season)
- Squirrel and Rabbit with dogs 28 days

Black Bayou Lake NWR

- Small Game 140 days (State season)
- Waterfowl 60 days (State season)
- Archery Deer 123 days (State season)

Bogue Chitto NWR

- Archery Deer and Hog 118 days (State season)
- Deer and Hog Youth Gun 3 days (State season)
- Deer and Hog Gun 18 days
- Deer and Hog Primitive Weapon 9 days
- Small Game 120 days
- Small Game with Dogs 40 days
- Raccoon and Opossum with Dogs 59 days
- Waterfowl State Teal and General Season (on Wed, Thu, Sat, and Sun) 44 days

- Woodcock 104 days (State season)
- Special Hog added 13 days gun added in 2012

Cameron Prairie NWR

- Archery Deer 40 days
- Snipe 39 days
- Dove 9 days
- Youth Waterfowl Lottery 14 days
- Senior Waterfowl Lottery 5 days
- Lottery Alligator Hunt 30 days

Cat Island NWR

- Small Game (no dogs) 87 days
- Small Game (with or without dogs) 54 days
- Deer Archery 117 days
- Deer Primitive Weapons 3 days
- Deer Modern Firearm 3 days
- Waterfowl 36 days
- Woodcock 45 days
- Beaver, Nutria, Coyote, Raccoon, Feral Hog 151 days

Catahoula NWR

- Deer Archery 123 days
- Deer Primitive Firearms 7 days
- Deer Modern Firearms 5 days
- Waterfowl 30 days plus youth days
- Small game 147 days

D'Arbonne NWR

- Small Game 140 days (State season)
- Waterfowl 60 days (State season)
- Archery Deer 123 days (State season)
- Gun Deer 7 days

Delta NWR

- Waterfowl, Teal, General, and Conservation Order for Light Geese 46 days
- Deer and Hog Archery 58 days
- Rabbit with Dogs Allowed 40 days

Grand Cote NWR

- Deer 138 days
- Waterfowl 18 days
- Small game 146 days

Lacassine NWR

- Deer Archery 40 days
- Teal 10 days
- Waterfowl 38 days
- Youth Waterfowl Lottery 8 days
- Senior Waterfowl Lottery 3 days
- Lottery Alligator Hunt 30 days

Lake Ophelia NWR

- Deer 107 days
- Waterfowl 36 days
- Small Game 146 days
- Turkey 16 days

Mandalay NWR

- Archery Deer 138 days (State season)
- Waterfowl 22 days lottery

Sabine NWR

- Teal hunt 10 days
- Waterfowl Hunt 38 days
- Alligator Hunt Lottery 30 days

Tensas River NWR

- Deer 92 days
- Turkey 18 days
- Waterfowl 31 days
- Small Game 109 days

Upper Ouachita NWR

- Small Game for 140 days (State season)
- Waterfowl for 60 days (State season)
- Archery Deer 123 days (State season)
- Gun Deer 7 days

Additional Hunting Opportunities Planned on National Wildlife Refuges in Louisiana in 2014-2017

Bayou Cocodrie NWR

- 2016 – open turkey season

Black Bayou Lake NWR

- 2014-2015 – open youth waterfowl weekend
- 2014-2015 – open special teal season

Bogue Chitto NWR

- 2014-2015 – add 6 days of dogs to hunt squirrel
- 2014-2015 – add 6 days of dogs to hunt rabbit

Cameron Prairie NWR

- 2014-2015 – waterfowl hunt closure time moved from 12:00 to 2:00 pm

Catahoula NWR

- 2014 – open February small game hunt in the Headquarters Unit

Delta NWR

- 2017-2018 – open upland/migratory game birds such as rails, gallinules, and doves
- 2017-2018 – open areas outside the waterfowl sanctuary on Delta NWR to rabbit hunting

D'Arbonne NWR

- 2014-2015 – open youth waterfowl weekend
- 2014-2015 – open special teal season

Lacassine NWR

- 2014-2015 – waterfowl hunt closure time moved from 12:00 to 2:00 pm

Red River NWR

- 2014-2015 – open 1,926 acres to all seasons of hunting
- 2014-2015 – open lottery waterfowl hunts on Bayou Pierre Unit (Yates Tract)

Sabine NWR

- 2014-2015 – waterfowl hunt closure time moved from 12:00 to 2:00 pm

Tensas River NWR

- 2015-2016 – waterfowl hunt time moved from 12:00 to 2:00 pm
- 2017 – open alligator hunting on Tensas River, Indian Lake, and Africa Lake

Upper Ouachita NWR

- 2014-2015 – open youth waterfowl weekend
- 2014-2015 – open special teal season
- 2014-2015 – open dove season expanded from 3 days to entire first split (15 days)
- 2014-2015 – expand open areas for teal and dove from 4,200 acres to 35,100 acres