

Atchafalaya

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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Refuge Facts

- Established: authorized 1984.
- Established 1986 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- Acres: 15,220 (Saint Martin and Iberville Parishes, Louisiana).
- Established to acquire lands and waters in the Atchafalaya Basin.
- Location: the refuge is located in the Atchafalaya Basin 20 minutes west of Baton Rouge, north of Interstate 10 and south of Highway 190.

Natural History

The refuge's elevated bottomland forests contain tree species such as cottonwood, sweetgum, willow oak, sugarberry, American elm, green ash, American sycamore, black willow, overcup oak, water hickory, baldcypress, and tupelugum. The forest supports the osprey, swallow-tailed kite, Mississippi kite and the endangered Louisiana black bear. The refuge occupies a portion of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Atchafalaya Spillway Water Diversion Project. The Atchafalaya Basin Swamp encompasses more than 800,000 acres of wetlands providing habitat for a diversity of wildlife. The refuge is managed as part of the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area along with lands owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Managed by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries under cooperative agreement.
- One full-time staff.
- 20,000 visitors annually. Visitors generate \$2,000,000 in expenditures annually.
- Current budget (FY 01) is \$68,025.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat and protection for endangered and threatened wildlife.

- Provide habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds.
- Provide, enhance, and maintain habitat meeting the requirements of all wildlife.
- Provide compatible recreation, environmental education, scientific research, and interpretive/demonstration activities.
- Fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife.

Management Tools

- Forest habitat management improves the plant community for wildlife.
- Law enforcement.
- Wildlife management through public hunting.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

- Fishing.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Hunting, including youth and handicap hunts.

Calendar of Events

January: deer muzzleloader hunting.

January-February: squirrel, rabbit, and raccoon hunting.

March-April: turkey hunting.

May: International Migratory Bird Day.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week.

October-January: archery deer hunting.

November: youth and handicap hunting.

November-December: deer either sex hunting.

December-January: waterfowl, woodcock hunting, bucks only deer hunting.

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Questions and Answers

Where is the refuge, and how do I access it?

Travel west on U.S. 190 about 40 miles, turn south on Louisiana Highway 975, travel about 2 miles to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Headquarters at Sherburne Wildlife Management Area.

What is available at the refuge, what can I do?

The refuge has a nature trail, handicapped ATV trail, small and big game hunting seasons, and fishing. There is excellent birdwatching and alligators are frequently observed. All visitors contact the area Manager (Chad White 318/566 2251) for public use regulations. All hunting and fishing regulations applicable to the refuge are published annually in the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries "Louisiana Hunting Regulations" and "Louisiana Fishing Regulations."

What types of hunting can I do?

Small game hunting for gray and fox squirrels, swamp rabbits, woodcock and migratory waterfowl. Big game hunting is for white-tailed deer and eastern wild turkey (spring season).

What types of fishing are available?

Freshwater fishing for largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill and catfish is excellent at times.

What is in store for the future?

Land acquisition by the Fish and Wildlife Service is complete. The COE manages 16,000 acres as a part of Sherburne WMA. On the west side of the Atchafalaya River, the COE owns an additional 16,000 acres that is open to public use. The COE plans a future purchase of 18,000 acres somewhere in the Atchafalaya Basin. The Fish and Wildlife Service is working with the COE to increase the staff (forester/law enforcement officer and a law enforcement officer) on the refuge.

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