

Okefenokee NWR CCP Excerpt
October 2006

GOAL 4 – PUBLIC SERVICES

Provide and enhance fully accessible opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation when compatible to promote public appreciation, understanding, and action on behalf of the Okefenokee Ecosystem while maintaining the wilderness resource of the Okefenokee Wilderness Area.

Objective 6. Expand environmental education to a multi-faceted, curriculum-based program for use on and off the refuge to enhance public awareness and understanding of the refuge's natural ecology, the human influences on the swamp ecosystem, the wilderness philosophy and concepts, and to inspire action among local, national, and international education groups on behalf of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the refuge, and the ecosystem.

- Strategy 6.1. Develop grade-appropriate environmental education activities and materials that support the Georgia/Florida approved curricula.
- Strategy 6.2. Develop environmental education facilities, including outdoor and indoor classroom settings at various entrances and locations, to balance environmental education demands on the landscape and to reduce conflicts between groups and/or activities.
- Strategy 6.3. Enhance the existing Cane Pole Trail for an alternative environmental education area by creating an interpretive boardwalk with an observation platform extending out into Mizell Prairie.
- Strategy 6.4. Develop a plan that deals with the administration of groups seeking environmental education from contact to follow-up activities.
- Strategy 6.5. Expand and develop environmental education outreach to local schools and other interested groups covering on-going refuge activities.
- Strategy 6.6. Expand and develop environmental education support materials for teachers to use both on and off refuge.
- Strategy 6.7. Enhance teacher workshop materials and host teacher workshops at the refuge.
- Strategy 6.8. Encourage concession operations at various entrances to support curriculum based environmental education and sales items.
- Strategy 6.9. Develop a multifaceted Junior Refuge Manager program for all young refuge users, including those off the refuge via the Internet.
- Strategy 6.10. Develop yearly environmental education projects that involve the financial support and physical assistance of the Okefenokee Wildlife League.
- Strategy 6.11. Develop a partnership with the city of Folkston in the coordination of programs offered by the Okefenokee Education and Research Center and utilizing refuge

facilities for environmental education to promote the purpose/objectives of the refuge and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

- Strategy 6.12. Increase or enhance the partnerships with environmental education organizations to develop and present educational programs, activities, and exhibits on the refuge that promote awareness of the resources.
- Strategy 6.13. Continue to participate in the St. Marys to the Suwannee initiative for establishing a canoe trail from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico.
- Strategy 6.14. Evaluate and determine the effectiveness of all environmental education activities and modify as needed to meet refuge needs.
- Strategy 6.15. Develop a multifaceted educational program for adult refuge users, including off refuge users via the Internet.

Objective 7. Provide non-personal and personal interpretive media and programs that increase awareness and understanding of the refuge's natural and human influences, habitat diversity, wildlife values, wilderness philosophy and concepts, and management activities performed to protect, enhance, restore, and maintain the Okefenokee Ecosystem.

- Strategy 7.1. Promote an understanding of the relationship among all programs of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and Okefenokee Refuge through interpretive panels, brochures, signing, etc.
- Strategy 7.2. Re-examine and refine key resource management messages that define and simplify refuge actions to protect, enhance, restore, and maintain the Okefenokee Ecosystem.
- Strategy 7.3. Develop interpretive panels, brochures, signing, etc., that increase awareness of the swamp ecosystem, the importance of wetlands, and wilderness management. Evaluate options for presenting the information to hearing and visually impaired visitors.
- Strategy 7.4. Evaluate all brochures for necessity. Eliminate or condense brochures where possible.
- Strategy 7.5. Evaluate all festivals and special events for appropriateness.
- Strategy 7.6. Evaluate feasibility of interpretation within the wilderness area and consider the use of backcountry rangers.
- Strategy 7.7. Expand and develop kiosks and interpretive panels for all upland trails and boardwalks with a trail map and brief description of the trail, including elements of interest.
- Strategy 7.8. Continue current Memorandum of Understanding with International Paper Company for provision of an interpretive trail across its lands.
- Strategy 7.9. Evaluate and develop, if feasible, other avenues for presenting the living history of the Chesser Island Homestead.
- Strategy 7.10. Interpret through various media the conversion of manicured lawn area to a backyard habitat exhibit to promote natural landscapes.

- Strategy 7.11. Evaluate current Memorandum of Understanding with Zoo Atlanta and the potential for partnerships with other zoos and aquariums (Jacksonville Zoo and Georgia Aquarium) to decide if there are common goals in interpretation and environmental education, which the refuge would want to share.
- Strategy 7.12. Examine feasibility of maintaining an interpretive radio station available 24 hours a day to inform visitors of refuge hours, visitor center, trail locations, and a description of all refuge entrances.
- Strategy 7.13. Develop news releases and magazine articles for weekly and monthly civic and conservation organization publications.
- Strategy 7.14. Enhance website to reach major national and international markets.
Establish web site links through civic and conservation organizations.
- Strategy 7.15. Expand refuge outreach and media relations plan to reach major media markets locally, regionally, and nationally.
- Strategy 7.16. Continue to cultivate partnerships with community or conservation organizations capable of developing and administering funds to assist in key refuge issues and interpretive themes.
- Strategy 7.17. Expand refuge volunteers to include youth groups such as 4-H clubs, Girl and Boy Scouts, etc., working on projects that enhance the refuge while educating youth and their leaders about key refuge issues.
- Strategy 7.18. Support off-site outreach programs when feasible and beneficial to goals of the refuge.