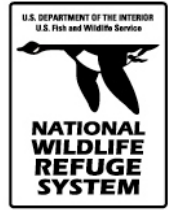


# News Release

## *National Wildlife Refuge System*



**Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge  
Headquarters  
51 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 101  
Winona, MN 55987**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Upper Miss Refuge Shelves Plan for Gibbs Lake Hunting Area in Pool 7**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today it will not pursue a formal waterfowl hunting plan for the Gibbs Lake Area located in Pool 7 of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge in Wisconsin.

Refuge Manager Don Hultman said the Gibbs Lake Area was discussed at a recent meeting with managers and he decided not to go forward with further planning.

Hultman said hunter sentiment played a key role in his decision.

“Gibbs Lake is a localized issue on the refuge and many people who hunt the area believed there was no longer a problem serious enough to warrant new regulations,” Hultman said.

At a Gibbs Lake workshop in February, 2007, hunters were virtually unanimous in opposition to components of a preliminary draft plan.

The plan would have limited the number of shot shells used by hunters to address shooting at birds out of range, limited the number of hunters on the boundary with the Lake Onalaska closed area, and involved other provisions aimed at improving the quality of hunting.

The Gibbs Lake Area was targeted for change due to refuge concerns with waterfowl hunter crowding and crippling loss of ducks in this popular hunting spot just northwest of the Lake Onalaska Waterfowl Hunting Closed Area in Pool 7. Developing a plan was identified as an action item in the refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan approved in 2006.

(More)

One aspect of the preliminary plan supported by hunters was the implementation of a new regulation requiring the immediate retrieval of downed birds. Hultman said the entire refuge would benefit from such a rule change and he will consider this for the 2009 season independent of Gibbs Lake.

There was also strong support for increased public information and awareness and a formal hunter behavior survey/study. Hultman said they will pursue these efforts as funding and workload allow.

He said the last such studies were done in the early to mid-1990s and many hunters felt the information was dated and did not reflect current hunter behavior and crippling loss in the area.

However, Hultman said they will continue to monitor the Gibbs Lake Area and will likely focus more enforcement there this fall and in future seasons.

“If future monitoring shows we have a growing problem with crowding and bird loss due to crippling, we will resurrect the planning process, involve the public, and take action as needed,” Hultman said.

In addition to being the most visited refuge in the country, the “Upper Miss” Refuge has the added complexity of a major navigation system, including 11 locks and dams, within its boundary. It is also a world-class fish and wildlife area which harbors 306 species of birds; 119 species of fish; more than 200 active bald eagle nests; thousands of heron and egret nests; spectacular concentrations of canvasback ducks, tundra swans, and white pelicans; and several threatened or endangered species.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [HTTP://www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).