

News Release

**Department of the Interior / U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge
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Arson in Lacassine Pool May Shut Down Fishing

Lake Arthur— There have been multiple arson fires in Lacassine Pool since the Pool was opened to fishing March 15th. “Uncontrolled fires may lead to someone getting hurt or killed out there, this is a serious safety concern for us,” stated Larry Narcisse, Lacassine’s Refuge Manager. “Anglers are already having problems traversing the extremely shallow water; we don’t want anyone stuck out there amid fire and smoke. If arson continues, we will close the Pool to fishing to keep people safe,” continued Narcisse.

Lacassine Pool was last burned during February and August of 2005. Burning vegetation now will only burn off the top layer and invigorate unwanted plant species. Also, spring fires destroy nests and eggs of migratory birds and Mottled ducks, a species of concern in Louisiana. Fire Management officials plan to take advantage of drought conditions expected later this year to burn into the organic layer of the Pool that will help remove some of the 60-year build up of organic material. Dead vegetation currently in the Pool will be needed to help fuel upcoming burns.

“We will be increasing Law Enforcement operations at Lacassine Pool,” said Don Voros, the Southwest Louisiana Refuge Complex Leader. If the arsonist or arsonists are caught the person or persons could be charged with fines of up to \$250,000 and/or up to 10 years of imprisonment for Destruction of Federal Property [18 USC 1361], and additional violations under the Refuge Administrative Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Code of Federal Regulations 50CFR for interfering with management, and public safety and protection on a National Wildlife Refuge. If anyone has information about the arsonist, please call Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge at 337-774-5923.

“There have been some accidents along the entrance road into Lacassine pool due to excessive speed, explained officer Cleve Pugh, I would like to remind visitors and fisherman to please obey the 35 mph maximum speed limit.” Pugh also reminds anglers that Pool water levels are extremely shallow and additional areas become inaccessible each week as the water evaporates due to increasing temperatures and lack of rain. Many anglers have found themselves stuck and push poling out for hours. Please be cautious if you choose to launch and run a boat. “If water levels continue to decrease, and anglers continue to need assistance getting out of the marsh, we may have to close the pool for the safety of the public,” said Manager Narcisse. For additional information about Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge visit our website at <http://www.fws.gov/swlarefugecomplex>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses almost 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.



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Attachment captions:

Arson fire in Lacassine Pool.

Accident along Lacassine Pool Road resulting in vehicle leaving the road and landing in the ditch.