



News Advisory From . . .

Congressman Rodney Alexander

5th Congressional District of Louisiana

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ALEXANDER ANNOUNCES \$1.9 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING FOR TENSAS NWR

FUNDING SECURED THROUGH INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE BILL

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, today announced that \$1.9 million in federal appropriations is secure for the Tensas NWR, which will be used to complete the third of four phases of the Chicago Mill acquisition.

The \$1.9 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars will be leveraged by nearly \$750,000 in private carbon sequestration funds (from utilities, such as Entergy, supporting carbon sequestration projects). Additionally, \$115,000 in management endowment funds will also be donated to the refuge as part of the sequestration funds, as well as \$575,000 in additional tree-planting and restoration costs, saving taxpayers over \$1.4 million.

"This funding will be used to better enhance the quality of life for residents in North Louisiana," Alexander said.

"I will continue to fight for federal funding dollars for projects like the Tensas NWR."

Alexander is pleased that his colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee were able to help push this project forward. The conference report is expected to be passed by the full House and Senate and signed into law by President Bush in the coming days.

"The Trust for Public Land applauds Congressman Alexander's commitment to the Tensas National Wildlife Refuge and to securing funds for the Chicago Mill acquisition", said Don Morrow, TPL's Senior Project Manager. "Future generations from the 5th District and the entire state will reap the benefits from improved water quality, air quality and habitat for black bear and even the Ivory-billed woodpecker. The eco-tourism potential and environmental benefits are tremendous."

THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND
FY 2006 -- FACT SHEET

* denotes species endangered or threatened

** part of a larger program

TITLE: Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge

AGENCY: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

STATE: Louisiana

PROJECT NAME: Chicago Mill Phase III (of IV total)

ACRES: 2300 acres (phase III)
11,033 (total)

PRICE TO AGENCY: \$1.9 million to be matched by \$750,000 in private carbon sequestration funds (phase III)

Total cost of all phases: \$9 million LWCF funds to be matched by \$4 M in private carbon sequestration funds

NATURAL

RESOURCES: Prior to 2005, last confirmed sighting of Ivory-billed Woodpecker

Bottomland hardwood forest

Louisiana black bear*

Largest white-tailed deer herd in Louisiana

PROGRAMMATIC

SIGNIFICANCE: Wildlife migration corridor
Endangered and/or threatened species protection
Wildlife habitat preservation
Consolidation of existing refuge lands
Carbon sequestration demonstration project

SUMMARY: The Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge, located in the Tensas River basin in northeast Louisiana, was established in 1980 in an effort to preserve the largest privately owned tract of bottomland hardwoods remaining in the Lower Mississippi River Delta. When European settlers first arrived to the area, an estimated 25 million acres of bottomland hardwoods were seasonally flooded in the Mississippi Valley. Currently, less than 5 million acres of this valuable resource remain, fragmented and scattered throughout the valley, serving as islands of wooded habitat in an otherwise agricultural area. The Tensas River NWR is one of many refuges that were created to help to preserve and restore this increasingly scarce habitat for a variety of wildlife.

The refuge's bottomland forest contains a great variety of trees, shrubs, vines and other plants which provide a diversity of habitat types for a substantial number of wildlife species. Over 400 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish can be found on the refuge. In addition to the numerous species of small mammals and passerine birds, the refuge provides habitat for the largest white-tailed deer herd in Louisiana.

The backwater sloughs, lakes, and bayous of the refuge provide habitat for a great diversity of aquatic life such as reptiles, amphibians, and crustaceans. Refuge waters are filled with channel catfish, largemouth bass, and black crappie as well. Large concentrations of migratory waterfowl utilize the refuge's open wetlands in winter months while many song and wading birds arrive in the spring seeking food and shelter.

Endangered species like the bald eagle and the peregrine falcon are occasionally seen in the open wetlands. Loss of bottomland hardwood habitat doomed the ivory-billed woodpecker and eliminated

the red wolf and panther from the refuge ecosystem. A permanent resident of the Tensas River area is the Louisiana black bear, a federally listed threatened species. In fact, the Tensas River population of Louisiana black bear is one of only three known populations of this subspecies in existence. An estimated 100 to 120 bears currently inhabit the refuge, and the future of the species will be largely determined by the management and protection of the Tensas Basin and its hardwood forests.

The Tensas River NWR has an immediate opportunity to further its black bear recovery program and ensure the permanent protection of critical bottomland hardwood forestlands by continuing the phased acquisition of the 11,033-acre Chicago Mill tract. At present, the Tensas NWR exists as two separate units. With the acquisition of the Chicago Mill property, these two units will be bridged, thus providing a protected wildlife corridor for the refuge species, most notably the Louisiana black bear. Located in Madison Parish, this property was initially used for forestry purposes and then primarily as an agricultural tract for many years. Conservation offers the USFWS an outstanding opportunity to create additional habitat by restoring bottomland hardwoods to the site. The Chicago Mill acquisition is both innovative and highly leveraged, using almost \$4 million of private carbon sequestration funds to offset what otherwise would be costs incurred by the USFWS. The first phase of this project, totaling over 2,455 acres, was completed in November 2004, using previously appropriated funds, an allocation from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, and carbon sequestration funds from the Entergy Corporation. An additional 470 acres was added to refuge as part of Phase II in April 2005, utilizing a similar mix of funding. To further the recovery efforts for the Louisiana black bear, more than 450,000 trees have already been replanted on 1500 acres of these lands. Additionally, Entergy donated \$75,000 in management funding to the refuge as part of the first phase and has pledged an additional \$100,00

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