

Clarks River

National Wildlife Refuge

photo: USFWS



photo: USFWS



photo: Forest Service



photo: Forest Service



Photos (top to bottom)

Senator Mitch McConnell at the Clarks River NWR dedication.

Dedication Ceremony.

Wood ducks.

Canada warbler.

Refuge Facts

- Established in 1997.
- Acres: 18,000.
- Located in Marshall, McCracken, and Graves County, Kentucky.
- Location: the refuge is located in western Kentucky between Benton and Paducah on the East Fork of the Clarks River.

Natural History

- The proposed refuge area was first identified as a high priority site for protection in 1978 by the Fish and Wildlife Services Bottomland Hardwood Preservation Program. In 1991 the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources asked the Service to consider the site for protection as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge is the only National Wildlife Refuge located solely within the State of Kentucky.
- The most significant resource values of this area are the wetland habitat complexes formed by the river, creeks, beaver ponds, and natural ponding.
- This natural wetland ecosystem is relatively intact and has high wildlife habitat values, particularly for migratory birds and other species representative of bottomland hardwood systems.
- The hardwood dominated forests are used as breeding, wintering, and migration habitat by many species of neotropical migratory birds.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Six-person staff.
- Estimated 40,000 visitors per year.
- Current budget (FY 02) \$220,000.

Refuge is located in close proximity to the National Recreational Area - U.S. Forest Service Land Between the Lakes, and many other State Wildlife Management Areas offering a multitude of outdoor oriented activities.

Refuge Objective

The primary management objectives for the proposed refuge would be to provide habitat for a natural diversity of wildlife associated with the Clarks River floodplain and would include:

- Wintering habitat for migratory waterfowl.
- Habitat for nongame migratory birds.
- Opportunities for wildlife dependent recreation.

Management Tools

The primary management tools for the proposed refuge would be:

- Water management for waterfowl.
- Forest management for migratory songbirds.
- Cooperative farming.
- Banding wood ducks.
- Banding migratory songbirds.
- Public hunting and fishing.
- Education and interpretation.
- Research.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

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Public Use Opportunities

The primary public use opportunities for the proposed refuge will be:

- Hunting and fishing.
- Wildlife observation and photography.
- Hiking.
- Wildlife education and interpretation programs.

Questions and Answers

Will the Service be condemning land to create this refuge?

It is not the Service's policy to use condemnation. Also, all of the funds obtained so far for land acquisition have a stipulation attached to them which forbids expending those funds on condemned land.

Will hunting be allowed?

Yes. The refuge is open to hunting according to special regulations contained in the free hunting permit.

If I sell my land to the Government, can I still farm it?

In most cases yes, under a cooperative farming agreement worked out with the Service. In some cases, where the land has been historically marginal to poor in production, the Service may decide to discontinue farming practices and restore the land to its original habitat.

What do I do if I am interested in selling my land to the Refuge?

Contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Realty at 1/800/419 9582 or contact the Refuge Manager Rick Huffines in Benton, KY at 270/527 5770.

What if I don't want to sell my land?

You do not have to sell your land to the refuge. This refuge will be acquired from willing sellers only!