

Red River

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: Ronnie Maum



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photo: USFWS



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Refuge Facts

■ Red River National Wildlife Refuge Act was signed into law on October 13, 2000. The first 1377 acres were purchased on August 22, 2002 at the Spanish Lakes Lowland focus area in Powhattan Louisiana.

According to legislation, the refuge shall consist of approximately 50,000 acres of Federal lands and waters along that section of the Red River between Colfax, Louisiana and the Arkansas state line, a distance of approximately 120 miles.

■ Red River NWR is one of five refuges that make up the North Louisiana Refuges Complex. Red River is the only National Wildlife Refuge in Northwest Louisiana. The refuge consists of five units in which the Service has identified for land acquisition:

Headquarters Site in Bossier City (Caddo and Bossier Parishes)

Bayou Pierre Floodplain (Desoto and Red River Parishes)

Spanish Lake Lowlands (Natchitoches Parish)

Lower Cane River (Natchitoches Parish)

Wardview (Caddo and Bossier Parishes)

■ Currently the refuge consists of 10,600 acres (as of July 2009).

Natural History

■ Historically, the Red River Valley was forested with bottomland hardwoods, cypress sloughs, and shrub swamps. Annual flooding of the Red River produced extremely fertile soils in the flood basin making the area ideal for farming. Early settlers cleared the land for homesteads and farming but within the last three decades, the valley has seen an increase in agricultural production resulting in very little mature bottomland hardwood forests left.

■ After the completion of the Red River Waterway Project in 1994, water levels in the river are higher and more constant which have greatly reduced the turbidity. Water quality has improved and with the seasonal retention of water levels, a rich diversity of aquatic plants has developed.

■ Increased water levels on the river also improved some adjacent habitats. Flooded timber and farm fields with wet, depressional areas are now common. USDA programs such as the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are restoring valuable wildlife habitats through the reforestation of prior converted wetlands and highly erodible lands in the Red River Valley.

Refuge Objectives

■ Provide for restoration and conservation of native plants and animal communities on suitable sites in the Red River Valley, including restoration of extirpated species.

■ Provide habitat for migratory birds.

■ Provide technical assistance to private landowners in the restoration of their lands for the benefit of fish and wildlife.

Management tools

■ Reforestation of bottomland hardwoods.

■ Moist soil impoundments are managed for waterfowl, shorebirds and wading birds by mowing, disking and flooding.

■ Law enforcement.

■ Hunting.

■ Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

■ Education/interpretation.

■ Hunting/fishing.

■ Wildlife observation.

■ Photography.

■ Self-guided hiking trails.