



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
INTER-OFFICE TRANSMITTAL

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JUN 18 1981

- ☐ Director, \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Regional Director, \_\_\_\_\_
- ☒ Project Leader, Hillside NWR
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Regular Mail
- ☐ Air Mail
- ☒ Action
- ☐ Information

HILLSIDE NWR

From	Office	Date
Assistant Area Mgr - Atlin	Jackson, MS	6/17/81

Subject

R.D.'s approval not required. Maintain original in refuge files.

Submit a "no effect" Section 7 consultation form.

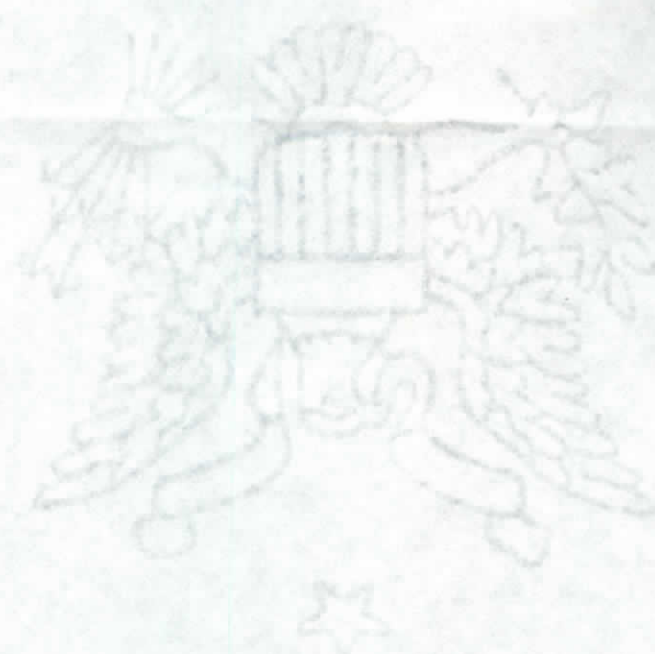
Thanks, Atlin

TRAPPING PLAN

HILLSIDE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

YAZOO CITY, MISSISSIPPI

0861



SUBMITTED BY: George Chandler

AREA OFFICE CONCURRENCE: Robert Munn Acting

REGIONAL DIRECTOR APPROVAL: NOT Required

DATE: 6/8/81

DATE: 6/17/81

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Location and General Description

Hillside National Wildlife Refuge occupies 15,383 acres of west central Mississippi in the Mississippi/Yazoo River alluvial plain thirteen miles north of Yazoo City. The refuge is situated at the foot of the loess bluff hills between the hills and the Corps of Engineers Hillside Floodway levee in Holmes and Yazoo Counties.

The alluvial soils of the area are high in natural fertility and have clay, silty clay, silty clay loam, or silt loam textures. Very fine sandy loam, fine sandy loam, sandy loam, loam, and loamy sand are also present. Topography is flat to gently sloping. The climate is humid sub-tropical with an average annual temperature of 64.8 degrees. Mean annual rainfall is 51.8 inches. Economy in the sparsely populated area is centered around specialized agriculture. Major crops are cotton and soybeans.

Historically, the Yazoo Basin produced an abundance of diverse fish and wildlife resources. The clearing of bottomland hardwood forests in this century to produce agricultural crops has resulted in a drastic decline in these high quality resources.

Refuge lands were purchased by the Army Corps of Engineers under their Hillside Floodway, Yazoo Basin Project and transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1974 for operation as a National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge functions as a silt collection sump via a cutoff levee containing the altered channels of Black and Fannegusha Creeks.

### B. Habitat and Wildlife

Refuge habitat types are dominated by bottomland hardwoods interspersed with bald cypress/tupelo-sloughs and "brakes" (Type 7 wetlands) in the wetter areas and buttonbush, water elm, swamp privet, and willow (Type 6 wetlands) in the more shallow depressions. A total of 3,573 acres of adjoining refuge land is in agricultural production under the Service's cooperative farming program.

The fauna is diverse with many popular and important species present. Refuge wetlands are noted for large waterfowl wintering populations. Mallards are the most numerous species with wigeon, pintail, green-winged teal, and wood ducks being common. Waterfowl concentrations of up to 125,000 have been observed in recent years. Vast acreages of agricultural land in the Yazoo Basin attract high concentrations of mourning dove. This species has probably suffered less from changing agricultural practices than any other. Numerous species of shore birds and other migratory and resident birds utilize the refuge. Gray and fox squirrel, white-tailed deer, swamp and cottontail rabbit, raccoon, and bobwhite quail are the principal resident game species. Common furbearing species include nutria, beaver, raccoon, muskrat, and bobcat. The endangered American alligator occurs naturally on the refuge and the southern bald eagle, also endangered, is an occasional winter visitor. Non-game wildlife is also abundant in the Basin. Mississippi

State University listed 46 species of mammals, 168 species of birds, and 83 species of herpetofauna in the Yazoo Backwater Area in their Environmental Inventory and Assessment of the Yazoo Pump Study. Sloughs, streams, and marsh areas support a number of warm water fishes. Fishery resources have been seriously reduced by the Hillside Floodway Project.

#### C. Refuge Development

Gravelled roads border the refuge to the south and east, and U.S. Highway 49E follows the west boundary from Techeva Creek at the Holmes/Yazoo County line to the Hillside Floodway levee just north of Parker Bayou. The levee and the Howard blacktop road intersect at the north end of the refuge to complete the all weather, perimeter road system. An east-west hard surface road bisects the refuge 4.5 miles east of Thornton, Mississippi. Only a few deteriorated logging and farm access roads are present within the refuge interior. Several abandoned farm tenant shacks and one hunting cabin that still remain will be removed in the near future. Approximately 7 miles of barbed wire fence have been removed. Prior to FWS ownership of Hillside Refuge 3,573 acres of bottomland hardwood timber were cleared and placed in agricultural production. Approximately 1,600 acres of the agricultural land is the Turkey Point agricultural unit at the south end of the refuge. The Corps of Engineers Hillside Floodway levee that borders the refuge to the west contains runoff from the altered channels of Black and Fannegusha Creeks and diverts water flow into Parker Bayou at the west end of the Turkey Point agricultural unit.

Renovation of two existing buildings to meet temporary office and storage needs was completed in FY 78. A 30'x 60' permanent storage/maintenance building located on the Christmas Plantation agricultural unit is completed along with a 100'x 33' equipment shed.

Proposed development consists of: construction of six water control structures to seasonally inundate 184 acres for moist soil plant production; construction of additional support facilities at the maintenance complex site, construction of one self-service visitor center, and two walking trails; and rehabilitation of 6.1 miles of existing roads and 18.5 miles of ditch drains.

#### D. Refuge Objectives

Specific refuge objectives have not yet been established. NWR System objectives and FWS intent, however, clearly indicate our primary goals to be endangered species preservation and enhancement, waterfowl protection and habitat enhancement, bottomland hardwood habitat preservation, and provision of substantial opportunities for wildlife-oriented public use.

## II. TRAPPING PROPOSAL

#### A. Type of Trapping Program

A restricted permit program will be implemented on Hillside National Wildlife Refuge. These lands involved probably were trapped to a

small degree prior to the initiation of the Hillside Floodway Project. However, as increased water flows and the subsequent siltation has changed much of the wooded acreage to woody swamps, cattail marshes and willow flats, the aquatic furbearer populations have increased greatly, and now provide a significant usable fur resource.

B. Program Information

1. Method of Announcements

Announcement of the trapping program will be made in local newspapers and radio two months prior to the opening date of trapping season.

2. Acquiring of Permits

Prior to permit issuance, trappers will be required to attend a seminar, coordinated by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation and the staff at Hillside Refuge, on rules and regulations for the upcoming 1981-82 trapping season. Only persons attending the seminar will be eligible for a permit.

3. Methods of Reporting Harvest

Trappers will be required to complete forms, supplied to them by the refuge, showing numbers, species, and sex of the animals caught each day. These reports will be sent to the refuge office at the end of the season so that the refuge can keep abreast of trapper success. Permits will not be issued to the trapper the following year if compliance with these regulations is not met.

4. Method of Control and Enforcement

Control and enforcement will be implemented by the refuge staff. Permit holders, when encountered in the field, will be inspected, to provide for comparisons with his reported total catch at the season's end.

C. Species to be Harvested

- ✓ The primary furbearers available for trapping on Hillside National Wildlife Refuge are: beaver, nutria, muskrat, mink and raccoon.

D. Methods of Taking Furbearers

- ✓ The acceptable method for trapping on Hillside Refuge will be limited to water sets only. This will lessen the chances of accidental catches of dogs that are often used in other types of sport hunting i.e. waterfowl and quail, on the refuge.

E. Regulations

- ✓ Regulations regarding the trapping of furbearing animals on Hillside National Wildlife Refuge will be the same, except where otherwise

stated, as those rules and regulations approved and adopted by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation.

✓ Trappers will be expected to adhere to all other rules and regulations that apply to Hillside National Wildlife Refuge as set forth in the hunting and fishing brochures, i.e. motorized vehicles on designated trails only, etc.

✓ Traps used on the refuge must be clearly marked with the name or permit number of the trapper.

✓ All traps must be "thrown" by sunset the day before a scheduled water-fowl hunt; hunts are held Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday mornings during the season.

✓ Trappers may carry a .22 rimfire rifle or pistol while checking traps for the sole purpose of quickly and humanely dispatching trapped animals.

✓ Closed areas will be clearly marked on a map given to each permit holder.

✓ Traps will not be set where animals caught will be visible to the visiting public from roads, trails or observation points.

✓ No one under the age of 16 will be allowed to trap without being accompanied by a parent or guardian.

#### F. Procedures for Consultation and Coordination with the State

The main office of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation is located in Jackson, Mississippi and is easily accessible by phone or in person. This office is most helpful in offering advice or answering questions.

### III. AN ASSESSMENT OF TRAPPING DESIRABILITY

Several members of the refuge staff have been contacted by the public in the past concerning trapping on the refuge. Most of the individuals were retired, looking for part-time work or were seeking a supplement to their present income.

The trapping program on Hillside National Wildlife Refuge can be used as an effective wildlife management tool. The trapping program will be administered to maintain furbearer populations at levels compatible with refuge management objectives.

### IV. RELATIONSHIP TO REFUGE OBJECTIVES AND OTHER PROGRAMS

#### A. Endangered Species

Trapping on the refuge as defined in this plan should pose no threat to the endangered species. Trapper-alligator confrontations will be unlikely, since alligators are generally inactive during the winter months. The southern bald eagle and peregrine falcon are transient

visitors and no confrontations are expected.

B. Waterfowl

X Due to the possibility of hunter-trapper confrontations during the scheduled waterfowl hunts, trappers will be required to trigger the mechanism on their traps prior to sunset on the day before a scheduled hunt. Waterfowl hunts are held Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday until noon during the state season. On the day of the hunt, trappers will be allowed to reset traps after noon. Traps must then be checked once within a 24 hour period.

C. Environmental Education and Recreation

Conflicts between trappers and persons engaged in some form of non-consumptive use on the refuge are expected to be minimal.

The trapping program will provide authorized individuals with quality wildlife-oriented experiences, educational opportunities, and opportunities to utilize a renewable natural resource.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
for  
OPENING HILLSIDE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
to  
TRAPPING

I have determined that the proposed opening of Hillside National Wildlife Refuge Yazoo City, Mississippi to trapping, will not have a significant effect on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following reasons:

1. Trapping is a valid management tool of a renewable natural resource.
2. The Refuge Manager retains the right to shorten or close the season or any area for any conflicts with existing refuge objectives.
3. The use of water set traps only on non-waterfowl hunting days will lessen the chance of trapper-hunter confrontations and the likelihood of accidental catches.

Supporting References:

1. Environmental Assessment (attached)
2. Section 7 Evaluation Form (attached)
3. Cultural Resources Assessment (On file at Hillside Refuge)
4. Refuge Objectives (On file at Hillside Refuge)



Department of the Interior  
Environmental Assessment

Proposed

Public Trapping  
on  
Hillside National Wildlife Refuge

Prepared by:  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Approved by:

*Robert Trisso*  
Acting Area Manager

## I. PROPOSED ACTION

### A. Description of Proposed Action

Hillside National Wildlife Refuge will be open to trapping of beaver, nutria, muskrat, raccoon and mink using water sets only. All trapping will follow the rules and regulations approved and adopted by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation.

A limited permit program will be implemented. Each trapper will be required to attend a seminar, co-sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation and the staff at Hillside Refuge, on trapping regulations for the 1981-82 season before a permit can be issued.

Season dates will correspond to those set by the state Department of Wildlife Conservation. However, the season may be shortened or closed by the Refuge Manager if conflicts with other refuge objectives occur. Also any area may be closed for the same reasons.

### B. Purpose of Proposed Action

The proposed action is to provide opportunities to utilize a renewable natural resource and to help minimize furbearer damage to dikes and levees on the refuge.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### A. Location, Size, and Physical Characteristics

Hillside National Wildlife Refuge occupies 15,383 acres of west central Mississippi in the Mississippi/Yazoo River alluvial plain thirteen miles north of Yazoo City. The refuge is situated at the foot of the loess bluff hills between the hills and the Corps of Engineers Hillside Floodway levee in Holmes and Yazoo Counties.

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## C. Socioeconomic Consideration

The refuge is located in Holmes and Yazoo Counties. Yazoo City is 12 miles to the south of the refuge, with a population of 12,098 people.

The economy of the area immediately surrounding the refuge is primarily based on agriculture with large scale production of soybeans and cotton.

Access to the refuge is excellent via U.S. Highway 49E, also gravelled roads run the entire perimeter of the refuge.

## III. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED ACTION

By allowing trapping on the refuge, individual mammals will be taken from the present populations. Trapping will help keep furbearer populations under the maximum carrying capacity, thus preventing die-offs due to overpopulation, lack of food, or disease.

Noise disturbance and soil compaction will be adverse effects most noticeable at boat access points and along designated roads where vehicles will be used.

Air pollution from vehicle engine exhaust and air and water pollution from boat engine exhaust will occur to a minimum degree.

Trapping will have little or no effect on vegetation, since the season occurs during the dormant period of most plants.

Disturbance of other wildlife by trappers will be minimal.

#### IV. MITIGATING MEASURES

NONE

#### V. ADVERSE IMPACTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

Adverse impacts which cannot be avoided include human disturbance and loss of individual animals. There will also be some erosion as a result of vehicle use.

#### VI. SHORT TERM USE VS. LONG TERM PRODUCTIVITY

Trapping on the refuge will not have any adverse effects on long term productivity. Trapping will possibly keep populations in balance and actually may increase long-term productivity.

#### VII. ESTIMATED HARVEST

There is no substantial data that indicates the numbers of furbearers present on the refuge. Therefore a prediction of the season's harvest is not possible.

#### VIII. ALTERNATIVES

Alternative actions include reduced trapping, increased trapping, or no trapping. Increased trapping, using sets other than water sets, would increase the likelihood of catching sporting dogs used for other activities such as squirrel, rabbit and quail hunting. Reduced trapping or no trapping would diminish or eliminate the adverse effects associated with trapping, but it is possible that without trapping the furbearers could attain overpopulation status.

#### IX. CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS AND INTENSITY OF PUBLIC INTEREST

The public has expressed an interest to the refuge staff in opening Hillside National Wildlife Refuge to trapping. Public controversy concerning trapper and waterfowl hunter confrontations will be minimized by requiring trappers to trigger the trap mechanism prior to scheduled waterfowl hunts and limiting trappers to water sets only.

X. CONSULTATION

Both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Area Office in Jackson, Mississippi and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation, Jackson, Mississippi have been consulted and have agreed to assist in any way.

Compatability Statement  
on  
Hillside National Wildlife Refuge  
to  
Trapping of Furbearers

The Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 USC 460k) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer such areas for public recreation as an appropriate incidental or secondary use only to the extent that it is practicable and not inconsistent with primary objectives for which the area was established. In addition, the Refuge Recreation Act requires (1) that no area of the Refuge System is used for forms of recreation not directly related to the primary purposes for which the area was established; and (2) that funds are available for the development, operation, and maintenance of the permitted forms of recreation.

The recreational use authorized by these regulations will not interfere with the primary purpose for which the Hillside National Wildlife Refuge was established. This determination is based upon consideration of, among other things, the Service's Final Environmental Statement on the Operation of the National Wildlife Refuge System published in November 1976, and the Hillside Trapping Plan, Environmental Assessment and Section 7 Evaluation. Funds are available for the administration of the recreational activities permitted by these regulations.

REGION: 4

PROGRAM(S): Proposed Trapping Plan

LOCATION: Hillside National Wildlife Refuge,  
Holmes and Yazoo Counties, Mississippi

LISTED SPECIES OR CRITICAL HABITATS CONSIDERED:

American Alligator  
Waterfowl Resting Areas

NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF ACTION:

Opening Hillside NWR to trapping; it is proposed to open Hillside NWR to trapping by permit only, using water sets on days when a waterfowl hunt is not scheduled. The primary furbearers available for trapping on Hillside NWR are: beaver, nutria, muskrat, mink and raccoon. Seasons will be within the framework set forth by the State of Mississippi.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTION:

To provide opportunities to utilize a renewable natural resource and to help minimize furbearer damage to dikes and levees on the refuge.

To enable the Service to conduct a sound, effective wildlife management program on Hillside NWR.

EXPLANATION OF IMPACT ON LISTED SPECIES OR CRITICAL HABITAT:

Since alligators are generally inactive during the winter months, trapping, as defined in this plan, should pose no threat to the endangered species.

A large area on the south end of the refuge, known as the "Turkey Point" area, will be closed to all trapping and waterfowl hunting. Consequently, wintering waterfowl will have an area with minimal disturbance.

CONCLUSION (CROSS OUT ONE):

A. MAY AFFECT

B. ~~WILL NOT AFFECT~~

RECOMMENDATION:

Project Leader

Henry Cavall Date 6/29/81

Area Manager

Date

Comments:

ARD

Date

Comments:

ARD-FA

Date

Comments:

Regional Director

Date

Comments: