U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Jackson

Ecological Services Field Office

photo: USFWS

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Robert Bowker, Field Supervisor
Jackson ES Field Office
6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Suite A
Jackson, MS 39213
Phone: 601/965 4900
Fax: 601/965 4340
E-mail: robert_bowker@fws.gov

Photos (top to bottom)
Alabama sturgeon conservation activity.

Coastal dune habitat.

Bottomland hardwood habitat.

Outreach education.

Station Facts

- A Vicksburg Office was established in 1948, the Jackson office in 1977, the two will be consolidated in the Jackson area during 1999.
- FY 1998 budget: $2.4 million.
- Staff: 18.

Station Goals

- Implement recovery, permit, and Section 7 consultation activities for 31 federally listed threatened and endangered species in Mississippi.
- Conduct listing program activities and assist the recovery of listed species in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.
- Investigate, prevent, and remediate effects of environmental pollution to maximize quality habitat for Service trust species.
- Assist Federal and state agencies, and private citizens, to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to fish and wildlife resources resulting from water resources development projects.
- Restore degraded wetlands on privately owned lands through our Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

Services Provided To

- Private citizens and community groups.
- Federal/state agencies, local governments seeking federal or state approvals/permits.
- Other Service entities.

Activity Highlights

- Reviews over 1,500 federally funded, licensed or permitted projects annually for impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- Represents fish and wildlife interests in navigation-related issues on the Lower Mississippi River.
- Assists other agencies in containment spill contingency planning to minimize effects on fish and wildlife resources.
- Conducts Section 7 consultation on the gopher tortoise, red-cockaded woodpecker, Louisiana black bear, least tern, pallid sturgeon, pondberry and quillwort.
- Reforests over 3,000 acres of privately owned, degraded wetlands since 1993 through provisions of the Partners for Fish Wildlife Program.
- Assists in the creation of 15 national wildlife refuges and three wildlife management areas as mitigation for losses of fish and wildlife habitat associated with Federal civil works projects.
- Coordinates with the Corps of Engineers on three controversial projects: Mississippi Mainline Levee enlargement; Big Sunflower River maintenance project; and Yazoo Backwater Area pump project.
- Provides protection for over 180 species through listing and recovery actions taken under provisions of the Endangered Species Act.
- Assists in the development of a Mobile River Basin Ecosystem Recovery Plan.

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Questions and Answers

What are the Fish and Wildlife Service's natural resource goals regarding the major Federal flood control projects in Mississippi?
Structural approaches to flood control frequently damage fish and wildlife resources.

The Service recommends nonstructural methods including flowage easements and reforestation on frequently flooded agricultural land and flood proofing or relocation of homes and buildings since these measures have been shown to reduce flood damages, save money, and do not adversely impact fish and wildlife resources.

Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project—This Corps' of Engineers project will dredge 125 miles of river for flood control benefits. The Big Sunflower River supports the highest density of mussels of any river in the United States. The dredging project will result in the loss of approximately 50 percent of those mussel resources. The Service has recommended nonstructural flood damage reduction measures (flowage easements) to protect this valuable resource.

Mississippi River Mainline Levee Project—This Corps' of Engineers project will raise deficient areas of the levee. The project as originally designed would have resulted in the loss of 11,400 acres of bottomland hardwoods due to clearing for borrow material. The Service's recommendation of avoidance and minimization of impacts resulted in saving 6,600 acres of bottomland hardwoods within the batture land along the Mississippi River.

Yazoo Backwater Area Pump Project—This Corps' of Engineers project will reduce flood damages on frequently flooded cleared land within the Backwater Area. The Service's goals in the Backwater Area are flood damage reduction and reforestation.

The Service recommends that the frequently flooded cleared land be reforested, because timber is more flood tolerant than agricultural crops on this type of land. This nonstructural method of flood damage reduction is more cost effective than the proposed structural method (pumps). The benefits of reforestation include reducing the tax burden on the nation, providing a consistent source of income for landowners, providing more fish and wildlife habitat, and improving water quality. The majority of the benefits of the proposed structural pump project are agriculture related.

What are the Service's natural resource goals regarding the Corps' Section 10/ 404 permit program in Mississippi?
The Service is working with the Corps and their Section 10/404 permit program to reemphasize the need to either avoid impacts to wetlands or minimize impacts to wetlands. Unavoidably lost wetland functions and values should be replaced through compensatory mitigation.

The Service is working with the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Corps in identifying new locations and methods for Compensatory Mitigation Banks, especially in the piney woods and coastal ecosystems in Mississippi.

The Service, the Corps, EPA and Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality are collaboratively using and refining a methodology to evaluate lost wetland functions and values and the potential for wetland restoration. The Charleston District Mitigation Method evaluates the wetland credits lost through Section 404 permit activity. It can also be used to determine credits gained through restoration of degraded wetlands. It is the Service's goal that this methodology be adopted by the Mobile and Vicksburg Districts statewide to create unanimity on potential project impacts to wetlands and the appropriateness of offered mitigation.

What contaminant issues are there in Mississippi?
There are several contaminant issues in Mississippi which are adversely impacting fish and wildlife trust resources. These issues include runoff from hazardous waste sites (over 10 superfund and 994 CERCLIS), and oil and other hazardous waste spills. Other concerns include waste disposal from large swine rearing facilities, sewerage overflows from municipal sewerage treatment plants, and pesticide runoff from agricultural lands.

How can I find our information on threatened and endangered species, including those in Mississippi?
See the Fish and Wildlife Service's web site on the internet at http://www.fws.gov (Endangered Species).

What is the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and its accomplishments in Mississippi?
This program provided technical and financial assistance to anyone interested in restoring, improving, and protecting fish and wildlife habitat on private lands. Cropland, pasture, or wet areas that have been drained or altered qualify for this program, as well as degraded riparian, fisheries, and endangered species habitat. Assistance is provided through partnerships with farmers, ranchers, conservation groups, corporations, local and governmental agencies and educational organizations. From 1996-1998, the Mississippi Field Office worked with 52 landowners to restore wetland hydrology to 2,399 acres, enhance hydrology on an additional 2,597 acres, reforest 2,428 acres, and provide technical assistance to numerous landowners.