

General Comments

General

- Leave things as they are. Sometimes we improve too much. Doing a good job - leave things as they are. Why change? Keep on keepin' on.
- Don't let the vocal, well-funded, organized groups hurt the public's use. Base decisions on scientific data, no on emotional arguments.
- Thoroughly consider the impacts of any changes on the resources and on the rights of Americans to freely pursue their right to access and use wildlife refuges in this area.
- Hold a public vote on all issues that are being considered for change.
- The primary concern of any national wildlife refuge hinges directly on habitat and quality of habitat. All concerns, (e.g., observing wildlife, hunting, and fishing) should take secondary place. The goals of the Refuge have to be understood and have value. For example, restricted zones should be explained as temporary until game fish numbers return. Education is needed, include newspaper articles, special seminars, signage, etc.
- Drastic measures will pay off sooner if they are started now.
- A data collection effort/plan is needed before the Refuge has enough information to make some of these decisions. What if best available information/data is not enough to make a decision?
- Remember the historical activities of the area. Titusville was a commercial fishing village and town.
- The human population around the Refuge has increased by more than 30% in the past 10 years, resulting in unprecedented pressures on the resources.
- Wild places provide an escape from man made things to help restore a sense of balance and hope.
- We must learn to live in harmony with nature. We have the responsibility to protect the earth and all that is in it.
- The Refuge provides a vital connection between people and the wild world left. This is especially important for children.
- It is our moral duty to protect our environment and the species that live in it.
- Somebody has to stand up to the current administration's total disregard for wildlife and the lands upon which they live.
- Preserve the Refuge for humans to enjoy without harming or hindering wildlife.
- Safeguard the Refuge, its resources, and its wildlife, since they are important pieces of our history and our heritage.
- I would hate the idea that my grandchildren won't have the opportunity to see manatees, except in pictures, because someone decided that the unnecessary pursuits of humans were more important than the continued existence of a species.
- Protect the interests of wildlife over the lobbies and faceless corporations.

- The whole idea of a refuge is to provide a place for the people and animals to take "refuge", away from the demands that humans put on an ecosystem. It is not created to give a small segment of people a place to play, but to protect the species within it.
- Merriam Webster's Intermediate Dictionary, 1998, defines the word refuge as 1: shelter or protection from danger or distress, 2: a place that provides shelter or protection.
- A wildlife refuge is to provide protection, shelter from hardship or danger, a haven, and a sanctuary for wildlife.
- Refuges are a place to observe wildlife, not impact wildlife.
- Primarily, a wildlife refuge should be for the wildlife and supporting habitats. Humans should not interfere, impact, disrupt, or kill wildlife.
- What would Paul Kroegel think about letting hunters kill the few ducks that are left?
- The number one priority of the management plan must be to protect and enhance wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- Ensure that the Refuge is a sanctuary for solitude and refuge for wildlife and wildlife observers.
- Stop development of the Refuge.
- It costs many times more to restore than to conserve.
- Take protective actions now before it is too late.
- The Refuge is a local, Florida, national and global natural treasure, protect it as such.
- Preserving and enhancing our existing wildlife refuges improves the quality of all our lives - animals and humans.
- Place the 140,000 acres of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge off limits to further human induced degradation. The increased incidence of boating accidents, growing levels of man-made debris, and other consequences of feckless modernism violate the spirit of the 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act.
- Be aware and mindful that the future of those with no voice is in the hands of the Refuge.
- As the fifth largest national wildlife refuge in the southeast, Merritt Island is an important ecological resource and a critical undeveloped link in the region.
- The cumulative impacts of the Refuge's location in an area of extreme growth and increasing recreational development make it a critical part of protecting what is left of the wild and open space in central Florida.
- The Refuge is highly important to Florida, especially given the lack of natural lands for wildlife.
- Wildlife and wild areas are disappearing at alarming rates. We have a duty to do everything we can to make sure our children's children can enjoy them.
- The importance of the Refuge will increase over time, as development continues to devour other natural landscapes.
- Under NEPA, the Refuge's CP must take into account all the connected actions (e.g., increasing human recreational demands and human development in and around the Refuge) on and around the Refuge to ensure that management of the Refuge continues to provide protection for wildlife and habitats, especially for threatened and endangered species.

- Since the Refuge has only limited control over actions on surrounding lands, it must be more conservative in what is allowed on the Refuge and must anticipate and avoid any direct, indirect, and cumulative adverse impacts to the Refuge.
- Do not allow the current administration to reverse, undermine, or otherwise detract from environmental policies on the Refuge. Protect the Refuge and its resources, despite the current administration.
- The Refuge is a national treasure, manage it as such - beyond local calls for public use.

Fish, Wildlife, and Plant Populations

- Reduce alligator numbers until bird numbers rebound.
- Keep mosquitoes away from scrub areas to protect Florida scrub-jays.
- Protect rare, threatened, and endangered species.
- Stabilize and increase declining native wildlife.
- There are many giant redfish in both the North Indian River lagoon and Mosquito Lagoon that need to be thinned out. The drastic decline of blue crabs (a major part of the redfish diet) should be a good indicator. Therefore, temporarily increase the bag limit to 2 fish per angler per day and allow one of those 2 fish to exceed the existing size limit of 18-27 inches. (This will allow anglers a "trophy-sized" fish.)
- Temporarily stop waterfowl hunting for a year or two to let waterfowl numbers increase.
- What data collection methods are being utilized for redfish counts?
- Wildlife needs to be protected, even if it restricts public access. It is a refuge, not a playground.
- Manage the Refuge for waterfowl, scrub jays, and eagles and all wildlife and fish will benefit.
- Too many alligators are out there for the duck hunters. Need to control them.
- What is the capacity of wildlife (e.g., manatees) that could be supported by the habitat? Need a study.
- Manage for a diversity of species (the Refuge has been ranked with Africa's Serengeti and other areas of the world where wildlife is concentrated and viewable).
- Indigenous and endangered species protection should always come first.
- Threatened and endangered sea turtles remain threatened by human impacts such as light disorientation and predation that come as a result of encroaching human development.
- The highest goal for the Refuge must be to provide sanctuary for wildlife from human related dangers and threats (e.g., West Indian manatee).
- Protect and guard biological diversity.
- A management plan for the Refuge must enhance the safety and recovery of endangered species, especially water-bound species such as the West Indian manatee.
- Wildlife are our most important asset.
- We strongly oppose any use of the Refuge that would further endanger the magnificent and gentle manatees or that would put at risk any wildlife of the Refuge.

- Provide a genuine refuge/sanctuary for threatened and endangered species like the West Indian manatee and the Loggerhead sea turtle. Wildlife have so few areas left to them, provide undisturbed habitats for them.
- The Refuge must continue to provide key habitats for wildlife (e.g., butterflies).
- Manage the Refuge to maximize biodiversity.
- We only have a fraction of the birds as there was in this area in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Wildlife are in grave danger from human use and development impacts, even on the Refuge.
- The management plan must place wildlife, especially threatened and endangered wildlife as the priority.
- Re-introduce native animals that hunters have killed off (e.g., Florida panther, red wolf, and black bear).
- The Refuge is a sanctuary for wildlife, not a zoo. The Refuge should not have captive animals (e.g., alligators in the aquarium at the Visitor Information Center).
- Encroaching development (outside of and within the Refuge's boundary) gives rise to concerns about pollution and the impacts on wildlife and habitats of the Refuge. Of special concern is the threat represented to the viability, recovery, and enhancement of threatened and endangered species.
- Address the threats to sea turtles on the Refuge, including trash, especially monofilament line and fishing hooks; habitat loss; habitat degradation, especially from pollution; noise impacts; boat and barge collisions; and propeller strikes.
- Highly guard biodiversity on the Refuge.
- Set up hunter check stations to monitor not only the numbers, sex, and species of waterfowl taken, but also the number of hunters and the areas they use so that the Refuge can more appropriately direct activities for habitat improvement and track the effectiveness of those management activities.

West Indian Manatee

- Insist on complete manatee protection.
- Do everything possible to maintain and extend the protection already granted to manatees.
- Ensure that manatees are around for future generations.
- Manatees face numerous threats. It is difficult to find one without propeller gashes.
- Humans represent the largest threat to the West Indian manatee (an endangered species). Motor boat and barge collisions, harassment, and fishing litter such as monofilament line and fishing hooks continue to pose the greatest threat to the recovery of this species.
- The lives of manatees are more important than another place for boaters.
- There are 3,000 manatees in the State of Florida, which indicates that the manatee is not endangered and has sufficiently recovered.
- Manatees are not native to Florida.
- More manatee deaths only indicates that there are simply more manatees.
- Why do you want to ruin thousands of people's lives to save a few manatees? No one wants to see a manatee killed, or a squirrel for that matter that runs out in front of my car.
- Put the needs of the manatee above the desires of the boaters.

- Address the threats to manatee on the Refuge, including trash, especially monofilament line and fishing hooks; habitat loss; habitat degradation, especially from pollution; noise impacts; boat and barge collisions; and propeller strikes.
- Enforce stricter penalties on those who purposely kill or harm manatees.

Habitat Management

General Habitat

- Minimize destruction of native vegetation during upkeep of roadways.
- Wildlife habitat must come first!
- Accommodate other species when managing habitat (e.g., scrub habitat management should also include management for deer and turkey).
- Manage habitat for multiple species. For example, leave islands of different habitat (e.g., hammock) within scrub restoration areas. Therefore, do fire and roller chopping in a different way.
- We are concerned about the impacts of NASA's 50-year plan on Refuge habitats, especially scrub habitat (e.g., proposed landing facilities in Happy Creek).
- The increase in the human population is causing environmental damages, especially to seagrasses.
- More habitat is a viable goal. Also, quality habitat can, with time, be created.
- Use wise fire management and let people know when you'll be burning so they don't drive all the way there to find out the gate locked.
- Protect all Refuge habitats, especially for threatened and endangered species.
- Protect and preserve our ecosystems for healthy systems and wildlife.
- The Refuge should be accountable and make others accountable for disruption of our ecological systems.
- Florida loses sea turtle and manatee habitat on a daily basis, making the Refuge more and more important for the protection of these habitats.
- Decrease pollution of Refuge habitats (e.g., from boat usage).
- Maximize protection of Refuge habitats for wildlife. Maximize management of the Refuge for ecological integrity.
- Protect large areas as completely natural, without allowances for human activity.
- Highly guard biodiversity on the Refuge.

Impoundments

- To help restore fisheries, restore more salt marsh.
- How to judge functionality of a particular impoundment?
- There is a noticeable reduction in birds in the impoundments since the salt marsh reconnection project began. Dr. Jerry Lorenz has conducted extensive studies in South Florida (related to roseate spoonbills) which verify that there is considerably more food (e.g., minnows) per acre in the freshwater impoundments versus salt marsh. Since one of the primary uses of the Refuge is wildlife observation, could some of the impoundments where the public views wildlife, like parts of Black Point Wildlife Drive, Peacock's Pocket, Gator Creek, BioLab Road, and Shiloh marshes be allowed to be blocked off and revert back to freshwater impoundments? This would provide more forage for wading birds and waterfowl and create optimum opportunity for viewing wildlife. I'm not talking about all the impoundments, just two or three in each area.

- Do not depend on rain to make the impoundments healthy. Add nutrients and plant food on bad years.
- Bring back the pumps to keep water in the impoundments in dry years.
- The Refuge needs to keep the impoundments flooded and maintain the dikes.
- The Refuge may be eliminating too many impoundments.
- Priorities for impoundment management should emphasize health and safety issues. There is a big concern regarding public health (i.e., West Nile Virus). Public health is more important than wildlife habitat.
- The public wants to see the Refuge's plans for the impoundments (e.g., which are proposed for reconnection).
- The Refuge should more actively manage the impoundments for waterfowl, including periodic drawdowns, balanced salinity levels, and encouragement of beneficial food growth, such as widgeon grass - *ruppia maritima*, which needs a salinity level of around 10-20 ppm.
- We are adamantly AGAINST full reconnection of the impoundments or removal/breaching of the dikes. We feel that the Refuge is one of the most important wintering areas for waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway, most importantly for birds like widgeon, teal, gadwall, and especially pintails, whose population levels have decreased drastically in the past decade. Full removal or breaching of the dikes would eliminate key habitat to these birds (and also for wading birds) and would not create the same biodiversity that was once present when the impoundments were there.
- Continue to manage the water levels to aid the migratory birds in feeding, nesting and resting. Provide many habitats within the park.
- Manage impoundments for diversity of species, while also restoring some of the salt marsh.
- Manage all Refuge impoundments to maximize habitat attractive to waterfowl and other species. Management should include controlled burns, Spring draw-downs, and other proven effective biological manipulation techniques.
- Creating numerous impoundments with attractive waterfowl habitat within the Refuge would more evenly disperse waterfowl throughout the Refuge's impoundment complex. Plus, this would help alleviate the overcrowding of hunters.

Waterfowl Habitat

- Help return/improve upon the waterfowl areas to restore them to historical use by waterfowlers.
- The Refuge is mismanaging waterfowl habitat. Other areas in central Florida are attracting and maintaining birds numbers, while the Refuge is decreasing. It's easy, provide and manage the habitat and the animals will return and maintain a viable population during their migratory flights. Maintain proper water levels and water pH.
- Why breach impoundments if they are providing key waterfowl habitat?
- Don't want to lose waterfowl habitat/impoundments.
- Duck numbers are down. Are we managing impoundments for specific declining ducks? Manage for a mix of ducks.

- We need better management of the impoundments for waterfowl habitat. I've been hunting the Refuge since 1985. The quality of the habitat has been in a downward spiral since about 1997. 1998-2000 were probably the worst years. The impoundments need a periodic drawdown and drying out. In other words...we need to have "active" management of the impoundments.
- Habitat for ducks must be increased all over the US, or the hunters won't have anything to worry about.
- Make management of waterfowl impoundments static. For example, we are keeping impoundment X closed to collect freshwater.
- Improve waterfowl numbers by maintaining good habitat. Develop a consistent plan for each impoundments. Don't change the approach often to accommodate 1 species, then change again to accommodate another species.
- Changes have occurred to Refuge habitats resulting in the decline of habitat quality and the decline in ducks (e.g., mangroves and coots). The Dikes are hurting the waterfowl population.
- Maintain brackish habitat in all impoundments for waterfowl.
- Enhance the management of habitat for waterfowl, with an emphasis on puddle duck habitat.
- Successful waterfowl habitat management can be measured by comparing the waterfowl harvest statistics by species and by impoundments from year to year.

Rookery Islands

- Protect rookery islands.
- Help other potential rookeries. Create new rookeries, if necessary.

Scrub Habitat

- Policy on snags in scrub jay habitat - re: predatory birds, exotics, feral cats.
- Increase scrub jay habitat.

Exotic, Invasive, & Nuisance Species

- Remove invasive plants.
- Remove hogs ASAP.
- Control and eliminate exotic, invasive, and nuisance species, especially Australian pine, Brazilian pepper, melaleuca, cogongrass, Old World climbing fern, and feral hogs.
- Increase exotic plant control activities.
- Exotic plants and animals have to go.
- No protection or management of non-indigenous species. Eradicate them.
- Manage the resource wisely and work to remove exotic species of plants.
- Feral animals do too much damage to the environment and they have no place on the Refuge. All feral animals on the Refuge should be eliminated.

Spoil Islands

- Erosion of the spoil islands is resulting in the loss of nesting habitat for colonial nesting birds. Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge benefitted from shell material dropped by buckets from helicopters. Is there any way our spoil islands can be enhanced in a similar way?

Aquatic Habitats

- Improve water quality.
- Reduce damage to grass flats.
- Reduce damage to seagrass beds.
- Restore the water areas (behind the mosquito control ditches) for access to the open lagoon. Tear down the dikes, where practical.
- Increase marsh restoration activities (remove more dikes).
- Protect the seagrass beds, since they are the cradle of the Lagoon. Evaluate if restricted, no pole, and other zones have helped.
- Decrease pollutants in the Lagoon.

Research

- Do we know enough to restore wetlands? What are the ramifications of wetland restoration on all wildlife? What species are affected? For example, in deciding to remove impoundments, how are the species prioritized?

Land Protection & Conservation

General

- Increase funding to acquire more land.
- Duck hunting money should be used to buy additional land.
- Any and all land buying schemes should be priority.
- Buy more land now.
- It is vital that we set aside places where life can go on as it was before we all arrived on the scene.
- The Refuge needs to do all that it can to make sure that it remains a place where the creatures that still try to live in this state may find a place to live and reproduce, without the most intrusive activities of our society.
- Ensure that the Refuge is not devoured by growth.
- The Refuge has experienced high growth around and within its boundaries. Preserve what wild areas are left within the Refuge.
- At least maintain the Refuge as it exists now, with no more development. Habitats are getting smaller and smaller and are being fragmented, negatively impacting our wildlife.
- Expand the Refuge.
- This area around Scottsmeer is not facing rapid residential development. Further, historic development has been and continues to be agriculture and shoreline development is virtually non-existent in this area. The 1994 study erroneously portrayed this area are under development pressure. This seems like Rural Cleansing in the Scottsmeer area. The Turnbull/North Indian River Lagoon expansion plan of 1994 was erroneous, misleading, and deceptive - depicting development pressures on these lands that did not exist.
- The taxpayers are about tapped out to finance more land and the accompanying "management" costs.

Law Enforcement

- We want to see more law enforcement on Refuge waters and parking lots.
- Increase enforcement of persons commercially fishing without an Incidental Business Permit.
- Increase enforcement of persons guiding without proper license.
- Increase law Enforcement!!! Great to have rules, but they are ineffective if you do not have enforcement.
- I want to see more law enforcement on Refuge waters and parking lots.
- Increase law enforcement presence on the water with proper equipment to patrol the flats (e.g., proper boat to access shallow water areas).
- Utilize law enforcement officers to check fishermen and guides at the boat launch ramps.
- Enforce the rules more strictly.
- Strengthen laws to protect wildlife, especially West Indian manatee.

Education & Visitor Services

Recreation - General

- Public use of the Refuge should complement conservation and should in no way undermine efforts to protect the valuable species of the Refuge. Do not imperil the Refuge and its inhabitants by giving in to the clamor for more access, more recreation, or more of the other things that pose threats.
- Do not cave in to the pressure brought about by people who supposedly "need" Refuge waters to enjoy boating and fishing. Other areas exist for this. The Refuge must protect wildlife, not public use.
- The Refuge is NOT an amusement park for human use. I don't want to see the Refuge turned into "Manatee World". Wildlife needs must come first.
- Do not cave into other pressures to make the Refuge a recreational park.
- Humans and their thoughtless pursuit of fun have become the largest threat to our natural wild spaces and wildlife. Perceived human recreational needs (i.e., recreational desires) are crowding out the survival requirements of other species.
- Ban motorized boating on the Refuge.
- There are thousands of acres available for hunting, using personal watercraft, etc. in other areas, off the Refuge. Do not increase these uses (e.g., do not increase the number of users, areas of uses, and types of uses).
- Allow only low impact/passive recreational activities on the Refuge.
- Provide more current information on the web pages and update these pages frequently (e.g., current sightings on the Refuge and their locations).
- Do not increase public use activities beyond current levels.
- Allow only passive recreation activities on the Refuge.
- Allow only passive recreation, scientific research, and educational activities.
- Humans pose the greatest threat to wildlife, especially to threatened and endangered wildlife. Any additional human activity and access should be carefully considered as to the impacts and additional pressure on Refuge wildlife, especially those species of management concern.
- We would like to see signs on BioLab warning parents not to leave children unattended.
- We want to see facilities improved - trash cans, rest rooms at boat ramps, etc.

- The 55-mph zones are too high on the roadways. They negatively impact users (e.g., photographers)
- Wildlife versus people - conflicts.
- If 1% of traffic is hunting, then why is 40% of the Refuge open to hunting?
- Remove powerboats from manatee areas unless they have prop guards.
- Open portions of the northwest part of the Refuge to horseback riding (near Bill's Hill).
- Restrict from Refuge use all commercial fishing/hunting interests.
- Address increasing public use and demands.
- The Refuge should develop a slide show/video to be shown at meetings of local clubs, rotary groups, and other organizations.
- Lower speed limit on SR 3.
- Require users to put in hours of volunteer service to promote their future use of the Refuge.
- Problems need to be identified. If hunting, fishing, or boating are adding to the problems, then these activities have to be reduced or eliminated.
- All destructive sports have to be reduced until waterfowl and fish numbers rebound.
- I expect a quiet experience in a natural environment.
- Allow passive recreation only.
- Require registration of spoil island users to find out who is trashing them.
- I oppose closing any area as a punitive measure. This penalizes the non-violators.
- The operating hours of the Refuge and the Seashore should be daylight hours. Since both are governed by the overlap area and since the Seashore is part of the Refuge, Refuge hours should apply to the Seashore.
- Perhaps more signs advising people not to feed the wildlife are needed as some people seem not to see any problem with this habit.
- The Refuge is for wildlife protection, not for recreation.
- Take into account that hunting has been decreasing dramatically, while bird watching and other non-lethal animal observation continues to escalate.
- Ban high impact activities from the Refuge.
- Ban mechanized sporting activities.
- Motorized watercraft are not compatible with the purposes of the Refuge and the Refuge System. Eliminate motorized watercraft use of the Refuge.
- Allow only passive uses, with no motorized vehicles on anything by access roads. That means no vehicles, only walk in and walk out of the area.
- Because the human population is increasing, use is increasing, and impacts are increasing. Thus, there is no alternative but to establish stricter controls on use, including consumptive uses.

Hunting - General

- No hunting - it's a Refuge.
- Eliminate duck hunting.
- The "inviolable sanctuary" purpose of the Refuge should preclude any form of hunting. Please revisit this use. Less than 1% of Refuge users participate in hunting activities. Most of the visitors come to observe wildlife. The small group of users participating in hunting obligates a disproportionate expenditure of staff time and Refuge funding (including publishing hunting literature, managing the

- quota hunt, manning the check stations, providing law enforcement, posting signs, picking up beer cans and other litter, and repairing dike roads torn up by hunters accessing areas by truck and boat).
- The only hunting that should be allowed on the Refuge should be for exotic animals, such as hogs and nutrias. To earn this right, hunters should put in time on the Refuge removing exotic vegetation and picking up litter.
- Return the Refuge to the vision of President Theodore Roosevelt by banning hunting, allow hunted animals the opportunity for sanctuary.
- Hunting is legalized cruelty to animals.
- According to a Decision Research Poll in 1999, 78% of Americans want refuges to fulfill the mission of wildlife protection by banning hunting and trapping. The Refuge System represents only 5% of the public lands in the US available to hunters and trappers. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, less than 5% of refuge visitors participate in hunting and trapping activities. Surely, the 95% who do not kill animals are entitled to have this minuscule percentage of public land reserved for their peaceful enjoyment.
- On behalf of The Fund for Animals' 200,000 members and active supporters, I urge you to return your Refuge to its original mission. Keep faith with the vision of Theodore Roosevelt and the will of the American people. Make your Refuge an island of sanctuary where no animal need fear death at human hands.
- Allow hunting on the Turnbull/North Indian River Lagoon properties.

Waterfowl Hunting

- Continue the quota system for duck hunting, since it is working well. While it does restrict the number of hunters, it also provides for a safer and more quality hunt.
- Consider fewer permits issued per day for heavy use areas (i.e., Shiloh 2, Shiloh 3, L-pond, etc.). It would be better to miss out on a day or two of hunting for the opportunity of a more enjoyable hunt (i.e., less hunting pressure). The Goodwin area is a good example of this.
- Implement a system for Pullovers over Dikes (PVC).
- Hunter numbers are kept down by quotas.
- Compare the percent of area for waterfowl versus the percent of area allowed for hunting. Decrease waterfowl hunt areas to address decreasing waterfowl #s.
- Eliminate the quota hunts for waterfowl. They are restrictive and eliminate a large portion of public access to the Refuge. Instead, stake the areas and enforce.
- Harvest data needs to be gathered from all hunters! Sex and species information is critical to good waterfowl management.
- Close the Refuge to hunting until bird numbers increase!!
- Continue waterfowl hunting on the Refuge into the future.
- Make waterfowl hunting less encumbered with micro-management regulations.
- Understand that waterfowl hunting is a traditional consumptive and legal use of the Refuge, compatible with the area's intended uses.
- Improve poor behavior by duck hunters (e.g., sky busting, setting up too close to other hunters, and poor ethics).
- Close waterfowl hunting areas to fishermen and birders for the 45 days of the season from daylight to 1 pm on all hunt days.
- Maintain waterfowl hunting areas with the same efficiency and enthusiasm as

- directed at Black Point Wildlife Drive. It looks like the Refuge is intentionally mis-caring for the hunting impoundments.
- Improve the quality of the waterfowl hunt impoundments.
 - Manage heavily hunted waterfowl areas exclusively for waterfowl (e.g., exclude other users and focus management on waterfowl and not on other species).
 - Improve current quota hunt system. Eliminate specific days of quota permit. Make the permit multi-day. Add flexibility for the hunters.
 - It would take pressure off Mosquito Lagoon to open the Sand Trail (north of beach parking lot 13) to waterfowl hunter access (to limit the straight runs across the Lagoon to the impoundments).
 - Create a no-motor hunting area where only kayak/canoe or walk-in allowed. Consider this for part of Peacock's Pocket, one of the Shiloh areas, or Duck Roost. Being adjacent to large john-boats with huge decoy spreads disrupts the hunting when they set up late or pick up early. This occurs quite frequently and it would be nice to have limited access areas - shallow water/no motor hunter access areas.
 - There is a pond area just south of the 405 causeway, north of the Pine Island area, and near the southwest corner of the Refuge in this area, that would offer an excellent duck hunting experience. Consider working with NASA to open this area to the public during hunting season.
 - Open parts of Turnbull to waterfowl hunting (private hunt areas exist in that area now).
 - Provide access for handicapped hunters. Develop permanent blinds, possibly in an area that is not traditionally a highly used hunting area. These could be constructed and maintained by waterfowl groups. This could be incorporated into the current quota system.
 - Continue waterfowl hunting on the Refuge. Hunters represent a large number of recreational users of the Refuge and hunting has been a traditional consumptive use of the Refuge for many years.
 - Abolish hunt permit fees, since they restrict access. (Hunting licenses are issued by the State of Florida.)
 - Count the number of hunters using the Refuge, since no true count exists. Many permits go unused. By counting the permits used and the hunters per permit, the Refuge can develop a better permitting system. Maximize the access to hunters within the Refuge's capability. There must be some permits available for day of hunt use (similar to TM Goodwin WMA permitting).
 - Man the hunter check stations until at least 2:30 pm on all hunt days, otherwise accurate statistics cannot be gathered.
 - Expand the waterfowl hunting area. Existing closed areas and all new areas added to the Refuge should be evaluated with the goal of the expansion of a mandated activity, hunting. The new Turnbull areas fall into this category.
 - By creating numerous impoundments to disperse waterfowl, the need for quota hunt permits would be eliminated.
 - Waterfowl hunting is a legitimate and priority use of Merritt Island NWR and should be promoted in the same fashion as fishing and wildlife observation. Portray waterfowlers as a positive member of the Refuge's family of activities.
 - Hunting under the quota hunt system has been excellent.

Other Hunting

- Quota system for Hog hunting would be nice, if allowed.
- Open deer & hog hunting with muzzle loader and archery.
- Allow feral hog hunting.
- Implement a managed dove field.
- Implement alligator hunts.
- Why not hunt other species (e.g. hogs, deer, turkey, and alligators)? Expand hunting opportunities to additional species. Consider an archery wild hog season.
- Feral hogs can be better controlled by regulated hunting than by trappers. Trappers would still have to be used inside NASA's security areas.
- Add limited hunting for deer and wild turkeys. (Lake Woodruff NWR has limited hunting, archery and muzzle loader, under a system that works very well.)
- Allow NASA employees to do primitive weapon (or other) hunting of feral hogs in the NASA security area.
- Develop handicapped hunting program.
- Expand hunting by adding seasons for the public to take hogs and deer.
- Do not expand hunting on the Refuge (e.g., do not allow hunting of deer, alligator, turkey, and other species).
- Add bow hunting opportunities.

Lagoonal Fishing - No Motor Zone

- Develop no motor zones to enhance the quality of the fishing experience.
- No more "no motor" zones.
- I oppose actions such as making the entire Mosquito Lagoon a no motor zone. This only serves a small, but growing niche of outfitters and guides.
- Do not create closed area and no motor zones. This would create an economic hardship.
- Consider disabled fishermen - unable to pole, row, or paddle through a no motor zone.
- Open the north Banana River to outboards of 10 HP or less.
- Eliminate the no motor zone.
- No no motor zones, they restrict access.
- Increase the designation of recreational no motor zones to provide better protection for wildlife and habitats.

Lagoonal Fishing - Catch and Release Areas

- Develop catch & release only areas.
- Set aside most of the fishing areas for catch and release fishing. The marsh ponds behind the dike roads or the No Motor area of the Banana River Lagoon, are ideal for this.
- Catch and release areas are a good alternative to no-fish zones in high use areas.
- Catch and release zones create recharge areas within the fishery, helping to replenish fish stocks.
- With artificial lures or flies, mortality of game fish is only 3% to 7%, which can be reduced with education. Over 85% of sport anglers in the US now practice some form of catch and release.
- Make it illegal to net, trap, collect, or possess any and all fish, shrimp, crabs, crawfish, clams, or oysters in catch and release areas, except for research and

- educational purposes.
- Designate Mosquito Lagoon a catch and release area.
- Designate the no motor zone in the Banana River a catch and release area.
- Catch and release areas would be detrimental to professional guides. Many tourists like to keep their catches.
- Do not develop catch and release areas or regulations (let it continue to be voluntary).
- Designate catch and release days.
- Limit the implementation of catch and release areas.

Lagoonal Fishing - Poling Only/Trolling Only Zones

- I would like to see pole only and/or trolling motor only areas in MINWR waters if these areas were imposed with some degree of common sense.
- Develop pole zones within 500 yards of shore or in water less than 2 feet.
- Pole/troll zones only on grass flats to protect flats - have the access marked clearly.
- No more "polling-only" zones.
- Disagree with pole/troll only zone idea. Areas already exist for this. If people going too fast, have law enforcement there instead.
- Boating has increased in Mosquito Lagoon. Develop polling and trolling motor zones.
- Designate the flats as poling only zones, especially in Mosquito Lagoon due to large crowds destroying the seagrasses and marine life.
- Education and enforcement are needed, not polling or trolling only areas.
- Develop pole and troll zones on flats (e.g., George's Bank and Tiger Shoals) in areas of less than 3 feet of water.
- It is unfair to establish pole and troll zones. They discriminate against the elderly and handicapped users.
- Mark pole and troll zones with a buoy system (not with poles).
- Areas set aside for pole and troll zones serve as fish replenishment areas, since these areas and the fish in them experience less fishing pressure and disturbance.
- No troll/pole areas. Trolling motors 24/36v are as bad as 8-10 HP outboards.
- I will happily give up my trolling motor!
- Do not have troll zones. They restrict access (e.g., hunters).

Lagoonal Fishing - General

- Leave fishing rules alone.
- Do not close any more Refuge areas to motor vessels.
- Increase enforcement/patrols.
- I want to see education being given to boaters using the resource, if only by means of signs at the boat ramps.
- I know that some users are abusing the resources. Shallow grass flats are being damaged by irresponsible motor vessel use. Education is needed.
- It is time something is done about high public use before it is too late and our natural resources are severely damaged. The Refuge is experiencing increasing fishing pressures. Take actions to protect the resources.
- Indian River Guides Association has some definite opinions about management decisions affecting the MINWR. Many of us make our living out on MINWR

- waters.
- Control boat speed.
 - Reopen east side of Banana River.
 - Channel markers and signs are too easy to hit. Also, it is difficult to follow channel markers.
 - Need warnings of shallow waters.
 - Reflectors needed on boundary markers in North Indian River Lagoon.
 - Open WSEG ramp to night use.
 - Expand the number of boat ramps and parking at Haulover.
 - Is prop scarring really an issue?
 - Prohibit no running close to the shoreline in some areas.
 - Limit big motors in the flats to 50hp.
 - Protect the fragile resources of Mosquito Lagoon.
 - Re-evaluate the practice of allowing professional fish hunters to operate in an environment so rare and dear to everyone. On any given day, there are at least 50 guides on the water that are responsible for three redfish kills per guide. You can easily predict the elimination of the equivalent of an entire school of 150 redfish per day. A realistic, conservative estimate is that 50,000 redfish per year are killed in mosquito lagoon by fishing guides, if that many can be located.
 - Restrict outboard motor horsepower to 25 HP or less outside the marked Intracoastal Waterway area of Mosquito Lagoon (to reduce damage to grass flats).
 - Limit traffic on Mosquito Lagoon. It would be better to fish less in Mosquito Lagoon, but to see a lot fewer boats when you do fish there. This would help to improve the quality of the experience.
 - To increase the quality of the fishing experience (and to lower the redfish populations numbers), temporarily increase the bag limit to 2 fish per angler per day and allow one of those 2 fish to exceed the existing size limit of 18-27 inches. (This will allow anglers a "trophy-sized" fish.)
 - Control prop damage.
 - Establish marked channels into flats.
 - Something has to be done to regulate the overuse of Mosquito Lagoon. There are too many advertisements, articles, fishing shows, tournaments,... promoting the use of the Lagoon.
 - Stop the practice of bumping up of fish.
 - Reduce the number of fishermen in Mosquito Lagoon.
 - Mosquito Lagoon is experiencing increasing pressure and increasing users running wild, resulting in negative experiences for users.
 - Make a 50 HP the maximum in water 2 feet or less.
 - Close the saltwater side of Widgeon Bay to give birds and fish a place to rest from boats and people.
 - No shallow water restrictions.
 - Haulover Canal is overcrowded. Consider the option of putting a new boat ramp on the south side of Haulover, on the Mosquito Lagoon side.
 - Continue commercial fishing activities.
 - The primary cause of prop scars in seagrass beds within Mosquito Lagoon is caused by the unintentional running of boats into shallow water. This is due to the lack of markers and the difficulty in determining the edge of grass flats.
- Phase 1 (Channel Markers): mark with channel markers the cuts or channel into

Van's Slough, pardon Slough, and Eddy Creek to address east and west access to grass flats. Phase 2 (Channel Markers): place channel markers in the back slot of east channel on Tiger Shoals and Twin Palms Passage used by anglers to keep all the boats running on plane across the grass flats in a confined corridor. (Without this north-south access on Tiger Shoals and Twin Palms Passage, it would be almost impossible to exit the grass flats in a heavy west wind using push pole or trolling motor. Channel markers for the grass flats will use 2.5-inch PVC pipe using a 6-inch green with two 1-inch reflective bands on top and bottom of the green. The red 6-inch band with one 1-inch reflective band over red. Entrance and exit markers will be 4-inch PVC pipe with red or green bands with 1-inch reflective, 4 to 5 feet out of the water. Phase 3 (Pole or Troll Area): areas recommenced for pole or troll are Tiger Shoals, Three Cabbage Island grass flats, Whale Tail, and Middle Banks. Mark the edge of the grass flats to create pole or troll areas. In this area, a boat may only use push pole, trolling motor, or engine at idle speeds. Under power, the engine must be at idle, trimmed up, prop must be off the bottom and not damaging seagrasses. The purpose is to help protect the shallow water seagrasses in the Mosquito Lagoon. Pole or troll area markers are 2.5-inch PVC pipe with an 8-inch sided yellow diamond facing out with a 1-inch reflective band of all four sides of the diamond. Markers set 50 to 100 yards apart, all markers to be 4 to 5 feet out of the water. (See maps and bearings.)

- The Refuge should take whatever actions deemed necessary to protect mosquito Lagoon and its fishery (e.g., speed zones, horsepower limits, pole and troll only areas, hand propelled boat only areas, catch and release rules, and a quota system). No one wants to wake up in ten years to find a Mosquito Lagoon devoid of any worthwhile sportfish.
- Reign in the number of boats, fishermen, and professional guides using Mosquito Lagoon.
- Add another boat ramp opposite the existing ramp at Haulover.
- The Haulover Canal boat ramp has despicable conditions due to inadequate parking, long launch lines, only a single boat ramp, and the lack of public facilities. Federal funds are available for improving boat ramp areas, so why not this one? Also, add fish cleaning tables, paved access roads, and lighted parking lots.

Fishing - General

- No tournaments allowed in the Refuge!!! They are the single most destructive activity on the Refuge. These tournaments stress the fragile resources and promote that it is okay to exploit the limited resources for boat sales or other agendas. These tournaments have lots of negative impacts, including pre-tournament scouting.
- Fishing ethics are needed. Permitted guides are a great resource.
- Seasonal closure of any area would dramatically impact all professional guides on the Refuge. It would be a financial hardship.
- The Refuge should not have "no fishing" zones.
- Establish a quota for fishermen. This would reduce pressure on Mosquito Lagoon.
- It may be time to issue permits to fish. This could mean that only a certain number of permits are issued for each body of water.

- If speed zones were established, they would help take pressure off Mosquito Lagoon, since boats would not travel as far to get to the Lagoon and would have less bumping up of the fish.
- Refuge waters are experiencing increased use, resulting in increased disturbance of fish and birds, especially in Mosquito Lagoon.
- The number of fishermen varies in cycles. This use will dropped off, so nothing should be done because there is no problem.
- Fishing shouldn't be allowed if they don't carry their trash out.
- Prohibit motorized boating (e.g., allow only paddles, oars, and sails).
- There are countless places for boats in Florida and so few places for manatees. Therefore, limit boat access to the Refuge.
- Prohibit jet skis, airboats, and all motor boats above 5-10 hp.
- The Refuge must not be a playground for boaters and jet skiers.
- Fishing on the Refuge should be restricted to cane poles with only string lines. No monofilament should be allowed on the Refuge.
- Allow fishing access through the Turnbull/North Indian River Lagoon properties.

Freshwater Fishing

- Stock the freshwater lakes across from the Hammock trails, clean it up. This is a good place for kids to fish (e.g., boy scouts). Maybe open it up to public. Make it a good scenic area. Not much happening there now in terms of wildlife abundance. Stock it with fish. Have a recreation area there.

Environmental Education

- Many of our educational resources share the same themes and perhaps could have a concerted effort in the current and future courses taught within Brevard County's schools. The annual reassessment of the programs is important and should be expanded to surrounding areas to include a more Regional approach to public awareness and education.
- Have more educational programs in schools. Try to recruit volunteers for the Refuge to help with this.
- We would like to see education being given to boaters using the resource, If only signs at boat ramps.
- Increase Refuge support for environmental education programs.
- Need to educate people about the Refuge. Increase awareness that the Refuge is here.
- Create a Teachers' Day. Invite all the area teachers to educate that group about the Refuge.
- Educate high school students about the resources and the Refuge.
- Install educational signs to address boater and water etiquette.
- Education needs to be established and expanded, including teaching proper fishing techniques.
- Implement a Refuge education program for all users (e.g., fishermen and hunters).
- If users don't know what is expected of them, they don't know what to do. Therefore, more education of the users and the public is necessary.

- Have fairly taught education with no segment being downgraded. Give education on hunters and fishers with no bias. Conduct comprehensive education. (The bias is exemplified in books at the Visitor Information Center where they do not recognize that hunters and fishers are very conservation minded.) We don't need to only take photographs or to just look at it.
- Need more environmental education programs, for example, develop educational kiosks along Black Point Wildlife Drive.
- Keep in mind the need for and impact of environmental education on future generations. Environmental education should be a key point in future refuge management.
- Develop a bold conservation education plan.
- Educate waterway users on the dangers to wildlife (e.g., manatees).
- Develop an active school program.
- A lot of environmental damage to the Refuge by users is caused through ignorance. The refuge needs some kind of educational program, especially for new users (e.g., hunters). If the Refuge does not outline the expectations, then it won't get compliance. Fine those who don't comply/learn. Require a check-in of users and give them a list of expectations.

Interpretation

- I would like to see more public programs with engaging talks from the variety of highly knowledgeable and interesting folks who come to visit here. Engage the use of the new facility at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary.
- Develop interpretative trails for bicycle riding.

Wildlife Observation - General

- Open side roads on State Road 3 for hiking.
- Put signs at the Scrub Jay trail to indicate that no motorized vehicles are allowed on the trail.
- Open some closed areas on northern end of Refuge to hiking/wildlife observation.
- Since wildlife observation is the highest use of the Refuge, it should dictate the highest priority in planning (as long as compatible with wildlife habitat).
- Wildlife habitat for wildlife observation should be a priority (versus hunting and fishing). For example, boating may be in direct competition with charismatic megafauna - manatees. Therefore, limit boat access. Further, hunting certainly is at odds with wildlife observation.
- Designate a non-motorized boat area for wildlife observation.
- Develop canoe/kayak and hiking trails on the Refuge separate from car access areas.
- Develop a designated, marked kayak trail loop, 1-3 miles long through varied areas - open glade, hammocks, etc. The Gator Creek (east) area or southern BioLab Road area or similar out of the way areas would be better suited. Perhaps, one-day this could evolve into a Shark River type trail with stopovers for camping with a permit system.
- Develop a mountain bike trail along the railroad bed north from SR 406 for wildlife observation.
- Create a hiking/biking trail system to provide the public the opportunity to experience the wildlife and habitat up-close and personal.

- I visited a wetland refuge in London that had blinds with big plexiglass windows and benches so that people could sit in comfort, out of the wind, and watch wildlife through their binoculars and spotting scopes. Above the windows were big white boards with pictures of the wildlife that was likely to be seen. Similar facilities at the Refuge would be nice.
- Encourage bicycle use of the Refuge. This is a low impact, non-polluting use. Currently it is dangerous to ride from Titusville to the beach.
- Open the Bartram Trail. It is at Seashore parking lot #12, but needs boardwalks or an alternate route to provide access to the Trail.
- Develop wildlife or bird blinds for birdwatchers to sit in, out of the wind to view birds.
- Develop more birding platforms.
- Like bird watchers from all around the world, I love to passively pursue my hobby along the Black Point Wildlife Drive. This hobby generates many relaxing hours of watching (not shooting nor catching) the wildlife along the drive. I am a believer of "Leave no Trace" and only shooting wildlife with a camera.
- Maybe some blinds could be constructed to provide users the opportunity to watch the birds while keeping out of the elements. Properly designed blinds for observing and photographing wildlife would be a welcome addition.
- Restrict activities such as fishing, boating, and crabbing in wildlife viewing areas. Even activities like kayaking and bicycling can conflict with wildlife observation.
- Maintain and enhance existing facilities for wildlife observation and other non-consumptive uses. Limit development of the Refuge.
- Increase the number of hiking trails for wildlife observation.
- Develop a passive nature trail within the Huntington Tract (in the Turnbull/North Indian River Lagoon area). Shell rock could be used to develop a decent parking area. Add signs with a "pack it in, pack it out" message. Add trash bins. Get partners to do some policing of the property.

Black Point Wildlife Drive

- Have Black Point Wildlife Drive usage only for wildlife observation. No fishing, crabbing, etc. Many other areas exist where they can do these activities.
- Black Point Wildlife Drive IS the premier gateway for the Florida Birding Trail.
- Add just a little more parking at Black Point Wildlife Drive.
- Restrict crabbing and fishing on Black Point Wildlife Drive. These activities result in lots of trash, clog the Drive, create dangerous interactions between pedestrians and moving vehicles, and result in illegal activities (e.g., driving the wrong way on the one-way Drive).
- Why is there a disparity in the management plans for the impoundments of Black Point Wildlife Drive and other impoundments? The Wildlife Drive seems to get preferred treatment.
- Consider reopening Black Point Wildlife Drive to fishing and crabbing.
- Open side roads from the Wildlife Drive to fishing and crabbing.
- Stop fishing, crabbing on Black Point Wildlife Drive. This is a wildlife drive, not fishing, crabbing, hunting, etc.
- Create educational signage along Black Point Wildlife Drive. This would be helpful to visitors.
- Please discontinue fishing and netting on Black Point Wildlife Drive. The fisherman leave fishing line and hoods and trash, drive well over the posted limit,

and are often DUI after drinking beer for several hours. There are other places on the refuge they can fish a "Wildlife Drive" should be reserved for those who wish to view wildlife.

- Develop a two-way paved part (from L Pond Road) to SR406. If this were 2-way traffic, it would allow quick access to the "beginning" of L-pond Road, with a One-Way Traffic sign - Do Not Enter for the remainder of the Wildlife Drive at this Intersection. L-pond Road is too worn to support two-way traffic any longer. Traffic on the Wildlife Drive could then have the option to exit to SR 406 or continue along L-pond Road to SR 3.
- Perhaps some educational kiosks could be placed along Black Point Drive.
- Prohibit motorcycles from the Wildlife Drive (due to wildlife disturbance issues).
- Add trash cans at the Cruickshank Trail parking lot.

Manatee Observation Deck

- Add trash cans.
- Add port-o-lets.
- During busy days, have an interpreter stationed there to provide information and answer questions.
- Stop people from crawling under the observation deck (to get closer to the manatees).
- Extend a boardwalk along the full length of the present wooden fence to create a larger and longer viewing area (and to help prevent access to the bank).

User Fees

- I would like to see fees applied to public users of the Lagoon in order to reduce pressure and create revenue for maintenance and up-keep of the Refuge.
- We believe a fee should be charged at all Refuge boat ramps to support education, facilities maintenance and improvement, and more law enforcement.
- Implement a fee for everyone who fishes in Mosquito Lagoon - money should go only to education, law enforcement, and maintenance (e.g., toilets at boat ramps and trash cans).
- Establish an entry fee for Refuge (with special passes for NASA).
- Wildlife viewers are a large user group of the Refuge and should bear part of the expense through user fees.
- Consider day-use and annual pass fee program. Put these funds back into Refuge operations and habitat management.
- Do not establish user fees for boat ramps. We already pay taxes and Incidental Business Permits. Ramp fees restrict access.
- Exempt commercial guides from additional user fees.
- Implement user fees, but only if the money goes to the Refuge (not to some pot of money in Washington).
- Charge everyone for a fishing license.
- Do not charge ramp fees. They will restrict access. Some cannot afford these fees.

- Develop a User Pay system for all groups that currently use the Refuge for free. Waterfowl hunters contribute more money to the Refuge System than any of the other user groups, either through permits, Pittman-Robertson funds, or federal stamp programs. Currently, the other user groups of the Refuge are not chipping in their weight's worth, but continue to try and dictate how the Refuge is managed. A User Pay system would not only contribute additional funds to the Refuge, but also make sure everyone puts in their fair share to help out.
- I would not mind a user fee, if it was reasonable.
- Consider a self-pay station for day use fee collection at the entrances to the Refuge. NASA employees, and pass holders would be exempt from the day use fee.
- Consider a day use fee of \$1 per person.
- Waterfowl hunters already provide a great deal of funding for projects and programs within the Refuge through the Duck Stamp and State of Florida Waterfowl Permit program. Thus, hunters are paying for refuges, while other visitors are reaping the benefits. Therefore, all visitors and users should pay a fee or possess a federal Duck Stamp to gain access to the Refuge, thus alleviating the burden of waterfowlers unjustly paying the only fees.
- Birdwatchers should also kick in their fair share in fees, instead of only through donations.

Access

- Leave dike roads closed or maintain them to prevent erosion and vehicles getting stuck.
- Put buoys at Haulover boundary for the days preceding a shuttle launch to warn people that they can't go past that point.
- Keep levee roads and dikes mowed and passable for non-vehicle traffic.
- Maintain the dike roads better during hunting season.
- We would like to see paved roads down near Canaveral National Seashore open to the public.
- Open up some of the closed areas (roads) up in Shiloh area to vehicles for wildlife observation, maybe fishing, especially east and west of Shiloh Road.
- Fix L pond road.
- What about ATVs, horseback riding? (e.g. handicapped access by ATV)?
- Continuous trails - develop connectors North to South.
- Too many roads and too much development at the Refuge already. Future plans should be to protect wild land and wildlife as a priority above all other considerations.
- Open the closed off areas on the Refuge to allow full use of the Refuge (e.g., south end of Mosquito Lagoon and south end of the Seashore).
- Preserve the diversity of experiences on the Refuge (e.g., easily accessible Wildlife Drive versus remote, rustic areas that are less easily accessible).
- Open up southern Mosquito Lagoon.
- Create turn-around areas on the dike roads.
- Provide launch areas for kayaks along the dike roads.
- Make the Refuge more easily accessible to kids.
- Open dikes to public access, especially those north of Haulover Canal.
- Limit vehicle size on dike roads (i.e., motor homes, trucks over 1 ton).
- Create hiking/biking trail system linking the seashore.

- If more public access is granted, it will never be rescinded.
- Need equal access for all users and user groups, especially people with disabilities. For example, motors should be allowed for individuals with disabilities, even in no motor zones.
- Access to waterfowl habitat is a concern.
- Don't close the park to birders unnecessarily as there are lots of other places for hunters to hunt.
- Please consider having L-pond Road one-way from Black Point towards SR 3.
- No off road vehicles use of the Refuge. It is a totally unacceptable activity.
- Restrict the Refuge to only appointments.
- Keep the Refuge free from motorized traffic and resultant pollution.
- Highly control RV access to the Refuge.
- Provide a paved trail connecting Titusville through the Refuge to Playalinda Beach (Seashore) that is a safe distance from the roadway for walking, bicycling, and roller blading. Users currently share the road with cars (going in excess of 55 mph).
- Open the Turnbull/North Indian River Lagoon area lands for public use. It was deceptive to have the County's EELs program buy the lands for \$1.1 million, sell them to the State of Florida for \$543,084, and then hand them over to the federal government to fence and close from public enjoyment. Selling to the State at a de-valued price has driven down property values in the area.
- The bottom line is the need for public access and use of the miles of frontage along the Indian River. Historic use should not be denied.

Trash/Litter

- Need trash cans, recycle drop at ends of dike roads (including the Shiloh area).
- Our Refuge is world renown and visited by many foreign and out of state visitors. The amount of trash left mainly by fishermen and crabbers is an embarrassment to our country, our state, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Develop and enforce a much tougher policy to deal with this. Our normal visitors far outweigh these slobes and our main commitment should be to our regular visitors.
- There are NO trash receptacles. This contributes to the litter problem. Try "Bear Proof" receptacles or something similar to limit vandalism.
- Consider partnerships to pick up trash from receptacles on the Refuge (e.g., City of Titusville).
- Need recycling bins.
- Litter problems are often a result of the lack of trash receptacles.
- Install signs that say "Pick up other people's trash". Groups can report on what they find.
- I recognize the cost in trash removal but some humans will leave trash regardless of whether appropriate disposal bins are available, or not, so bite the bullet so to speak and provide trash can. Thank you for providing pit toilets down by Cruickshank Trail and keeping them quite clean, but I did notice recently that people threw trash beside them instead of taking it with them.
- Let volunteer clubs do cleanups of key areas. These
- What about developing an "adopt-a-road" approach? Groups could adopt certain areas of the Refuge to clean up and they could erect a sign with their business and/or organization name.
- Advertise litter pick-up events on the web.

- Have more community/Merritt Island Wildlife Association clean-ups (e.g., at Haulover and Black Point Wildlife Drive) on weekends when more people can participate.
- Close the littered areas of Haulover.
- Education and enforcement are needed to improve the littering problem.
- Don't mark and warn users that an area will be closed if littering continues. Just close the area and offer a VIP pass to all those who are willing to donate 1 hour per week cleaning up litter. This pass will allow holders to continue using the "closed" area. Plus, it will encourage folks not to litter. And, it will help clean up the Refuge.
- Institute stiff penalties for littering.
- Anyone caught littering should be given a summons to appear before a federal magistrate to answer for this violation. There ought to be a system (3 strikes, you're out) where violators who receive more than 2 summons are barred from the Refuge. Can the Refuge confiscate property (e.g., fishing tackle and vehicles) for clear violations of Refuge rules?
- To combat the litter problem along Eagle Nesting Road (by Black Point), allow only hiking and bicycling traffic (no cars or other vehicles).
- Use weekend warriors (e.g., from the jail or day laborers) to pick up trash on the Refuge.

User Conflicts

- I have seen many confrontations (some very serious) when anglers "run" through an area that someone has quietly poled onto.
- I have seen boats chase other boats.
- I have seen lures cast at other boats.
- Boat traffic in Mosquito Lagoon seems to be 4-5 times what it was 15-18 years ago. This increase has resulted in more ramp conflicts, more noise, more wakes, more competition at known "spots", and a generally less exciting and less peaceful experience.
- Hunters should have the same rights as bird watchers. It seems the Refuge caters to the bird watchers and other eco-tourists, while hunters are the ones who pay to utilize the Refuge, but who are treated as unwanted interlopers.
- Merritt Island NWR should pay more attention to other groups of individuals such as birdwatchers, lepidopterists etc. The world does not revolve around only hunters and fishermen, even in Florida! Birding and other non-consumptive hobbies add much needed income to the local economy. After all, we have to stay in motels and eat in restaurants too!
- We wish the Audubon yearly bird count at Christmas would take precedence over hunting.

Personal Watercraft.

- Jet skis - don't want them.
- Other areas exist off the Refuge where this use can occur.
- Personal watercraft (PWC) should have equal access and equal treatment. No scientific evidence exists that PWCs are any more destructive to the environment than traditional prop-driven boats. If anything, the jet propulsion and high draft is less damaging to aquatic life and the environment.
- Training is needed for all users of personal watercraft.

- Personal watercraft cause less damage than a propeller driven boat and it emits less pollution than some of the older outboard motors still out on the water.
- It isn't fair to discriminate against personal watercraft users.
- Jet skis should only be allowed if they paddle them. It's not a playground.
- PWC cause less damage than conventional boats.
- New technologies have decreased the concern with the pollution and noise factors associated with PWC. Therefore, revisit the PWC ban on the Refuge, since PWCs are now more environmentally friendly.
- PWC are a vehicle for wildlife observation.
- Lake Tahoe established provisions for certain noise and pollution standards for PWCs.
- PWC users want equal access to areas open to conventional boats.
- No personal watercraft on the Refuge. It is a totally unacceptable activity.
- Motorized watercraft are not necessary for our survival, there is No compelling reason to allow them in the Refuge.
- Complete a compatibility determination for personal watercraft, as it is similar to conventional boats.
- Personal watercraft emit sound levels comparable or lower than boats of similar power or performance levels.
- Personal watercraft do not disturb wildlife any more than other vessels operating at the same distance. See Rodgers, JA, 2002, Buffer Zone Distances to protect Foraging and Loafing Waterbirds from Disturbance by Personal Watercraft in Florida, Study 7520, Bureau of Wildlife Diversity Conservation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Gainesville, FL.
- Water turbulence from the personal watercraft jet drive operating a mid-speed did not extend down to the level of the seagrass blades in a water depth of approximately 20 inches. No statistically significant differences in the abundances of seagrasses or other benthic biota were found in quadrants randomly deployed within the circular test areas following the intensive personal watercraft operation. The results of tests conducted in this study indicate the operation of personal watercraft in depths of 2 feet or more, as recommended by the manufacturers, does not detrimentally affect seagrass beds by causing a detectable change in the abundances of seagrasses or other common benthic biota within grassbeds. Personal watercraft used under the recommended guidelines during testing did not cause scarring of the grassbeds. See the study, "Effects of Personal Watercraft Operation on Shallow-water Seagrass Communities in the Florida Keys", October 6, 1997, Continental Shelf Associates, inc.
- "Manatee injury and death from personal watercraft is non existent. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Protected Species management reported in a review of over 25 years of manatee mortality records, no PWC was implicated in a death or injury." Excerpt from a letter from David W Arnold, Chief of the Bureau of Protected Species Management, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, to the Honorable Dave Weldon, March 16, 1999.
- Refuge management policies and guidelines should regulate and educate against inappropriate behavior of PWC riders, vessel operators, fishermen, and other users of the Refuge.
- Apply regulations equally, to all motorized watercraft and their users to ensure

- equal access.
- Wildlife disturbances due to PWC use is on the order of or less than other uses like walking, non-powered boats, or other powered boats. Therefore, PWC-specific restrictions or bans afford bird populations no incremental increase in protection.
- The majority of PWC accidents occur on non-owner operated PWC, with many on rental PWC. A simple exclusion of rental vessels from the Refuge could potentially reduce PWC accidents in a material manner.
- More fatalities occur in non-powered vessels (e.g., canoes, kayaks, and rowboats) than in PWC.
- Non-powered vessels contribute no registration fees, gas tax revenue, or launch ramp revenues to state based boating safety, enforcement, or facilities funding. Yet, the non-powered boating community demands equal and in some cases exclusive access to public waterways.
- PWC use is more compatible with the mission of the Refuge System than automobile use. But, no consideration is being given to restrict or eliminate automobiles.
- The National Park Service is currently involved in rule making for continued PWC use at several park units. One of their studies documents that a "visit use study can help managers determine if use is appropriate for the area". (See: Personal Watercraft Use in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area: Visitor Characteristics and Perceptions across Three Study Seasons, Research Summary, cooperative Park Studies Program, university of Minnesota, College of Natural Resources, No. 21, March 2001.)
- The majority of PWC use does not involve hunting or fishing, therefore increased access of PWC will not result in any incremental increase of pressure on hunting or fishing resources.
- Personal watercraft (or any motorized watercraft) are not compatible with the purposes of the Refuge and the Refuge System. Eliminate motorized watercraft use of the Refuge.

Bathrooms

- Port-o-lets are badly needed at Bair's Cove, the manatee viewing platform, and the northwest corner of Haulover Canal where kayakers launch.

Research

- Have any studies looked at the local/global effect of hunting on migratory/endangered species?
- Conduct a study on compatible uses for Mosquito Lagoon.
- What is the capacity of boat usage that is compatible for wildlife? The Refuge needs to ensure that it is maintaining a quality environment for wildlife.

Refuge Administration

General

- Marine Protected Area designation & potential impacts????
- Follow only scientific research.
- Offer a 1-year/2-year "open house" to report direction and progress on the 15-

- year plan.
- Return ownership of the waters (that are owned by NASA and managed by the Refuge) to the State of Florida.
- 30% of the fishing licenses (collected by the State of Florida) should go into law enforcement (as stated by the law).
- Texas is implementing a professional guide license where the holder must prove that 65% of the guide's income comes from guiding. Florida should do the same.
- The Refuge needs to implement a data collection system to measure impacts of what is implemented. With a lack of data, management actions are just a best guess.
- The Refuge should reach out and receive more public input from the hunting community on issues that affect them inside the Refuge. Maintaining communication and a relationship with groups like Delta Waterfowl and others is an important tool.
- Devote more money and facilities to non-consumptive uses (i.e. non-hunting and non-fishing activities).
- Restrict other government intrusions into the Refuge (e.g., US Navy, US Coast Guard, US Air Force, and NASA). It is important for government agencies to show the way in respecting wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- Ensure that the lands and wildlife are protected and that NASA's insatiable urge to pioneer space does not jeopardize the Refuge.
- It seems that the Refuge has more lands than it can manage.

Funding & Staffing

- Direct more funding for habitat management, for fire management, and to increase biodiversity.
- Increase personnel/funding to manage the Refuge.
- Ask the Waterfowlers' Association for volunteer help.
- Use the volunteers to help mark and maintain trails (e.g., hiking trails and canoe trails).
- The law enforcement staff of the Refuge needs to be doubled. 3 officers for 140,000 acres is woefully inadequate.
- Increase volunteer program. Have the volunteers help with the hunt program, so that the Refuge can have more hunting days. Have the volunteers run hunt check stations.

Regulations

- Leave existing laws alone with one exception - impose fines on anyone caught destroying the grass flats.
- Ban jet skis!! They have numerous negative impacts (e.g., pollution, noise, wildlife and habitat disturbance).
- Ban ATVs. They have numerous negative impacts (e.g., pollution, noise, wildlife and habitat disturbance).
- Ban horses. They have negative impacts (e.g., seed distribution through feces and wildlife and habitat disturbance).
- Ban motorized boats. They have numerous negative impacts (e.g., pollution, noise, wildlife and habitat disturbance).
- Ban motorcycles. They have numerous negative impacts (e.g., pollution, noise,

- wildlife and habitat disturbance).
- Ban bicycling. This use has numerous negative impacts (e.g., wildlife and habitat disturbance).
- People who violate Refuge hunting regulations should be banned from the Refuge.
- Ban people who violate the laws from any refuge (e.g., littering, wildlife harassment, game and fish violations). Establish harsh penalties.
- I am opposed to arbitrary restriction on any motorized vessels. Any restrictions should cover all vessels and not single out a single type of vessel.

Partnerships

- Keep up the good work - We need more alliances between the Environmentally Endangered Lands' properties and the Refuge. Some of the Refuge's programs should be seamlessly interchangeable with Brevard's sanctuaries.
- Partnerships - Co-op plantings? Consider for future??
- Coordinate with other government agencies.

Incidental Business Permits

- Establish a freeze on Incidental Business Permits, then determine and implement a ceiling/limited number of permits to be issued.
- Do not limit the number of licensed or permitted fishing guides.
- Funds from Incidental Business Permits should be used to pay for on the water law enforcement.
- Control non-permit holding guides. Call Florida Sportsman to get non-permitted guides' advertisements pulled from the magazine. Call un-permitted guides and get them under permit. Consider sting operations.

Feral Hog Removal Contracts

- Unit 3 is not required by law to be included under the same bidding process as areas 1 and 2.
- Area 3 has a thriving hog population and should be addressed by 2 or 3 trappers (instead of just one trapper as currently exists) to lower the hog population. All area 3 trappers should have equal rights to range throughout the area. Each trapper should be allowed up to 5 agents. The contract amount would remain the same for area 3, but divided amongst the 3 trappers. Contractors should not be allowed to continue past a five-year term for the same area, but could reapply for another area.
- Areas 1 and 2 should remain a bidding process, under these guidelines: (1) public invitation, (2) trapper's residence, (3) qualifications, (4) bidding process, (5) cap on bids, and (6) award of bids. Notification of the public should be at least 30 days prior to the actual bid process, where bid packages can only be picked up at the Refuge's Visitor Information Center, where bid packages explaining the rules and procedures, and where a copy of a picture identification should accompany each bid. The picture identification could be used to verify that the applicant lives within the required distance and that the applicant is free is arrest warrants. Once an award is made, it should be advertised in the newspapers. Previous agents on the Refuge with good performance records should have high priority.

- Trapper qualification should include: a minimum of five years of verifiable experience associate specifically with the trapping, catching, removing, and relocating of feral hogs; completion of a state hunter safety course; completion of first aid training; a clean criminal record; a clean driving record; a record that is free of serious game violations; a trapper's license from the Game and Fish Commission; a US citizen; a Florida resident; and active health and automobile insurance.
- Approximated values of hog removal contracts are: \$5,500-\$7,500 for Area 1 and \$7,500-\$9,500 for Area 2. Bids should not be accepted below the minimum or beyond the maximum. If you accept the highest bidder, a well-funded terrorist could pose as a trapper and out bid other applicants or an undesirable trapper could out bid other applicants.
- Hog trapping has become a playground, not a legitimate effort.

Archaeological & Cultural Resources

- Protect cultural and historical resources.