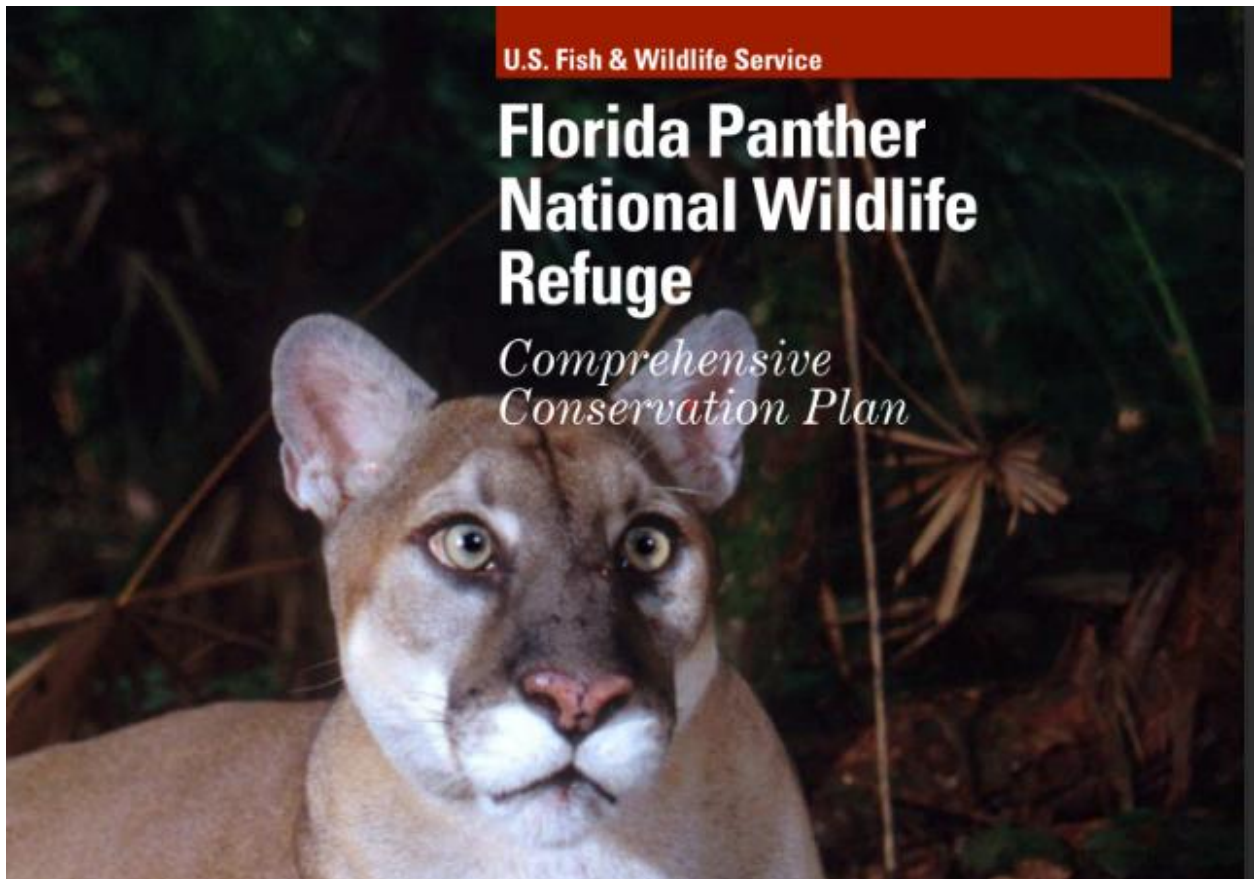


Pistol Pond Project

Select items from 2020 Comprehensive plan related to Project



Lakes

Many small (1-20 acre) lakes are scattered throughout the refuge. The lakes or ponds are shallow (1-4 feet deep), except for Colding and Pistol ponds which have depths of 20-25 feet. These two ponds were artificially excavated for SR 29 road base material. Some common vegetation include pickerel weed, alligator flag, floating lemna and wolffiella, and submergent bladderwort and naiad. A few have emergent stands of giant cutgrass.

Cultural Resources

Archaeological investigations within the refuge have been limited. Seventeen archaeological and historic sites are recorded for the refuge. Two additional prehistoric sites have been reported but have not been verified. The three prehistoric sites are black earth middens and date to an unspecified Glades period. The middens contain a variety of ceramics, worked bone and shell tools, and faunal materials. Similar sites are seen in the Big Cypress National Preserve. Eleven of the historic sites are 20th century hunting camps. Buildings stand only at the Wilson Lake and Rock Island camps. The Lee Tidewater Cypress Company purchased the Fakahatchee Strand in 1906 for its large virgin stands of cypress. Logging operations did not begin until the late 1940s. Miccosukee and Seminole bands may have utilized the refuge in the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, no sites or camps have been found or reported on the refuge which can be attributed to either group.

Today, the only visible evidence are the all terrain vehicle roads which crisscross the refuge. The roads were the railbeds of the lumber railroad. A shell rock mining and crushing company operated near Pistol Pond as evidenced by the scatter of rusting equipment. The Colding House, located at the refuge maintenance complex, originally stood near the fire tower. It was moved to its current location in 1950. None of the historic sites are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Appendix C - Public Involvement Process

Part 1 - Service Responses to Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

The following topics were identified by the Service and through the public involvement process. Comments listed are representative of those received by the Service from the public and the stakeholder group; responses from the Service follow the comments.



1. Public Access

The refuge has been closed to public access except for limited, small group tours. This was by far the biggest issue during the planning process for the refuge. Comments ranged the full spectrum, from maintaining the refuge as an inviolate sanctuary to proposals for multi-recreational pursuits.

Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities Regarding Access

- Survey responses were split: 50 percent wanted more access; 50 percent did not
- Allow a limited-hunter deer and turkey hunt
- Allow sport fishing on Colding and Pistol ponds
- Establish hiking trails and camping opportunities
- Adjacent public areas allow multiple public use - keep the refuge an inviolate sanctuary
- Allow foot access only
- Provide more tours or interpretive trails
- Allow off-road vehicle use
- Need for bird watching and photography areas
- Refuge was established for panthers, increasing public use or harvesting panther prey will violate refuge purpose

(from p 13)

The following priorities have been determined by the Service for the South Florida Ecosystem, which includes the refuge:

- Protect and manage units of the National Wildlife Refuge System and other national interest lands.
 - Protect migratory birds and protect, restore, and manage their habitats.
 - Protect, restore, and manage candidate, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats.
 - Protect, restore, and manage wetlands and other freshwater habitats.
 - Protect, restore, and manage fish and other aquatic species and their habitats.
 - Protect, restore, and enhance coastal and estuarine habitats.
 - Protect, restore, and manage for biodiversity.
-

From page 20

Aside from the issue of hunting, the Service will review the prospect of a public fishing area at **Pistol** Pond (Special Project 14). The Service will continue to offer guided swamp buggy and auto and walking tours of the refuge on a limited basis.

From Management goals (p 23 for overview)

Management Goals

Habitat Management

- 1.0 Provide optimum habitat conditions on the refuge for the Florida panther.

Natural Diversity Management

- 2.0 Restore and conserve the natural diversity, abundance, and ecological function of refuge flora and fauna.

Research and Monitoring

- 3.0 Conduct research, monitoring and evaluations to improve management of flora and fauna on the refuge and within the South Florida Ecosystem.

Public Use Management

- 4.0 Provide opportunities for compatible public use in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Environment Education Management

- 5.0 Develop and implement outreach and education programs that will promote conservation and provide an understanding and appreciation of the Florida panther, fish and wildlife ecology, and human influence on ecosystems of south Florida.

Cooperative Management

- 6.0 Promote interagency and private landowner cooperation for the protection and management of natural and cultural resources within southwest Florida.

Archaeological Resources Management

- 7.0 Protect refuge cultural resources in accordance with federal and state historic preservation legislation and regulations.

Natural Diversity Management

Goal

- 2.0 Restore and conserve the natural diversity, abundance, and ecological function of refuge flora and fauna.

and labor cooperation, and other exotic plant issues.

Objective

- 2.6 Implement management techniques to enhance other refuge endemic fauna.

Strategies

- 2.6.1 Restore a 100-acre disturbed site adjacent to SR 29 as a moist soil management area. The area would be managed for waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds by water level management and tilling practices. (Special Project 5)
- 2.6.2 Develop littoral zones and restore native vegetation along pond edges at Colding and Pistol ponds to enhance habitat for fish, birds, and other fauna.

Public Use Management

Goal

- 4.0 Provide opportunities for compatible public use in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Objective

- 4.3 Determine compatibility and feasibility of fishing at **Pistol** Pond.

Strategies

- 4.3.1 By 2000, determine the mercury level of fish in Pistol

Pond by enlisting the cooperation of the Service's Ecological Services Division on sampling and contaminants analysis. (*Special Project 13*)

- 4.3.2 Inventory fishery resources in Pistol Pond by employing electro-shocking techniques through cooperation of the Service's Fisheries Division.
- 4.3.3 Evaluate the costs, logistics, and safety considerations in creating suitable sites for fishing in Pistol Pond. The evaluation will consider options of partnership assistance to defray costs and/or gain assistance for site development. (*Special Project 14*)
- 4.3.4 Determine if public use at Pistol Pond will be compatible with the future extension of SR 29 panther fence and crossing.

*Project 13. Research Mercury Levels of Fish in **Pistol** and Colding Ponds*

Past fish collections from Pistol and Colding ponds have indicated varying mercury levels, but all were high and some records exceeded human consumption standards. To better understand the contamination level, more sampling is prudent. This will be a cooperative effort requiring fishery assistance (electro-shock boat) from either a state or federal agency. In addition, \$5,000-10,000 is needed to run the mercury tests.

Project 14. Evaluate the Safety and Feasibility of a Fishing Program for Pistol Pond

This study would also assist management in making a compatibility determination regarding fishing on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. Pistol Pond is not a natural lake. It is actually a pit created after fill material was excavated for SR 29. The banks are not gradual, but steep sided, with nearly a vertical drop of 10-15 feet around the entire bank. This presents an extremely hazardous bank fishing situation, especially if small children are involved. To remedy this hazard the bank slope would have to be cut or filled. Another measure may include the construction of a fishing pier. In addition, the existing fishery is extremely limited, thus the reason for the shock boat requirement in Project 13. Refuge staff will assess these various factors and determine if a fishing program is compatible and economically feasible. No additional costs will be incurred with this evaluation project.