



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

"... conserving our natural resources and your right to enjoy them."

affiliated with



Resolution No. 5A, 2012

SUBJECT: MAUREPAS SWAMP DOG HUNTING

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) is responsible for all hunting rules and regulations for the taking of native game species upon the numerous Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) across the State of Louisiana and making changes to those rules and regulations as appropriate, considering many factors of influence, keeping the proper management of the resource and public interest in mind, and

WHEREAS, the largest WMA in the State of Louisiana is located approximately 25 miles west of New Orleans along the south shore of Lake Maurepas, currently comprised of over 100,000 acres of land with more expansions expected, known as the Maurepas Swamp Management Area, and

WHEREAS, the topography of this area consists of flooded cypress/tupelo swamp with limited red maple, various oak species and numerous lesser brushy trees adapted to the watery habitat that sees periods of extensive flooding resulting from heavy rains or tropical winds for days at a time, thus accurately describing the area as "a vast swamp" with limited access points and difficult terrain for any sportsmen challenging its defenses, and

WHEREAS, prior to the establishment of this land as public hunting property in 2001, this entire area was managed by deep-rooted traditional hunting clubs leasing large tracts of property for private hunting rights, primarily for white-tailed deer; and many of these deer hunting clubs could trace their history back to the early 1900's only a few decades after much of the swamp was logged for its valuable cypress timber, leaving behind countless miles of interconnecting open pull runs utilized by hunters for walking or small boating access into the deepest depths of the swamp; and these hunters brought their special breed of hounds or "Deer Dogs" to go where they could not in search of their quarry, which created bonds of family and friendship between hunters, and love of the sport between men and their animals, that have become stories of local legend even today, and

WHEREAS, years turned to decades and natural changes in the swamp occurred stifling hunter ingress with new growth trees, aquatic vegetation over-taking the boat runs, noticeable land subsidence and rising tides rendering many areas too deep for walking, all of which forced the determined hunters to adapt their hunting tactics, and

WHEREAS, with the invention of the airboat and other powered motor boats, hunters were once again able to access much of the vast emptiness and remain successful in their excursions, all the while depending on their faithful canine companions to venture beyond their human limits in hopes of bringing back that "Big Buck" for a trophy mount or simply bragging rights back at camp, and

(more)

WHEREAS, the creation of the Maurepas Swamp Management Area in 2001 abruptly ended the generations-old tradition and the long heritage of deer camps, dog hunting and organized hunting clubs in the Maurepas Swamp, and added restrictions on the use of powered boats and where they can travel, limited road and foot access points, and now the bloom of invasive vegetation such as water hyacinth and greater salvania have made paddle boating and walk-in to many areas nearly impossible, inaccessible and unfeasible for big game hunting, and

WHEREAS, though it is recognized that WMAs must be properly managed with appropriate rules and regulations for the protection of wildlife species and the environment, restrictions on powered vessels, limited access points, and inaccessible conditions leave much of Maurepas Swamp WMA underutilized as public hunting grounds, where the use of hunting dogs could be very beneficial in increasing hunter success rates and managing a healthy deer population, and

WHEREAS, the history of fair chase use of dogs for deer hunting in this area prior to 2001 without any threat to deer populations, and the area's ideal setting for control of dogs by isolation, warrants the question of allowing for an experimental dog hunting season once again in hopes of increasing hunter interest, license sales and WMA permit income, and

WHEREAS, dog hunting opportunities have been allowed for years on Kisatachie Forest WMAs and a few other state-owned properties, understandably not without problems and controversy at times, with problems primarily associated with trespass on private properties adjacent to small or medium tracts of public land, and

WHEREAS, the Maurepas Swamp Management Area, by virtue of its vastness and remoteness, is perfectly suited for free-roaming dog hunting throughout most of its broad expanse where trespassing or dog intrusion would be highly unlikely and manageable with proper permitting and a required dog ownership identification program.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation urges the Legislature of the State of Louisiana to authorize the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to consider a special dog hunting deer season on the Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in Convention Assembled, March 11, 2012 in Covington, Louisiana.

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a statewide conservation education and advocacy organization with more than 10,000 members and 26 affiliate groups. Established in 1940, it is affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation and represents a broad constituency of conservationists including hunters, fishers, campers, birders, boaters, and other outdoor enthusiasts.