

PUBLIC INFORMATION BULLETIN

Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex
694 Beech Hill Lane
Hardeeville, SC 29927



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2024

Contact: Nathan Hawkaluk, 843-784-9911 ext. 101, Nathan_Hawkaluk@fws.gov



Pinckney Island and Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuges (NWR's) Proposed Forest Management Action

Pinckney Island and Harris Neck NWR's, administered by the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex, propose to use mechanical selective removal of trees and shrubs to reduce hazardous fuels, control invasive species, and improve forest habitat for resident, migratory, and imperiled wildlife species. The selective removal of trees and shrubs, in this instance, is defined as the cutting and/or removing of trees by various techniques, such as chipping, mulching, and chainsaw felling. This is an existing refuge use but is being currently reviewed as the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and US Fish and Wildlife Service Compatibility Policy requires re-evaluation of non-priority uses every 10 years. The 2011 Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment found this use to be compatible with the mission of these NWR's.

This use would be conducted primarily within established pine and mixed pine hardwood stands scattered across the landscape of both Pinckney Island and Harris Neck NWR's. In addition to hazardous fuel reduction and invasive Chinese tallow tree control, these areas would be overall improved for a variety of wildlife species found here. These include painted bunting (*Passerina ciris*), Bachman's sparrow (*Peucaea aestivalis*), various woodpeckers, tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), eastern diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*), and many others.

You are invited to review draft Compatibility Determinations and Environmental Action Statements related to the proposed forest management action on both Pinckney Island and Harris Neck NWR's. These draft documents are available online at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/pinckney-island> and <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/harris-neck>. Documents are open to review beginning May 9, 2024, for a 33-day period and all comments must be submitted by the close of business on June 10, 2024. Please submit any comments to Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex either through email (savannahcoastal@fws.gov) or standard mail (Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex, 694 Beech Hill Lane, Hardeeville, SC 29927).

Across the country, national wildlife refuges work closely with state agencies, tribes, private partners, and citizens to best manage these public owned lands for the benefit of wildlife and people.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.