



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge
7200 Crane Lane
Gautier, MS, 39553



March 25, 2011

Dear Sir/Madame

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has begun the process of planning for a proposed expansion of Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Jackson County, Mississippi and Mobile County, Alabama. Grand Bay National NWR was established in 1992 for the purpose of protecting one of the largest remaining expanses of native Gulf Coast savanna. In subsequent years, the Service has also brought under management a section of the scenic Escatawpa River.

The proposed expansion includes four areas which total 8,166 acres (see attached map).

Area A (340 ac.) a small area at the northeast corner of the refuge which includes a large colony of the endangered gopher tortoise.

Area B (1,321 ac.) an area of coastal savanna in the central part of the refuge and the former community of Pecan.

Area C (2,505 ac.) a section of the Escatawpa River and a tributary, Black Creek on the west side of the refuge.

Area D (4,000 ac.) an area that reaches from the eastern boundary of the refuge into the Grand Bay Swamp.

The purpose of the proposed refuge expansion is to preserve valuable riverine habitat, protect endangered and threatened species, restore and protect key habitats (i.e. coastal savanna, longleaf pine), and manage populations of migratory birds and other inter-jurisdictional trust species. The project area is within The Nature Conservancy's Grand Bay Bioreserve, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Grand Bay Coastal Preserve. Excellent partnership opportunities exist with these federal and state agencies and conservation organizations.

An inter-governmental coordination meeting has been scheduled for April 14, 2011, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at the 5 Rivers – Alabama's Delta Resource Center. 5 Rivers is located at 30945 Five Rivers Blvd., Spanish Fort, AL 36527. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the proposed expansion and obtain input from federal, state, and local agencies. After the inter-governmental coordination meetings have been held in Mississippi and Alabama, public scoping meetings will be scheduled. The final phase in our planning will be the preparation of an environmental assessment which will be circulated for public review and comment.

For additional information concerning our meeting or the planning process, please contact Maury Bedford, Gulf Coast NWR Complex Manager at 228-497-6322 x 105 or Maury_Bedford@fws.gov.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maury Bedford', written in a cursive style.

Maury Bedford
Complex Manager
Gulf Coast NWR Complex

Encl (2): Map of Proposed Expansion
Directions to Meeting

Outdoor ALABAMA

SHARE THE WONDER.



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MARCH 2011						
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Home > Outdoor Adventures > 5 Rivers - Alabama's Delta Resource Center

5 Rivers Contact Information and Directions

5 Rivers is located across from Meaher State Park on the Mobile Bay Causeway (US Highway 90/98) in Spanish Fort, about five miles from downtown Mobile.



FROM PENSACOLA:

I10 West, take Exit 35 (Daphne-Fairhope, US 98)
 From the exit go straight through the traffic signal at the intersection with US 98.
 Merge onto US 90/98, also called Battleship Parkway
 Cross over Blakeley River Bridge, continue for approximately 1/4 mile.
 Turn right onto 5 Rivers Blvd, directly across from Meaher State Park.
 Follow the road and signs into the property.

FROM MOBILE/MISSISSIPPI

I10 East through the George Wallace Tunnel.
 Take the immediate exit after the Tunnel, Exit 27 onto Battleship Parkway (US 90E).
 Go approximately 1/2 mile past the Blue Gill Restaurant and turn left onto Five Rivers Blvd, which is directly across the road from Meaher State Park.
 Follow the road and signs into the property.

FROM BIRMINGHAM/NORTH ALABAMA

I65 South to Exit 31 (HWY 225)
 Follow Hwy 225 to Hwy 31 in Spanish Fort
 Turn Right onto HWY 31/90/98 and go to mile marker 42
 Turn Right onto 5 Rivers Blvd, which is directly across the road from Meaher State Park.
 Follow the road and signs into the property.

5 Rivers – Alabama's Delta Resource Center

30945 Five Rivers Blvd.
 Spanish Fort, AL 36527
 251-625-0814
 Monday through Sunday