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Agriculture

Forest  
Service

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# Environmental Assessment

## Kisatchie National Forest

### Proposed Plan Amendment Prohibiting Dog-Deer Hunting

**Claiborne, Grant, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon, Webster, and  
Winn Parishes in Louisiana**

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# 1 Introduction: Purpose of and Need for Change

## 1.1 Proposal

The Forest Service is proposing to amend the Kisatchie National Forest's Revised Forest Plan by adding a new standard that would prohibit the use of dogs to hunt deer on the entire Kisatchie National Forest (KNF). The proposed standard would state the following:

*“Prohibit use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest. Other kinds of hunting with dogs are allowed throughout the Forest (in accordance with state hunting regulations) unless site-specific management direction prohibits the use (such as on administrative sites and the National Wildlife Preserves).”*

The prohibition does not apply to still-hunting for deer or to other kinds of hunting with dogs, such as for squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, or game birds.

## 1.2 Purpose and Need

Based on complaints from Forest users and neighboring landowners, the Kisatchie National Forest (KNF) recognizes that dog-deer hunting is increasing user conflicts on the Forest. This method of hunting impacts other Forest users when deer-hunting dogs range beyond the control of hunters and trespass onto private lands and leases. Landowners living near the KNF have reported personal property vandalism, livestock harassment, personal confrontations, shooting from and across roads, shooting near homes, and road damage from the influx of dog-deer hunters each year. Other recreationists, including other hunters, have experienced accompanying nuisances, including noise, blocked roads, littering, and speeding to get ahead of dogs on forest roads. The purpose of this proposal is to alleviate all or some of these conflicts.

The KNF is the only federal land within Louisiana with a wildlife management mandate on which dog-deer hunting is allowed. Other federal and state lands (USFWS refuges, COE lands, WMAs) do not allow this practice because it is hard to manage and they are able to maintain biological controls through still-hunting only.

In addition, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries found that during the 1988-1989 season, 79% of Louisiana's deer hunters still-hunted most of the time while 21% hunted with dogs most of the time. They also found that 75% of the hunters desired a change in regulations. Of those indicating a desire for change, 82% preferred regulations that allow for more days of still-hunting and less of hunting with dogs (LDWF and LSU Dept of Experimental Statistics, 1989).

In addition, the Forest Service received a petition from Congressman Rodney Alexander in May 2009 which listed numerous complaints about dog-deer hunting in the Pollock and Dry Prong area of the Forest. The signers of this petition, most of whom own property in the area, claimed that dog-deer hunters:

- Stand in the roadways and park in ditches and along the road, making it difficult for cars to pass
- Cut ruts in ditches
- Leave food and trash on the sides of the roads
- Stand close to homes, making it unsafe for children or pets to be outside
- Abandon some hunting dogs at the end of the season
- Are non-locals who aren't concerned about land belonging to local landowners
- Drive deer away from privately-owned lands, leaving private landowners with no deer to hunt on their land

Based on this awareness of user conflicts (oral and written complaints and petition) and from the information provided by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the KNF is concerned about how the impacts of dog-deer hunting practices affect all Forest users and neighboring landowners.

This proposal addresses the need to reduce recurring conflicts by prohibiting the practice of using dogs to hunt deer on the Forest.

### **1.3 Forest Plan Amendment**

This proposal would amend the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Kisatchie National Forest* (1999). The Forest Plan standards and guidelines would be amended to prohibit hunting deer with dogs on the entire Kisatchie National Forest. The proposed changes to the Plan are disclosed in more detail in Chapter 2 of the document.

### **1.4 Related and Referenced Documents**

This proposal is consistent with the goals, objectives, and desired future conditions as described in the following Forest Plan goals (p. 2-1 of the Forest Plan):

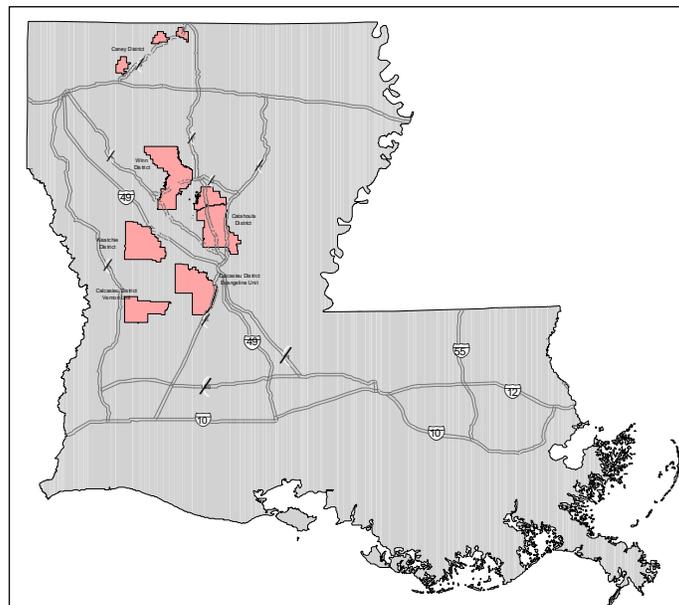
**Goal 4:** Provide for scenic quality and outdoor experiences which respond to the needs of forest users and local communities. Provide access to a wide variety of recreational opportunities and facilities.

**Goal 7:** Monitor to provide feedback regarding progress toward accomplishing Forest goals and objectives; and adapt management according to new information.

This environmental assessment tiers to the “Developed and Dispersed Recreation” analysis of the *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, pp. 4-69 to 4-82, for the 1999 Revised Forest Plan.

## 1.5 Location

The Kisatchie National Forest is in the north, central, and western portions of the state of Louisiana. District offices are located in Bentley, Boyce, Homer, Provencal, and Winnfield; the Forest headquarters is located at the Alexandria Forestry Center (the Supervisor’s Office) in Pineville, Louisiana. A vicinity map of the Forest follows:



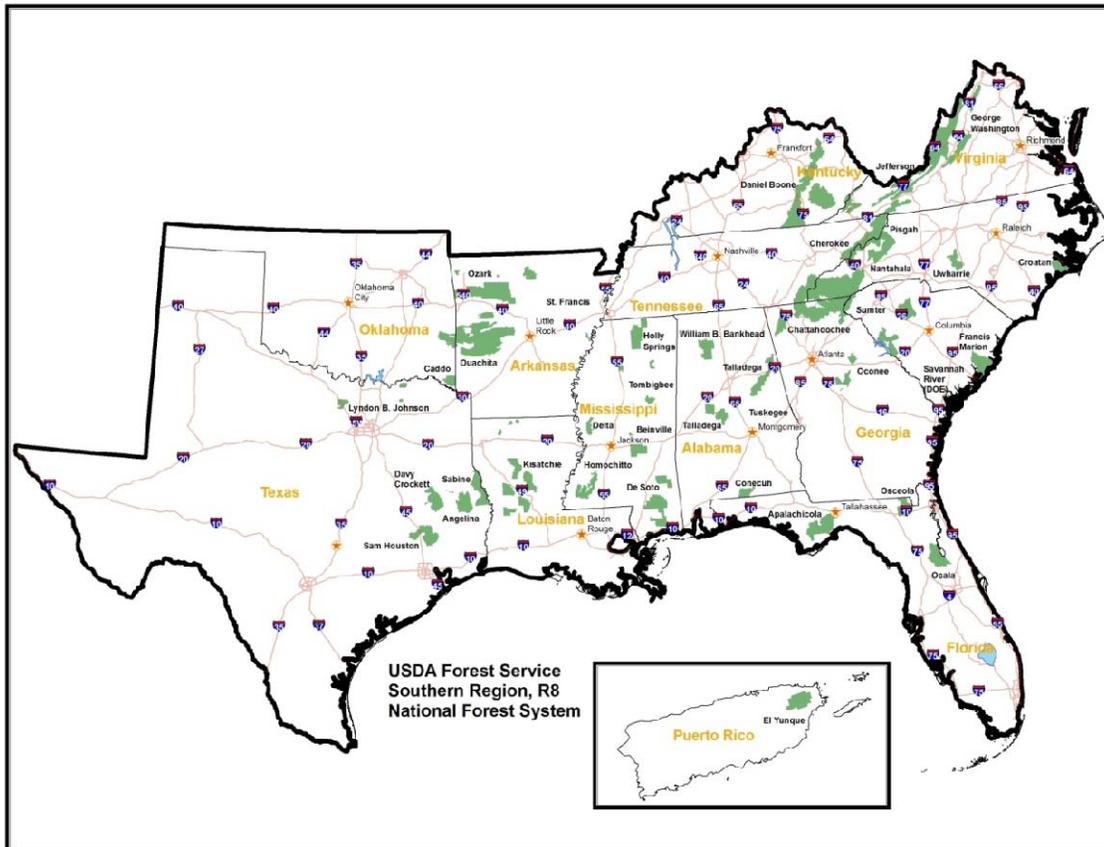
Kisatchie National Forest

## 1.6 Decision to be made

The Regional Forester for the Southern Region (Region 8) is the deciding official for this proposal. The Regional Forester may decide to:

- Select no action
- Select and implement the proposed plan amendment (or proposed action)
- Select a modification or alternative to the proposed action.

## Map of the Southern Region of the U.S. Forest Service



### 1.7 Public Involvement

The proposal was listed in the *Schedule of Proposed Actions* on the Forest's website beginning August 2009. The scoping proposal letter was mailed to approximately 100 public contacts and a scoping notice was placed in five newspapers of record in August 2009. News releases followed requesting comments on the Forest's proposal. Another scoping letter, notice, and news release, with additional information about respondents' privacy rights under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), were sent out in September 2009. Both scoping requests asked for comment responses by October 1, 2009.

During the scoping period, many collaborating agencies and interested citizen groups that may not have received a scoping letter were also informed of the proposal (Kisatchie National Forest, 2009). Those additional contacts are listed below:

- State Forester

- State Wildlife Agency
- State Tourism Agency
- Tribal Governments
- Louisiana Governor's Office
- Louisiana Parish Police Jury
- Louisiana Parish Sheriff
- The Nature Conservancy
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Quail Unlimited
- Ducks Unlimited
- Hunting Dog Association
- National Forest Foundation
- Universities
- U.S. Senators and Representatives
- State Senators and Representatives
- Television
- Radio
- Newspapers (statewide, local, weekends)
- Websites (Forest Service and State)
- Social Media

Comments received during the scoping period spanned the spectrum from not allowing any form of hunting with dogs to increasing the number of days for dog-deer hunting. Some comments agreed with the need for the proposal, saying that this method of hunting was disruptive to both their own enjoyment of the Forest and to the habitat conditions for deer. Many of these stated personal experiences where hunter's dogs were either lost or left behind and became nuisances to adjacent landowners, other hunters (including other dog-deer hunters), and other wildlife. Opposing comments expressed the desire to continue the practice because it is a traditional form of hunting, public areas open to dog-deer hunting are scarce, and new limitations on public hunting of public lands are unnecessary and undesirable.

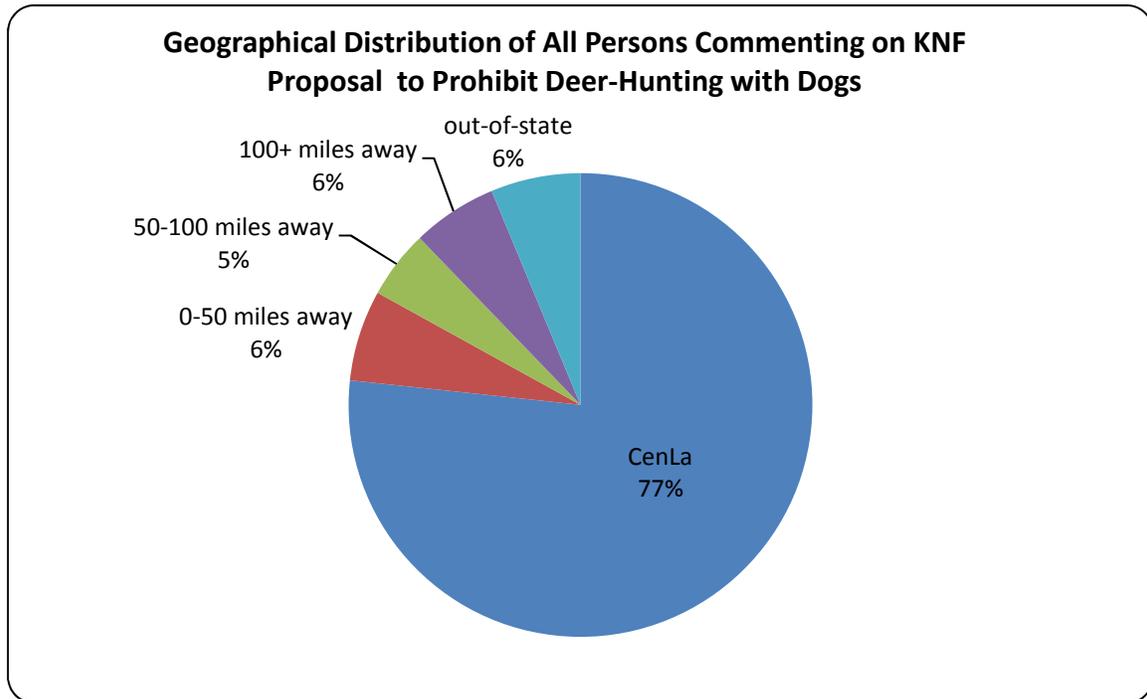
Interdisciplinary team (IDT) meetings were held during September and October 2009 to identify concerns, clarify any issues derived from public involvement, and explore the need for alternatives.

## **1.8 Scoping Summary**

By October 6, 2009, the Forest received 1,237 responses. Of these, 320 agreed with the proposed prohibition and 917 were against it. 162 of the comments

agreeing with the prohibition were from four different form letters. 834 of those against the prohibition were from three different form letters.

Figure 1 below shows the geographical distribution of people who commented on the proposal. These results portray the great deal of interest in the local area about dog-deer hunting.



*Figure 1*

## 1.9 Issues

The Forest Service separated the issues into two groups: significant and non-significant issues. Significant issues were defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action. Non-significant issues were identified as those: 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations require this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, "...identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)..." A list of non-significant issues and reasons regarding their categorization as non-significant may be found in the project record.

### 1.9.1 Significant Issues

Significant issues are points of disagreement or dispute with the proposal that are used to generate alternatives, prescribe management requirements, or analyze environmental effects.

Although there were many responses both for and against the proposal, only those that opposed the elimination of dog-deer hunting on the Forest were considered to be disputes (issues) with the proposal. Those responses in support of the proposal serve to bolster the need and are not treated as issues in the following list.

#### **Issue 1: Public Safety**

Those opposed to the proposed prohibition of dog-deer hunting on KNF felt that:

- the proposal is not justified based on the minor complaints; only a few are causing problems
- the proposal would not stop lawbreakers or help enforcement

Those agreeing with the proposal felt that:

- dog-deer hunting is unsafe (reckless driving, blocking roads, shooting from roads, wild shooting, dogs are danger to children on private lands, etc)
- dog-deer hunters threaten landowners who refuse them; there is fear of retaliation
- studies show that road hunting is a “serious concern” for 60% of the states with dog-deer hunting, but only 19% of the states that do not allow deer hunting with hounds report serious road-hunting problems

#### **Issue 2: Impacts on Recreation and Other Land Uses**

Whether eliminating dog-deer hunting on the Forest would:

- discriminate against a particular type of dog user; leave fewer days for deer hunting than needed; leave no other places to dog-deer hunt
- lessen hunting opportunities; KNF is large enough to conduct dog-deer hunts and should be open to all forms of recreation and all types of hunting; it is not uncommon for hunters to have their hunts interrupted by others

#### **Issue 3: Social and Economic Impacts**

*Social:* Whether eliminating dog-deer hunting on the Forest would:

- move hunters to Mississippi, which is already saturated with hunters
- represent a total bias against dog-deer hunters; dog-deer hunting is legal, ethical, and moral
- lessen opportunities for wholesome, family-oriented activity, and fellowship

- ignore the overwhelming local support for dog-deer hunting; “the government is out-of-touch”
- fail to recognize a Louisiana tradition
- be too restrictive; “the few are trying to control the many”;
- set a precedent for future loss of privileges; “another form of governmental control”
- not eliminate the conflicts between hunters and other landowners

*Economic:* Whether eliminating dog-deer hunting on the Forest would:

- cause a decline in license sales and decrease economic revenues
- displace hunters to other States
- make it too expensive for people who can't afford a lease to dog-deer hunt

### 1.9.2 Related Issues or Concerns

Related issues or concerns (or non-significant issues) are not used to generate alternatives, but because they generate some conflict, are used to help prescribe management requirements, or analyze environmental effects.

#### **Concern 1: Biological**

Those opposed to the proposed prohibition of dog-deer hunting on KNF felt that:

- This proposal is poor management. There is no biological basis to support elimination of dog-deer hunting on the KNF
- Dog-deer hunting causes no real harm [to deer].
- Natural predators cause more problems for livestock than deer dogs

Those agreeing with the proposal felt that:

- it protects the welfare of the deer population (lessens stresses on deer, non-disruptive to deer); deer mortality may be indirectly related to hunting with hounds; “[c]rippling losses from dog-hunting may be greater than for other forms of deer hunting.”
- the proposal is proper management of the resource; there are too few deer on KNF; KNF has enough deer-kill from still-hunting only
- the simple presence of dogs may disrupt some wildlife species; hounds often pursue non-target animals; this is a particular concern in Louisiana, where the black bear is a threatened species
- dogs can introduce a variety of diseases and parasites into native populations and can physically destroy burrows
- although a majority of the public may support hunting overall, this support is often only on the basis that “the animal does not experience undue pain”

Although not specifically mentioned as a public concern, the occurrence or possibility of occurrence of federally-listed species (proposed, endangered,

threatened, and sensitive species (or PETS)) within the Kisatchie NF, and the determination of effects on those species, is by default a management concern for the Forest.

### **Concern 2: Disparity with State or private land use policies**

Those opposed to the proposed prohibition of dog-deer hunting on KNF felt that:

- the KNF does not need to make this decision; KNF regulations should coincide with state regulations
- KNF should have hunting regulations similar to private lands' hunting regulations and abide by LDWF wishes

Those agreeing with the proposal felt that:

- it would lessen concentration of displaced hunters [from private lands onto KNF lands]
- the FS should follow the increasing example of other large landowners (timber companies and private leases), public lands, and other states in eliminating dog-deer hunting; state WMAs do not allow dog-deer hunting
- political interference is responsible for allowing dog-deer hunting to continue
- it is the responsibility of the LDWF and the Forest Service to ensure that activities they permit do not adversely impact adjoining property

## 2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the alternatives' potential actions and summarizes the environmental consequences of the alternatives. These alternatives represent a range of reasonable alternatives. A reasonable alternative should achieve the defined purpose and need (Section 1.2 above), not violate any minimum environmental standards needed to achieve the Forest Plan's stated goals and objectives (Section 1.4 above), and address the significant environmental issues derived from scoping (Section 1.9.1 above).

In addition to the 'No Action' alternative and the original proposal, one more alternative was developed to address the significant issues. Although many slight variations of the original proposal could have been developed, the Forest Service believes that a full spectrum of actions and effects are covered by Alternatives 1, 2, and 3. This belief is based upon direction from the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ): "For some proposals there may exist a very large or even an infinite number of possible reasonable alternatives. For example, a proposal to designate wilderness areas within a National Forest could be said to involve an infinite number of alternatives from 0 to 100 percent of the forest. When there are potentially a very large number of alternatives, only a reasonable number of examples, covering the full spectrum of alternatives, must be analyzed and compared. An appropriate series of alternatives might include dedicating 0, 10, 30, 50, 70, 90, or 100 percent of the Forest to wilderness. What constitutes a reasonable range of alternatives depends on the nature of the proposal and the facts in each case".<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2 Descriptions of the Alternatives

#### 2.2.1 Alternative 1 (No Action)

This alternative would not amend the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Kisatchie National Forest* (1999). The use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest would be determined each year through consultations with the LDWF. The existing Forest Plan guideline (FW-707) would remain in effect:

*"The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries will regulate fishing, trapping, hunting season, and bag limits."*

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (1981) Sections 1502.14 and 1505.1(e)

This alternative looks at the range of effects experienced over the past 5 dog-deer hunting seasons on the Forest. In the past, the season has ranged from 7 days (2008) to 15 days (2005, 2006, and 2007).

Under this alternative, 368,684 acres of the Forest would potentially be open for the dog-deer hunting season each year<sup>2</sup>. Training of deer hunting dogs on the KNF would continue to be prohibited.

### **2.2.2 Alternative 2 (Proposal)**

This alternative would amend the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Kisatchie National Forest (1999)* by adding a new standard to prohibit the use of dogs to hunt deer on the entire Kisatchie National Forest (KNF). Forest Plan guideline FW-707 would remain in effect. The new proposed standard would state the following:

*“Prohibit use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest. Other kinds of hunting with dogs are allowed throughout the Forest (in accordance with state hunting regulations) unless site-specific management direction prohibits the use (such as on administrative sites and the National Wildlife Preserves).”*

The proposal would not apply to still-hunting for deer, or other kinds of hunting with dogs, such as for squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, or game birds.

This alternative represents the Forest Service’s initial proposal addressing the purpose and need. It attempts to reduce conflicts between dog-deer hunters and other Forest users by eliminating the use of dogs to hunt deer on the KNF.

Under this alternative, none of the Forest would be open for the dog-deer hunting season each year. Training of deer hunting dogs on the KNF would continue to be prohibited.

### **2.2.3 Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)**

This alternative would amend the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Kisatchie National Forest (1999)* by adding a new standard to prohibit the use of dogs to hunt deer on the Kisatchie National Forest (KNF) EXCEPT where designated. The season length would be limited to a maximum of 9 consecutive days each year, similar to its current length. Maps of the designated areas are shown in Appendix A. The proposed standard would state the following:

*“Prohibit use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest except in areas specifically designated open to dog-deer hunting. Areas open to dog-deer hunting are shown in the map attachments to Amendment 8 of the Forest Plan. A maximum of 9 consecutive days that contain 2 weekends would*

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<sup>2</sup> Information derived using best available GIS data.

*be allowed each year. Other kinds of hunting with dogs are allowed throughout the Forest (in accordance with state hunting regulations) unless site-specific management direction prohibits the use (such as on administrative sites and the National Wildlife Preserves)."*

This alternative would not apply to still-hunting for deer, or other kinds of hunting with dogs, such as for squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, or game birds.

This alternative is a variation of the Forest Service's current management. It provides dog-deer hunters with areas that were either suggested during the public comment period, or were chosen by the FS using criteria that respond to the issues raised during scoping. It strives to reduce conflicts between dog-deer hunters and other Forest users by delineating areas where there appear to be fewer interfaces with private landowners, lessees, and specially protected areas.

Under this alternative, 109,688 acres of the Forest would be open for the dog-deer hunting season each year<sup>3</sup>. Training of deer hunting dogs on the KNF would continue to be prohibited. Dog-deer hunters would be required to obtain a permit from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fish.

### ***Alternatives Eliminated from Detailed Study***

The Council on Environmental Quality, as part of its oversight of implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act, states that the range of alternatives includes all reasonable alternatives as well as those other alternatives which are eliminated from detailed study. Those eliminated should have a brief discussion of the reasons for eliminating them.<sup>4</sup>

#### **2.2.4 OA-1 – Different Arrangements of Dog-deer Hunt Areas**

Several responses to scoping suggested that instead of eliminating dog-deer hunting entirely on the Forest, we should leave some areas open to dog-deer hunting. The areas suggested were varied and chosen based on an individual's knowledge of an area, and as an attempt to ease ongoing conflicts among Forest users. Although it is not exactly the same as any of the varied arrangements suggested, Alternative 3 incorporates these suggestions on a Forest-wide basis.

*Rationale for elimination:* This alternative is basically a variation of Alternative 3, and is covered within the spectrum of the other alternatives. Therefore, each specific arrangement of alternate dog-deer hunt areas was not analyzed in detail as separate alternatives.

#### **2.2.5 OA-2 – Different Controls on Hunting Method**

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<sup>3</sup> Information derived using best available GIS data.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (1981) Sections 1502.14 and 1505.1(e)

Various responses to scoping suggested using controls on how dog-deer hunting was conducted in order to mitigate some of the effects they felt were causing problems. Some suggestions included using a permit system, identification collars for dogs, shotguns-only, antler restrictions, beagles-only, increased fines, restricted hours, and weekend-only hunts. All of these ideas were taken into consideration but each was not individually used to define a new alternative. Although these varied methods may be consistent with the purpose and need for the proposal, the overall influence on effects were considered to be relatively small and the implementation costs relatively high. The effects to the significant issues, in general, would be similar to reducing the area available to dog-deer hunting. These effects are already examined in detail in Alternative 3.

*Rationale for elimination:* The effects expected from this alternative would be nearly the same as those for Alternative 3, and is therefore covered within the spectrum of the other alternatives. In addition, this or a variation of this alternative would likely create administrative and financial hurdles that could make it unfeasible or, at the least, seriously delay implementation.

### 2.3 Comparison of the Alternatives

Table 1 below provides a quantitative overview of the differences among the three alternatives' actions considered in this environmental analysis.

Table 1: Comparison of Alternative by Actions

Proposed Activities	Alternative 1 No-Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3 Designated Areas
*Acres on KNF where dog-deer (DD) hunting would be allowed (Total) (See maps in Appendix A)	368,684	0	109,688
• Acres allowed on Catahoula RD	78,737	0	40,238
• Acres allowed on Calcasieu RD	84,688	0	29,096
• Acres allowed on Kisatchie RD	60,944	0	10,825
• Acres allowed on Winn RD	144,355	0	29,529
• Acres allowed on Caney RD	0	0	0
*Road density where DD hunting is allowed (miles/square mile)(Total)	3.45	0	3.85
• Road density on Catahoula RD	3.92	0	3.94
• Road density on Calcasieu RD	3.22	0	3.42
• Road density on Kisatchie RD	2.91	0	4.28
• Road density on Winn RD	3.56	0	4.00
• Road density on Caney RD	0	0	0
Interface with private lands where DD hunting is allowed (miles of landline per 1000 acres of FS land)	3.60	0	2.60
• Private interface on Catahoula RD	3.41	0	2.49

• Private interface on Calcasieu RD	1.90	0	1.47
• Private interface on Kisatchie RD	4.24	0	2.93
• Private interface on Winn RD	4.44	0	3.73
• Private interface on Caney RD	0	0	0

\*Information derived using best available GIS data

A qualitative and quantitative comparison of the environmental effects of the alternatives is summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Comparison of Alternative by Issues**

Issues	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Are Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) objectives met?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) met?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Days allowed per year for dog-deer hunting	7-15 <sup>5</sup>	0	9 <sup>6</sup>
Amount of access (road density) within dog-deer hunt areas.(Forest-wide)	same	none	increasing
• Catahoula RD	same	none	increasing
• Calcasieu RD	same	none	increasing
• Kisatchie RD	same	none	increasing
• Winn RD	same	none	increasing
• Caney RD	none	none	none
Potential for conflict with private landowners.(Forest-wide)	same	none	decreasing
• Catahoula RD	same	none	decreasing
• Calcasieu RD	same	none	decreasing
• Kisatchie RD	same	none	decreasing
• Winn RD	same	none	decreasing
• Caney RD	none	none	none
Effect on hunting related expenditures on/near KNF	None	Lower	Slightly higher
PETS Evaluated (findings of BE)			
+Red-cockaded woodpecker	4 <sup>7</sup>	5	4
+Louisiana black bear	4	5	4
Relative potential risk to other Forest users	High	Low	Moderate
Relative potential for road/traffic conflicts (based on road density where DD hunting is allowed)	High	Low	Moderate

<sup>5</sup> Range is based on LDWF's historic average season for KNF.

<sup>6</sup> Actual days would vary, but would occur consecutively over two weekends during the latter part of December each year.

<sup>7</sup> PETS Indicators: 4 - Not likely to adversely affect; 5 - May have beneficial effects

<b>Disparity with State and Private Land Uses</b>			
Similar to State Wildlife Mgmt. Areas (WMAs)?	No	Yes	No
Similar to most privately leased lands <sup>8</sup>	No	Yes	No
<b>Water Quality</b>	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
<b>Air Quality</b>	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
<b>Heritage Resources</b>			
Number of heritage sites potentially affected	0	0	0

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<sup>8</sup> Personal communication with Ken Dancak, December 2009

## **3 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**

### **3.1 Public Safety (Issue 1)**

#### **3.1.1 Affected Environment**

Hunters are responsible for hunting safely and showing consideration for non-hunters. The Code of Federal Regulations specifies the following:

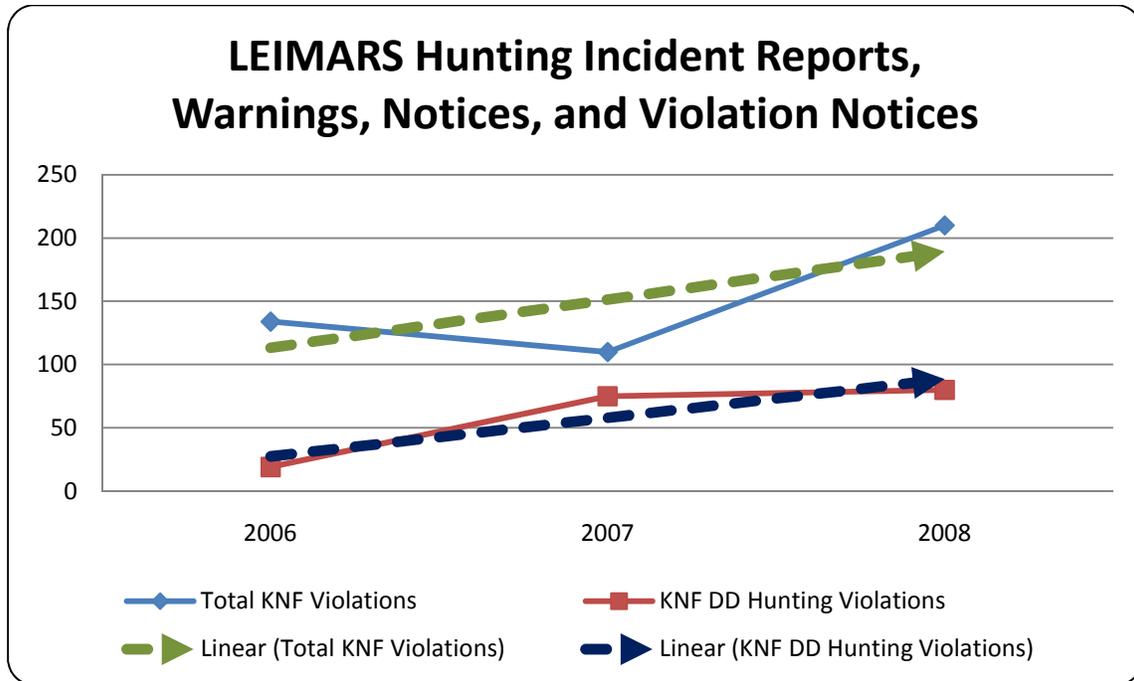
36 CFR §261.10(d) states that hunting or discharging a firearm or any other implement capable of taking human or animal life, causing injury or damaging property is prohibited as follows:

- In or within 150 yards of a residence, building, campsite, developed recreation site, or occupied area;
- Across or on a National Forest System road or a body of water adjacent thereto, or in any manner or place whereby any person or property is exposed to injury or damage as a result in such discharge; or
- Into or within any cave.

Kisatchie National Forest also recommends that all visitors to the forest wear “hunter orange” during hunting season. Signs are posted on bulletin boards disclosing the dates of hunting seasons to inform and caution Forest visitors.

Dog-deer seasons on the Forest have typically lasted from 7 to 15 days in recent years. During this time, road traffic levels increase as hunters utilize extensive areas to drop off and retrieve dogs, and disperse other members of their hunting group. This increase in traffic and hunter activity has generated concerns from other Forest users and adjacent landowners about public safety.

Figure 6, below, shows the number of warnings and violations issued by USFS law enforcement during 2006, 2007, and 2008. This data shows that as total violations have been increasing in the last few years, dog-deer hunting season violations have increased at a similar rate.



**Figure 6: Three-year comparison of hunting incident reports, warnings, notices, and violations on the KNF issued by the Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations Management Attainment Reporting System.**

Table 8 lists citations and warnings written on the Forest during the dog-deer hunting seasons from July 2007 through March 2009<sup>9</sup>.

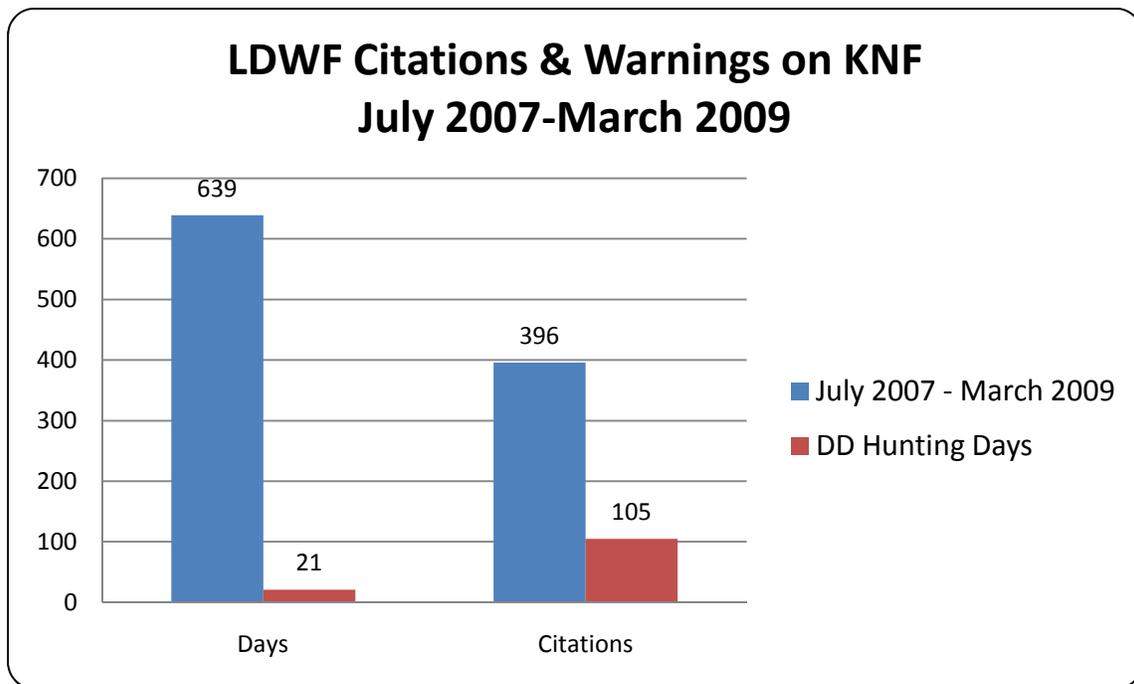
**Table 8: LDWF Region 3 Citations & Warnings Written on KNF, July 2007 – March 2009**

Citation and Warnings during KNF Dog-Deer Season	Number
Failure to Validate Harvested Deer	18
Hunting, Standing, Loitering on a Public Road	15
Hunting Deer from a Public Road	14
Possessing Illegally Harvested Deer	9
Failure to Tag Harvested Deer	6
Failure to Wear Hunter Orange	6
Open Container of Alcohol	5
ATVs on public road	4
Hunting without a Basic License	3
Hunting with Unplugged Shotgun	3
Hunting Deer without Tags	3
Possessing Untagged Deer Meat	3
Taking Illegal Deer during Open Season	3
Hunting from a Moving Vehicle	2
Hunting without Big Game License	2
Possessing Drugs/Marijuana	2

<sup>9</sup> Source: (Oliver, 2009)

Hunting Deer Using Illegal Methods	1
Hunting Deer over Bait	1
Discharging Firearm from Public Road	1
Taking Deer with Illegal Weapon	1
Reckless Operation of a Vehicle	1
Careless Operation of Vehicle	1
Unauthorized Use of Movable Vehicle/Equipment	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>

Between July 2007 and March 2009 (639 days), a total of 396 citations and warning were written by LDWF Region 3 agents on the KNF(Oliver, 2009). The table above shows that 105 citations and warnings were given on the KNF during 21 dog-deer hunting days. The percentage of days represented by the dog-deer hunting season =  $(21 \div 639) = 3.3\%$ ; the percentage of citations and warnings written by LDWF Region 3 agents during the 21 days of dog-deer hunting relative to the grand total number of citations and warnings =  $(105 \div 396) = 26\%$ . This analysis shows that a disproportionately higher number of violations occurred during the dog-deer hunting season than during the rest of the hunting year (See Figure 7, below).



**Figure 7: Comparison of warnings and violations issued by the State on KNF in relation to the number days allowed for dog-deer hunting.**

### 3.1.2 Environmental Consequences

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

Public safety concerns would continue during the dog-deer hunting season. Safety violations would continue at a relatively high rate per day of hunting opportunity. Traffic during dog-deer hunting season would increase where hunters are running their dogs. Confrontations between conflicting uses of the Forest would continue to occur.

Public risk would be proportionate to the length of the season, i.e., a longer season would create more risk of public safety violations than shorter seasons.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

Under this alternative, the Forest would be closed to hunting deer with dogs. Consequently, activities associated with this practice would cease. Traffic, the number of citations written for safety violations, and confrontations with other recreationists and adjacent landowners would decrease during the time of year that dog-deer hunting typically occurs.

#### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

Under this alternative, a portion of the Forest would be open each year for dog-deer hunting. Activities associated with hunting deer with dogs would still impact Forest users and adjacent landowners within the areas open for dog-deer hunting each year. However, this alternative would consolidate dog-deer hunting areas into more contiguous blocks and minimize the amount of interface with adjacent landowners. The combination of less total area available and less public/private interface could reduce the opportunities for conflicts between hunters and many other Forest users.

On the other hand, reducing the area available for dog-deer hunting could concentrate more hunters on less area. Table 1 on page 17 indicates that Alternative 3 would create hunting areas with higher road densities than currently exist forest-wide. Concentrating dog/deer hunters into smaller areas, without significantly reducing the number of hunters, would increase the likelihood of an unfortunate shooting incident. Cross-fire related incidents are likely to increase when hunters are in close proximity to other hunters.

Creating newly defined areas could make it more difficult for law enforcement officers to police the dog-deer hunting activities, at least for a few years. Reducing the size of a dog/deer hunting area would create enforcement challenges because dog handlers have little or no control of their dogs after they are released. Released dogs could continue to chase deer beyond designated areas, resulting in continued conflicts with landowners and/or recreationists.

## **3.2 Recreation and Other Land Uses (Issue 2)**

### **3.2.1 Affected Environment**

The Forest provides developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. The developed sites are areas dedicated to and managed primarily for recreation. The general undeveloped areas of the Forest support dispersed recreation activities such as hunting, nature study, hiking and primitive camping – activities requiring no constructed facilities.

The Forest's 1997 Recreation Information Management System reported more Recreation Visitor Days (RVD) for hunting driving for pleasure, motorcycle and ATV riding, and fishing than any other type of dispersed recreation (USDA Forest Service, Kisatchie National Forest, 1999). Camping, swimming, and picnicking were identified as having more RVDs in developed recreation. Motorcycle and ATV use is managed as developed use since the motorized vehicle use management decision in 2008.

Since the early 1930's, the Kisatchie NF has provided the opportunities and settings for a wide range of recreational activities in Louisiana. Currently, the Kisatchie NF is one of the largest providers of dispersed recreation in the state. Hunting on the Kisatchie NF is recognized as a time-honored tradition as well as a popular recreational activity. The pressure to provide hunting opportunities on public land is increasing every year since private landowners expect to receive monetary payment for hunting leases and many dog-deer hunters prefer to avoid paying these lease fees by hunting on the Kisatchie NF.

Hunting is a recreational activity that typically has historical and traditional ties between a group of users and a specific area. This can be true for all types of hunters. Many hunters or groups of hunters return to the same area year after year and generation after generation.

Deer hunting with dogs has been practiced in Louisiana since at least colonial times. Hunting restrictions then were nonexistent. Louisiana lands began to be reserved for wildlife when the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service established Breton Refuge in 1904. The State (LDWF) began to reserve lands (Wildlife Management Areas) in the early 1950's. The USFWS and LDWF have never allowed deer hunting with dogs on Refuges or WMAs. Currently, LDWF has approximately 1.3-million acres in the WMA system. The USFWS has approximately 500,000 acres in Louisiana Refuges. The Corps of Engineers incidentally began to allow hunters to hunt COE lands (~100,000 acres) (deer dogs always have been prohibited). KNF remains the only Louisiana public land with a wildlife management mandate on which deer hunting with dogs is allowed

Information from the LDWF (Durham, Personal communication, 2009) indicates that dog-deer hunting is allowed on approximately 100,000 acres of public lands in the Atchafalaya Basin (approx. 75 miles SE of the KNF), but not allowed elsewhere in the State. The legal 2009 dog-deer hunting season in the Atchafalaya Basin lasted from 12 December to 24 January (44 days); deer dogs

can be trained the entire remainder of the year there. The archery/still-hunt season lasts from 1 October to 31 January. This land belonging to the Louisiana State Office of Lands has no landscape or wildlife management objectives. Louisiana Game Wardens occasionally patrol the area; otherwise, no one manages the area.

It is unlikely that any additional areas for dog-deer hunting will become available to the public in the foreseeable future. In fact, it is more likely that the areas available will decrease in the future. This is due to the trend toward private lands being sold and/or divided up in smaller portions, and the reluctance of landowners currently to have this kind of activity on their lands.

### **3.2.2 Environmental Consequences**

Many recreational activities such as horseback riding, hiking, fishing, wildlife viewing, scenery viewing can be impacted by any form of hunting if that activity occurs during hunting season in an area that hunters frequent. The level of impact can vary by the type of hunting. Dog-deer hunting can impact other recreational activities for the historical 7-15 days of the season.

Since training of deer hunting dogs is currently prohibited on the KNF and none of the alternatives propose changing this, no change in effects to this recreational use is expected under any of the alternatives.

Neither the quality of scenery management nor the total number of recreation visitor days available for hunting activity is notably affected by any of the alternatives. The majority of the acreage that is included currently and in Alternative 3 allowing dog-deer hunting is designated as "Roaded Natural" (within ½ mile of better than primitive roads). All three alternatives are compatible with the "Roaded Natural" designation.

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

The use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest would continue to be determined each year through consultations with the LDWF. The Kisatchie NF would still continue to provide diverse hunting opportunities by including the amount of dog-deer hunting (ranging from 7 to 15 days) that has been provided in the past several years. User conflicts would continue between the hunter groups. Dog-deer hunting could impact other recreational activities for the 7-15 days of the season.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

The effect under this alternative would vary depending on the experience hunters are seeking. The elimination of dog-deer hunting would reduce the disturbance to those who still-hunt during for the times when dog-deer hunting had typically been allowed. In the areas of the forest that had previously allowed dog-deer hunting there would be some increase in opportunities for solitude for other types of hunting experiences. There would be no displacement of game from the

immediate area due to noise generated by the large numbers of hunters and dogs commonly associated with dog-deer hunting groups.

The elimination of dog-deer hunting may reduce disturbance or risk to other activities such as hiking, bird-watching, or horseback riding, but it would not eliminate all disturbance or risk from any hunting activity.

Other types of hunting with dogs would continue to be allowed. Dogs are mobile; therefore they could continue to pose some minimal disturbance to still hunters as other types of dog hunting continues.

Eliminating dog-deer hunting on the Kisatchie NF would reduce the diversity of the hunting opportunities provided. It would eliminate a large portion of the public land opportunity for the traditional culture of hunting deer with dogs that has been a part of the forest for generations. The opportunity for dog-deer hunting on the Kisatchie NF has been reduced to a small portion of the total hunting season. Eradicating this form of hunting would result in the total loss of a user group.

Dog-deer hunting requires large contiguous blocks of land to accommodate the numbers of hunters and dogs involved. The Kisatchie NF and industrial forest holdings are the primary providers of this experience. Currently there are some large industrial forest holdings that do allow lessees to dog-deer hunt for the minimal days provided. Some industrial forest holdings are prohibiting dog-deer hunting and are asking the Kisatchie NF to do the same as an adjacent landowner. Prohibition of dog-deer hunting can occur at any time at the discretion of the private or corporate landowner. The increase of demand on the remaining land holdings through this alternative could impact the willingness of landowners to allow these areas to remain available to dog-deer hunters.

Eliminating dog-deer hunting on the Kisatchie NF could negatively impact a tradition and culture enjoyed by many generations of Louisianans. The opportunities to engage in the sport of dog-deer hunting would be lost for those who cannot find other open lands or cannot afford leases. The quality of the hunt for those who hunt the non-KNF tracts could be reduced with the shift of additional hunting pressure onto those other lands.

### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

This alternative designates roughly one-third of the current acreage available to dog-deer hunting to remain open for dog-deer hunting use. It would allow the Kisatchie NF to continue to offer a wide diversity of hunting opportunities.

This alternative could, for the short duration of the dog-deer season, displace still-hunters that have customarily used the designated dog-deer areas.

Alternative 3 would allow dog-deer hunting to continue under more constrained parameters. It would concentrate multiple groups of dog-deer hunters in smaller defined areas. This alternative could increase user conflicts between dog-deer hunting groups due to a larger demand placed on a smaller area, especially by those that have hunted within the designated areas in the past. This alternative

could affect other landowners that allow dog-deer hunting by increasing the demand for leases.

### **3.3 Social and Economic Impacts (Issue 3)**

#### **3.3.1 Social and Cultural**

##### **3.3.1.1 Affected Environment**

Many dog-deer hunters utilize the KNF to hunt because it is nearby and does not require them to join or purchase a lease. The only other public land nearby (within 75 miles) that allows dog-deer hunting is in the Atchafalaya Basin (approximately 100,000 acres with very few roads). Other state and federal agencies do not allow the use of dogs to hunt deer on their lands. Approximately 22,000,000 acres (66% of Louisiana acreage) of private lands are potentially available for dog-deer hunting, however, most private lands either do not allow use of dogs to hunt deer, or require hunters to join (and pay for) a lease in order to hunt (Durham, Deer Program Leader, Wildlife Division, LDWF, Personal communication, 2009). There are very few large tracts of private lands available for dog-deer hunting.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries found that during the 1988-1989 season, 79% of Louisiana's deer hunters still-hunted most of the time while 21% hunted with dogs most of the time. They also found that 75% of the hunters desired a change in regulations. Of those indicating a desire for change, 82% preferred regulations that allow for more days of still-hunting and less of hunting with dogs (LDWF and LSU Dept of Experimental Statistics, 1989).

##### *Nature of the Social Conflict*

Some Forest users (hunters and other recreationists) and neighboring landowners have said that dog-deer hunting is increasing user conflicts on the Forest. They say that this method of hunting impacts other Forest users when deer-hunting dogs range beyond the control of hunters and trespass onto private lands and leases. Landowners living near the KNF have reported personal property vandalism, livestock harassment, personal confrontations, shooting from and across roads, shooting near homes and road damage from the influx of dog-deer hunters each year. Other recreationists and hunters have experienced accompanying nuisances, including noise, blocked roads, littering, and speeding on forest roads.

In May 2009 the Forest Service received a petition that listed complaints about dog-deer hunting in the Pollock and Dry Prong area of the Forest. The signers of this petition, most of whom own property in the area, claimed that dog-deer hunters typically stand in the roadways, park in ditches and along the road, cut ruts in ditches, leave food and trash on the sides of the roads, hunt too close to homes, occasionally abandon hunting dogs at the end of the season, aren't concerned about the effects to land belonging to local landowners, and drive

deer away from privately-owned lands, leaving private landowners with no deer left to hunt on their land.

During scoping for this proposal, dog-deer hunters have said that hunting deer with dogs is a tradition in Louisiana that needs to be protected. They say that if they cannot use dogs to hunt deer on KNF lands, then they would not be able to hunt any place else. Although the LDWF allows dog-deer hunting on a portion of the state-controlled land, most public and private lands (including leased parcels) don't allow it. They say that dog-deer hunting does not create any more conflicts than other forms of recreation since conflicts can occur any time different users occupy the same area. They say that since dog-deer hunting is only allowed for a short period of time (7 – 15 days) each year, after most of the still-hunt season is over, it has little impact on still-hunters.

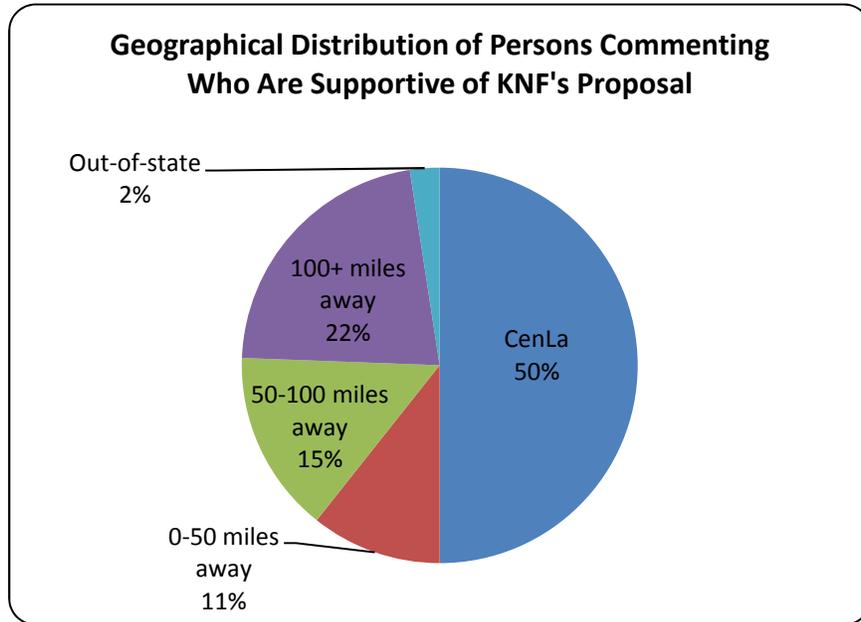
Dog-deer hunters have also said that the elimination of this type of hunting on the KNF represents a bias against dog-deer hunting. They claim that doing so would ignore the overwhelming support of dog-deer hunting; that “the government is out of touch” and too restrictive. They say it is legal, ethical, and moral and should not be prohibited. They say the proposal is another form of government control.

Our scoping results also show that many hunters in Mississippi feel that prohibiting deer hunting on the KNF is likely to displace Louisiana's dog-deer hunters to Mississippi. They feel that hunting conditions in Mississippi are already too crowded and the addition of Louisiana dog-deer hunters would worsen the problem.

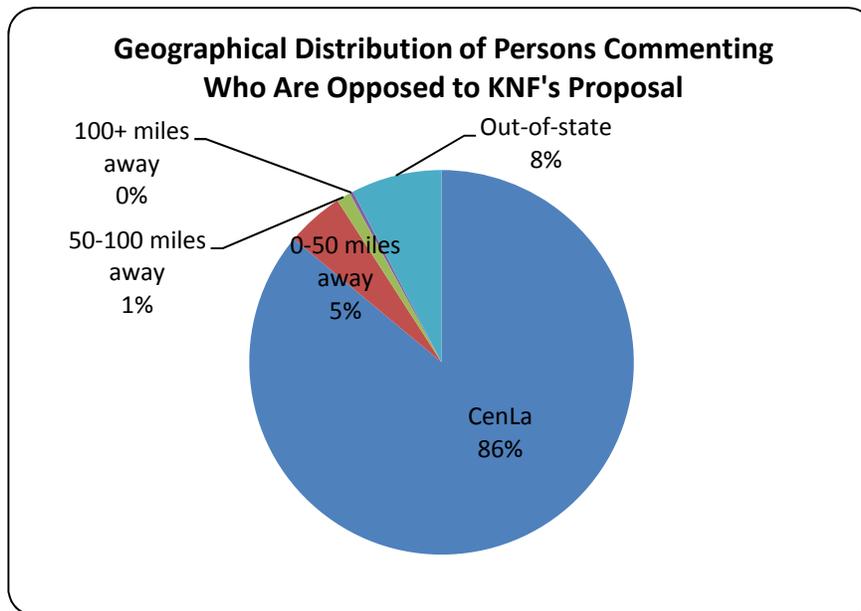
Hunters who only still-hunt for deer either say it is not compatible at all because it is noisy and creates confrontations and confusion when deer are killed; or they are not bothered by it and are willing to share the time and space during the dog-deer hunt season.

#### *Distribution of Scoping Comments*

Results from public scoping for the original proposal (Alternative 2) show that of those respondents agreeing with the proposed prohibition, 50% were from the local area (Central Louisiana, or CenLa), and of those against the prohibition, 86% were local. The charts below show the geographical distribution of those responses.



*Figure 2*



*Figure 3*

**3.3.1.2 Social and Cultural Consequences**

The potential consequences described in this section are derived from the comments received by the Kisatchie National Forest before and during scoping for this proposal. They are also informed by input received by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries during its last round of public meetings for the 2009 hunting regulations, and by a petition received by the Forest in May 2009. For more details, see Appendix E, Social Issues and Effects Matrices.

### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

For the dog-deer hunters, the dog-deer hunting tradition would continue. Dog-deer hunter lifestyle and values would be maintained. Conflicts, considered minor by them, would remain the same. Some dog-deer hunters would continue to believe existing regulations are too restrictive and biased.

For private landowners within and adjacent to the KNF, the importance of maintaining the dog-deer tradition would be recognized over their opposition to maintaining the tradition. Landowners who don't share similar lifestyle and values as dog-deer hunters would continue to be critical of the need to maintain the tradition. Conflicts, considered major, would remain the same. Most landowners would continue to believe existing regulations are not restrictive enough.

For other hunters and recreationists, the importance of maintaining the dog-deer tradition would be recognized over their concerns with its negative effects. Recreationists who don't share similar lifestyle and values would continue to be critical of the need to maintain the dog-deer hunting tradition. Some still-hunters would be critical of the need to maintain the tradition. Conflicts, considered major by some, would remain the same. Some recreationists would continue to believe existing regulations not restrictive enough.

### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

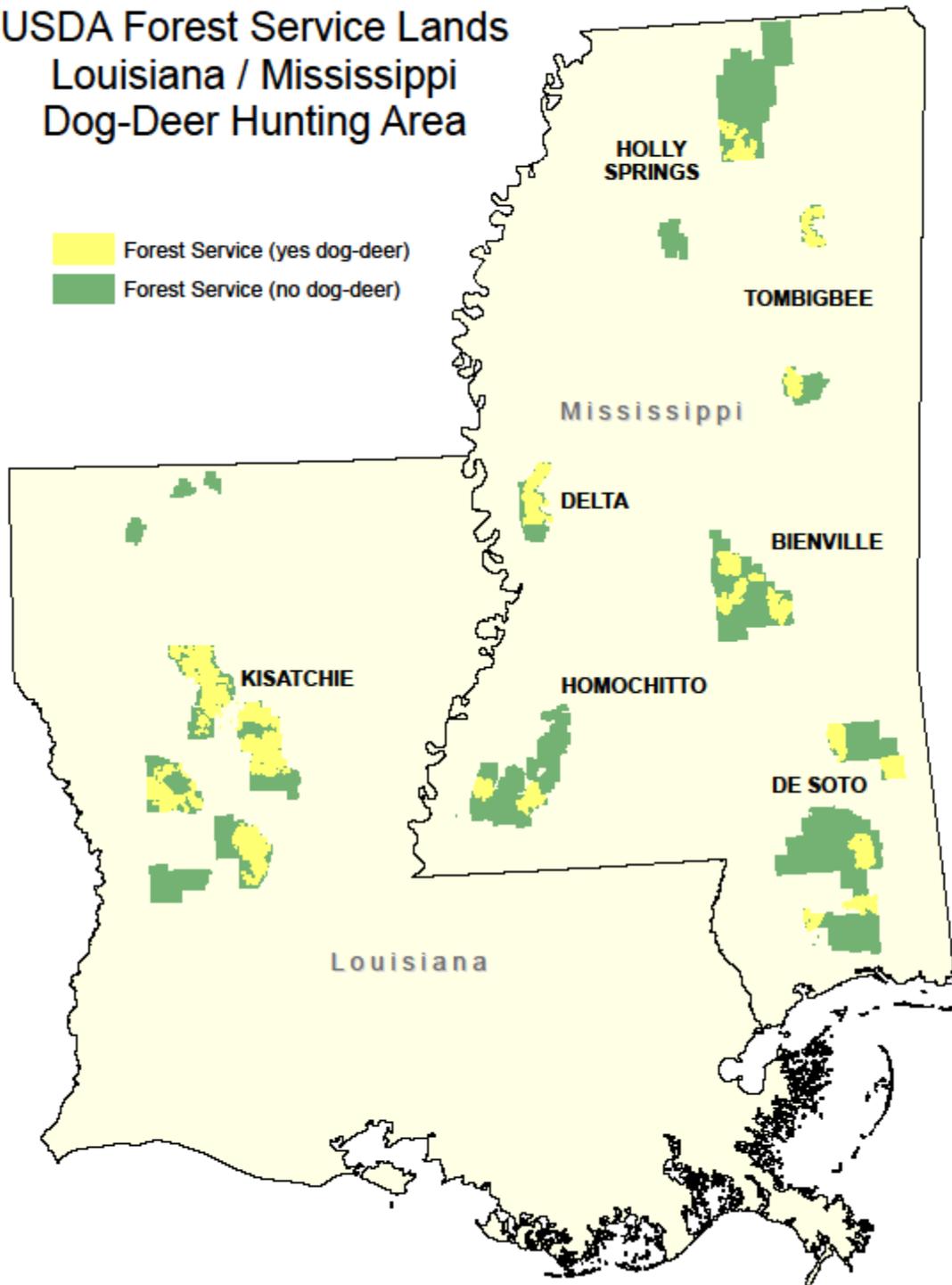
For the dog-deer hunters, the dog-deer hunting tradition would not continue. Dog-deer hunters' expressed need to maintain traditional lifestyle and values would not be endorsed. Conflicts, considered already minor by them, would lessen. Most dog-deer hunters would believe this alternative is too restrictive and biased. Many Mississippi hunters would expect Louisiana dog-deer hunters to hunt in Mississippi. (Refer to the map on the following page of Dog-Deer Hunting Areas in Louisiana and Mississippi.)

Private landowners within and adjacent to the KNF who don't share similar lifestyle and values as dog-deer hunters, would not experience a loss of a Louisiana tradition. Conflicts, considered major by them, would lessen. Most private landowners would consider this the best approach to protect their private rights. They would not see it as unduly restrictive or biased, since other public lands do not allow dog-deer hunting. They would believe that any displacement would be minor, since dog-deer hunters do not represent a group large enough to affect hunters in Mississippi.

Hunters and recreationists who don't share similar lifestyle and values as dog-deer hunters would support the proposal. Some still-hunters would be satisfied by the reduction in dog-deer hunting disturbances. Conflicts, considered major by some, would lessen. Many recreationists and some still-hunters would consider this the best approach to preserve a pleasant recreational experience. They would not see it as unduly restrictive or biased, since other public lands do not allow dog-deer hunting. They would believe that any displacement would be minor, since dog-deer hunters do not represent a group large enough to affect hunting in Mississippi.

### USDA Forest Service Lands Louisiana / Mississippi Dog-Deer Hunting Area

- Forest Service (yes dog-deer)
- Forest Service (no dog-deer)



### **Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)**

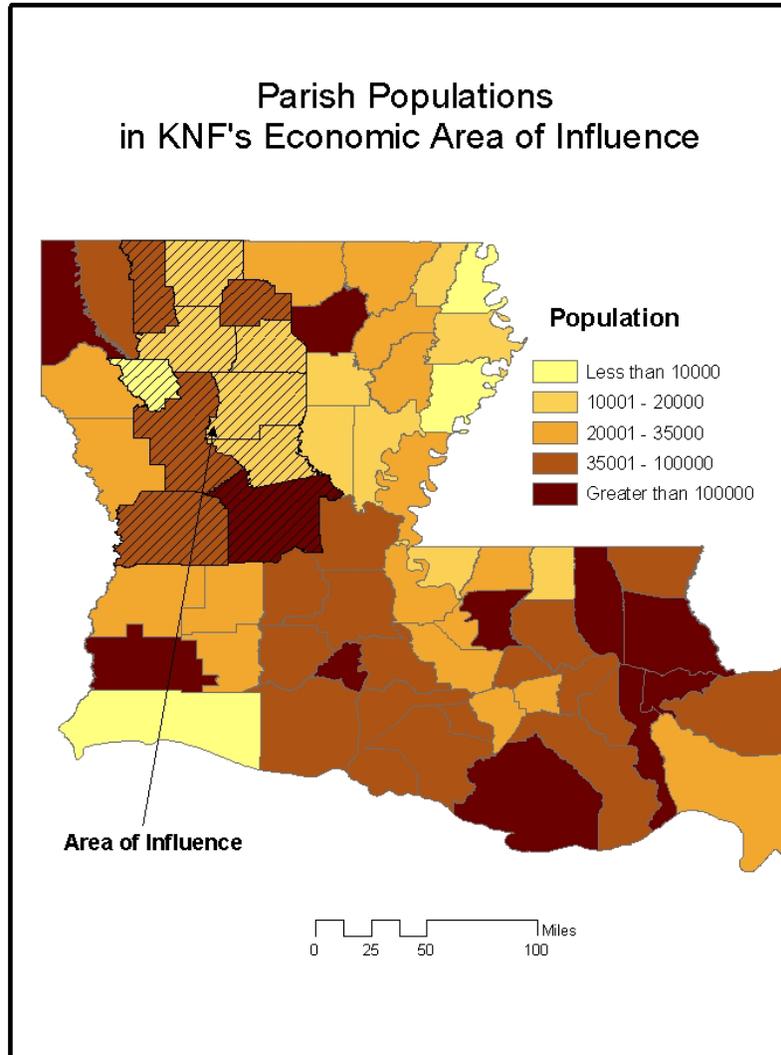
For the dog-deer hunters, the tradition would continue but on less area than before. Dog-deer hunter lifestyle and values would be maintained. Conflicts, considered already minor by them, would lessen. Many dog-deer hunters would still believe existing regulations are too restrictive and biased. Some Mississippi hunters would still expect some Louisiana dog-deer hunters to move into Mississippi to hunt.

Private landowners within and adjacent to the KNF who don't share similar lifestyle and values as dog-deer hunters would see the tradition continue on less area than before. They would be satisfied as long as dog-deer hunt areas were not adjacent to their lands. Conflicts, considered major by most, would continue for landowners within the designated dog-deer hunting areas, but lessen for those who hunt outside these areas. Some private landowners would consider this an adequate compromise to protect their private rights. They would not see it as unduly restrictive or biased. Those with lands within the designated dog-deer hunting areas would continue to believe that government controls are inadequate. They would believe that displacement of Louisiana hunters would be minor, since dog-deer hunters do not represent a group large enough to affect hunting in Mississippi.

Other hunters and recreationists would see the dog-deer hunting tradition continue but on less area than before. Recreationists who don't share similar lifestyle and values as dog-deer hunters would be satisfied as long as dog-deer hunt areas were not occurring on areas where they recreate. User conflicts, considered major by some, would continue for those who recreate within the designated dog-deer hunting areas, but lessen for those who hunt outside these areas. Many recreationists and some still-hunters would consider this an adequate compromise to maintain a pleasant recreational experience. They would not see it as unduly restrictive or biased. Those who recreate within the designated dog-deer hunting areas would continue to believe that government controls are inadequate. They would believe that displacement would be minor, since dog-deer hunters do not represent a group large enough to affect hunting in Mississippi.

### 3.3.2 Economic

#### 3.3.2.1 Affected Environment



**Figure 4**

The economic environment potentially impacted by the proposal and alternatives includes the seven parishes in which the Forest lies (Claiborne, Grant Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon, Webster, and Winn Parishes) and the surrounding parishes. These parish economies are typically rural and slow-growing, dominated by small businesses. The small businesses benefit from the visitors and recreationists that are attracted to the national forest. Forest visitors purchase food, gas, and lodging that help the local economies. Roads provide national forest visitors access to enjoy the scenery, watch birds, photograph pictures, hunt, and other recreational activities. Recreationists in the form of trail riders, hunters, hikers, swimmers, and campers come to the Forest to enjoy its

amenities. These visitors boost the local economies. The estimated spending for Kisatchie National Forest visitors for calendar year 2005 is \$6.2 million as shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Estimated visitor spending for KNF using the national visitor use monitoring (NVUM) results for calendar year 2005 (Kisatchie National Forest, 2007)**

	Day Use Developed Site	Overnight Use Developed Site on NF	Overnight Use within 50 miles of Forest	Undeveloped Areas	Wilderness	Total
Kisatchie National Forest visits						235,700
Segment Shares	42%	6%	6%	45%	1%	100%
Visits by segment	98,994	14,142	14,142	106,065	2,357	235,700
Party size	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	
Party visits	39,598	5,657	5,657	42,426	943	94,281
Spending (\$/party/trip)	\$54	\$174	\$216	\$42	\$42	
Spending totals (\$ 000's)	\$2,138	\$984	\$1,222	\$1,782	\$40	\$6,166

Among the parishes that contain the KNF, Rapides Parish has the highest population. Among the cities, Alexandria has the highest population. Table 4 below shows how both Rapides Parish and Alexandria compare to the other 14 largest parishes and places in Louisiana. Although the state population as a whole increased 5.9%, the population in Rapides Parish declined 4.0% between 1990 and 2000. During the same period, the population of Alexandria declined 5.8%. Most other parishes and cities in the table increased in population.

**Table 4: Population for 15 largest parishes and incorporated places in Louisiana: 1990 and 2000**

Population rank		Geographic area	Population		Population change	
2000	1990		2000	1990 <sup>10</sup>	Number	Percent
		<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>4 468 976</b>	<b>4 219 973</b>	<b>249 003</b>	<b>5.9</b>
		<b>PARISH <sup>11</sup></b>				
1	1	Orleans Parish <sup>7</sup>	484 674	496 938	- 12 264	-2.5
2	2	Jefferson Parish	455 466	448 306	7 160	1.6
3	3	East Baton Rouge Parish	412 852	380 105	32 747	8.6
4	4	Caddo Parish	252 161	248 253	3 908	1.6
5	7	St. Tammany Parish	191 268	144 508	46 760	32.4
6	6	Lafayette Parish	190 503	164 762	25 741	15.6
7	5	Calcasieu Parish	183 577	168 134	15 443	9.2
8	8	Ouachita Parish	147 250	142 191	5 059	3.6
<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Rapides Parish</b>	<b>126 337</b>	<b>131 556</b>	<b>- 5 219</b>	<b>-4.0</b>
10	10	Terrebonne Parish	104 503	96 982	7 521	7.8
11	13	Tangipahoa Parish	100 588	85 709	14 879	17.4

<sup>10</sup> 1990 census counts are as published in 1990 census reports and thus do not include any changes published subsequently due to boundary changes or to the Count Question Resolution program.

<sup>11</sup> In Louisiana, the primary divisions are parishes, which correspond to counties.

12	11	Bossier Parish	98 310	86 088	12 222	14.2
13	15	Livingston Parish	91 814	70 526	21 288	30.2
14	12	Lafourche Parish	89 974	85 860	4 114	4.8
15	14	St. Landry Parish	87 700	80 331	7 369	9.2
		<b>INCORPORATED PLACE</b>				
1	1	New Orleans city <sup>12</sup>	484 674	496 938	- 12 264	-2.5
2	2	Baton Rouge city	227 818	219 531	8 287	3.8
3	3	Shreveport city	200 145	198 525	1 620	0.8
4	4	Lafayette city	110 257	94 440	15 817	16.7
5	6	Lake Charles city	71 757	70 580	1 177	1.7
6	5	Kenner city	70 517	72 033	- 1 516	-2.1
7	8	Bossier City	56 461	52 721	3 740	7.1
8	7	Monroe city	53 107	54 909	- 1 802	-3.3
<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Alexandria city</b>	<b>46 342</b>	<b>49 188</b>	<b>- 2 846</b>	<b>-5.8</b>
10	10	New Iberia city	32 623	31 828	795	2.5
11	11	Houma city	32 393	30 495	1 898	6.2
12	12	Slidell city	25 695	24 124	1 571	6.5
13	15	Opelousas city	22 860	18 151	4 709	25.9
14	14	Ruston city	20 546	20 027	519	2.6
15	13	Sulphur city	20 512	20 125	387	1.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File, Table PL1, and 1990 census.

<sup>12</sup> Orleans Parish and New Orleans city are coextensive.

Figure 5 shows the KNF parishes' population sizes in relation to Rapides Parish and each other.

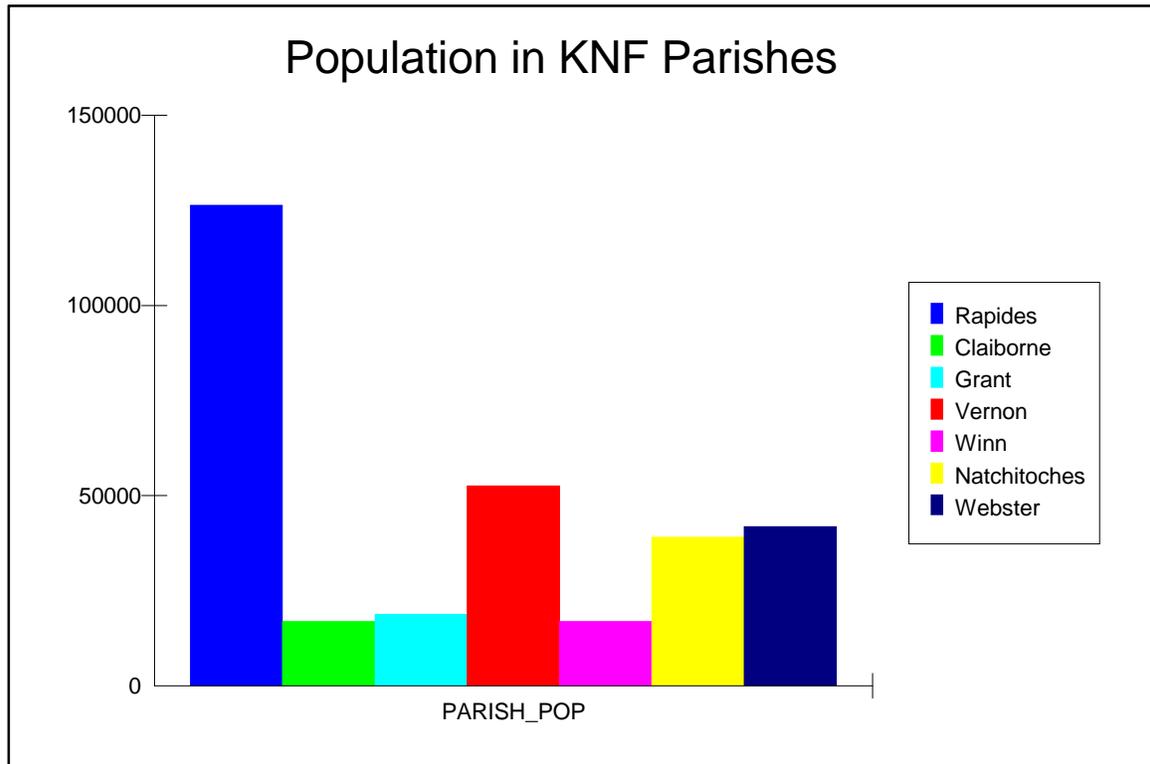


Figure 5

North Louisiana employment statistics are similar to the State's except that "Armed Forces" employment is higher. This is largely due to the presence of Fort Polk in Leesville, LA and Barksdale AFB in Shreveport, LA. Service, production, transportation, and material moving occupations ranked higher in North Louisiana than for the State, whereas, management, professional, construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupation percentages were lower.

Total household income below \$10,000 per year was higher, and per capita income was lower, in the North Louisiana parishes. The percentage of households with food stamp benefits was much lower in North Louisiana than for the State as a whole. Appendix F compares 2005 demographic statistics for the Forest's economic impact area (north Louisiana) with the State as a whole. As mentioned earlier, many dog-deer hunters use the KNF to hunt because it is nearby and because most private lands either do not allow use of dogs to hunt deer, or require hunters to join (and pay for) a lease in order to hunt (Durham, Personal communication, 2009).

For the 2007 deer season approximately 161,000 deer licenses were sold. The State estimated that about 10% (16,100) of the licensed deer hunters used dogs to hunt deer, as well as about 5,000 unlicensed youth and seniors (Durham,

Personal communication, 2009). Therefore approximately 21,000 Louisiana hunters hunted deer with dogs in 2007. This is about 0.48% of the state's population in 2008 (21,100/4,411,000).

In 2009, a big game (deer and turkey) license for a Louisiana resident costs \$14. There is no additional license fee for using dogs to hunt deer. One can reasonably assume that most dog-deer hunters also still-hunt for deer, and would continue to do so if not able to dog-deer hunt.

It is estimated that approximately 90% of hunters who dog-deer hunt travel no more than 75 miles and most hunts do not include overnight stays in hotels. This assumption is based on past experiences where hunters from north Louisiana typically travel to the Winn District and hunters from south Louisiana travel to either the Atchafalaya Basin or to KNF's Calcasieu and Catahoula Districts. Overnight stays are typically camping trips.<sup>13</sup> Expenditures are assumed to be included in the NVUM (USDA Forest Service, 2006) estimates provided above in Table 3.

### **3.3.2.2 Economic Consequences**

Based on the small proportion of the state's population who hunt deer with dogs (0.48%), and the negligible change expected in numbers of big game licenses sold, the effect to state licensing revenues is not likely to be substantial under any of the alternatives.

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

License sales would remain the same. Hunters who now use dogs to hunt deer on the KNF would be able to continue doing so without the additional cost of buying into a lease, or having to travel elsewhere. No changes in economic revenues to the local area's economy would occur.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

License sales would be reduced if existing dog-deer hunters chose to quit hunting deer altogether. However, as mentioned earlier, most dog-deer hunters would likely switch to still-hunting for deer. If this occurs, no noticeable change in the sale of big game licenses would be expected.

North Louisiana is more economically disadvantaged than the State as a whole (see Table 5); therefore costs associated with dog-deer hunting could impact them more severely than hunters statewide. Many hunters say that if free public lands are not available, they could not afford to dog-deer hunt. Under this alternative, dog-deer hunters who currently use the KNF to hunt would need to either lease land elsewhere to hunt, travel out of state, or travel 75 or more miles to hunt on public lands in the Atchafalaya Basin. These other options would increase the cost for dog-deer hunters in the KNF area.

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<sup>13</sup> Personal communication, Ken Dancak, KNF Forest Biologist.

Local area economy could be affected if many dog-deer hunters choose to travel elsewhere to hunt. Money currently spent at local businesses on food, gas, recreation fees, and lodging would be lost from the local area and dispersed to areas where dog-deer hunting is allowed.

### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

License sales would not be expected to change noticeably if existing dog-deer hunters were required to hunt only on designated areas on the KNF. Dog-deer hunters who choose not to hunt in designated areas would likely still-hunt for deer; those that continue to hunt with dogs would move to the designated areas. Hunters who say that they could not afford to dog-deer hunt anywhere except on the KNF would find areas available locally. Traveling to areas beyond their usual places to hunt may increase costs for some hunters.

Local contributions to the local area's economy would remain nearly the same. Money currently spent at local businesses on food, gas, recreation fees, and lodging would continue to be spent in the KNF area. Some additional revenues may be obtained from expenditures for travel to more distant hunting areas.

## **3.4 *Biology of White-tailed Deer (Concern 1)***

### **3.4.1 Affected Environment**

#### *Habitat:*

The white-tailed deer is an adaptable animal that thrives in a wide range of habitats throughout the U.S. (except for major portions of California, Nevada, and Utah) (Halls 1978, pgs 43-44). Deer are found throughout Louisiana (Moreland 1996, pg 12), primarily in rural or semi-rural areas.

Kisatchie National Forest management is governed by the Kisatchie National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. The desired future condition for a majority of the Forest is longleaf pine and mixed pine – hardwood. Longleaf pine forests support neither the same number of deer nor the same size deer as a fertile river-bottom forest. Longleaf pine forest management does not benefit deer in the same way that it does quail, turkey, and RCWs (Moreland 1996, pgs. 17-18).

The FY2008 Monitoring and Evaluation Report for the KNF (M&E Report) provides the following planned and current conditions for the major landscape communities on the Forest:

**Table 6: Landscape communities on the KNF**

Landscape Community	Forest Plan 10-year goal (acres)	FY2002 acres	FY2003 acres	FY2004 acres	FY2005 acres	FY2007 acres	FY2008 acres
Longleaf pine, all stages	121,000	120,483	122,503	119,245	125,661	125,415	125,481
Shortleaf pine / oak-hickory, early stages (<10 yrs)	0	2,897	626	1,149	1,182	999	1,042
Shortleaf pine / oak-hickory, mid-late stages	16,000	34,912	45,610	36,396	45,450	56,909	57,790
Mixed hardwood-loblolly pine, early stages (<10 yrs)	42,000	15,519	6,811	9,720	3,053	1,141	1,129
Mixed hardwood-loblolly pine, mid-late stages	252,000	247,710	259,284	253,922	267,186	241,372	249,343
Riparian, small streams	85,000 (no annual change)	85,000	85,000	85,000	85,000	85,000 <sup>1</sup>	85,000
Riparian, large streams	92,000 (no annual change)	92,000	92,000	92,000	92,000	92,000 <sup>2</sup>	92,000

Prescribed burns, timber thinning, and mid-story removals are common management practices. For example, prescribed burning and other forms of mid and understory restoration work is concentrated in the fire dependent longleaf pine stands (desired management type). These stands account for 439,000 acres total on the forest. Twenty-five percent of these stands are burned annually on the forest. This equates to burning each acre of this forest type every 3-5 years.

The condition of the Forest's understory is considered generally open. This is especially true when compared to adjacent ownerships, where prescribed burning for understory control is uncommon. The District Fire Management Officers on the forest estimate that 46% of the Forest is in an open, grassy understory state; 25% of the Forest is in an irregularly burned or untreated (thick brush) state, and the remainder (29%) is somewhat open.

*Limiting Factors:*

Deer mortality factors primarily include: hunting (legal and illegal), predation (primarily by dogs and coyotes), vehicle accidents, diseases, weather (flooding), and entanglement (fences, etc) (Halls, 1978). Hunting is the primary mortality factor for deer (Matschke, 1984).

KNF deer hunting is composed of archery hunting, still-hunting with firearms, and firearm hunting with dogs. Two general styles (or a combination thereof) of hunting deer with dogs are practiced on KNF:

1. The more traditional deer hunt with dogs involves placing hunters on stands around the area to be hunted and leading hounds into the cover. Once a deer has been “jumped,” dogs are released and the chase begins with the hope of moving the deer toward or past waiting hunters (Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, 2008, p. 16).
2. The most prevalent style on KNF is using vehicles to follow dogs. The dogs are led into cover to “jump” and chase deer. As the chase progresses, hunters coordinate their efforts via radios and/or cell phones describing where the chase is heading and possible points of interception (Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, 2008, p. 17).

Intensive dog-hunting, combined with chase trucks, 2-way radios, a dense road network, and [illegal] doe kills, can potentially decimate a deer population.

*Population abundance:*

Estimated deer abundance is reported in the annual Kisatchie National Forest M&E Report (available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/kisatchie/projects/index.html>). The most recent report (for Fiscal Year 2008) has the following estimates:

**Table 7: Deer abundance on the KNF**

<b>White-Tailed Deer (acres/animal)</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
Catahoula District	90	110	100	140	140	130
Evangeline District	90	120	100	200	200	190
Kisatchie District	90	110	100	110	110	100
Winn District	75	90	85	100	100	100
Vernon District	75	75	75	75	75	75
Caney District	50	50	50	50	50	50

The M&E Report further states: “Deer populations are and have been considerably below the habitats' carrying capacity; herd densities are too low to provide adequate aesthetic enjoyment for non- consumptive users. Catahoula and Evangeline deer numbers are based on the LSU deer abundance survey during late fall 2005” (Kisatchie National Forest, 2009). Noble (1984) declared that the biological carrying capacities of varying habitats were: longleaf pine habitat – 1 deer / 30 acres and mixed upland pine / hardwoods -- 1 deer / 25 acres (as compared to bottomland hardwoods -- 1 deer / 10-12 acres).

LDWF wildlife personnel, in conjunction with KNF personnel, annually conduct deer browse surveys on Kisatchie National Forest. These surveys consistently reveal low amounts of browse utilization, indicative of a low density deer population. A Louisiana State University researcher conducted a recent deer abundance study (consisting of a pellet group survey and deer-browse survey) on the Catahoula District, Evangeline Unit, Vernon Unit, Kisatchie District, Winn

District, and Caney District. He concluded that deer on Kisatchie National Forest are “well below carrying capacity” (Chamberlain, M.J., 2005).

LDWF testified (in a June 14, 2007 Louisiana Senate Natural Resources Committee hearing) that LDWF Wildlife Management Areas receive all the deer-kill necessary with archery and still-hunting only (deer hunting with dogs is prohibited on all LDWF WMAs).

*Experience in other States:*

On study areas in Alabama, Florida, and South Carolina, deer escaped the dogs in experimental chases by utilizing swamps or other bodies of water for escape when available (Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, 2008, p. 43); however, relatively little escape cover exists on some areas of KNF.

Crippling losses from dog-hunting may be greater than for other forms of deer hunting. In east Texas, 38% of deer were shot but not retrieved on a dog-hunted area compared to 12% on a still-hunted area. Deer chased by hounds are occasionally struck by vehicles (Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, 2008, p. 44).

Hunting deer with dogs has the potential to overharvest deer in localized areas because it is an efficient harvest method (Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, 2008, pp. 42-43). Deer hunting with dogs was proposed as a primary reason deer were extirpated from the mountains of North Georgia during the late 19th century.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (1990) declared “...a danger of depletion of the deer resource exists on lands [in east Texas] where deer hunting with dogs is permitted and that this danger of depletion is directly related to some factor or combination of factors associated with the practice of hunting deer with dogs”. A negative relationship was observed in eastern Texas between deer density and the percent of deer range hunted with dogs -- the generally lower deer densities were attributed to more efficient harvest and/or higher crippling loss in areas hunted with dogs.

In Florida, dog-hunted areas had lower deer densities than still-hunted areas, but some of the impact may have been related to greater illegal harvest of does by dog-hunters (Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, 2008, p. 43).

### **3.4.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

Deer hunting with dogs on KNF would continue. Numbers of deer-dog hunters utilizing Kisatchie NF in the future could increase if more private landowners prohibit deer hunting with dogs.

Dog-deer hunting under this alternative may continue to contribute to low deer population numbers on the KNF by continuing the current pressure on the population and possibly increasing the pressure should the other available dog-deer hunting areas be decreased.

### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

Deer hunting with dogs on KNF would be prohibited.

The mortality rate of Kisatchie National Forest deer would likely be reduced. KNF deer populations may begin to increase if dog-deer hunters either leave the area or quit hunting. There could also be fewer non-lethal disturbances to the deer population as well as wildlife in general. If dog-deer hunters switch to still hunting and achieve their current harvest success rate, then no measurable effects would be expected in terms of deer populations.

### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

Deer hunting with dogs on KNF would be allowed in designated areas on the Catahoula District, Evangeline Unit, Kisatchie District, and Winn District. Deer hunting with dogs for much of Louisiana would be concentrated in these designated areas.

Dog-deer hunting under this alternative may continue to contribute to low deer population numbers in the designated areas where the practice would still be allowed. KNF deer populations would likely begin to increase in the non-designated areas that currently allow dog-deer hunting. However, this is conditional on a number of factors, as described above for Alternative 2.

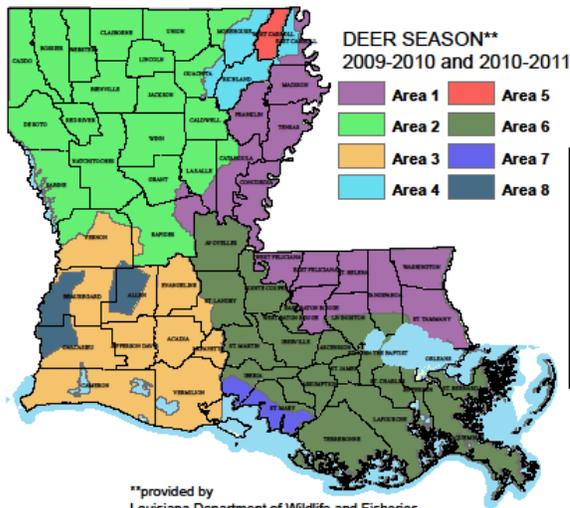
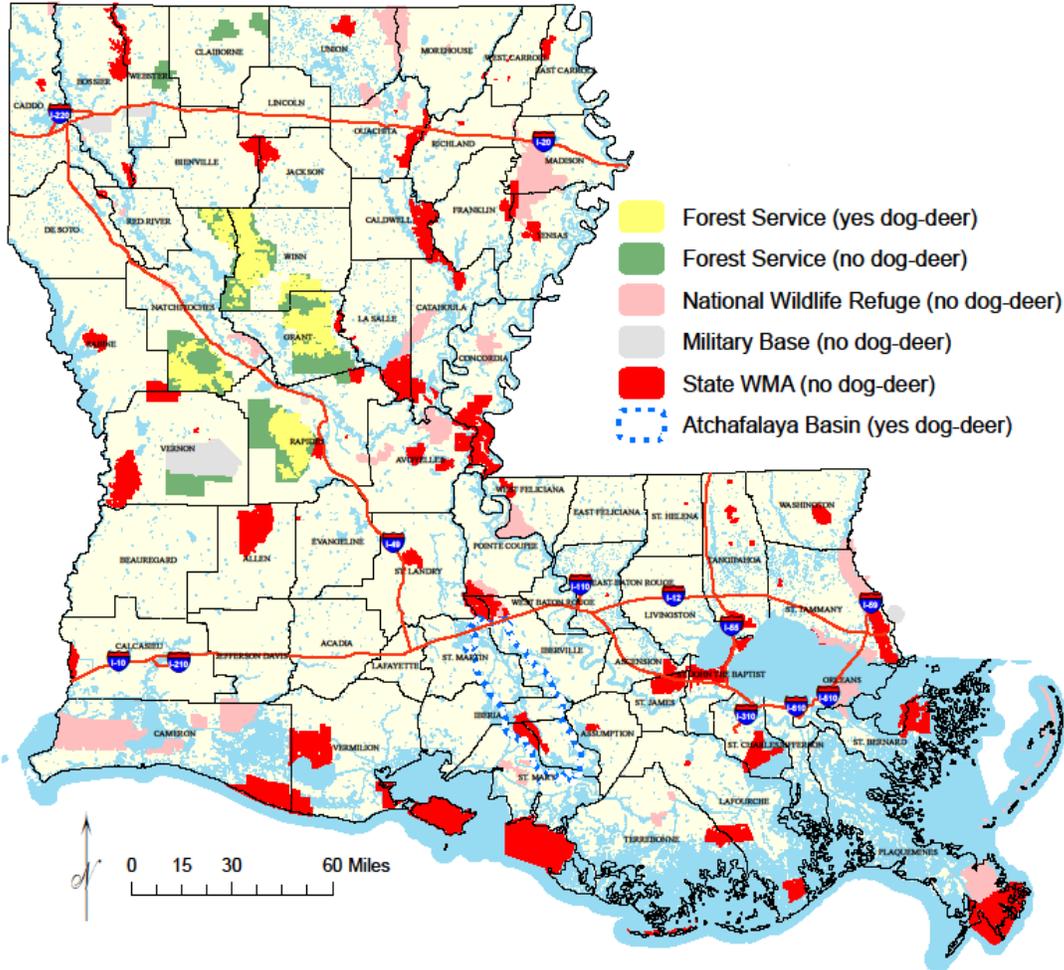
If more private landowners choose to prohibit deer hunting with dogs on their lands, hunting with dogs could become more concentrated on Kisatchie National Forest, and disturbances to deer would likely increase.

## ***3.5 Disparity with State/Private Land Use Policies (Concern 2)***

### **3.5.1 Affected Environment**

The deer hunting with dogs issue has been discussed and studied for a long time in the state and for the KNF area. Deer hunting with dogs has been practiced in the state since at least colonial times. Hunting restrictions then were nonexistent. Louisiana lands began to be reserved for wildlife when the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service established Breton Refuge in 1904. The State (LDWF) began to reserve lands (Wildlife Management Areas, or WMAs) in the early 1950's. The USFWS and LDWF have never allowed deer hunting with dogs on Refuges or WMAs. Currently, LDWF has approximately 1.3-million acres in the WMA system. The USFWS has approximately 500,000 acres in Louisiana Refuges. The US Corps of Engineers allows hunting on some USACE lands (approximately 100,000 acres), although deer dogs always have been prohibited. (Refer to the map on the following page which shows Louisiana's Public Lands and Dog-Deer Hunting Areas.)

## Louisiana Public Lands and Dog-Deer Hunting Areas



- 14 million forested acres  
 - 9% Federal and State lands including Kisatchie National Forest  
 - Over 90% of the private lands do not allow dog-deer hunting

\*\*provided by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

KNF generally provides more gun deer hunting than other Louisiana public hunting lands with a wildlife management mandate, as shown in the table below.

**Table 9: Public hunting areas and season lengths**

<b>Public Land Open to Hunting in LA</b>	<b>Ave. # Gun Deer Hunting Days – 2009 Season</b>
KNF <sup>14</sup>	57
LDWF Wildlife Mgmt. Areas <sup>15</sup>	32
USFWS Wildlife Refuges <sup>16</sup>	13
USACE & US National Park Service <sup>17</sup>	31

Deer hunting with dogs' season lengths are included in the table above: KNF currently provides 8 days of deer hunting with dogs; deer hunting with dogs is prohibited on all other Louisiana public hunting lands with a wildlife management mandate (WMAs, Refuges, USACE lands, and NPS land).

Deer gun-hunting season on Louisiana private lands in Louisiana Area 2 has been 93 days in length since 2004. Of this total, deer hunting with dogs is allowed on 40 days and 39 days, in alternating years. Deer season length on private lands is longer than the average gun deer hunting season on KNF because hunting pressure generally is higher on KNF than on private lands.

KNF and LDWF Wildlife personnel work regularly with each other; they have excellent working relationships. The KNF and LDWF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 1985 with the common purpose of promoting an effective wildlife management program on the KNF.

The Code of Federal Regulations, Forest Service Manual, and the MOU provide wide-ranging guidance concerning Forest Service wildlife responsibilities, occupancy, and use. A few of these responsibilities include:

- The prohibitions in this part apply, except as otherwise provided, when: an act or omission affects, threatens, or endangers a person using, or engaged in the protection, improvement or administration of the National Forest System or a National Forest System road or trail (36 CFR 261.1 (a) 3).
- Each Forest Supervisor may issue orders which close or restrict the use of described areas within the areas over which he has jurisdiction. An order may close an area to entry or may restrict the use of an area by applying any or all of the prohibitions authorized in this subpart or any portion thereof (CFR 261.50(a)). When provided by an order, the following are prohibited: ... Hunting and fishing (36 CFR 261.58 (v)).

<sup>14</sup> Caney, Middlefork, Corney, Catahoula, Evangeline, Vernon, Kisatchie, & Winn

<sup>15</sup> Gun deer-hunting is allowed on 43 WMAs, archery-only on 8 WMAs, & no deer hunting is allowed on 4 WMAs

<sup>16</sup> Gun deer-hunting is allowed on 10 Refuges, archery-only on 7 Refuges, & no deer hunting is allowed on 6 Refuges

<sup>17</sup> Indian Bayou, Bonnett Carre, Old River, & Barataria – all have either antler restrictions or shotgun-only deer hunting

- Provide diverse opportunities for esthetic, consumptive, and scientific uses of wildlife, fish, and sensitive plant resources in accordance with National, Regional, State and local demands (FSM 2602.2).
- Manage recreation uses of National Forest Systems lands to meet national needs rather than to meet the needs of individuals or nearby communities. Local needs should usually be met by State and local governments (FSM 2303.10)
- Maintain a partnership with State fish and wildlife agencies in habitat management efforts. Recognize the State wildlife and fish agencies as responsible for the management of animals and the Forest Service as responsible for the management of habitat. Involve other Federal agencies, concerned conservation groups, and individuals in activities affecting wildlife and fish as appropriate (FSM 2603.2).
- The regulation at 36 CFR 241.2 emphasizes Forest Service responsibility for determining the extent of wildlife and fish use on the National Forest System lands, directs forest officers to cooperate with the States in both the planning and action stages of management, and stipulates that the harvesting of wildlife and fish must conform with State laws (Forest Service Manual 2610.1.5.b).
- Participate with and involve other agencies, organizations, and individuals in fostering support for natural resources management on National Forest System lands (Forest Service Manual 2610.3.5).
- To recognize the Department (LDWF) as the agency primarily responsible for determining the means by which the wildlife resource shall be regulated (MOU).

None of the alternatives “regulate” the wildlife resource; they are addressing the impacts associated with a recreational activity on the Kisatchie National Forest and attempt to balance Forest Service responsibilities for controlling use and occupancy of federal land with the desire to work cooperatively with the State on wildlife management issues.

### **3.5.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

The KNF would continue to provide LDWF with input and recommendations for hunting with dogs on the KNF. LDWF would determine the regulations based upon the input from the KNF and the public as they have been doing each year. The disparity between dog-deer hunting regulations on other public lands and the KNF would continue.

### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

By prohibiting the use of dogs to hunt deer on the KNF, the disparity between the policies of the Kisatchie NF and other public lands and their policies would be reduced. KNF policies would be more like those of other Federal lands in Louisiana as well as more like the policies on the WMAs in the State in regards to dog-deer hunting. As with most other lands in Louisiana, under this alternative the landowner (USFS) would determine whether this activity occurs on its lands or not<sup>18</sup>.

### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

This alternative allows the use of dogs to hunt deer on the KNF to continue, however in a more limited area. The disparity between the policies of the Kisatchie NF and other public lands and their policies would be reduced. As with most other lands in Louisiana, under this alternative the landowner (USFS) would determine whether this activity occurs on its lands or not.

## **3.6 Soil, Water, Air**

### **3.6.1 Affected Environment**

Dog-deer hunting seasons on the KNF have typically lasted from 7 to 15 days each year, on all the KNF districts except the Caney District and the Vernon Unit of the Calcasieu District. The season usually occurs during the latter part of the regular deer hunting season (December). During this time of year, many areas have water at or near the surface and are sensitive to rutting and compaction from wheeled vehicles. The KNF does not allow traveling off designated open roads, so soils are typically unaffected by dog-deer hunters and other Forest users.

All lands on the Forest have been categorized as Class II air quality areas. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) has been delegated most of the authority for air quality protection in Louisiana. The LDEQ considers the entire Forest to meet all national ambient air quality standards as set by the EPA.

None of the following alternatives would be affected by climate change, nor would they contribute any noticeable changes to the global climate. The actions that implement any of these alternatives would have no discernable effects across the Forest and therefore even less effect at a global level.

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<sup>18</sup> The Forest Supervisor may issue orders which close or restrict the use of areas. An order may close an area to entry or may restrict the use of an area (CFR 261.50(a)).

### **3.6.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

This alternative would continue to allow dog-deer hunters to use much of the Forest during the dog-deer hunting season. Because the dog-deer season lasts a relatively short period of time and hunters are required to stay on roads, the effects expected would be those associated with disturbance of roadbeds and the potential runoff of soil into streamside areas. All streamside areas on the Forest have a buffer zone of at least 50 feet to provide protection to the streamside vegetation and to filter any runoff before it reaches the stream bank. Therefore, direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soil and water on the KNF from dog-deer hunting would be minimal if any.

No discernible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur to air quality under this alternative.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

This alternative would prohibit dog-deer hunting across the KNF. It would lessen the probability that any adverse effects would occur from hunter-associated runoff.

No discernible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur to air quality under this alternative.

#### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

This alternative would allow dog-deer hunting to occur on a portion of the Forest that currently allows it. It consolidates hunting areas into more contiguous blocks of national forest land on KNF districts where dog-deer hunting now occurs. For this reason, it may help reduce impacts to adjacent private lands since hunters occasionally attempt to access the Forest through private land.

No discernible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur to air quality under this alternative.

## **3.7 Cultural Resources**

### **3.7.1 Affected Environment**

Prehistoric and historic cultural resources are a nonrenewable resource protected by laws and regulations.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) established the preservation of significant historic properties as a national policy and created a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Historic properties, including prehistoric and historic archeological sites, meeting criteria for listing in the

NRHP may not be adversely affected by federal activities without consideration of mitigation alternatives. More specifically, Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agency heads to take into account the effects of undertakings on properties included in or eligible for the NRHP. Any ground-disturbing activities can be defined as undertakings requiring the assessment of effects to sites eligible for or listed in the NRHP (Anderson & Smith, 2003). Essential to compliance with this legislation is a heritage resource inventory to identify and evaluate properties within the area of a proposed undertaking or project.

### **3.7.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

This alternative does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties. Given this, there is no further obligation and the Section 106 review process is complete. In addition, this proposal will not affect access to or use of resources by Federally Recognized Indian Tribes.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

This alternative does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties. Given this, there is no further obligation and the Section 106 review process is complete. In addition, this proposal will not affect access to or use of resources by Federally Recognized Indian Tribes. It should be noted, however, that this proposal will have the potential to negate a traditional cultural expression as dog-deer hunting is entrenched in Louisiana's history.

#### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

This alternative does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties. Given this, there is no further obligation and the section 106 review process is complete. In addition, this proposal will not affect access to or use of resources by Federally Recognized Indian Tribes.

## **3.8 Vegetation – General**

### **3.8.1 Affected Environment**

The four major landscape communities comprising the Kisatchie National Forest include longleaf pine, shortleaf pine/oak-hickory, mixed hardwood-loblolly pine, and riparian. Embedded within these four major landscape communities are small-scale, inclusional plant communities that include hillside bogs, cypress swamps, sandy woodlands, or calcareous prairies. Also within these four major community types, old-growth communities have been tentatively identified based on their existing forest cover type.

Dog-deer hunting occurs for a short time during the year. This practice rarely affects overstory vegetation.

### **3.8.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

Alternative 1 would continue to allow deer hunting with dogs and conditions would remain the same. There has been no noticeable damage to vegetation, i.e. denuding, creating trails, or other impacts to the native plant communities on the forest. When combined with other activities on the Forest, cumulative impacts would be negligible because the effects are so slight they do not combine with any other effects on vegetation in any measurable way.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

Alternative 2 would discontinue the use of deer hunting with dogs. Overall, negligible impact would be expected from the discontinued use of deer hunting with dogs. When combined with other activities on the Forest, cumulative impacts would be expected to be negligible.

#### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

Alternative 3 would designate specific areas on the forest for deer hunting with dogs. In the designated areas, no detrimental impacts to the vegetation would be expected. Overall, when combined with other activities on the forest, cumulative impacts would be expected to be negligible.

### **3.9 Vegetation – Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive Species (PETS)**

#### **3.9.1 Affected Environment**

No Federally-listed endangered plant occurs on the Forest. One threatened plant, 23 sensitive plants, and 61 plant species of conservation concern occur and are tracked on the Forest (see Appendix C for complete list). Sensitive species are rare range-wide, while conservation species are rare in Louisiana but may be common in other states.

Threatened, sensitive and conservation plant species occur in a variety of Forest habitats. A generalized habitat breakdown follows (Kisatchie National Forest, 2007):

- Sandy woodlands – 16 species
- Mesic slopes and bottomland forests – 16 species
- Hillside bogs, longleaf pine flatwood savannahs, bayhead swamps and baygalls – 15 species
- Calcareous prairies – 11 species

- Upland longleaf pine forests – 8 species
- Limestone outcrops (historic site) – 4 species
- Sandstone glades and barrens – 4 species
- Calcareous forest streamsides – 2 species
- Other habitats – 10 species

The Botanical Evaluation prepared by the Forest Botanist is included in Appendix B.

### **3.9.2 Environmental Consequences**

There are no ground disturbing activities under any alternative. The alternatives either allow the use of dogs to hunt deer or do not allow the use of dogs to hunt deer. Dogs or deer hunters walking through the woods will have no adverse effects to plant species under any alternative.

## **3.10 Wildlife – General Non-Rare Wildlife**

### **3.10.1 Affected Environment**

#### *Habitat Requirements:*

The Kisatchie National Forest provides habitat for a broad array of general wildlife species (birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians). These species have varying ecological requirements. The entire Kisatchie National Forest is considered habitat for wildlife, in general.

#### *Limiting Factors:*

Free-ranging dogs can disrupt normal maintenance activities (e.g., feeding, bedding, or grooming) of wildlife. Dogs have disrupted foraging, nesting, and roosting by birds. Dogs have been implicated in introducing diseases and parasites into wildlife populations, physically destroying burrows, and causing alarm reactions. (Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, 2008, p. 49).

#### *Population abundance:*

Populations of general wildlife species on Kisatchie National Forest are at least at minimum viability levels. The high levels of multiple-use of the land (including deer hunting with dogs) prevent Kisatchie National Forest optimal conditions from occurring, thereby preventing maximum population levels of wildlife species.

For white-tailed deer, see section 3.3.1.1, above.

### **3.10.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

Other wildlife species will continue to be disturbed by deer hunting with dogs. No indirect effects would occur.

If more private landowners choose to prohibit deer hunting with dogs on their lands, hunting with dogs could become more concentrated on Kisatchie National Forest, and disturbances to deer as well as general wildlife would likely increase.

### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

Disturbances to other wildlife species would be diminished and environmental quality for other wildlife species would be enhanced on the Kisatchie NF.

No noticeable cumulative effects are expected. If more private landowners choose to prohibit deer hunting with dogs on their lands, disturbances to general wildlife should decrease State-wide.

### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

Other wildlife species will continue to be disturbed by deer hunting with dogs in the designated areas during the deer-hunting-with-dogs season. No indirect effects would occur.

If more private landowners choose to prohibit deer hunting with dogs on their lands, hunting with dogs could become more concentrated on Kisatchie National Forest, and disturbances to deer as well as general wildlife would likely increase within the designated areas.

## ***3.11 Wildlife - Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and***

### ***Conservation species***

As stated earlier in the vegetation section, sensitive species are rare range-wide, while conservation species are rare in Louisiana but may be common in other states. See Appendix C for a list of the wildlife threatened, endangered, sensitive, and conservation (TESC) species.

Louisiana pine snakes are not active (especially above ground) during the winter (the period during which deer hunting with dogs occurs); consequently, there will be no effect to Louisiana pine snakes. Deer hunting with dogs might negligibly impact some rare species such as Bachman's sparrow, Rafinesque's big-eared bat, Southeastern myotis, Louisiana slimy salamander, and Bald Eagle. A few individuals of these species might be disturbed by activities associated with dog-deer hunting. Dogs barking and an occasional gunshot may cause individuals of these species to flush. There is an extremely remote possibility a dog could catch and kill an individual of these species. The impacts from dog-deer hunting are expected to be no different than the impacts of hunting quail with dogs, a practice that has occurred in southern pine ecosystems for more than 100 years. While individuals may be impacted, these impacts will not lead to a loss of viability or trend toward federal listing.

### **3.11.1 Red-cockaded Woodpecker**

#### **3.11.1.1 Affected Environment**

##### *Habitat Requirements:*

Requires open (little midstory), mature, fire-sustained, pine-dominated forests (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, 2003). In Kisatchie National Forest's Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (1999), Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management Areas were established on Catahoula (73,000 pine and pine-hardwood acres), Calcasieu (Evangeline Unit (46,400 pine and pine-hardwood acres) and Vernon Unit (63,800 pine and pine-hardwood acres)), Kisatchie (60,200 pine and pine-hardwood acres), and Winn (59,400 pine and pine-hardwood acres) Ranger Districts.

##### *Limiting Factors:*

This species primarily is susceptible to habitat degradation (fire-suppression, lack of cavity trees, and habitat fragmentation) (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, 2003, pp. x-xi). Human-induced disturbances also can adversely impact this species (USDA Forest Service, Kisatchie National Forest, 1999). The USDA Forest Service strictly governs management and recreational activities within RCW cluster sites (USDA Forest Service, Kisatchie National Forest, 1999, pp. 2-61 to 2-66).

##### *Population abundance:*

The last annual population surveys were conducted by Kisatchie National Forest wildlife personnel in Summer 2009; results of the surveys are as follows: Winn Ranger District – 37 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 263 active clusters), Kisatchie Ranger District – 49 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 292 active clusters), Catahoula Ranger District – 74 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 317 active clusters), Evangeline Unit of Calcasieu Ranger District – 117 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 231 active clusters), and Vernon / Ft Polk – 213 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 481 active clusters). These clusters primarily are within Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management Areas which cover approximately 303,000 acres on the Kisatchie National Forest (50% of the Forest). The overall Kisatchie National Forest RCW population has a slightly increasing population trend. Much work (including prescribed burns, timber thinning, and mid-story removal) remains in future decades to achieve USFWS recovery status.

#### **3.11.1.2 Environmental Consequences**

##### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

Disturbances to individual RCWs by dogs chasing deer, especially at cluster sites, are possible. Barking dogs and occasional gunshots may cause individuals to flush or leave the area temporarily. These effects would be

insignificant and would not lead to cluster abandonment. RCWs are fairly tolerant of disturbance as evidenced by existing clusters in highway and railroad rights-of-way, golf courses, and military installations. Healthy RCW populations exist at Fort Polk, Fort Benning, Fort Stewart, Fort Bragg, Camp Lejeune, and Eglin Air Force Base.

If more private landowners prohibit deer hunting with dogs in the future, deer hunting with dogs probably would increase on Kisatchie NF which may increase the risk of disturbance to RCWs, but is unlikely to reach a level where clusters would be abandoned.

### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

Dog-deer chases, with its accompanying human and vehicular chases, would not occur in RCW foraging habitat and cluster sites thereby reducing the potential for disturbance which would enhance the habitat security for this species. No indirect effects would occur.

The activity with possible disturbances would be reduced thereby increasing the overall habitat security for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers on Kisatchie National Forest.

### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

Disturbances to individual RCWs by dogs chasing deer, especially at cluster sites, are possible. Barking dogs and occasional gunshots may cause individuals to flush or leave the area temporarily. These effects would be insignificant and would not lead to cluster abandonment. RCWs are fairly tolerant of disturbance as evidenced by existing clusters in highway and railroad rights-of-way, golf courses, and military installations. Healthy RCW populations exist at Fort Polk, Fort Benning, Fort Stewart, Fort Bragg, Camp Lejeune, and Eglin Air Force Base.

If more private landowners prohibit deer hunting with dogs in the future, deer hunting with dogs probably would increase on Kisatchie NF which may increase the risk of disturbance to RCWs within the designated areas, but is unlikely to reach a level where clusters would be abandoned.

## **3.11.2 Louisiana Black Bear**

### **3.11.2.1 Affected Environment**

#### *Habitat Requirements and Denning:*

The Louisiana black bear is found in Louisiana, south Mississippi, and east Texas. They require large areas of bottomland and other hardwood forest habitat to meet their survival needs, including hardwood mast trees, fruiting plants, and secluded locations for den sites to bear young (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, 2009). The entire Kisatchie National Forest is within the historic range of the Louisiana black bear. On March 10, 2009, the USFWS designated a critical-habitat zone (1,195,821 acres) for Louisiana black bear extending north

– south throughout the entire state (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, 2009); the Winn and Catahoula Districts and Evangeline Unit are within 50 miles of this zone. Bears often range for miles; much of the Kisatchie National Forest could harbor transient bears.

Louisiana black bears start to den from late November to early January. They exhibit varying degrees of lethargy while denning; most can easily be aroused if disturbed. Denning activity is influenced by a number of factors: food availability, age, gender, reproductive condition, photoperiod, and weather conditions. Generally, pregnant females are the first to den and males the last. Factors contributing to interruption of the denning period or the changing of den sites during a given winter include human activity, rapidly fluctuating water levels, fluctuating extremes in weather conditions, and the lack of concealment of ground dens.

Data collected by monitoring denning behavior indicate bears are more active in winter months in the lower Mississippi River Valley than at more northern latitudes. For some bears, usually males, winter inactivity may be nothing more than bedding for a few days or weeks in one area before moving to new bedding sites. Pregnant females, the first to seek den sites, usually choose sites that are more secure and inaccessible than those typically selected by males. Females prefer large, hollow trees, as these provide dry, secure, and well-insulated cover, but will also den in brush piles and thickets (Black Bear Conservation Coalition, 2009). Bears could den on Kisatchie National Forest.

#### *Limiting Factors:*

The decline of the Louisiana black bear population is attributed to habitat loss and unregulated harvesting. Because black bears have a low reproductive rate, the effect of illegal killing of adult bears, especially females, is a serious concern. Habitat loss was a significant causal factor in the decline of the black bear population, but unregulated hunting may have been the primary factor in their decline. (Black Bear Conservation Coalition, 2009).

#### *Population abundance:*

The only current reliable estimates of bear numbers in Louisiana are for the Tensas River Basin population, which has been intensively studied for several years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of Tennessee. By February 2005, 150 different bears had been captured and identified in the Tensas Basin. In addition to the Tensas population, Louisiana black bears occur in the Tensas River basin, Atchafalaya basin, Tunica Hills, and Pearl River Basin. The Black Bear Conservation Coalition and other agencies have been translocating bears to close the gap between the Tensas and Atchafalaya basin bear populations. Wildlife personnel have moved adult females and their cubs from their winter dens in the Tensas Basin to artificial dens at Lake Ophelia NWR (approximately 25 miles from the Catahoula District and 32 miles from the Evangeline Unit) and the Red River and Three Rivers Wildlife Management Areas in east-central Louisiana. Between March 2001 and 2006, 30 adult

females and 69 cubs had been moved, and most of these bears remained in and around the target area (Black Bear Conservation Coalition, 2009).

### **3.11.2.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

Whereas no resident bears currently exist on KNF, this proposal will have no direct or indirect effects on Louisiana Black Bears.

If the Louisiana Black Bear population expands in Louisiana, deer hunting with dogs would be adverse to bears because deer dogs could harass bears.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

Whereas no resident bears currently exist on KNF, this proposal will have no direct or indirect effects on Louisiana Black Bears. No indirect effects would occur.

KNF might be designated habitat for the bear in the future as the bear population expands in Louisiana; if this happens, the prohibition of deer hunting with dogs would be beneficial to bears because deer dogs could harass bears.

#### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

Whereas no resident bears currently exist on Kisatchie National Forest, this proposal will have no direct or indirect effects on Louisiana Black Bears.

Kisatchie National Forest might be designated habitat for the bear in the future as the Louisiana Black Bear population expands in Louisiana. Deer hunting with dogs would be adverse to bears because deer dogs could harass bears in the designated areas.

## **3.12 Aquatics and Fish -- General**

### **3.12.1 Affected Environment**

The Forest is characterized by numerous small intermittent streams (stream orders 1 through 3) with associated narrow level floodplains. Perennial streams (stream orders 4 and above) normally have well-sustained relatively constant flow during dry periods of the summer. The Forest has approximately 5,500 miles of stream channels – approximately 4,800 miles of stream order 1 through 3, and approximately 700 miles of stream orders 4 and above (Kisatchie National Forest, 2007).

Water qualities of nine streams on the Forest have been monitored quarterly in cooperation with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. Almost all samples from these streams have turbidity levels well below 25 NTU, which is the criterion for natural and scenic streams. (Kisatchie National Forest, 2007).

### **3.12.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

This alternative would create no apparent change in existing conditions. Since dog-deer hunting activities occur during a relatively short time (7-15 days) each year and occur almost exclusively outside of streams, direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aquatic habitat would be minimal.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

This alternative would eliminate dog-deer hunting; therefore minimally beneficial direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aquatic habitat would be expected.

#### ***Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)***

This alternative would allow dog-deer hunting to occur on a portion of the Forest. Since dog-deer hunting activities occur during a relatively short time (7-15 days) each year and almost exclusively outside of streams, direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aquatic habitat would be minimal.

### **3.13 Aquatics and Fish – Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Conservation species**

See Appendix C for a list of the wildlife threatened, endangered, sensitive, and conservation (TESC) species.

The proposed project will not overly impact the streams, ponds, and lakes on Kisatchie National Forest. Consequently, rare aquatic species on Kisatchie National Forest not considered include: American Alligator, Louisiana pigtoe, Texas heelsplitter, Ouachita fencing crayfish, Calcasieu painted crayfish, Kisatchie painted crayfish, Texas pigtoe, Schoolhouse Springs leuctran stonefly, Sandbank pocketbook, Southern hickorynut, Teche painted crayfish, Louisiana fatmucket, Free State Crayfish, Western sand darter, Bluehead shiner, Southern creekmussel, Blue sucker, Sabine shiner, and Sabine fencing crayfish.

#### **3.13.1 Affected Environment**

The Louisiana pearlshell mussel (LPM) (*Margaritifera hembeli*), a Federally-listed threatened species occurs in the Bayou Rigolette watershed on the Catahoula District and the Bayous Rapides and Boeuf watersheds on the Calcasieu District – Evangeline Unit. The streams and drainages where the threatened mussel exists include approximately 83,500 acres (14% of the total Forest).

There have been known direct kills of LPM caused from crossing streams in unauthorized locations. Sedimentation into the streams can be fatal to the LPM living in the locale of sedimentation.

U.S.D.I. Fish and Wildlife Service concur with the Biological Evaluation (Appendix B) determination that none of the alternatives would likely adversely affect the LPM.

Appendix C displays the Kisatchie National Forest's aquatic species listed as endangered, threatened, sensitive, or conservation. The table also indicates species considered but not analyzed further because they do not occur on the Forest or their range lies outside national forest land.

### **3.13.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### ***Alternative 1 (No Action)***

This alternative would create no apparent change in existing conditions. Since dog-deer hunting activities occur almost exclusively outside of streams, direct effects to aquatic TESC habitat would be minimal.

During the hunting season, use of primitive forest roads would likely increase and consequently increase the risk of temporary runoff erosion, turbidity, and siltation to aquatic habitat in the immediate vicinity. Given that dog-deer hunting activities occur during a relatively short time (7-15 days) each year, these indirect effect should be minimal, having little or no effect on LPM. This alternative may impact individuals of the various aquatic sensitive species, but it is not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or a loss of population viability.

Dog-deer hunting would not be expected to contribute to any possible siltation occurring from other activities.

#### ***Alternative 2 (Proposal)***

This alternative would eliminate dog-deer hunting; therefore minimally beneficial direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aquatic habitat would be expected.

#### **Alternative 3 (Designated Dog-Deer Hunting Areas)**

Since a relatively small portion of the Forest would be impacted for a short period of time annually, the forest-wide risk to aquatic habitat from erosion, turbidity, and siltation would be low.

Areas designated for dog-deer hunting under this alternative exclude LPM streams on the Catahoula District but include many of the LPM streams on the Calcasieu District (Evangeline Unit). The reduced amount of area to dog-deer hunting on the Calcasieu District could potentially concentrate more hunter traffic onto the designated hunting area and indirectly impact LPM streams. Therefore, the risk to LPM from traffic-induced erosion, turbidity, and siltation would be low on the Catahoula District, but potentially higher on the Calcasieu District.

### **3.14 Management Indicator Species**

#### **3.14.1 Affected Environment**

##### *Plants*

Plant management indicators (MI) represent the long-term concerns relating to the diverse plant resources and habitats on the Forest. Plant MI include both individual species and communities. The list of management indicator species (MIS) and communities resulted from a review of all species likely to occur on the Forest. Emphasis for selection was focused at the landscape scale with additional consideration given to small, unique, or under-represented communities. A more detailed description of the plant MIS can be found in Chapter 3 of the Forest Plan FEIS (USDA Forest Service, Kisatchie National Forest, 1999).

Plant MIS and all identified unique or under-represented communities were selected to represent each of the four major landscape forest communities of the Kisatchie National Forest. The plant MIS and trends for KNF are shown below in Table 10.

##### *Terrestrial wildlife*

A group of bird species represent the wildlife communities associated with each of the four major landscape communities found on the Forest. The MI habitat descriptions and current acreages are shown in Tables 3-15 to 3-18 in the Forest Plan FEIS (USDA Forest Service, Kisatchie National Forest, 1999). These species, as well as those they represent, are expected to find their most extensive optimal habitat conditions once the corresponding desired future condition (DFC) is reached on a particular landscape. Although individual species may occur in several landscapes at lower population densities or as small isolated populations, a MI is expected to occur at its highest population densities within the landscapes for which they were chosen. Habitat quality and quantity are expected to have a primary influence on wildlife populations. Other factors beyond the control of forest management, however, may have a profound effect on wildlife populations as well. Such factors include weather patterns, individual species demographics, and other unpredictable events. The wildlife MIS and trends for KNF are shown below in Table 10.

##### *Aquatic species*

Aquatic MI were selected to represent long-term concerns relating to aquatic resources on the Forest. In measuring the biological integrity of an aquatic ecosystem, a combination of species represents aquatic habitats and communities. Fish indicators reflect the ability of aquatic organisms to move within and among stream reaches. A mussel is included as a management indicator because there may be environmental factors that impact filter feeders, such as mussels, that may not impact fish. The aquatic MIS and trends for KNF are shown below in Table 10.

**Table 10: Management indicator species for wildlife, plant, and aquatic species by community type**

Landscape Community	Wildlife MIS	KNF Trend *		Plant MIS	Aquatic MIS
		1998-2003			
		Mid-term	Short-term		
Longleaf Pine (134,000 acres)	Bachman's Sparrow Northern Bobwhite Quail Prairie Warbler Red-cockaded WP Red-headed WP	- - NA - =	== == - - ==	Longleaf pine Noseburn Pinehill bluestem Pale purple coneflower	
Shortleaf Pine/oak-Hickory (18,000 acres)	Prairie Warbler Cooper's Hawk Eastern Wood-Pewee Pileated WP Red-cockaded WP Summer Tanager	NA NA == == - ==	- NA - + - ==	Black hickory Flowering dogwood Mockernut hickory Partridge pea Shortleaf pine White oak Wild bergamot	
Mixed Hardwood-Loblolly Pine (376,000 acres)	White-eyed Vireo Hooded Warbler Pileated WP Red-cockaded WP Wood Thrush Yellow-billed Cuckoo	== == == - - +	== == + - == ==	Bigleaf snowbell Black snake-root Christmas fern Loblolly pine Partridge berry Southern red oak Virginia Dutchman's pipe	
Riparian – small stream (30,000 acres)	Acadian Flycatcher Louisiana Waterthrush White-eyed Vireo Yellow-billed Cuckoo	== NA == +	== NA == ==	American beech Basswood Cherrybark oak Inland sea-oats Ironwood Mayapple Wild azalea	<u>Slow-flowing:</u> ..Pirate perch ..Blackspotted topminnow <u>Impoundments &amp; ponds:</u> ..Largemouth bass ..Sunfish
Riparian – large stream (40,000 acres)	Kentucky Warbler Northern Parula Pileated WP Warbling Vireo White-breasted Nuthatch Worm-eating Warbler	== == == NA NA NA	+ == + NA NA ==	Green hawthorn Inland sea-oats Lizard's tail Louisiana sedge Southern magnolia Swamp chestnut oak	<u>Swift-flowing:</u> ..Brown madtom ..Redfin darter ..Louisiana pearlshell mussel

\* Legend: "+" indicates a statistically significant increasing trend, "-" a statistically significant decreasing trend, "==" a statistically significant trend was not detected; "=" a statistically significant trend was not detected and the species was observed on <5% of points; and "NA" indicates data insufficient to calculate trend estimate (statistical significance set at alpha <0.10). Statewide trends and Upper Coastal Plain trends can be found in Wagner's MIS Report. (Wagner, 2005, p. 74)

### 3.14.2 Environmental Consequences

#### *Alternatives 1, 2, and 3*

None of the alternatives are expected to have a direct effect on MIS or lead to a change in their population trends.

### ***3.15 Civil Rights and Environmental Justice***

Civil rights are integrated throughout the Forest Service workforce, programs, and activities. Our civil rights mission is to ensure fair and equitable opportunities for Forest Service customers and employees to facilitate effective delivery of agency programs and activities.

The demographics of the visitors to Kisatchie National Forest (USDA Forest Service, 2006) indicate the majority are white (97%) male (74%) in the 30 to 60 age range (58%), and 44% of visitors incomes range from \$25,000 to \$49,000 (Kisatchie National Forest, 2007). Many locals and adjacent landowners, mostly mid- to lower-income users, enjoy the amenities of the national forest. None of the alternatives would create any changes that would disproportionately impact low-income communities. All Forest users would be required to abide by the alternative chosen. This requirement is not disproportionate and applies to everyone.

The 2005 Kisatchie National Forest NVUM survey (USDA Forest Service, 2006) results indicated the ethnicity of Forest visitors to be: 1.8% Hispanic/Latino, 1% American Indian, and 2.2% Black/African American. None of the alternatives would disproportionately affect any minority group.

Median household, family, and non-family income are all lower among the north Louisiana parishes (which closely represent the KNF parishes) than for the state as a whole. Poverty in Louisiana is higher than the national rate. 2005 Census data shows that 18.8% of people in the state and 22.4% of the people in north Louisiana are below the poverty level. See Appendix F for a detailed economic profile.

Reasonable restrictions on hunting use proposed in all alternatives would be applied consistently to everyone and therefore would not be discriminatory nor have a disproportionate effect on lower-income groups.

## 4 List of Preparers

### 4.1 Core Interdisciplinary Team

<b>Name</b>	<b>Contribution</b>	<b>Years Experience</b>
Mike Balboni	Forest Supervisor	30
Carl Brevelle	Planning/NEPA	34
Ken Dancak	Wildlife Biology	30
James Caldwell	Public Affairs	37
David Byrd	Ecosystems Unit Leader	17

### 4.2 Specialists

<b>Name</b>	<b>Contribution</b>	<b>Years Experience</b>
Jackie Duncan	Vegetation, Silviculture	14
Velicia Bergstrom	Heritage Resources	21
Shanna Ellis	Forest Recreation	21
Edward Bratcher	Fire, Lands, Minerals	26
Joel Harrison	GIS Analysis	15
Dave Moore	Botany	25
Robert Potts	Social Scientist	20
Gayla James	Law Enforcement	20

### 4.3 Other Contributors/Advisors

<b>Name</b>	<b>Contribution</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Chris Liggett	Planning/NEPA	USFS, R8 Atlanta
Dave Purser	NEPA	USFS, R8 Atlanta
Dennis Krusac	Biologist	USFS, R8 Atlanta
Scott Durham	Deer Program Info	LDWF, Louisiana
Kenny Ribbeck	State Wildlife Info	LDWF, Louisiana

## 5 Individuals and Organizations Contacted

### 5.1 Forest-wide Mailing List

The following people were mailed letters describing the Kisatchie NF's proposal and were asked to comment:

<b>Name</b>	<b>City/State</b>
Bruce Robinson	Alexandria, LA 71301-2345
Katherine Raffray	Alexandria, LA 71303
Chris Clayton	Alexandria, LA 71309-1110
Theodore Fontaine, Jr	Alexandria, LA 71309-1150
Richard Landry	Alexandria, LA 71315-1997
Deborah Boyd	Bastrop, LA 71220
Huel Watson	Bastrop, LA 71220
Rodney Andrew Guidry	Bell City, LA 70630
Pauline W. Butler	Bentley, LA 71407
Glenda Maddox	Bossier City, LA 71111
Whitney Maddox	Bossier, LA 71112
Billy Durison	Boyce, LA 71409
Gordon Jeffers	Boyce, LA 71409
Lisa Richard Alexander	Boyce, LA 71409
Doug Rollins	Calcasieu, LA 71433
James & Lavern Chandler	Colfax, LA 71417
James Chandler II	Colfax, LA 71417
M. Holt	Colfax, LA 71417
Megan Carpenter	Colfax, LA 71417
Stacy Dupre	Colfax, LA 71417
Trevor Graham	Colfax, LA 71417
Celeste W.	Covington, LA 70433
Joanne Waguespack	Covington, LA 70433
Tina Bourque	Delcambre, LA 70528
Courtney Kleinpeter	Denham Springs, LA 70706
Virginia Vines	Dodson, LA 71422
Anthony A. Conques	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Betty Reagan	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Bobby & Karen Chandler	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Danny Garner	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Don Willett	Dry Prong, LA 71423
J. B. Mercer	Dry Prong, LA 71423
James Transer	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Jeff & Oneida Marsh	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Joe Linscombe	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Louisiana Sportsmen Alliance	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Robert & Betty Willett	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Ronald A. Mayeaux	Dry Prong, LA 71423
Ed & Betty Rhame	Elmer, LA 71424
Terry L. Goynes, Sr	Flatwoods, LA 71427
Albert Welch	Glenmora, LA 71433

Melvin Bagwell	Goldonna, LA 71031
Diane Arceneaux	Grand Coteau, LA 70541-0140
Jonathan Meyers	Harahan, LA 70123
Sherrie Marks	Hessmer, LA 71341
Ledd Weatherhead	Hineston, LA 71438
Ginny Nipper	Homer, LA 71040
Mary Ledet	Houma, LA 70361
Marygayle Browning	Iota, LA 70543
Trisha Meyers	Iowa, LA 70647
Michael Taylor	Jamestown, LA 71045
Lisa Wilson	Jefferson, LA 70121
William Vickers	Jefferson, LA 70121
Yvette Garrett	Jefferson, LA 70121
Chad Mallett	Jennings, LA 70546
Sandy St Romain	Lake Charles, LA 70605
James H. Cureton	Lake Charles, LA 70606
Ernest Kennedy	Lake Charles, LA 70611
Linda Hoke	Lake Charles, LA 70611
Brandy & Trampus Barton	Leander, LA 71438
Irby L. Perkins, Jr	Leesville, LA 71446
Michael D. Johnson	Leesville, LA 71446
Robert Johnson	Leesville, LA 71446
Steve Coffman	Leesville, LA 71496
Dale Bounds	Lufkin, TX 75901
Raymond Labat, Jr	Luling, LA 70070
Tammy Hebert	Lydia, LA 70569
Donna Cooke	Mandeville, LA 70448
Patricia Gonzalez	Mandeville, LA 70448
Sylvia Schmidt	Mandeville, LA 70471
Chad Bowen	Mansfield, LA 71052
Thomas d'Aquin	Marrero, LA 70072
Paul & Annie Myers	Melder, LA 71433
Marge Garvey	Metairie, LA 70001-3020
Shannon Eaton	Metairie, LA 70001-3020
Edith Burdett	Metairie, LA 70003
May Boyle	Metairie, LA 70003
Nicole Pazos	Metairie, LA 70003
Paulette Bernard	Metairie, LA 70005-1884
Sally Ann Farr	Monroe, LA 71201
Christine Spiese	Morgan City, LA 70380
Howard Franklin	Nashville, TN 37204
Jerry Broadway	Natchitoches, LA 71457
Roberta Walters	Natchitoches, LA 71457
Ray Boudreaux	New Iberia, LA 70560
Jeanie Blake	New Orleans, LA 70115
Donald Miller	New Orleans, LA 70115-1330
Kathleen O'Gorman	New Orleans, LA 70118
Letty Di Giulio	New Orleans, LA 70118
Debra Seeland Neve	New Orleans, LA 70122
Charlann Kable	New Orleans, LA 70128

Jenna Matheny	New Orleans, LA 70130
William M. Crotty	New Orleans, LA 70130
Sandy Songy	New Orleans, LA 70131
Dr. James Riopelle	New Orleans, LA 70131-3208
Dr. Jamie Manders	New Orleans, LA 70131-3208
Billy Craig	Pineville, LA 71360
Doyle Lasyone	Pineville, LA 71360
Dwayne Krumrey	Pineville, LA 71360
Max R. Foster	Pineville, LA 71360
Ronnie Wilkinson	Pineville, LA 71360
Dr. Randy Esters	Pitkin, LA 70656
A. R. Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Bernie Reynolds	Pollock, LA 71467
Black Dupont	Pollock, LA 71467
Bo & T. Wagner	Pollock, LA 71467
Brenda M. Dilly	Pollock, LA 71467
Brent & Maranda Granger	Pollock, LA 71467
Brent & P. Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Brent Butler	Pollock, LA 71467
C. Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Casey Bynog	Pollock, LA 71467
Charles & Betty Coleman	Pollock, LA 71467
Clint Wagner	Pollock, LA 71467
D. McWalter	Pollock, LA 71467
D.R. Willett	Pollock, LA 71467
Darrell & Maria Slaughter	Pollock, LA 71467
F.L. McCartney	Pollock, LA 71467
George Reynolds	Pollock, LA 71467
Heath Nugent	Pollock, LA 71467
I. R. Thames	Pollock, LA 71467
James & Brenda Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Joann Revelett	Pollock, LA 71467
Kenneth & Cynthia McKay	Pollock, LA 71467
Kenny & J. Liniun	Pollock, LA 71467
Marie & Sonny Holloway	Pollock, LA 71467
Marty & Corma Montgomery	Pollock, LA 71467
Michael Bonner	Pollock, LA 71467
Mike & Sandy Kirtland	Pollock, LA 71467
Molly Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Nancy Louelle Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Rhonda & Larry Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Ricky Lasyone	Pollock, LA 71467
Robert U. Argilliott	Pollock, LA 71467
Rocky Lasyone	Pollock, LA 71467
Roger Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Roy Wade	Pollock, LA 71467
Shari & Ty Kirtland	Pollock, LA 71467
Shellie Hargis	Pollock, LA 71467
Shellie Mercer	Pollock, LA 71467
Susan Nugent	Pollock, LA 71467

T. Willett	Pollock, LA 71467
Tim Montgomery	Pollock, LA 71467
Vernon & F. Cogdill	Pollock, LA 71467
Alton Dodd	Provençal, LA 71468
G. David Lewis	Provençal, LA 71468
Janice T. Lewis	Provençal, LA 71468
John Ward	Provençal, LA 71468
Juan & Pat Booty	Provençal, LA 71468
Julian Ray	Provençal, LA 71468
Kirby & Candace Evans	Provençal, LA 71468
Lindsey Evans	Provençal, LA 71468
Mike Ward	Provençal, LA 71468
Travis & Marcy Craft	Provençal, LA 71468
Ronald & Margaret Booty	Provençal, LA 71468-6143
Jerry Broadway	Robeline, LA 71469
Cory Carlson	Ruston, LA 71270
William Banderies	Saline, LA 71070
Timothy M. Hart, MD	Shreveport, LA 71106
Kim Warren	Shreveport, LA 71107
William & Gloria Owens	Shreveport, LA 71119-5106
Richard Bagwell	Sulfur, LA 70665
S.C. Dowden, Jr	Taylorville, MS 39168
Jo Cummings	Waggaman, LA 70094
Megan Sewell	Washington, DC 20037
Kathryn Lemoine	West Monroe, LA 71291
Rayne Lowe	West Monroe, LA 71291-4610
Billy Verhoff	Winnfield, LA 71483
Brent Carpenter	Winnfield, LA 71483-2545
Gary & Edna Banta	Winnfield, LA 71483-7307
Glen W. Watts	Woodworth, LA 71485

In addition to the preceding names, emails were sent to an additional 409 private and state/local/tribal individuals, asking for their comments on the proposal. Rather than disclose all these email addresses here, they are filed in our process records located at Kisatchie National Forest Supervisor's Office, Pineville, LA.

## **5.2 List of Government Agencies and Persons Consulted**

The following congressional contacts were mailed letters for information and asked to provide comment:

<b>Name</b>	<b>City/State</b>
Representative Anh Joseph Cao	Washington, DC 20515-1802
Representative Charles J. Melancon	Washington, DC 20515-1803
Representative Charles W. Boustany	Washington, DC 20515-1807
Representative John C. Fleming, Jr.	Washington, DC 20515-1804
Representative Rodney Alexander	Washington, DC 20510-1805
Representative Stephen J. Scalise	Washington, DC 20515-1801
Representative William Cassidy	Washington, DC 20515-1806
Senator David Vitter	Washington, DC 20510-1805
Senator Mary Landrieu	Washington, DC 20510

## **5.3 Organizations and Media Sources**

The Nature Conservancy

National Wild Turkey Federation

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Hunting Dog Association

National Forest Foundation

Newspapers (statewide, local, weekend) News Release

Television News Release

Radio News Release

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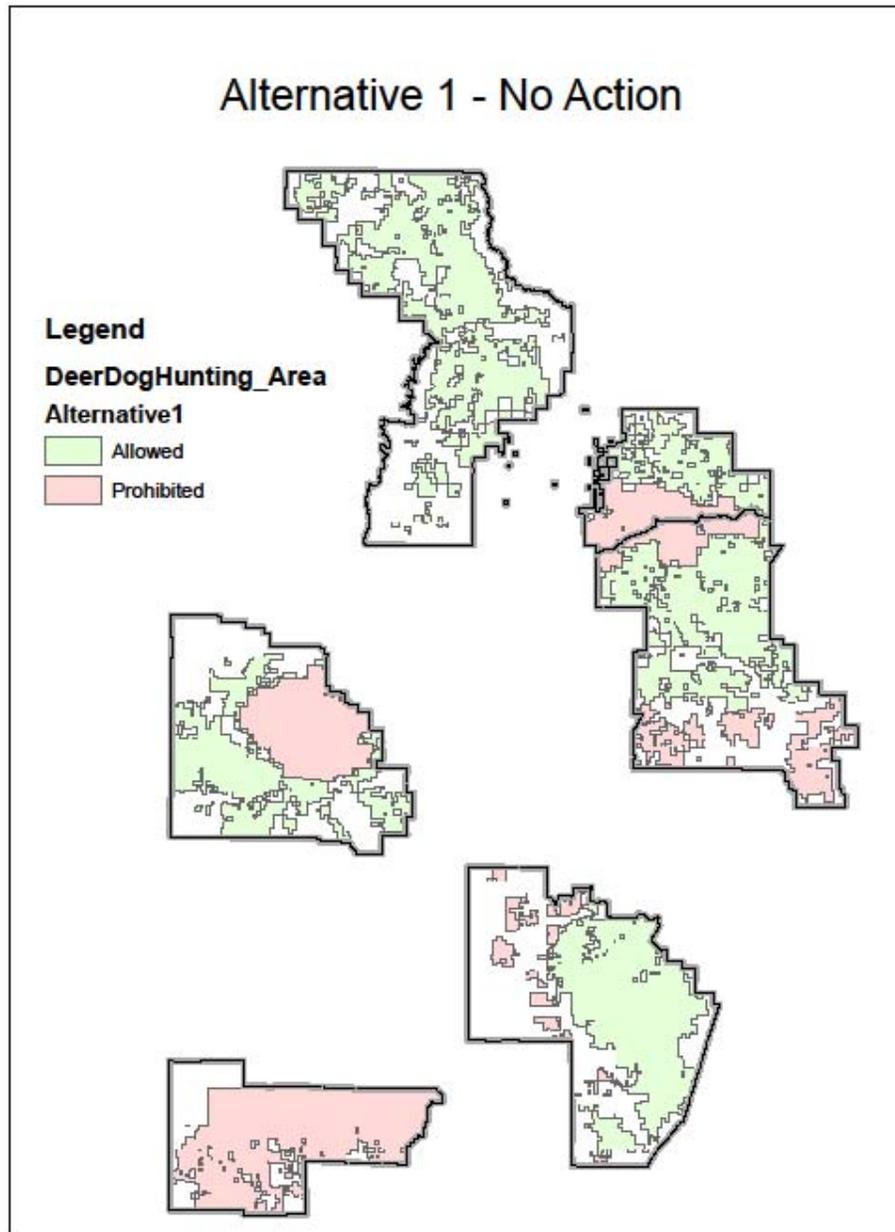
Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries. (2008). *Hunting with hounds in Virginia: a way forward*. Technical Report by Hound-Hunting Tech. Committee.

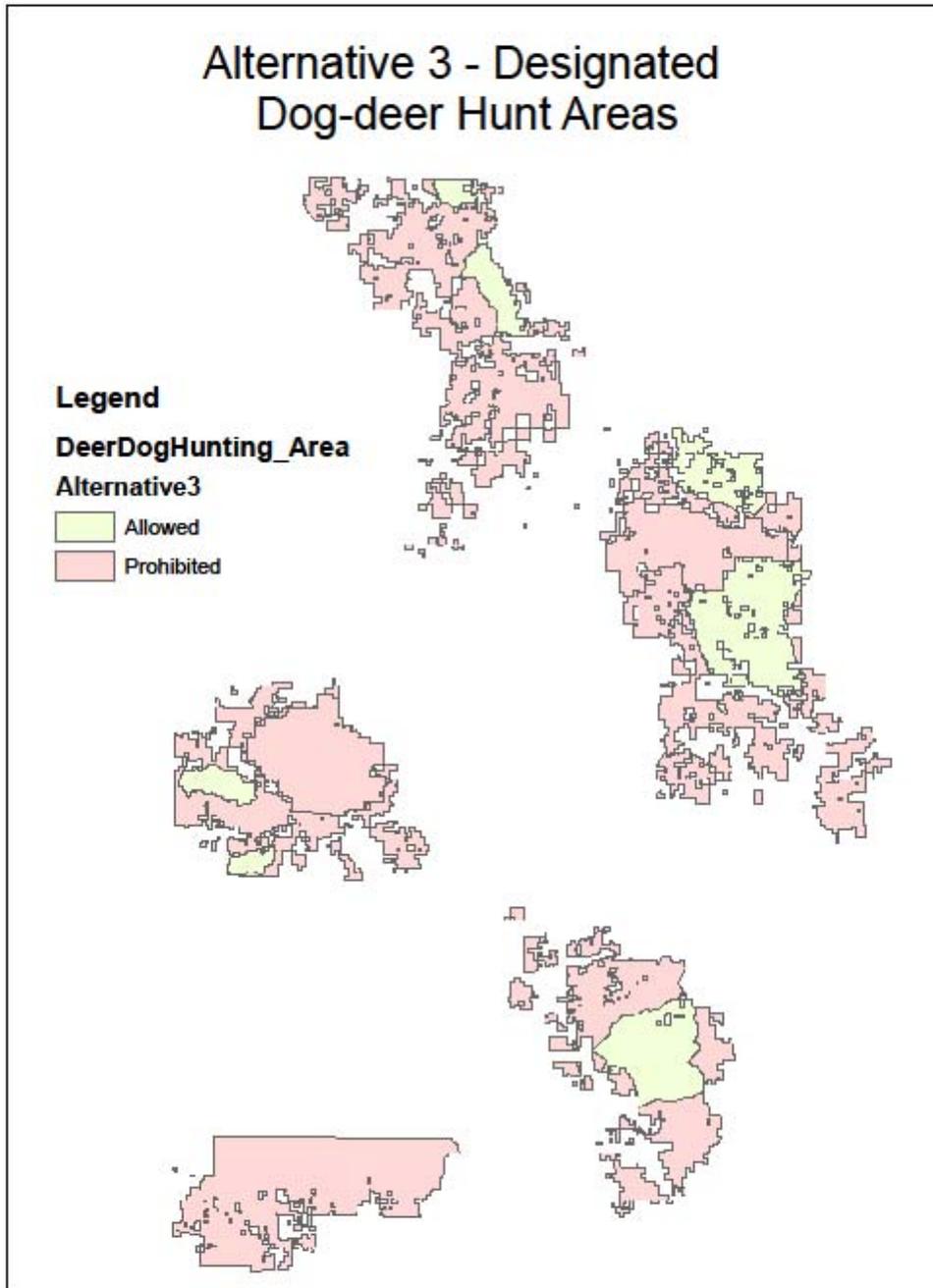
Wagner, R. O. (2005). *Wildlife Management Indicator Species Population and Habitat Trends, Kisatchie National Forest*. Pineville, LA: USDA Forest Service, Kisatchie NF.

## **7 Appendices**

### 7.1 Appendix A: Alternative 1 and 3 Maps

(Note: Alternative 2 is not shown. The entire KNF would be “Prohibited”)





## **7.2 Appendix B: Biological Evaluations**

## **Deer-Hunting With Dogs On Kisatchie National Forest**

### **A Biological Assessment For The Kisatchie National Forest (KNF)**

#### **1. Introduction**

##### **Purpose and need:**

Based upon public concerns regarding the use of dogs to hunt deer on the Kisatchie National Forest, the KNF has determined a need to evaluate whether changes should be made to this activity on the Forest or if it should be prohibited entirely on the KNF. The Forest has received many complaints from landowners, including a petition sent to local Congressional representative's office asking that something be done to address the unacceptable activities associated with dog-deer hunting on the KNF. The associated impacts to landowners and other forest users have been documented through increased violations and complaints to the legal authorities during the dog-deer hunting seasons. This proposal addresses the need to reduce ongoing conflicts.

##### **Legal direction references:**

36 CFR 241.2: The Chief of the Forest Service, through the Regional Foresters and Forest Supervisors, shall determine the extent to which national forests or portions thereof may be devoted to wildlife protection in combination with other uses and services of the national forests, and, in cooperation with the Fish & Game Department or other constituted authority of the State concerned, he will formulate plans for securing & maintaining desirable populations of wildlife species, and he may enter into such general or specific cooperative agreements with appropriate State officials as are necessary & desirable for such purposes. Officials of the Forest Service will cooperate with State game officials in the planned and orderly removal in accordance with the requirements of State laws of the crop of game, fish, fur-bearers, & other wildlife on national forest lands.

36 CFR 261.1.a.3: The prohibitions in this part apply, except as otherwise provided, when: an act or omission affects, threatens, or endangers a person using, or engaged in the protection, improvement or administration of the National Forest System or a National Forest System road or trail.

##### **Objectives of this Biological Assessment:**

The objectives of this Biological Assessment are: 1) to ensure Forest Service actions do not contribute to the Federal listing of any animal species; 2) to comply with requirements of the Endangered Species Act that actions of Federal agencies not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or adversely modify their designated critical habitat; and 3) to provide a process and standard to ensure endangered, threatened, and proposed species receive full consideration in the decision-making process.

##### **Area description, general location and management context of the project area:**

The 3 alternatives of this proposed project directly or indirectly affect the entire Kisatchie National Forest which is in central and northern Louisiana: Caney Ranger District (in Claiborne and Webster Parishes, LA; 32,354 acres), Catahoula Ranger District (in Grant, Rapides, and Winn Parishes, LA; 121,633 acres), Calcasieu Ranger District (in Rapides and Vernon Parishes, LA; 183,035 acres), Kisatchie Ranger District (in Natchitoches Parish, LA; 102,625 acres), and Winn Ranger District (in Grant, Natchitoches, and Winn Parishes, LA; 164,614 acres).

## 2. Consultation History

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service occurred in February 2010. Extensive informal consultation occurred with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; a history of these consultations is as follows:

Forest Service officials	LDWF officials	Type of Interaction	Date
Lisa Lewis (Acting Forest Supervisor) & Mike Balboni (Forest Supervisor)	Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commissioners, Robert Barham, Secretary, & Kenny Ribbeck, Wildlife Chief	Office Visit	June 25, 2009
Jim Caldwell (Public Affairs Officer) & Mike Balboni (Forest Supervisor)	Robert Barham, Secretary, Jimmy Anthony, Assistant Secretary & Col. Winton Vidrine, Law Enforcement Chief	Office Visit	Sept 28-29, 2009
Jim Caldwell (Public Affairs Officer) & Mike Balboni (Forest Supervisor)	Ann Taylor, LW&F Commissioner & Stephan Oels, LW&F Commissioner	Office Visit	Sept 29-29, 2009
Jim Caldwell (Public Affairs Officer) & Mike Balboni (Forest Supervisor)	Jimmy Anthony, Assistant Secretary	Office Visit	Sept 28-29, 2009

## 3. Proposed Management Actions

**Alternative 1 (not proposed):** Would not amend the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Kisatchie National Forest (1999). The use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest would be determined each year through consultations with the LDWF. The existing Forest Plan guideline (FW-707) would remain in effect: "The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries will regulate fishing, trapping, hunting season, and bag limits." Deer hunting with dogs currently is allowed on 368,684 ac of the 604,278 ac Forest (Catahoula Ranger District (78,737 ac of 121,633 ac), Evangeline Unit (84,888 ac of 97,547 ac), Kisatchie Ranger District (60,944 ac of 102,625 ac), Winn Ranger District (144,355 ac of 164,614 ac), Vernon Unit (0 ac of 85,487 ac), and Caney Ranger District (0 ac of 32,354 ac)).

**Alternative 2 (preferred alternative):** Would amend the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Kisatchie National Forest (1999) by adding a new standard to prohibit the use of dogs to hunt deer on the entire Kisatchie National Forest (KNF). The proposed standard would state the following: "Prohibit use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest. Other kinds of hunting with dogs are allowed throughout the Forest (in accordance with state hunting regulations) unless site-specific management direction prohibits the use (such as on administrative sites and the National Wildlife Preserves)." The proposal would not apply to still-hunting for deer, or other kinds of hunting with dogs, such as for squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, or game birds.

**Alternative 3:** Would amend the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Kisatchie National Forest (1999) by adding a new standard to prohibit the use of dogs to hunt deer on the Kisatchie National Forest (KNF) EXCEPT where designated. The season length would be limited to a maximum of 9 consecutive days each year, similar to its current length. The proposed standard would state the following: "Prohibit use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest except in areas specifically designated open to dog-deer hunting. Areas open to dog deer hunting are shown in the map attachments to Amendment 8 of the Forest Plan. A maximum of 9 consecutive days that contain 2 weekends would be allowed each year. Other kinds of hunting with dogs are allowed throughout the Forest (in accordance with state hunting regulations) unless site-specific management direction prohibits the use (such as on administrative sites and the National Wildlife Preserves)." This proposal would not apply to still-hunting for deer, or other kinds of hunting with dogs, such as for squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, or game birds. Deer hunting with dogs would be allowed on 109,688 ac of the 604,278 ac Forest (Catahoula Ranger District (40,238 ac of 121,633 ac), Evangeline Unit (29,096 ac of 97,547 ac), Kisatchie Ranger District (10,825 ac of 102,625 ac), Winn Ranger District (29,529 ac of 164,614 ac), Vernon Unit (0 ac of 85,487 ac), and Caney Ranger District (0 ac of 32,354 ac)).

#### 4. Species Considered & Species Evaluated for Alternative 2

##### Species Considered:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lafayette Ecological Services office, James F. Boggs – Supervisor, in a letter to Kisatchie National Forest, dated September 24, 2009, identified the following as USFWS-listed species on Kisatchie National Forest:

##### Endangered species:

Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*); USFWS listed as Endangered in 1970 (35 Federal Register 16047); currently found on Catahoula District, Evangeline Unit, Vernon Unit, Kisatchie District, and Winn District.

##### Threatened species:

Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel (*Margaritifera hembeli*); listed by USFWS as Threatened on September 24, 1993 (58 Federal Register 49935-49937); currently found on Catahoula District and Evangeline Unit.

Earth Fruit (*Geocarpon minimum*); listed by USFWS as Threatened on June 16, 1987; currently found on Winn District.

[Although not listed in the USFWS letter, the Louisiana Black Bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*) (listed by USFWS as Threatened in 1992), is included.]

Proposed species: None.

##### Candidate species:

Louisiana Pine Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus ruthveni*); currently found on Vernon Unit, Kisatchie District, and Winn District; soon to be reintroduced to Catahoula District; is a candidate (since March 2004) for USFWS-listing as a Threatened or Endangered species.

##### Species Eliminated from further analysis:

Alternative 2 will have no effects on vegetation; therefore, Earth Fruit will not be further analyzed.

Louisiana pine snakes are not active (especially above ground) during winter; therefore, there will be no effect to the species and it will not be further considered.

Alternative 2 will not impact streams, ponds, and lakes on Kisatchie National Forest. Consequently, rare aquatic species on Kisatchie National Forest will not be considered; these species include: Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel and American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis* - Threatened due to Similarity of Appearance, June 4, 1987; 52 Federal Register, pages 21059 – 21064).

##### Species Evaluated:

Endangered Species: Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

Threatened Species: Louisiana Black Bear.

Candidate Species: None.

#### 5. Evaluated Species Survey Information for Alternative 2

##### Documented Or Previous Survey Data:

RCW: The last annual population surveys were conducted by Kisatchie National Forest wildlife personnel in Summer 2009; results of the surveys are as follows: Winn Ranger District – 37 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 263 active clusters), Kisatchie Ranger District – 49 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 292 active clusters), Catahoula Ranger District – 74 active RCW clusters (USFWS

recovery goal: 317 active clusters), Evangeline Unit of Calcasieu Ranger District – 117 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 231 active clusters), and Vernon / Ft Polk – 213 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 481 active clusters). These clusters primarily are within Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management Areas which cover approximately 302,800 ac on the KNF (73,000 ac Catahoula District, 46,400 ac Evangeline Unit, 60,200 ac Kisatchie District, 69,400 ac Winn District, and 63,800 ac Vernon Unit) (50%, cumulatively, of the entire Forest). The overall Kisatchie National Forest RCW population has increased 45% since 2004. Much work (including prescribed burns, timber thinning, and mid-story removal) remains in future decades to achieve USFWS recovery status.

**Louisiana Black Bear:** The only current reliable estimates of bear numbers in Louisiana are for the Tensas River Basin population, which has been intensively studied for several years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of Tennessee. By February 2005, 150 different bears had been captured and identified in the Tensas Basin. In addition to the Tensas population, Louisiana black bears occur in the Atchafalaya basin, Tunica Hills, and Pearl River Basin. The Black Bear Conservation Coalition and other agencies have been translocating bears to close the gap between the Tensas and Atchafalaya basin bear populations. Wildlife personnel have moved adult females and their cubs from their winter dens in the Tensas Basin to artificial dens at Lake Ophelia NWR (approximately 25 miles from the Catahoula District and 32 miles from the Evangeline Unit) and the Red River and Three Rivers Wildlife Management Areas in east-central Louisiana. Between March 2001 and 2006, 30 adult females and 69 cubs had been moved, and most of these bears remained in and around the target area (Black Bear Conserv. Coalition 2009<sup>1</sup>). No bears are known to reside currently on KNF. Transient bears occur occasionally on the Forest.

New Surveys Or Inventories That Were Conducted For This Assessment: None.

## 6. Environmental Baseline for the Species Evaluated for Alternative 2

### RCW:

Existing environment, amount and type of habitat, and characteristics of the area to be affected by the proposed action for species evaluated: RCWs require open, mature, and old-growth pine forests. In Kisatchie National Forest's Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (1999), Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management Areas were established on Catahoula (73,000 pine and pine-hardwood acres), Calcasieu (Evangeline Unit (46,400 pine and pine-hardwood acres) and Vernon Unit (63,800 pine and pine-hardwood acres)), Kisatchie (60,200 pine and pine-hardwood acres), and Winn (59,400 pine and pine-hardwood acres) Ranger Districts. RCWs in these areas would be affected directly by Alternative 2.

Current status and associated ecological units or habitat associations that occur (1) within the action area and (2) in the nearby vicinity (habitat that could be indirectly affected by Alternative 2) and used by the species: RCWs have an increasing population on Kisatchie National Forest. Since 2004, the number of active RCW clusters has increased by 45%. The habitat associated with RCW occurring within the proposed action area and in the nearby vicinity will not be affected indirectly by Alternative 2.

Potential habitat for each species in or adjacent to the action area compared to total habitat distribution: Potential habitat on Kisatchie National Forest for this species exists in the following areas:

Land Type Association	Domest. Vegetation	Approximate Acres
#1 – High Terrace Rolling Uplands	Longleaf Pine (Catahoula, Winn, Kisatchie, Vernon, Evangeline)	284,000
#2 – Kisatchie Sandstone Hills	Longleaf Pine (Kisatchie, Evangeline)	88,000
#3 – Undulating Clayey Uplands	Shortleaf/Hardwoods (Catahoula, Winn, Kisatchie, Vernon)	78,000
#4 – Winn Rolling Uplands	Longleaf Pine (Winn)	61,000
#5 – Ft. Polk Rolling Uplands	Longleaf Pine (Vernon)	28,000
#6 – Caney Lake Lowly Uplands	Shortleaf/Hardwoods (Caney)	3,200
#7 – North Louisiana Cane Hills	Shortleaf/Hardwoods (Caney)	28,000
TOTAL		547,200

These Land Type Associations cover most of the Forest's 604,000 acres. Potential habitat for this species off the Forest is limited.

Threats/limiting factors that affect these species & factors in the action that may be detrimental to their habitat: This species is adversely susceptible to a host of factors such as habitat degradation, predation, disease, and human disturbance. Alternative 2 presents no threats or limiting factors to this species.

Incomplete or unavailable information; how a lack of data may influence analysis: Sufficient data for this species on Kisatchie National Forest exist for a proper assessment.

#### Louisiana Black Bear:

Existing environment, amount and type of habitat, and characteristics of the area to be affected by the proposed action for species evaluated: Louisiana Black Bears are habitat generalists and omnivores; they prefer large contiguous areas of bottomland hardwood forests. No sufficiently large contiguous areas of bottomland hardwood with low densities of road networks exist on Kisatchie National Forest; therefore, no Kisatchie National Forest District provides optimum black bear habitat. The best available habitat areas for bear on the Forest are the Kisatchie Hills Wilderness (8,679 acres, located on Kisatchie Ranger District), Saline Bayou National Scenic River corridor (5,150 acres, located on Winn Ranger District), and Cunningham Brake (1,646 acres, located on Kisatchie Ranger District). Nevertheless, compared to off-Forest lands, Kisatchie National Forest provides relatively suitable potential habitat. The entire Forest would be affected directly by this proposed action.

Current status and associated ecological units or habitat associations that occur (1) within the action area and (2) in the nearby vicinity (habitat that could be affected indirectly by the proposal) and used by the species: Louisiana Black Bears have a slightly increasing population in Louisiana (implied by Black Bear Conserv. Coalition 2009<sup>2</sup>). The habitat associated with the Louisiana Black Bear occurring within the proposed action area and in the nearby vicinity will not be affected indirectly by Alternative 2.

Potential habitat for each species in or adjacent to the action area compared to total habitat distribution: The entire Kisatchie National Forest can be considered potential habitat for this species. Potential habitat for this species off the Forest is generally limited.

Threats/limiting factors that affect these species & factors in the action that may be detrimental to their habitat: This species is adversely susceptible to a host of factors such as habitat degradation, disease, and human disturbance. Alternative 2 presents no threats or limiting factors to this species.

Incomplete or unavailable information; how a lack of data may influence analysis: Sufficient data for this species on Kisatchie National Forest exist for a proper assessment.

#### 7. Effects of Alternative 2 on Each Species Evaluated

##### RCW:

Direct Effects and Their Significance: Alternative 2 will reduce human and canine disturbances which can affect this species. No adverse direct effects will occur.

Indirect Effects and Their Significance: None.

Cumulative Effects and Their Significance: Alternative 2 will reduce human and canine disturbances thereby enhancing ecosystem quality which will benefit this species. No adverse cumulative effects will occur.

Possible conflicts between Alternative 2 & the objectives of federal, regional, state & local land use plans, policies & controls in place for the project or action area: No conflicts will occur between Alternative 2 and the objectives of federal, regional, state, or local land-use plans, policies and controls in place for the project or action area. No incidental take of this species will occur.

**Louisiana Black Bear:**

**Direct Effects and Their Significance:** Alternative 2 will reduce potential human and canine disturbances which can affect transient members, if any, of this species on the Forest. No adverse direct effects will occur.

**Indirect Effects and Their Significance:** None.

**Cumulative Effects and Their Significance:** Alternative 2 will reduce potential human and canine disturbances which can affect transient members, if any, of this species on the Forest thereby enhancing ecosystem quality which will benefit this species. No adverse cumulative effects will occur.

**Possible conflicts between Alternative 2 & the objectives of federal, regional, state & local land use plans, policies & controls in place for the project or action area:** No conflicts will occur between Alternative 2 and the objectives of federal, regional, state, or local land-use plans, policies and controls in place for the project or action area. No incidental take of this species will occur.

**8. Determination of Effect for Alternative 2**

**RCW:** Alternative 2 is not likely to adversely affect the Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

**Louisiana Black Bear:** Alternative 2 is not likely to adversely affect the Louisiana Black Bear.

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**9. Species Considered & Species Evaluated for Alternative 3****Species Considered:**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lafayette Ecological Services office, James F. Boggs – Supervisor, in a letter to Kisatchie National Forest, dated September 24, 2009, identified the following as USFWS-listed species on Kisatchie National Forest:

**Endangered species:**

Red-Cockaded Woodpecker; USFWS listed as Endangered in 1970 (35 Federal Register 16047); currently found on Catahoula District, Evangeline Unit, Vernon Unit, Kisatchie District, and Winn District.

**Threatened species:**

Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel; listed by USFWS as Threatened on September 24, 1993 (58 Federal Register 49935-49937); currently found on Catahoula District and Evangeline Unit.

Earth Fruit; listed by USFWS as Threatened on June 16, 1987; currently found on Winn District.

[Although not listed in the USFWS letter, the Louisiana Black Bear listed by USFWS as Threatened in 1992, is included.]

**Proposed species:** None.

**Candidate species:**

Louisiana Pine Snake; currently found on Vernon Unit, Kisatchie District, and Winn District; soon to be reintroduced to Catahoula District; is a candidate (since March 2004) for USFWS-listing as a Threatened or Endangered species.

**Species Eliminated from further analysis:**

Alternative 3 will have no effects on vegetation; therefore, Earth Fruit will not be further analyzed.

Louisiana pine snakes are not active (especially above ground) during winter; therefore, there will be no effects to the species and it will not be further considered.

Alternative 3 will not impact streams, ponds, and lakes on Kisatchie National Forest. Consequently, rare aquatic species on Kisatchie National Forest will not be considered; these species include: Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel and American Alligator (Threatened due to Similarity of Appearance, June 4, 1987; 52 Federal Register, pages 21059 – 21064).

Species Evaluated:

Endangered Species: Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

Threatened Species: Louisiana Black Bear.

Candidate Species: None.

#### 10. Evaluated Species Survey Information for Alternative 3

Documented Or Previous Survey Data:

RCW: The last annual population surveys were conducted by Kisatchie National Forest wildlife personnel in Summer 2009; results of the surveys are as follows: Winn Ranger District – 37 active RCW clusters on the District (USFWS recovery goal: 263 active clusters) [approximately 13 active clusters are in the area to be open for deer hunting with dogs], Kisatchie Ranger District – 49 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 292 active clusters) [approximately 17 active clusters are in the area to be open for deer hunting with dogs], Catahoula Ranger District – 74 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 317 active clusters) [approximately 33 active clusters are in the area to be open for deer hunting with dogs], Evangeline Unit of Calcasieu Ranger District – 117 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 231 active clusters) [approximately 58 active clusters are in the area to be open for deer hunting with dogs], and Vernon / Ft Polk – 213 active RCW clusters (USFWS recovery goal: 481 active clusters). These clusters primarily are within Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management Areas which cover approximately 302,800 ac on the Kisatchie National Forest (73,000 ac Catahoula District [40,238 ac to be open for deer hunting with dogs], 46,400 ac Evangeline Unit [29,096 ac to be open for deer hunting with dogs], 60,200 ac Kisatchie District [10,825 ac to be open for deer hunting with dogs], 59,400 ac Winn District [29,529 ac to be open for deer hunting with dogs], and 63,800 ac Vernon Unit [0 ac to be open for deer hunting with dogs]). The overall Kisatchie National Forest RCW population has increased 45% since 2004. Much work (including prescribed burns, timber thinning, and mid-story removal) remains in future decades to achieve USFWS recovery status.

Louisiana Black Bear: The only current reliable estimates of bear numbers in Louisiana are for the Tensas River Basin population, which has been intensively studied for several years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of Tennessee. By February 2005, 150 different bears had been captured and identified in the Tensas Basin. In addition to the Tensas population, Louisiana Black Bears occur in the Atchafalaya basin, Tunica Hills, and Pearl River Basin. The Black Bear Conservation Coalition and other agencies have been translocating bears to close the gap between the Tensas and Atchafalaya basin bear populations. Wildlife personnel have moved adult females and their cubs from their winter dens in the Tensas Basin to artificial dens at Lake Ophelia NWR (approximately 25 miles from the Catahoula District and 32 miles from the Evangeline Unit) and the Red River and Three Rivers Wildlife Management Areas in east-central Louisiana. Between March 2001 and 2006, 30 adult females and 69 cubs had been moved, and most of these bears remained in and around the target area (Black Bear Conserv. Coalition 2009<sup>7</sup>). No bears are known to reside currently on KNF. Transient bears occur occasionally on the Forest.

New Surveys Or Inventories That Were Conducted For This Assessment: None.

### 11. Environmental Baseline for the Species Evaluated for Alternative 3

#### RCW:

Existing environment, amount and type of habitat, and characteristics of the area to be affected by the proposed action for species evaluated: RCWs require open, mature, and old-growth pine forests. In Kisatchie National Forest's Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (1999), Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management Areas were established on Catahoula (73,000 pine and pine-hardwood acres) [of which 40,238 ac would be open for deer hunting with dogs], Calcasieu (Evangeline Unit (46,400 pine and pine-hardwood acres) [of which 29,096 ac would be open for deer hunting with dogs] and Vernon Unit (83,800 pine and pine-hardwood acres) [of which 0 ac would be open for deer hunting with dogs]), Kisatchie (60,200 pine and pine-hardwood acres) [of which 10,825 ac would be open for deer hunting with dogs], and Winn (59,400 pine and pine-hardwood acres) [of which 29,529 ac would be open for deer hunting with dogs] Ranger Districts. RCWs in the areas open for deer hunting with dogs (a cumulative total of 109,688 ac) would be affected directly by Alternative 3.

Current status and associated ecological units or habitat associations that occur (1) within the action area and (2) in the nearby vicinity (habitat that could be indirectly affected by Alternative 3) and used by the species: RCWs have an increasing population on Kisatchie National Forest. The habitat associated with RCW occurring within the proposed action area and in the nearby vicinity will not be affected indirectly by Alternative 3.

Potential habitat for each species in or adjacent to the action area compared to total habitat distribution: Potential habitat on Kisatchie National Forest for this species exists in the following areas:

Land Type Association	Dominant Vegetation	Total Approximate Acres	Acres To Be Open To Deer Hunting With Dogs
#1 - High Terrace Rolling Uplands	Longleaf Pine	264,200	Catahoula (40,238), Evangeline (29,096)
#2 - Kisatchie Sandstone Hills	Longleaf Pine	66,000	Kisatchie District (10,825)
#3 - Undulating Caneys Uplands	Shortleaf/Hardwoods	78,000	0
#4 - Winn Rolling Uplands	Longleaf Pine	61,000	Winn (29,529)
#6 - Ft Pike Rolling Uplands	Longleaf Pine	28,000	0
#8 - Caneys Lakes Lowery Uplands	Shortleaf/Hardwoods	3,200	0
#9 - North Louisiana Caneys Hills	Shortleaf/Hardwoods	29,000	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>647,200</b>	<b>109,688</b>

Potential habitat for this species off the Forest is limited.

Threats/limiting factors that affect these species & factors in the action that may be detrimental to their habitat: This species is adversely susceptible to a host of factors such as habitat degradation, predation, disease, and human disturbance. Alternative 3 presents insignificant threats or limiting factors to this species.

Incomplete or unavailable information; how a lack of data may influence analysis: Sufficient data for this species on Kisatchie National Forest exist for a proper assessment.

#### Louisiana Black Bear:

Existing environment, amount and type of habitat, and characteristics of the area to be affected by the proposed action for species evaluated: Louisiana Black Bears are habitat generalists and omnivores; they prefer large contiguous areas of bottomland hardwood forests. No sufficiently large contiguous areas of bottomland hardwood with low densities of road networks exist on Kisatchie National Forest; therefore, no Kisatchie National Forest District provides optimum black bear habitat. The best available habitat areas for bear on the Forest are the Kisatchie Hills Wilderness (8,679 acres, located on Kisatchie Ranger District), Saline Bayou National Scenic River corridor (5,150 acres, located on Winn Ranger District), and Cunningham Brake (1,646 acres, located on Kisatchie Ranger District). Nevertheless, compared to off-Forest lands, Kisatchie National Forest provides relatively suitable potential habitat. The

109,688 ac that would be open for deer hunting with dogs in Alternative 3 can be considered suitable potential habitat [the entire KNF can be considered suitable potential habitat].

Current status and associated ecological units or habitat associations that occur (1) within the action area and (2) in the nearby vicinity (habitat that could be affected indirectly by the proposal) and used by the species: Louisiana Black Bears have a slightly increasing population in Louisiana (implied by Black Bear Conserv. Coalition 2009<sup>2</sup>). The habitat associated with the Louisiana Black Bear that occurs within the proposed action area and in the nearby vicinity will not be affected indirectly by Alternative 3.

Potential habitat for each species in or adjacent to the action area compared to total habitat distribution: The entire Kisatchie National Forest can be considered potential habitat for this species. Potential habitat for this species off the Forest (on private lands) is generally limited.

Threats/limiting factors that affect these species & factors in the action that may be detrimental to their habitat: This species is adversely susceptible to a host of factors such as habitat degradation, disease, and human disturbance. Whereas no bears currently reside on the Forest, Alternative 3 presents negligible threats or limiting factors to this species.

Incomplete or unavailable information; how a lack of data may influence analysis: Sufficient data for this species on Kisatchie National Forest exist for a proper assessment.

## 12. Effects of Alternative 3 on Each Species Evaluated

### RCW:

Direct Effects and Their Significance: Human and canine disturbances which can affect this species are likely to be insignificant.

Indirect Effects and Their Significance: None.

Cumulative Effects and Their Significance: Alternative 3 probably will produce negligible human and canine disturbances thereby enhancing ecosystem quality which will benefit this species. No adverse cumulative effects are likely to occur.

Possible conflicts between Alternative 3 & the objectives of federal, regional, state & local land use plans, policies & controls in place for the project or action area: No conflicts will occur between Alternative 3 and the current objectives of federal, regional, state, or local land-use plans, policies and controls in place for the project or action area. No incidental take of this species will likely occur.

### Louisiana Black Bear:

Direct Effects and Their Significance: Alternative 3 will reduce potential human and canine disturbances which can affect transient members, if any, of this species on the Forest. No adverse direct effects will likely occur.

Indirect Effects and Their Significance: None.

Cumulative Effects and Their Significance: Alternative 3 will reduce potential human and canine disturbances for transient members of this species, if any, thereby enhancing ecosystem quality which will benefit this species. No adverse cumulative effects will likely occur.

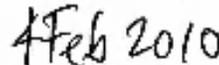
Possible conflicts between Alternative 3 & the objectives of federal, regional, state & local land use plans, policies & controls in place for the project or action area: No conflicts will occur between Alternative 3 and the current objectives of federal, regional, state, or local land-use plans, policies and controls in place for the project or action area. No incidental take of this species will likely occur.

13. Determination of Effect for Alternative 3

RCW: Alternative 3 is not likely to adversely affect the Red-cockaded Woodpecker.  
Louisiana Black Bear: Alternative 3 is not likely to adversely affect the Louisiana Black Bear.



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Kisatchie National Forest Wildlife Biologist  
USDA Forest Service  
The Wildlife Society-Certified Wildlife Biologist



Date

References

Black Bear Conservation Coalition. 2009<sup>1</sup>. website: About bears -- ecology.

Black Bear Conservation Coalition. 2009<sup>2</sup>. website: About bears -- ecology -- distribution & status -- Louisiana.

Revised Land and Resource Management Plan of Kisatchie National Forest. August 1999. USDA Forest Service, Southern Region, Pineville, LA. 229pp.

### 7.3 Appendix C: Rare Species on KNF

Type	Class / Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	USESA Ranking (Sept 2009) <sup>1</sup>	Global Rank <sup>2</sup>	State Rank <sup>3</sup>	R8 RF Ranking (Apr 2008) <sup>4</sup>
Animal	Bird	Red-cockaded Woodpecker	Picoides borealis	E	G3	S2	n/a
Animal	Mammal	Louisiana Black Bear	Ursus americanus luteolus	T	G5T2	S2	n/a
Animal	Mollusk	Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel	Margaritifera hembeli	T	G1	S1	n/a
Plant	Caryophyllaceae	Earth Fruit	Geocarpon minimum	T	G2	S1	n/a
Animal	Reptile	American Alligator	Alligator mississippiensis	TSA			n/a
Animal	Reptile	Louisiana pine snake	Pituophis melanoleucus ruthveni	Candidate	G3Q	S2S3	n/a
Animal	Bird	Bachman's sparrow	Aimophila aestivalis	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Animal	Mammal	Rafinesque's big-eared bat	Corynorhinus rafinesquii	n/a	G3G4		Sensitive
Animal	Mammal	Southeastern myotis	Myotis austroriparius	n/a	G3G4		Sensitive
Animal	Amphibian	Louisiana slimy salamander	Plethodon kisatchie	n/a	G3G4Q	S1S2	Sensitive
Animal	Bird	Bald eagle	Haliaeetus leucocephalus	n/a	G5	S2N,S3B	Sensitive
Plant	Orchidaceae	Giant Orchid	Pteroglossaspis ecristata (=Eulophia ecristata)	n/a	G2G3	S2	Sensitive
Plant	Rosaceae	Incised agrimony	Agrimonia incisa	n/a	G3		Sensitive
Plant	Apocynaceae	Louisiana bluestar	Amsonia ludoviciana	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Plant	Cyperaceae	Cypress-knee sedge	Carex decomposita	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Plant	Cyperaceae	Mohlenbrock's Umbrella-sedge	Cyperus grayioides	n/a	G3	S1	Sensitive
Plant	Orchidaceae	Southern Lady's slipper	Cypripedium kentuckiense	n/a	G3	S1	Sensitive
Plant	Eriocaulaceae	Pineland bogbutton	Lachnocaulon digynum	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Plant	Asteraceae	Slender gay feather	Liatris tenuis	n/a	G3	S1	Sensitive
Plant	Asteraceae	Broadleaf Barbara's buttons	Marshallia trinervia	n/a	G3	S1	Sensitive

Type	Class / Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	USESA Ranking (Sept 2009) <sup>1</sup>	Global Rank <sup>2</sup>	State Rank <sup>3</sup>	R8 RF Ranking (Apr 2008) <sup>4</sup>
Plant	Asteraceae	Barbed rattlesnakeroot	<i>Prenanthes barbata</i>	n/a	G3	S2	Sensitive
Plant	Cyperaceae	Large beakrush	<i>Rhynchospora macra</i>	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Plant	Asteraceae	Sabine coneflower	<i>Rudbeckia scabrifolia</i>	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Plant	Liliaceae	Texas sunnybell	<i>Schoenolirion wrightii</i>	n/a	G3	S2	Sensitive
Plant	Schisandraceae	Bay starvine	<i>Schisandra glabra</i>	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Plant	Poaceae	Carolina fluffgrass	<i>Tridens carolinianus</i>	n/a	G3	S2	Sensitive
Plant	Xyridaceae	Drummond's yelloweyed grass	<i>Xyris drummondii</i>	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Plant	Xyridaceae	Harper's yellow-eyed grass	<i>Xyris scabrifolia</i>	n/a	G3	S2	Sensitive
Plant	Orchidaceae	Yellow fringeless orchid	<i>Platanthera integra</i>	n/a	G3G4	S3	Sensitive
Animal	Mollusk	Louisiana pigtoe	<i>Pleurobema riddellii</i>	n/a	G1G2	S1S2	Sensitive
Animal	Mollusk	Texas heelsplitter	<i>Potamilus amphichaenus</i>	n/a	G1G2	SH	Sensitive
Animal	Crustacean	Ouachita fencing crayfish	<i>Faxonella creaseri</i>	n/a	G2	S2	Sensitive
Animal	Crustacean	Calcasieu painted crayfish	<i>Orconectes blacki</i>	n/a	G2	S2	Sensitive
Animal	Crustacean	Kisatchie painted crayfish	<i>Orconectes maletae</i>	n/a	G2	S2	Sensitive
Animal	Mollusk	Texas pigtoe	<i>Fusconaia askewi</i>	n/a	G2		Sensitive
Animal	Insect	Schoolhouse Springs leuctran stonefly	<i>Leuctra szczytkoi</i>	n/a	G2	S2	Sensitive
Animal	Mollusk	Sandbank pocketbook	<i>Lampsilis satura</i>	n/a	G2	S2	Sensitive
Animal	Mollusk	Southern hickorynut	<i>Obovaria jacksoniana</i>	n/a	G2	S1S2	Sensitive
Animal	Crustacean	Teche painted crayfish	<i>Orconectes hathawayi</i>	n/a	G3	S3	Sensitive
Animal	Mollusk	Louisiana fatmucket	<i>Lampsilis hydiana</i>	n/a	G3		Sensitive
Animal	Crustacean	Free State Crayfish	<i>Procambarus kensleyi</i>	n/a	G3		Sensitive
Animal	Fish	Western sand darter	<i>Ammocrypta clara</i>	n/a	G3	S2	Sensitive
Animal	Fish	Bluehead shiner	<i>Notropis hubbsi</i>	n/a	G3	S2	Sensitive
Animal	Mollusk	Southern creekmussel	<i>Strophitus subvexus</i>	n/a	G3	S1	Sensitive
Animal	Fish	Blue sucker	<i>Cycleptus elongatus</i>	n/a	G3G4	S2S3	Sensitive
Animal	Fish	Sabine shiner	<i>Notropis sabiniae</i>	n/a	G4	S2S3	Sensitive

Type	Class / Family	Common Name	Scientific Name	USES Ranking (Sept 2009) <sup>1</sup>	Global Rank <sup>2</sup>	State Rank <sup>3</sup>	R8 RF Ranking (Apr 2008) <sup>4</sup>
Animal	Crustacean	Sabine fencing crayfish	Faxonella beyeri	n/a	G4	S1S2	Sensitive

<sup>1</sup>US Endangered Species Act ranking: based on USFWS letter from Lafayette Field Office, Louisiana; dated September 24, 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Global Rank explanations:

G1 = critically imperiled globally because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer known extant populations) or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extinction

G2 = imperiled globally because of rarity (6 to 20 known extant populations) or because of some factor(s) making it very vulnerable to extinction throughout its range

G3 = either very rare and local throughout its range or found locally (even abundantly at some of its locations) in a restricted range (e.g., a single physiographic region) or because of other factors making it vulnerable to extinction throughout its range (21 to 100 known extant populations)

G4 = apparently secure globally, though it may be quite rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery (100 to 1000 known extant populations)

G5 = demonstrably secure globally, although it may be quite rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery (1000+ known extant populations)

GH = of historical occurrence throughout its range; i.e., formerly part of the established biota, with the possibility that it may be rediscovered (e.g., Bachman's Warbler)

GU = possibly in peril range-wide, but status uncertain; need more information

G? = rank uncertain. Or a range (e.g., G3G5) delineates the limits of uncertainty

GQ = uncertain taxonomic status

GX = believed to be extinct throughout its range (e.g., Passenger Pigeon) with virtually no likelihood that it will be rediscovered

<sup>3</sup>State Rank explanations:

S1 = critically imperiled in Louisiana because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer known extant populations) or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extirpation

S2 = imperiled in Louisiana because of rarity (6 to 20 known extant populations) or because of some factor(s) making it very vulnerable to extirpation

S3 = rare and local throughout the state or found locally (even abundantly at some of its locations) in a restricted region of the state, or because of other factors making it vulnerable to extirpation (21 to 100 known extant populations)

S4 = apparently secure in Louisiana with many occurrences (100 to 1000 known extant populations)

S5 = demonstrably secure in Louisiana (1000+ known extant populations)

(B or N may be used as qualifier of numeric ranks and indicating whether the occurrence is breeding or nonbreeding)

SA = accidental in Louisiana, including species (usually birds or butterflies) recorded once or twice or only at great intervals hundreds or even thousands of miles outside their usual range

SH = of historical occurrence in Louisiana, but no recent records verified within the last 20 years; formerly part of the established biota, possibly still persisting

SR = reported from Louisiana, but without conclusive evidence to accept or reject the report

SU = possibly in peril in Louisiana, but status uncertain; need more information

SX = believed to be extirpated from Louisiana

SZ = transient species in which no specific consistent area of occurrence is identifiable

<sup>4</sup>USDA Forest Service Region 8 Regional Forester's "Sensitive" Species List - last revised in April 2008.

<sup>5</sup>Not Considered in this EA because:

A = aquatic species largely will be unaffected by activities in this proposal.

B = plant species largely will be unaffected by activities in this proposal.

C = this species is mostly inactive during winter.

D = individuals of this species will benefit by the elimination of disturbances caused by deer hunting with dogs

## 7.4 **Appendix D: Response to Public Comments**

The KNF's proposal to prohibit dog-deer hunting was listed in the *Schedule of Proposed Actions* on the Forest's website beginning August 2009. The scoping proposal letter was mailed to approximately 100 public contacts and the notice was placed in five newspapers of record in August 2009. News releases followed requesting comments on the Forest's proposal. Another scoping letter, notice, and news release, with additional information about respondents' privacy rights under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), were sent out in September 2009. Both scoping requests asked for comment responses by October 1, 2009. The public could respond to the proposal by letter, telephone, or email.

The KNF interdisciplinary team (IDT) used a process called content summary analysis to gather and summarize comments. The first step taken was to read and number each email, individual/form letter, or petition. Each number was then entered into a spreadsheet, along with a summary or quotation characterizing comment(s) or overall content. The numbered list of responses served as an index linking the individual/form letters, emails, and petitions to a list of content summary groups. As new letters and emails came in, new responses were compared to the ongoing list of content groups and either assigned to one or more of these groups or added as a new group.

From September through October 2009 the KNF IDT, along with its Regional Office in Atlanta, worked to identify concerns, clarify issues, and explore the need for alternatives.

By October of 2009, the Forest had received 1,237 responses. Of these, 320 indicated some degree of support for the proposal while 917 indicated little or no support. 162 of the supportive responses were from 4 different form letters. 834 of the opposing ones were from 3 different form letters.

Comments spanned the spectrum from not wanting any form of hunting with dogs to increasing the number of days for dog-deer hunting. Responses that agreed with the need for the proposal said that this method of hunting was disruptive to both their own enjoyment of the Forest and to the habitat conditions for deer. Many stated personal experiences where hunter's dogs were either lost or left behind and became nuisances to adjacent landowners, other hunters (including other dog-deer hunters), and other wildlife. Opposing comments expressed the desire to continue the practice because it is a traditional form of hunting and new limitations on public hunting of public lands are unnecessary and undesirable.

Although there were many responses both for and against the proposal, only those that opposed the elimination of dog-deer hunting on the Forest were considered to be disputes (issues) with the proposal. Those responses in support of the proposal served to bolster the need and were not treated as issues.

The Forest Service separated the issues into two groups: significant and non-significant issues. Significant issues were defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action. Non-significant issues were identified as those: 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence.

The Forest Service identified two significant issues during scoping. These issues included:

- impacts on recreation and other land uses
- social and economic impacts

The Forest Service responded to these two issues by developing alternative 3. This alternative is a modification of the Forest Service's initial proposal. It responds to reducing ongoing conflicts between dog-deer hunters and other Forest users by reducing the amount of area prohibited to hunt deer with dogs on the KNF. It provides dog-deer hunters some areas that were either suggested during the public comment period, or were chosen by the Forest Service because there appeared to be fewer interfaces with private landowners, lessees, and specially protected areas. It provides other Forest users more area than current to recreate outside of dog-deer hunting areas. Alternatives 1 and 2 respond respectively to those who wanted deer-dog hunting to continue as in the past, or to those who wish to see the practice eliminated on the entire KNF.

Related issues or concerns (or non-significant issues) were not used to generate alternatives, but because they generate some conflict, were used to help prescribe management requirements, or analyze environmental effects. These related concerns included:

- the biological needs for deer
- public safety
- the apparent disparity with state/private land use policies

The effects relating to each of these concerns were analyzed in detail for all three alternatives in Chapter 3 of the EA.

As mentioned above, several responses to scoping suggested leaving some areas open to dog-deer hunting. The areas suggested were varied and chosen based on an individual's knowledge of an area, and as an attempt to ease ongoing conflicts among Forest users. Although it is not exactly the same as any of the varied arrangements suggested, Alternative 3 incorporates these suggestions on a Forest-wide basis. Therefore, each specific arrangement of alternate dog-deer hunt areas was not analyzed in detail as a separate alternative.

Other responses to scoping suggested using controls on how dog-deer hunting was conducted in order to mitigate some of the effects that they felt were causing

problems. Some suggestions included using a permit system, identification collars for dogs, shotguns-only, antler restrictions, beagles-only, increased fines, restricted hours, and weekend-only hunts. All of these ideas were taken into consideration, however the FS felt that their overall influence on effects to significant issues were relatively minor or would be similar to those already described for the other 3 alternatives.

Much of the disagreement with allowing or not allowing dog-deer hunting on the KNF was based on social values, beliefs, and attitudes (VBA). Since it is not the Forest Service's duty to presume what is "right" in terms of VBA, we did attempt to capture the range of VBA issues and look at how each alternative might affect them. This is presented in table form as a social issue matrix and social effects matrices (Appendix E).

**7.5 Appendix E: Social Issues and Effects Matrices**

The following Social Issues Matrix is based on the content analysis done on the nearly 2,000 response letters and emails received during public scoping for the original FS proposal.

**Social Issues Matrix**

Significant Issue	Stakeholder	Stakeholder Position	Rationale for Position	Unit of Measure	Actions to Address
Prohibiting dog-deer (DD) hunting on the Forest would eliminate a Louisiana tradition	DD hunters	Want to see the tradition protected.	Lifestyle and values that are important would be lost. Once gone, it will never return.	Number of days/year open for DD hunting	Keep areas for DD hunting
	Non-DD hunters	Don't see it as a tradition needing protection	Today's methods are not the traditional methods; DD hunts are too "high-tech" (unfair to game)	Description of today's DD hunting methods	Make sure hunts provide fair chase
Prohibiting DD hunting would lessen conflicts with other hunters and landowners	DD hunters	Want to keep DD hunting the same or increase the time allowed	DD hunting does not create any more conflicts than other forms of recreation; conflicts occur any time different users interact and should be expected	Number of violations written during DD season	Keep or increase DD hunting opportunity
	Other hunters	Either don't care or want to see DD hunting curtailed	Conflicts sometime occur when still hunters and DD hunters occupy the same area; still hunting and dog hunting are incompatible	Number of day/year when DD hunting and still hunting overlap; acres on Forest where overlap occurs	Reduce overlap of the different hunting methods; set a maximum number of days each year
	Private landowners	Want to see DD hunting eliminated or reduced	DD hunting techniques create opportunities for trespass, vandalism, public safety concerns	Number of confrontations & complaints; miles of landline	Reduce interface of DD hunt areas with private lands; set a maximum number

				exposed to DD hunting; miles of roads within DD hunt area	of days each year
Prohibiting DD hunting would be too restrictive, be biased toward DD hunting, and displace DD hunters to MS.	DD hunters	Want to keep DD hunting on the KNF; see prohibition as bias; feel it would displace LA hunters to MS	The government is “out of touch” with people; hunters in MS don’t want increase expected if LA hunters have to go to MS to DD hunt	Description of effects on expectations and values; description of effects to displaced DD hunters	Maintain opportunities to experience a wide variety of recreational uses
	Non-DD hunters	The government needs to set more controls on public lands; DD hunters can hunt on private lands or leases	DD hunting encroaches on the rights of non-DD hunters; other public lands prohibit it; there are not enough DD hunters to warrant the need	Non-KNF areas available to the public	Supply this use elsewhere;set a maximum number of days each year

The following Social Effects Matrices show the outcome expected for each alternative considered in detail. They represent further development of the information in the Social Impact Matrix shown above, and are used to describe the social effects in the EA.

**Social Effects Matrices**

Issue Statement>	Issue – Would prohibiting dog-deer (DD) hunting on the Forest eliminate a desired Louisiana tradition?		
Stakeholders >	DD Hunters	Private Landowners	Other hunters/recreationists
<b>Alt 1 - No Action:</b> No change in current direction. State would still set seasons, taking into account recommendations of KNF. All KNF lands available to hunt during the 2009-2010 season would remain open to DD hunting.	Tradition would continue. DD hunter lifestyle and values would be maintained.	The importance of maintaining the DD tradition would be recognized over their reluctance for the tradition. Landowners who don’t share similar lifestyle and values as DD hunters would continue to be critical of the need to maintain the tradition.	The importance of maintaining the DD tradition would be recognized over their reluctance for the tradition. Recreationists who don’t share similar lifestyle and values would continue to be critical of the need to maintain the tradition. Some still-hunters would be critical of the need to maintain the tradition.
<b>Alt 2 – Proposed Action:</b> No lands on the KNF	Tradition would not continue. DD hunters’ expressed need to maintain	Tradition would not continue. Landowners who don’t share similar	Tradition would not continue. Recreationists who don’t share similar

would be available for DD hunting	traditional lifestyle and values would not be endorsed.	lifestyle and values as DD hunters would not experience a loss of the tradition.	lifestyle and values as DD hunters would be supportive. Some still-hunters would be satisfied by reduction in disturbances.
<b>Alt 3 – Designated Dog-deer Hunting Areas:</b> Portions of the KNF would remain open for DD hunting for a maximum of 9 days per year	Tradition would continue but on less area than before. DD hunter lifestyle and values would be maintained.	Tradition would continue but on less area than before. Landowners who don't share similar lifestyle and values as DD hunters would be supportive as long as DD hunt areas were not adjacent to their lands.	Tradition would continue but on less area than before. Recreationists who don't share similar lifestyle and values as DD hunters would be supportive as long as DD hunt areas were not occurring on areas where they recreate. Some still-hunters would be bothered if continued endorsement of affected areas they hunt.

Issue Statement>	<b>Issue – Would prohibiting DD hunting lessen conflicts with other landowners, hunters, and recreationists?</b>		
Stakeholders >	<b>DD Hunters</b>	<b>Private Landowners</b>	<b>Other hunters/recreationists</b>
<b>Alt 1 - No Action:</b> No change in current direction. State would still set seasons, taking into account recommendations of KNF. All KNF lands available to hunt during the 2009-2010 season would remain open to DD hunting.	Conflicts, considered minor, would remain the same.	Conflicts, considered major, would remain the same.	Conflicts, considered major by some, would remain the same.
<b>Alt 2 – Proposed Action:</b> No lands on the KNF would be available for DD hunting	Conflicts, considered minor, would lessen.	Conflicts, considered major, would lessen.	Conflicts, considered major by some, would lessen
<b>Alt 3 – Designated Dog-deer Hunting Areas:</b> Portions of the KNF would remain open for DD hunting for a maximum of 9 days per year	Conflicts, considered minor, would lessen.	Conflicts, considered major, would continue for landowners within the designated DD hunting areas, but lessen for others.	Conflicts, considered major by some, would continue for those who recreate within the designated DD hunting areas, but lessen for others.

Issue Statement>	<b>Issue – Would prohibiting DD hunting be too restrictive, biased, and displace hunters?</b>		
Stakeholders >	<b>DD Hunters</b>	<b>Private Landowners</b>	<b>Other hunters/recreationists</b>
<b>Alt 1- No Action:</b> No change in current direction. State would still	Existing conditions would remain the same. Some DD hunters would continue to believe existing regulations	Existing conditions would remain the same. Most landowners would continue to believe existing regulations not	Existing conditions would remain the same. Some recreationists would continue to believe existing regulations

<p>set seasons, taking into account recommendations of KNF. All KNF lands available to hunt during the 2009-2010 season would remain open to DD hunting.</p>	<p>too restrictive and biased.</p>	<p>restrictive enough.</p>	<p>not restrictive enough.</p>
<p><b>Alt 2 – Proposed Action:</b> No lands on the KNF would be available for DD hunting</p>	<p>Most DD hunters would believe existing regulations are too restrictive and biased. Many MS hunters would expect LA DD hunters to move into MS</p>	<p>Most private landowners would consider this the best approach to protect their private rights. They would not see it as unduly restrictive or biased, since other public lands do not allow DD hunting. Displacement would be minor, since DD hunters do not represent a group large enough to affect hunting in MS</p>	<p>Many recreationists and some still-hunters would consider this the best approach to preserve a pleasant recreational experience. They would not see it as unduly restrictive or biased, since other public lands do not allow DD hunting. Displacement would be minor, since DD hunters do not represent a group large enough to affect hunting in MS</p>
<p><b>Alt 3 – Designated Dog-deer Hunting Areas:</b> Portions of the KNF would remain open for DD hunting for a maximum of 9 days per year</p>	<p>Many DD hunters would still believe existing regulations are too restrictive and biased. Some MS hunters would still expect LA DD hunters to move into MS</p>	<p>Some private landowners would consider this an adequate compromise to protect their private rights. They would not see it as unduly restrictive or biased. Those with lands within the designated DD hunting areas would continue to believe that government controls are inadequate. Displacement would be minor, since DD hunters do not represent a group large enough to affect hunting in MS</p>	<p>Many recreationists and some still-hunters would consider this an adequate compromise to maintain a pleasant recreational experience. They would not see it as unduly restrictive or biased. Those who recreate within the designated DD hunting areas would continue to believe that government controls are inadequate. Displacement would be minor, since DD hunters do not represent a group large enough to affect hunting in MS</p>

## 7.6 Appendix F: North Louisiana v. Statewide Economic

### Characteristics

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTIC	North Louisiana - December 2005	State of Louisiana - December 2005
<b>INCOME AND BENEFITS (IN 2005 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)</b>		
<b>Total households</b>	401,663	1,448,443
Less than \$10,000	14.5%	12.5%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	11.8%	8.6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	13.6%	14.0%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	10.9%	12.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	15.8%	14.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	15.7%	16.1%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.2%	10.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	6.5%	7.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1.6%	2.2%
\$200,000 or more	1.4%	1.9%
Median household income (dollars)	34,126	37,085
Mean household income (dollars)	46,597	51,960
With earnings	75.6%	78.2%
Mean earnings (dollars)	48,376	53,505
With Social Security	29.2%	28.9%
Mean Social Security income (dollars)	11,691	12,273
With retirement income	18.8%	17.1%
Mean retirement income (dollars)	14,552	16,048
With Supplemental Security Income	7.0%	5.4%
Mean Supplemental Security Income (dollars)	6,283	6,359
With cash public assistance income	1.3%	2.6%
Mean cash public assistance income (dollars)	3,319	2,346
With Food Stamp benefits in the past 12 months	16.3%	27.1%
<b>Families</b>	269,703	993,955
Less than \$10,000	8.8%	7.3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	8.2%	5.9%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	12.1%	12.5%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	11.8%	12.2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	17.6%	15.3%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	18.3%	18.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	10.7%	12.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	8.6%	10.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2.1%	2.6%
\$200,000 or more	1.6%	2.4%

Median family income (dollars)	41,908	46,168
Mean family income (dollars)	54,806	60,813
Per capita income (dollars)	18,894	20,401
<b>Nonfamily households</b>	131,960	454,488
Median nonfamily income (dollars)	16,480	19,319
Mean nonfamily income (dollars)	28,169	30,072
<b>Median earnings:</b>	21,494	22,737
Male full-time, year-round workers (dollars)	37,162	40,611
Female full-time, year-round workers (dollars)	24,796	26,319
<b>PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES AND PEOPLE WHOSE INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS IS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL</b>		
All families	17.9	14.5
With related children under 18 years	26.9	22.4
Married couple families	8.5	6.7
Families with female householder, no husband present	40.9	35.8
All people	22.4	18.8
Under 18 years	30.7	26.3
Related children under 18 years	30.1	25.9
18 years and over	19.4	16.2
18 to 64 years	20.2	16.7
65 years and over	15.7	14.1
People in families	20.2	16.6
Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	35.9	33.5

<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>		
<b>Population 16 years and over</b>	752,524	2,849,646
In labor force	61.0%	61.3%
Civilian labor force	60.1%	60.8%
Employed	54.3%	55.1%
Unemployed	5.9%	5.7%
Armed Forces	0.9%	0.5%
Not in labor force	39.0%	38.7%
<b>Civilian labor force</b>	452,525	1,732,535
Unemployed (percent)	9.7	9.4
<b>Females 16 years and over</b>	409,747	1,531,379
In labor force	56.0%	55.3%
Civilian labor force	55.9%	55.3%
Employed	50.6%	49.8%
<b>COMMUTING TO WORK</b>		
<b>Workers 16 years and over</b>	403,088	1,514,864
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	82.9%	82.0%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	10.7%	11.0%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	21.6	25.0
<b>Employed civilian population 16 years and over</b>	408,444	1,569,885
<b>OCCUPATION</b>		
Management, professional, and related occupations	28.9%	31.2%

Service occupations	19.3%	17.6%
Sales and office occupations	27.0%	26.0%
Construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupations	9.8%	11.6%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	14.0%	12.7%
<b>INDUSTRY</b>		
Construction	6.0%	8.0%
Manufacturing	10.0%	9.9%
Wholesale trade	2.8%	3.2%
Retail trade	12.1%	11.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4.8%	4.9%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5.6%	6.0%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	6.3%	7.8%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	28.2%	23.4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	7.6%	8.2%
Other services (except public administration)	4.5%	5.0%
Public administration	5.6%	5.9%
<b>CLASS OF WORKER</b>		
Private wage and salary workers	74.8%	76.7%
Government workers	18.9%	17.0%
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business and unpaid family workers	6.4%	6.3%

\*Source: US Census Bureau State & County QuickFacts

**7.7 Appendix G: USFWS Letter of Concurrence**



## United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
646 Cajundome Blvd.  
Suite 400  
Lafayette, Louisiana 70506



February 22, 2010

Mr. Michael L. Balboni  
Forest Supervisor  
Kisatchie National Forest  
2500 Shreveport Hwy.  
Pineville, LA 71360

Dear Mr. Balboni:

Please reference your February 4, 2010, letter and enclosed 2010 Biological Assessment (BA) for Deer-Hunting with Dogs on Kisatchie National Forest (KNF). The stated objectives of the BA are to do the following: (1) ensure that U.S. Forest Service actions do not contribute to the federal listing of any animal species; (2) comply with requirements of the Endangered Species Act; and (3) provide a process and standard to ensure endangered, threatened, and proposed species receive full consideration in the decision-making process. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the BA and offers the following comments in accordance with provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

The proposed project area is the entire KNF, which is in central and northern Louisiana: Caney Ranger District (RD) in Claiborne and Webster Parishes, LA; 32,354 acres; Catahoula RD (in Grant, Rapides, and Winn Parishes, LA; 121,633 acres); Calcasieu RD, Evangeline Unit and Vernon Unit (in Rapides and Vernon Parishes, LA; 183,035 acres); Kisatchie RD (in Natchitoches Parish, LA; 102,625 acres); and Winn RD (in Grant, Natchitoches, and Winn Parishes, LA; 164,614 acres).

The Forest Service conducted a BA to evaluate whether changes should be made to the existing use of dogs to hunt deer on the KNF, or if the practice should be prohibited entirely. The BA considers three alternatives: the no-action alternative (Alternative 1); the proposed action, preferred alternative (Alternative 2); and an alternative to the proposed action (Alternative 3). The no-action alternative serves to establish baseline conditions and represents the current condition for dog-deer hunting on the KNF. Under the no-action, there would be no change made to existing use of dogs for deer hunting, and there would be no amendment to the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Kisatchie National Forest ((Revised Forest Plan) 1999). The use of dogs to hunt deer on the KNF would be determined each year through consultations with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). On the KNF, deer hunting with dogs currently is allowed on 368,684 acres out of a total of 604,278 acres (Catahoula RD on



78,737 acres, Evangeline Unit on 84,688 acres, Kisatchie RD on 60,944 acres, Winn RD on 144,355 acres, Vernon Unit on 0 acres, and Caney RD on 0 acres). There is a need for implementation of an action alternative (Alternative 2 or Alternative 3) to reduce impacts to nearby landowners or other forest users that result from the current level of deer-dog hunting on the KNF. The no-action alternative is not a viable alternative because it does not address the need. Therefore, the Forest Service will decide to implement one of the two action alternatives. According to the BA, the alternatives evaluated refer specifically to deer-dog hunting and would have no effect on still-hunting for deer or other kinds of hunting with dogs; such as for squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, or game bird hunting.

The proposed action, Alternative 2, is the preferred alternative. Under this alternative, the use of dogs to hunt deer would be prohibited on the entire KNF. The Revised Forest Plan (1999) would be amended to reflect the new prohibition and would state the following: "Prohibit use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest. Other kinds of hunting with dogs are allowed throughout the Forest (in accordance with state hunting regulations) unless site-specific management direction prohibits the use (such as on administrative sites and the National Wildlife Preserves)."

Alternative 3 would prohibit use of dogs to hunt deer on the KNF except in designated areas during a designated season. Deer-dog hunting would be allowed on 109,688 acres out of a total of 604,278 acres (Catahoula RD on 40,238 acres, Evangeline Unit on 29,096 acres, Kisatchie RD on 10,825 acres, Winn RD on 29,529 acres, Vernon Unit on 0 acres, and Caney RD on 0 acres). The Revised Forest Plan (1999) would be amended to reflect the new restrictions on deer-dog hunting and would state the following: "Prohibit use of dogs to hunt deer on the Forest except in areas specifically designated open to dog-deer hunting. Areas open to dog-deer hunting are shown in the map attachments to Amendment 8 of the Forest Plan. A maximum of 9 consecutive days that contain 2 weekends would be allowed each year. Other kinds of hunting with dogs are allowed throughout the Forest (in accordance with state hunting regulations) unless site-specific management direction prohibits the use (such as on administrative sites and the National Wildlife Preserves)."

The BA initially considered the potential for impacts from implementation of the action alternatives to the following species, but eliminated from detailed analysis due to a determination of "no effect": the Louisiana Pearlscale Mussel (*Margaritifera hembeli*), listed by the Service as threatened on September 24, 1993 (58 Federal Register 49935-49937), which is currently found on Catahoula District and Evangeline Unit; the Earth Fruit (*Geocarpon minimum*), listed by Service as threatened on June 16, 1987, which is currently found on Winn District; and the Louisiana Pine Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus ruthveni*) a candidate species for listing, which is currently found on Vernon Unit, Kisatchie District, and Winn District.

The BA analyzed in detail the potential for the action alternatives to impact the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW, *Picoides borealis*) listed as endangered in 1970 (35 Federal Register 16047), which is currently found on Catahoula District, Evangeline Unit, Vernon Unit, Kisatchie District, and Winn District; and the Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*), listed as threatened in 1992, which does not reside on the KNF but occurs occasionally as a transient.

In the Revised Forest Plan (1999), RCW Habitat Management Areas (HMA) were established on Catahoula RD (73,000 acres), Evangeline Unit (46,400 acres), Vernon Unit (63,800 acres), Kisatchie RD (60,200 acres), and Winn RD (59,400 pine and pine-hardwood acres).

Implementation of either Alternative 2 or Alternative 3 would reduce the potential for human and canine disturbances to RCWs and to Louisiana black bears, resulting from deer-dog hunting, as compared to the no-action alternative (baseline condition). No adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur to RCWs or their habitat or to transient Louisiana black bears as a result of implementation of Alternative 2 or Alternative 3. Based on the information given, the Service concurs with your determination that implementation of Alternative 2 (the preferred alternative) is "not likely to adversely affect" RCWs or Louisiana black bears. We also concur that implementation of Alternative 3 is "not likely to adversely affect" RCWs or Louisiana black bears. No further consultation on these species is necessary for the current scope of this proposed project.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the BA of the proposed project and provide comment under Section 7 of the ESA. Should you have any further questions, please contact Monica Sikes (337/291-3118) of this office.

Sincerely,



James F. Boggs  
Supervisor  
Lafayette Field Office

REFERENCES:

Biological Assessment for Deer-Hunting with Dogs on Kisatchie National Forest. February 2010. USDA Forest Service, Southern Region, Pineville, LA. 10pp.

Revised Land and Resource Management Plan of Kisatchie National Forest. August 1999. USDA Forest Service, Southern Region, Pineville, LA. 229pp.