

JEAN LAFITTE

National Historical Park and Preserve

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE No. 42

DIRECT REDUCTION OF NUTRIA

BACKGROUND

Section 905 of Public Law 95-625 states that "Within the Barataria Marsh Unit, the Secretary shall permit hunting, fishing (including commercial fishing), and trapping in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws..." This allows for the continuation of "traditional uses" including the trapping of furbearing animals within the Barataria Preserve Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve.

A Trapping Management Plan was approved and implemented in October 1990 to regulate trapping activities and to control nutria (*Myocaster coypus*), a non-native furbearer. The Plan set up a three tiered approach to nutria population control: permit trapping leases, contract trapping, and direct reduction. The recommended take of nutria is 3,000 - 5,000 animals per year to reduce the likelihood of "eat-outs" and competition with native wildlife. Data indicates that the park has not met nutria reduction goals through traditional trapping, presenting the potential for greater damage to the resource and the continued proliferation of an exotic species. The park will undertake a direct reduction program to control nutria populations.

PREPARATION

Notification

- The opportunity for public comment was provided during preparation of the Trapping Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. No further public notice is required, unless temporary closures are enacted to facilitate direct reduction due to special circumstances. In the event of a temporary closure, public notice will be given in the Federal Register.
- Trappers holding Special Use Permits will be notified through a written condition attached to the permit that a Direct Reduction Program for the control of nutria is in effect.
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office will be notified in writing that a Direct Reduction Program for the control of nutria is in effect.

Training

- Park protection and resource management personnel will complete the Direct Reduction Firearms Qualification Course (Appendix A) and be certified once a year, preferably in the Fall.

IMPLEMENTATION

Field Activities

The park will employ a shoot-on-site program for nutria reduction to be carried out by qualified park protection and resource management staff. A .22 caliber rifle will be available for nutria control as qualified staff carry out various duties (ie. boat patrols) in the Barataria Preserve. Staff will have the discretion to shoot nutria under the following conditions:

- The target animal is positively identified as a nutria.
- Visitors are not within sight of the nutria or the shooter.
- The sight-line is safe and does not cross heavy vegetation, roads, trails, or waterways. No shots will be fired in the direction of dwellings or structures.
- No shots will be fired toward open water.
- Shooting will not disrupt visitor activities, permitted activities, or park operations.

Nutria carcasses will be left in place in non-visitor use areas. In visitor use areas, staff will remove the carcasses to more remote areas.

Documentation

A Nutria Direct Reduction Log (Appendix B) will be completed monthly to report the number of nutria dispatched and the success ratio. The Barataria Preserve Unit Manager will forward the completed log to the Resource Management Division each month.

[Chris - some sort of standard form to report ammo discharged??? CIRS report or anything?]

Evaluation

Resource damage due to nutria eat-outs will be monitored by park staff. If damage appears to be severe or spreading, nutria experts will be called in to evaluate the success of the park's Nutria Direct Reduction Plan and make recommendations for management action.

Appendix A

Direct Reduction Firearms Qualification Course Outline [Chris]

Appendix B

Nutria Direct Reduction Log

(month, year)

Date	Time	Shooter	Location	# Shots	# Dispatched	Notes

$$\frac{\text{# shots}}{\text{# shots}} \times \frac{\text{# dispatched}}{\text{# dispatched}} = \text{success ratio}$$

Barataria Preserve Unit Manager:
Please forward completed log sheet to the JELA Resource Management Division each month.