



Natural Resources

Alabama and Mississippi Resource Management Plan

Jackson Field Office

Geography

Many of the BLM tracts covered by the RMP planning process are located on the Ft. Morgan Peninsula, a narrow peninsula separating Mobile Bay from the Gulf of Mexico on the coast of Alabama. Several of the tracts are located in close proximity to the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and share the same habitat and wildlife as the refuge.

Although it is attached to the Baldwin County mainland, Ft. Morgan Peninsula is a barrier island, similar to the others along the sand-rich lower Atlantic and the northern Gulf coastlines. Their contours and positions change over time, but these landforms are generally made up of primary dunes seaward, secondary dunes behind them, and scrub dunes farther inland.

Geology

Longshore currents travel parallel to the coastline, carrying sand brought from the inner continent. The sand is deposited on the shore by waves (though cyclically removed and leveled during high-water events) and placed farther inland by wind action, building the dune system. Primary dunes are wind-built, with vegetation such as sea oats helping to trap the shifting sand; they are also fleeting, often erased completely during storms. Secondary dunes are more durable, though not permanent; they can be wiped away during severe storms. The scrub dunes, with more vegetation and protected from the main force of a storm by the seaward dunes, are rarely removed unless artificially disturbed. The dunes comprise a dynamic interconnected system.

Vegetation

Most of the BLM administered tracts in this area are coastal sand dune habitats with open sand, partially stabilized fore dunes and fringes of inland scrub habitats. Vegetation on coastal dune habitats is dominated by sea oats; other typical species include beach morning glory, penny wort and railroad vine. Interdunal areas typically support cordgrass, sedges and beach elder. Inland areas are dominated by a canopy of sand or slash pine with shrubs such as yaupon, gallberry, scrub oaks, wax myrtle and saw palmetto.

Wildlife

BLM will coordinate the development of wildlife portions of the Resource Management Plan with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Natural Heritage groups, the

Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge

Established in 1980, the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Located fifty miles due west of Pensacola, FL, and fifty miles southeast of Mobile, AL, the refuge consists of about 6700 acres of coastal lands ranging from constantly changing beach dunes to rolling pine-oak woodlands. The refuge consists of four units on the Ft. Morgan Peninsula and Little Dauphin Island. The refuge was created to serve as a rest-and-rehabilitation landfall for non-game birds migrating south in the fall and north in the spring. It also protects the well-being of native plants and animals, serves as a living laboratory for students and scientists, and provides wildlife-oriented public recreation.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Here on the Fort Morgan Peninsula, coordination with the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge will be a vital part of this process.

Over 370 species of birds have been identified and banded at the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. The area is a key spot for songbirds migrating between North America and points south, offering an important last chance to put on fat reserves or to “refuel” before and after the long flights over water. In addition, the area supports a diverse shorebird population, including several federally listed species, such as the piping plover, listed as threatened and the Least tern, listed as an endangered species.

Mammals found in this area include bobcat, gray and red foxes, the non-native nutria, raccoon, opossum, striped skunk, eastern cottontail, swamp rabbit, gray and fox squirrels, southern flying squirrel, and the nine-banded armadillo. The critically endangered Alabama beach mouse is associated with the sand dunes closest to the Gulf of Mexico, which support stands of sea oats, a principal food source.

Gulf Coast beaches provide important nesting habitat for Atlantic loggerhead sea turtles, as well as occasional green and Kemp’s ridley sea turtles. The refuge has documented at least 15 species of turtles, nine species of lizards, more than 30 species of snakes, and American alligator. The Alabama red-bellied turtle and the Kemp’s ridley sea turtle are listed as Endangered species, while the loggerhead sea turtle and the green sea turtle are listed as threatened species. The loss of nesting beaches due to coastal development and predation has been a major factor in the decline of these marine reptiles.

Among the amphibians, there are oak and southern toads, at least 15 species of frogs, and several species of salamanders.

