

USFWS closes duck hunting leases on La. Delta Plantation in Catahoula Parish

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U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander and U.S. Sen. David Vitter have issued the following statements regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's enforcement of "baiting" laws where unharvested crops were destroyed by Hurricane Gustav.

Vitter and Alexander were recently notified that several Louisiana sportsmen are being denied access to their duck hunting leases by the USFWS after agents declared certain lands leased to duck hunters to be "baited."

The USFWS has forced the affected landowner close the

leases, in particular on the Louisiana Delta Plantation in Catahoula Parish, in response to the threat of federal penalty to themselves and to their client hunters from USFWS agents.

"In no way should our hunters be denied access to their duck leases under this interpretation of 'baiting,'" said Alexander. "I hope the USFWS will take immediate steps to correct this, so that Louisiana sportsmen can enjoy what is left of their duck season. Duck hunting is a tradition that the federal government should never have the authority to jeopardize."

"This interpretation as to the definition of 'baiting' goes be-

yond the intent of the law," said Vitter. "Neither the landowner nor the hunters have engaged in any form of baiting, and the crops in question were plowed under following their destruction during Hurricane Gustav. The USFWS must take the necessary action to ensure that these leases are reopened and the hunters are allowed to close out this year's duck season."

Alexander and Vitter sent a letter to Dale Hall, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, requesting that he allow the affected landowner to open the leases on Louisiana Delta Plantation without fear of incurring federal penalty on themselves or

their client hunters.

Alexander and Vitter also urged that USFWS agents make fair judgments when enforcing the baiting laws in Louisiana where standing, unharvested crops were destroyed by the hurricanes that hit the state this fall.