

Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys  
National Wildlife Refuges  
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# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
22 June 2020

Contact: Andrew Gude  
Cell: 703/622.3896

## Public Notice of Availability for Comment:

### **Draft Compatibility Determination for Field Release of *Pseudophlothrips ichini*, (Thysanoptera: Phlaeothripidae), for Biological Control of Brazilian Peppertree, *Schinus terebinthifolius*.**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is evaluating a proposed use on the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The proposed use is to allow the environmental release of an insect, *Pseudophlothrips ichini* (the common name is “thrips”), (Thysanoptera: Phlaeothripidae), on Refuge lands. Thrips will be used for the biological control of the noxious, invasive-exotic Brazilian Peppertree (BP), *Schinus terebinthifolius*, with the agent (the thrips insect), released directly on the actual invasive BP plants we intend to target. This will occur under a Special Use Permit.

Prior to allowing this use on the Refuge, Federal law requires that the Service first determine that the proposed activity is appropriate and compatible and, if allowed, must be re-evaluated every ten years. A [compatible use](#) is a proposed or existing wildlife-dependent recreational use or any other use of a National Wildlife Refuge that, based on sound professional judgment, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the purposes for which the refuge was established and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission. The Service develops a compatibility determination to facilitate evaluation of proposed uses, including anticipated impacts and stipulations necessary to ensure compatibility. A draft compatibility determination covering the anticipated scope of the activity is currently available for public review and comment.

The National Wildlife Refuge System mission is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. The purposes for establishing the refuges are provided on the first page of the draft compatibility determination.

The Service would like to know what you think of this proposed refuge use. All comments received within 30 days following the date of this notice will be considered in finalizing this compatibility determination. We hope to make a final decision on this proposed use within 14 days following closure of the public comment period.

All comments should be in writing and must be received no later than **24 July 2020**. Comments should specifically articulate how the proposed action would, or would not, materially interfere with or detract from the Refuge purposes or System mission.

Comments should be addressed to:

**Email:**

**Andrew\_Gude@fws.gov; Subject Line: “Thrips Release”, phone (352.493.0238 x224).**

or,

**Mail:**

**“Thrips Release” c/o Andrew Gude, Lower Suwannee NWR, 16450 NW 31<sup>st</sup> Place, Chiefland, FL 32626.**

If commenting via email, please place the words “**Thrips Release**” in the subject line and your comments in the body of the text. Please do not include attachments because they will not be opened due to the potential of computer viruses.

To request a copy of the compatibility determinations, learn the final decision regarding this proposed use, or for more information, contact Refuge Manager Andrew Gude or find it on our website at [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Lower\\_Suwannee/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Lower_Suwannee/).

Copies of the draft compatibility determinations may also be obtained at the refuge office located at 16450 NW 31st Place, Chiefland, FL 32626. To access the office please make an appointment by calling Andrew on his cell phone 703.622.3896.