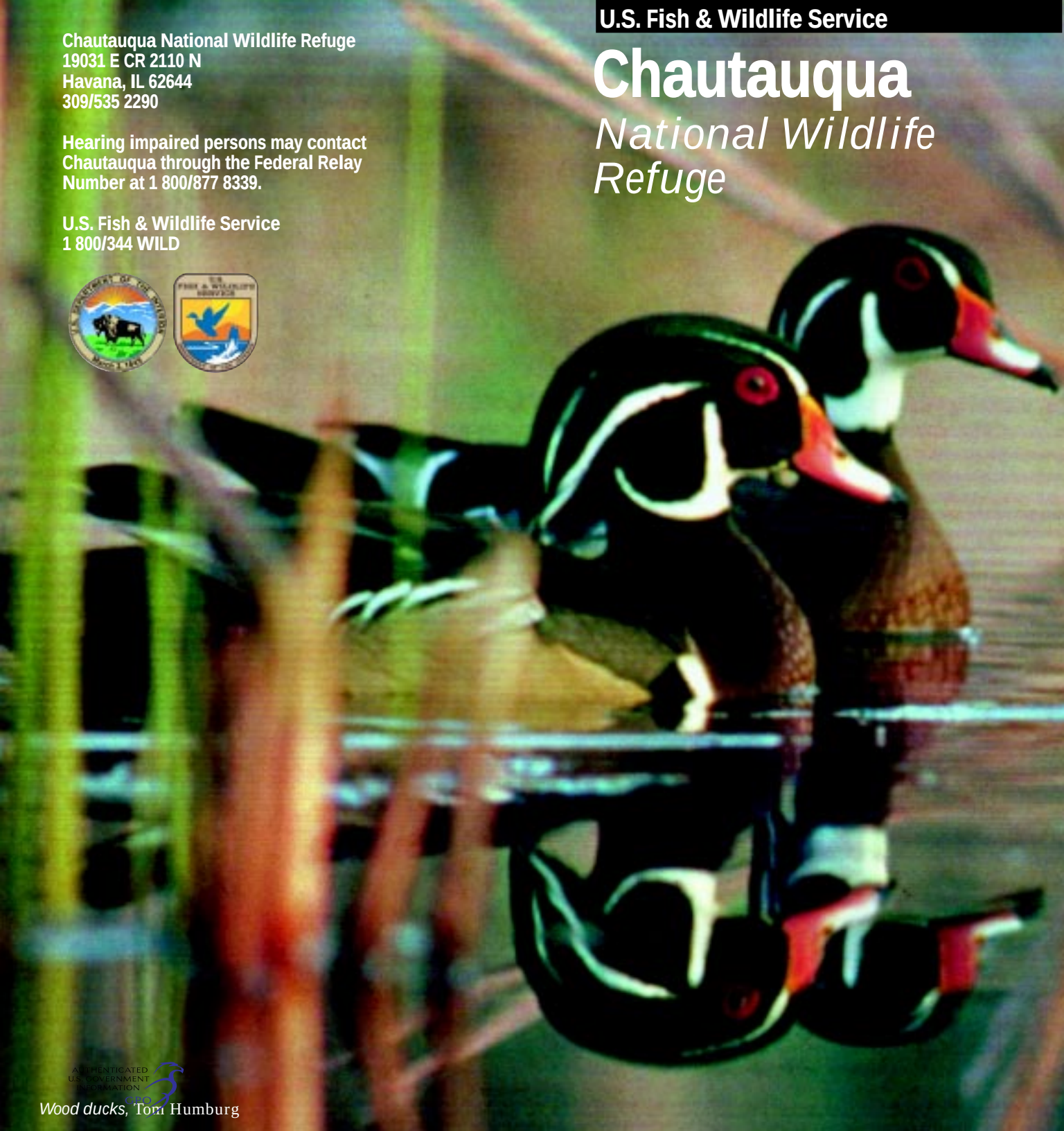
Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge
19031 E CR 2110 N
Havana, IL 62644
309/535 2290

Hearing impaired persons may contact Chautauqua through the Federal Relay Number at 1 800/877 8339.

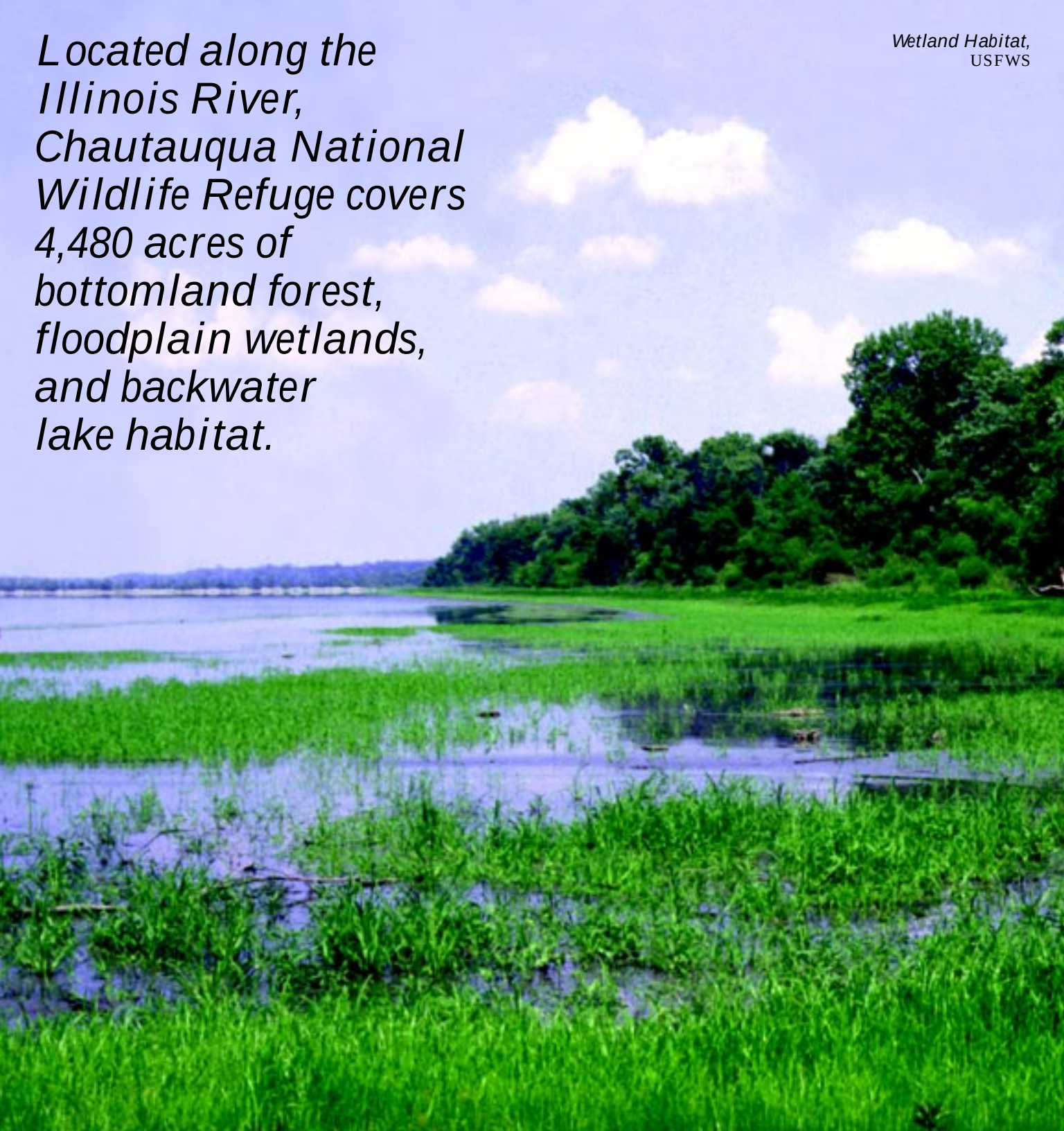
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Chautauqua
National Wildlife Refuge



Wood ducks, Tom Humburg



Located along the Illinois River, Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge covers 4,480 acres of bottomland forest, floodplain wetlands, and backwater lake habitat.

Wetland Habitat, USFWS



For Thousands of Years

Millions of waterfowl and other migratory birds rested and fed in the wet Illinois River bottoms during their annual migrations from northern breeding grounds to southern winter homes. Lake Chautauqua was a rich mosaic of sloughs, wetlands, and woodlands.

Times Changed

In the 1920s the area was diked, drained, and converted for agricultural production. In only two years the Illinois River reclaimed the land.

Poor land use practices and increased barge traffic on the river resulted in more river silt being deposited in tranquil backwater areas like Lake Chautauqua.

Aquatic plants, food for waterfowl and other wildlife, were smothered. Finally, with the purchase of the Chautauqua Drainage and Levee District in 1936, Lake Chautauqua became part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



This "Blue Goose" symbolizes the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of over 500 refuges protected and managed for wildlife, habitat, and people.

Today

Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge is part of the Illinois River National Wildlife and Fish Refuges Complex managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These refuges, distributed along 124 miles of the Illinois River, presently provide over 12,000 acres of refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds, fish, and other wildlife. When land acquisition is complete, the Illinois River Refuges will include 32,000 acres of bottomland forest, backwater lake, floodplain wetlands, and prairie habitat.

Pintails in Flight



Great Blue Heron



Trumpeter Swan, USFWS



Bald Eagle, James M. Miller



Dowitchers

Diverse Habitats = More Wildlife!

The variety of habitats found within the Refuge create wonderful conditions for wildlife observation. Changing water levels throughout the year attract a variety of birds –from the short-legged shorebirds that forage for invertebrates in the mud to the fish-eating birds that feed in four feet of water.

Ducks, geese...and more ducks and geese!

Twenty-three species of waterfowl are known to use the Refuge, including trumpeter and tundra swans. The combination of the North Pool and the South Pool provides a mix of prime habitat for diving ducks and dabbling ducks. When good food resources are available, as many as 250,000 waterfowl may be seen on Lake Chautauqua at one time.

Soaring Eagles

As many as 176 eagles have been sighted on the Refuge between October and March. Migrating eagles arrive on the Refuge around late October, and by mid-November they can be found feeding and resting in the large trees of the newly restored North Pool. Look closely and you might see one of several eagle nests along the Illinois River.

Shorebirds

The low water of summer and the resulting mud flats mean one thing – peeps. With over 10,000 of these migratory visitors darting in and out of cover, August is the time to see the many shorebird species found at Chautauqua Refuge.



Fishing on Lake Chautauqua, USFWS

Fishing

Whether from a boat or the tree-lined banks, Chautauqua Refuge provides exciting fishing opportunities for all ages. Fish for any of the 54 species found here, including bluegill, crappie, black bass, and catfish. Boat access is available at the Eagle Bluff Access Area. Best bets include the flooded timber of Melz Slough and the western edge of the North Pool.



Great Egret

Marsh and Water Birds

The dense wetland vegetation on Chautauqua Refuge provides ideal shelter and feeding habitat for secretive marsh birds such as soras, yellow rails, great blue herons, and great egrets. Although secretive and seldom seen, listen for American bitterns and green herons as they feed among the 70+ plant species found in the North and South Pools.



Wood Ducks



Mallards

Refuge Activities

There are many opportunities for you to explore and enjoy Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge. Check with the Refuge Manager for open areas and seasonal public use.

Hike the wheelchair accessible interpretive nature trail located at the Refuge Headquarters.

Hunt waterfowl in the Liverpool Lake Public Hunting Area, located outside Lake Chautauqua. *All hunting must adhere to federal, state and refuge regulations.* Check with the Refuge Manager for details.

Pick mushrooms and berries; collect nuts.

Watch waterfowl and other birds from Refuge trails and other access points.

Fish for bluegill, crappie, and catfish on Lake Chautauqua. Boat access is available at the Eagle Bluff Access Area.

There are picnic tables located at the Headquarters, Eagle Bluff, and Goofy Ridge Public Access Areas.

Headquarters Location and Office Hours

Refuge headquarters are located 6 miles north of Havana, off Manito Blacktop. Office hours are 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Need More Information?

For additional information contact:
Refuge Manager
19031 E CR 2110 N
Havana, IL 62644
Phone: (309) 535-2290

Information on Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge can also be found on Chautauqua's Home Page: http://www.fws.gov/r3pao/ill_rvr/index.html.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of age, race, religion, color, sex, national origin, or disability.

Contact:
U.S. Department of Interior
Office for Equal Opportunity
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

CHAUTAUQUA
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

LEGEND

- Refuge Boundary
- Dike
- Water Control Structure
- Spillways
- Hunting Area
- Interpretive Trail
- Launching Ramp
- Parking
- Restrooms

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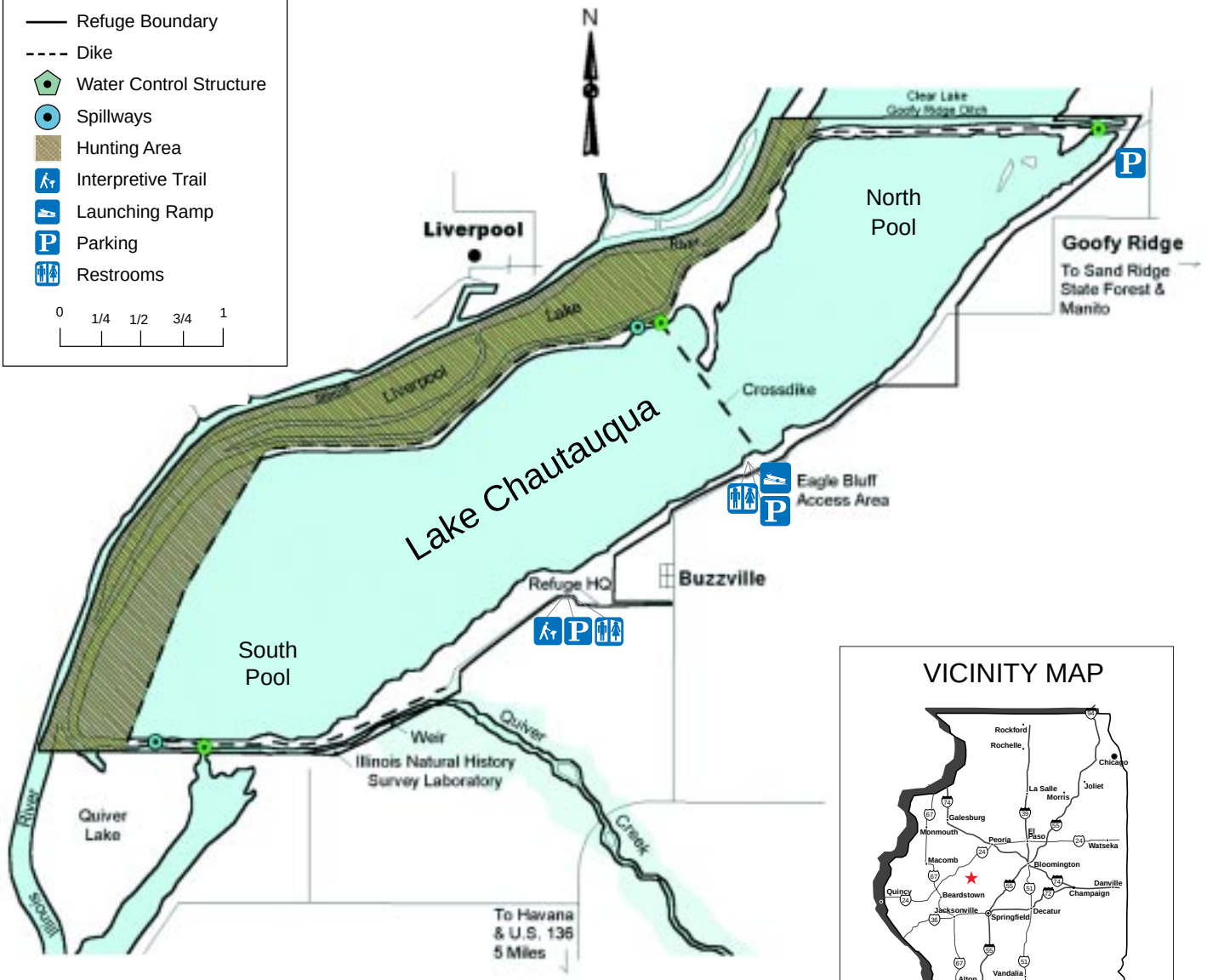

VICINITY MAP