

Appendix D: Draft Compatibility Determinations

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COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Hunting

Refuge Name: Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C & 715d

Refuge Purpose(s): Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935...

“... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ...” Executive Order 7246, dated Dec. 10, 1935

“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

“... conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans...” 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

National Wildlife System Mission: to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Description of Use:

What is the use? The use is the hunting of game as an activity conducted by the general public under regulation authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Hunting is currently allowed for Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, snowshoe hare, black bear and white-tailed deer on Seney NWR. These hunts are conducted in accordance with State of Michigan regulations. Approximately 300 people hunt deer on the Refuge and an equal number pursue Ruffed Grouse. One hundred hunters chase snowshoe hare, but few hunt black bear because of Refuge specific restrictions. Most hunting for American Woodcock is incidental to Grouse hunting

Where is the use conducted? The Refuge’s Hunt Plan divides the Refuge into two zones and a closed area. Zone A, which encompasses 49,522 acres is located in the center of the Refuge. Zone B covers the western third and bands along the north and southeast boundary of the Refuge for a total of 36,200 acres. The remaining area, 9,490 acres, which surrounds the Refuge buildings and public use facilities is closed to hunting.

When is the use conducted? Hunting season traditionally begins in mid-September for all species hunted on Seney NWR, except for white-tailed deer hunting which does not begin until October 1st. Black bear season closes by the end of October and Woodcock season typically closes the first week of November. Snowshoe hare is the longest season, ending March 31st followed by Grouse which ends on January first. White-tailed deer hunting seasons are defined by method of take; early Archery – October 1-November 14, Regular Firearms – November 15-30, Muzzleloader December 1-16.

How is the use conducted? Hunting is conducted under State of Michigan and Refuge-specific Regulations. A small number of tribal members may hunt the Refuge under authority of a consent decree enacted in 2007. Refuge-specific regulations include: no baiting and no use of dogs to pursue black bear. Hunting in Zone A is closed to Grouse, Woodcock, bear and early Archery deer hunting seasons. It is also closed to hare hunting until December 1st. Zone B is open throughout the state season for all species. All hunters, except those pursuing white-tailed deer and bear, must use non-toxic shot. Camping is allowed to facilitate deer hunting; all campers must obtain a free permit from the headquarters.

Why is the use being proposed? Hunting is identified as a priority public use identified in the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 and it has traditionally occurred at Seney NWR without adverse impacts to the purpose for which the Refuge was established. The hunt program is administered in accordance with sound wildlife management principles and the utmost concern for public safety.

Availability of Resources: Approximately \$25,000 is required annually to administer the hunting program. Staff support of this program cost \$20,000, half of which is for Law Enforcement patrol to insure compliance with hunting regulations. The remaining \$5,000 covers the cost of signs, equipment and informational brochures. Based on a review of the current Refuge budget, there is enough funding to ensure administration of this program is compatible with the purpose for which Seney NWR was established.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Hunting has not caused any adverse impacts to the Refuge, its habitats, visitors or wildlife. Concerns over impacts to non-target wildlife are minimized by the seasonality of the hunts and the large size of Seney relative to the number of people who hunt it. Hunting occurs after the nesting season and is not allowed near the impoundments until after most migratory species have left the Refuge. Visitor safety concerns are addressed by restrictions on when and where hunter can pursue their quarry. Law enforcement patrols are conducted regularly to ensure compliance with regulations. The hunting program follows all applicable laws, regulations and policies; including, 50 CFR, National Wildlife Refuge System Manual, National Wildlife Refuge System goals and objectives, and Seney NWR goals and objectives. This activity is also compliant with the purpose of the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System Mission. Conducting this program does not alter the Refuge's ability to meet habitat goals, provides for public safety and supports several primary objectives of the Refuge.

Public Review and Comment: This compatibility determination was part of the Draft Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, which was in the Federal register and available for public comment for 30 days.

Determination:

Use is not compatible.

Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: To ensure compatibility with National Wildlife Refuge System and Seney NWR goals and objectives the activity can only occur under the following stipulations:

1. State and/or Tribal hunting requirements apply to all hunting on the Refuge.
2. The following Refuge-specific regulations and restrictions apply:
 - a. Baiting is prohibited,
 - b. The use of dogs to hunt bear is prohibited,
 - c. ATV's are not permitted on Seney NWR,
 - d. Non-toxic shot must be used to hunt Grouse, Woodcock and Hare,
 - e. Camping is only allowed during the deer season and requires a Refuge permit.
3. Annually review all hunting activities and operations to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and policies.

Justification: This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. This use is being permitted as it is a priority public use and will not diminish the primary purposes of the refuge. This use will meet the mission of the NWRS by providing renewable resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife and plant resources on these lands.

Signature: Refuge Manager

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Fishing

Refuge Name: Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C & 715d

Refuge Purpose(s): Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935...

“... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ...” Executive Order 7246, dated Dec. 10, 1935

“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

“... conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans...” 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

National Wildlife System Mission: to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Description of Use:

What is the use? Recreational Fishing

Where is the use conducted? The Refuge allows fishing on the Manistique River, along the Driggs River and from the banks along 12 of its 21 impoundments. There is a “fishing loop” off of the Marshland Wildlife Drive to facilitate fishing and minimize conflicts. The total area impacted by fishing activities is less than 10 percent of the Refuge.

When is the use conducted? Fishing is conducted in accordance with State regulations on the Driggs and Manistique Rivers. Some of the impoundments

are open for fishing on May 15th, while others remain closed until Labor Day. All impoundments are closed for fishing on September 30th.

How is the use conducted? Fishing is conducted in accordance with the State’s General Hook and Line regulations and Refuge-specific regulations. Refuge-specific regulations prohibit the use of tackle containing lead and fishing at night.

Why is the use being proposed? Recreational fishing is identified as a priority public use identified in the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 and it has traditionally occurred at Seney NWR without adverse impacts to the purpose for which the Refuge was established. The fishing program is administered to provide recreational opportunities to visitors while avoiding negative impacts wildlife and their habitat.

Availability of Resources: The cost of administering this program is approximately \$10,000 annually. Seventy percent of this cost is for staff salary, primarily law enforcement patrols to insure compliance with regulations. The remaining expense is incurred by providing and maintaining brochures, signs and facilities. Based on a review of the current Refuge budget, there is enough funding to ensure administration of this program is compatible with the purpose for which Seney NWR was established.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Fishing has not caused any adverse impacts to the Refuge, its habitats, visitors or wildlife. Concerns over impacts to non-target wildlife are minimized by restricting fishing to the banks of impoundments, prohibiting lead tackle and limiting fishing to daylight hours. Other concerns, such as litter and fishing line entanglement are addressed through public education and regular patrols. The fishing program follows all applicable laws, regulations and policies; including, 50 CFR, National Wildlife Refuge System Manual, National Wildlife Refuge System goals and objectives, and Seney NWR goals and objectives. This activity is also compliant with the purpose of the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System Mission. Conducting this program does not alter the

Refuge's ability to meet habitat goals, provides for public safety and supports several primary objectives of the Refuge.

Public Review and Comment: this compatibility determination was part of the Draft Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, which was in the Federal register and available for public comment for 30 days.

Determination:

Use is not compatible.

Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: To ensure compatibility with National Wildlife Refuge System and Seney NWR goals and objectives the activity can only occur under the following stipulations:

1. State and/or Tribal fishing requirements apply on the Refuge.
2. The following Refuge-specific regulations and restrictions apply:
 - a. The use of lead tackle is prohibited,
 - b. Bank fishing only along designated impoundments,
 - c. Fishing during daylight hours only.
3. Annually review all hunting activities and operations to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and policies.

Justification: This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. This use is being permitted as it is a priority public use and will not diminish the primary purposes of the refuge. This use will meet the mission of the NWRS by providing renewable resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife and plant resources on these lands.

Signature: Refuge Manager

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Wildlife Observation and Photography (including means of access)

Refuge Name: Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C & 715d

Refuge Purpose(s): Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935...

“... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ...” Executive Order 7246, dated Dec. 10, 1935

“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

“... conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans...” 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

National Wildlife System Mission: to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Description of Use:

What is the use? General public access to observe and/or photograph wildlife and refuge habitats including the means of access such as automobile, hiking, bicycling, canoeing, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Under the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act, of 1997, wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses.

Where is the use conducted? These activities could take place anywhere on the Refuge but most often occur in the vicinity of roads and visitor use facilities. The Refuge contains nearly 100 miles of roads and dikes that are open to hiking, biking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, a 7 mile wild-

life drive, a 1.4 mile hiking trail and 10 miles of groomed ski trails. Canoeing is allowed on the Manistique River and the Refuge maintains one wildlife observation/photo blind.

When is the use conducted? The Refuge’s visitor use facilities are open from May 15th to October 15th; this is when wildlife observation and photography are most likely to occur. However they could occur at any time of the year, but only during daylight hours.

How is the use conducted? All wildlife observation and photography activities will be conducted with the Refuge’s goals, objectives and management plans as the guiding principles. Activities done under these restrictions allow the refuge to accomplish its management and provide for the safety of visitors. Entry on all or portions of individual areas may be temporarily suspended due to unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety.

Why is the use being proposed? Wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses on National Wildlife Refuge System Lands as identified in the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. Allowing access to the Refuge for wildlife observation and photography is consistent with goals of the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Availability of Resources: Approximately \$50,000 is required to maintain the Refuge roads, trails and facilities used by the public engaged in wildlife observation and photography. Currently, with the assistance of the volunteers and the Seney Natural History Association, there is enough staff and funding available to administer these activities.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Wildlife observation and photography cause minor disturbance to wildlife. Wildlife quickly become accustomed to vehicles along the wildlife drive and non-motorized access is typically along established trails or roads. Overall, the disturbance is limited to a small portion of the entire Refuge. In areas where people do travel off trails, the impact is minimal and tempo-

rary. The Manistique River runs through a small portion of the Refuge's southeast corner, therefore canoeist pose no threat.

Wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses listed in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. By facilitating these uses on the refuge, we will increase visitors' knowledge and appreciation of fish and wildlife, which will lead to increased public stewardship of fish and wildlife and their habitats on the refuge and in general. Increased public stewardship will support and complement the Service's actions in achieving the refuge's purposes and the mission of the NWR System.

Public Review and Comment: this compatibility determination was part of the Draft Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, which was in the Federal register and available for public comment for 30 days.

Determination:

Use is not compatible.

Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: To ensure compatibility with National Wildlife Refuge System and Seney NWR goals and objectives, wildlife observation and wildlife photography can only occur under the following stipulation:

1. The Refuge is closed from sunset until sunrise,
2. Visitors may not enter the water,
3. Motorized and non-motorized vehicles are restricted to designated roadways.
4. All Terrain Vehicles are prohibited.

Justification: This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. It promotes public stewardship of natural resources and help the Refuge meet its goals and objectives. It does not materially interfere with or detract from the Services ability to meet the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The activities follow all applicable laws, regulations and policies; including Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations,

National Wildlife Refuge System Manual, National Wildlife Refuge System goals and objectives, and refuge goals and objectives. These activities are compliant with the purpose of the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System Mission. Operating this activity does not alter the refuge's ability to meet habitat goals and it helps support several of the primary objectives of the refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Environmental Education and Interpretation

Refuge Name: Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C & 715d

Refuge Purpose(s): Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935...

“... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ...” Executive Order 7246, dated Dec. 10, 1935

“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

“... conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans...” 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

National Wildlife System Mission: to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Description of Use:

What is the use? Environmental education consists of public outreach and onsite activities conducted by refuge staff, volunteers, teachers, and university professors. Interpretation occurs in less formal activities with refuge staff and volunteers or through exhibits, signs, and brochures.

Where is the use conducted? Environmental education and interpretation activities may occur throughout the Refuge, but are most likely to occur in the vicinity of the headquarters, visitor’s center, wildlife drive, trails and roads. The Visitor Center is staffed daily from May 15 through October 15th and hosts 45,000 visitors annually. Visitors are greeted

with a variety of interpretive displays and signs as they traverse the trails, wildlife drive, fishing loop or explore the Visitor Center. The Refuge also maintains a website that provides interpretive information.

Environmental education and interpretation may occur on the Refuge or off site. Programs are given upon request to school and other groups visiting the Refuge. Back-country tours and interpretive programs are offered weekly during summer months. Special events are conducted throughout the year. Off-site activities consist of teacher workshops, participation in special events, and the sharing of wildlife education trunks.

When is the use conducted? Interpretation occurs, throughout the year, whenever a visitor reads a sign, brochures or the Refuge’s website. Environmental education activities are concentrated in the summer months, but can occur at any time. Most all activities occur during daylight hours.

How is the use conducted? All environmental education and interpretation activities are conducted with the refuge's primary goals, objectives, and habitat management requirements as the guiding principles. Activities done under these restrictions allow the refuge to accomplish its management goals and provide for the safety of visitors. All programs include a description of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Refuge System. All of the programs address at least one of a number of wildlife conservation issues such as management, watershed, habitat, wildlife, endangered species, invasive species, etc

Why is the use being proposed? Permitting this activity is consistent with the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, and helps accomplish refuge goals and promotes understanding, appreciation, and support for its mission.

Availability of Resources: Approximately \$250,000 is required to properly administer this program. This includes a full time visitor services specialist, a visitor center manager and staff time required to maintain the public use infrastructure.

Trained volunteers and interns provide an integral part of the Refuge's environmental education and interpretation program. They staff the Visitor' Center daily, put on special events and assist Refuge staff with a variety of other needs. In some cases interns and volunteers conduct programs with minimal staff oversight.

Every effort is made to meet each request for environmental education and interpretive programs. However staff and funding shortages have curtailed programs and the number of requests often exceed our resources. Based on a review of the current Refuge budget, there is enough funding to administer this program, at a reduced level, and ensure compatibility with the purpose for which Seney NWR was established.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Environmental education and interpretation are not expected to have measurable environmental impacts on the refuge, its habitats, or wildlife species. Disturbance to wildlife is limited to occasional incidents like flushing wildlife. Restrictions on locations for environmental education and interpretation and the numbers of users will assure minimal disturbance to wildlife and other public use activities.

The activities follow all applicable laws, regulations and policies; including Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations, National Wildlife Refuge System Manual, National Wildlife Refuge System goals and objectives, and Seney NWR goals and objectives. These activities comply with the purpose of the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System Mission. Operating these activities does not alter the refuge's ability to meet habitat goals and it helps support several of the primary objectives of the refuge.

Public Review and Comment: this compatibility determination was part of the Draft Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, which was in the Federal register and available for public comment for 30 days.

Determination:

Use is not compatible.

Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: To ensure compatibility with National Wildlife Refuge System and Seney NWR goals and objectives, environmental education and interpretation can only occur under the following stipulation:

Environmental education and interpretation activities will occur only when and where the pose little or no threat to wildlife. The impacts of any activity that occurs outside of designated public use area will be evaluated for its impacts on wildlife and for alternative locations. All activities will occur under the guidance of a refuge staff member, volunteer or trained teacher to assure minimal disturbance to wildlife, minimal vegetation damage, and minimal user conflict between other public uses.

Justification: Environmental education and interpretation are priority public uses for the National Wildlife Refuge System as outlined in the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. By facilitating these uses on the refuge, we will increase visitors' knowledge and appreciation of fish and wildlife, which will lead to increased public stewardship of fish and wildlife and their habitats on the refuge and in general. Increased public stewardship will support and complement the Service's actions in achieving the refuge's purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Signature: Refuge Manager

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Research

Refuge Name: Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C & 715d

Refuge Purpose(s): Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935...

“... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ...” Executive Order 7246, dated Dec. 10, 1935

“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

“... conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans...” 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

National Wildlife System Mission: to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Description of Use:

What is the use? The use is research projects conducted by Universities and other academic institutions; government agencies such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and U. S. Geological Survey (USGS); and private conservation organizations. Research projects will focus on better understanding of refuge wildlife and habitat resources, provide information to improve adaptive management decisions, and increase life history information on species of concern.

A refuge research application accompanied by a written project proposals is required for review and approval before access will be allowed. If approved, access to refuge lands and waters will be limited to

the least invasive means required to accomplish the activities. Research will be carried out by professors, students, contractors, and refuge staff and volunteers. Researchers will be required to sign in and out of the Refuge daily, provide written reports and make their data available to Refuge staff.

Where is the use conducted? Research activities will occur throughout the Seney NWR’s 95,212 acres and occasionally on adjacent state land.

When is the use conducted? Research may occur at all times of the year day or night. However, most research activity occurs during the summer months and daylight hours.

How is the use conducted? All research activities will be conducted with the refuge’s primary goals, objectives, and habitat management requirements as the guiding principles. Every effort will be made to minimize the impacts of research activities on wildlife and their habitats and avoid conflicts with public use and management activities. A Special Use Permit will be issued for each research project that specifies what, when, where, and how research may occur on the Refuge.

Why is the use being proposed? Research and monitoring information is critical to making sound biological decisions in the restoration and management of ecosystems/landscapes for fish and wildlife communities occurring on national wildlife refuges. It is needed to measure the successes and failures of management efforts. This is an important use with long-term benefits that ensures we have the best information possible upon which to base management decisions.

Availability of Resources: Approximately \$100,000 to administer the research program at Seney NWR. Much of the research and monitoring is funded by grants, other government agencies, universities, or conducted by students and volunteers. Refuge staff involvement includes reviewing research proposals, supervising or monitoring research activities, reviewing reports, providing some equipment and vehicles, and occasionally participating in field work. Based on a review of the current Refuge bud-

get, there is enough funding to ensure administration of this program is compatible with the purpose for which Seney NWR was established.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Disturbance to wildlife and vegetation by researchers could occur through vegetation sampling, capture and handling of wildlife, observation activities, banding, and accessing the study area. It is possible that direct or indirect mortality could result as a byproduct of research activities. However, the overall impact of allowing well designed and properly reviewed research to be conducted by non-Service personnel is likely to have very little impact on refuge wildlife populations. If the research project is conducted with professionalism and integrity, potential adverse impacts are likely to be outweighed by the knowledge gained about an entire species, habitat or public use.

Public Review and Comment: This compatibility determination was part of the Draft Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, which was in the Federal register and available for public comment for 30 days.

Determination:

- Use is not compatible.
- Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: To ensure compatibility with National Wildlife Refuge System and Seney NWR goals and objectives the activity can only occur under the following stipulations:

1. Each research proposal is evaluated to insure the least invasive techniques are used, and preference is given to projects that focus on better understanding of refuge wildlife and habitat resources, provide information to improve adaptive management decisions, and increase life history information on species of concern.
2. Researchers must follow their study proposal and comply with the provisions of their Special Use Permit.
3. Coordination will be maintained with the biological staff.

4. Researchers must sign in and out of the Refuge daily.
5. A report must be submitted at the end of each field season and at the conclusion of the study.
6. Researchers must make any data collected while at the Refuge available for Refuge use.
7. Refuge research activities are evaluated annually to insure that their collective impacts do not compromise the goals or objectives of Seney NWR.

Justification: This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. Research and monitoring information is critical to making sound biological decisions in the restoration and management of ecosystems/landscapes for fish and wildlife communities occurring on national wildlife refuges. It is needed to measure the successes and failures of management efforts. This is an important use with long-term benefits that ensures we have the best information possible upon which to base management decisions.

Signature: Refuge Manager

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Haying

Refuge Name: Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C & 715d

Refuge Purpose(s): Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935...

“... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ...” Executive Order 7246, dated Dec. 10, 1935

“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

“... conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans...” 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

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Description of Use:

What is the use? Haying is the cutting and removal of grass, by baling and transporting it off the refuge. Haying is conducted by a private parties under authority of a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge Manager, which requires that the permittee apply fertilizer at a rate of 10 lbs/acre.

Where is the use conducted? Currently, haying occurs on four farm fields within Seney NWR. They total 237 acres. The Draft CCP calls for a reduction in haying.

When is the use conducted? Generally, haying occurs in mid to late summer, after July 15th. Haying earlier in the growing season is avoided due to the potential destruction of ground-nesting birds.

How is the use conducted? Haying is usually accomplished by a mowing device towed by a tractor. Mowed grass is left to air dry and compiled into bales using a separate piece of equipment. All equipment must be clean prior to haying to reduce the potential of spreading noxious or invasive plants from another location.

Why is the use being proposed? Haying is used to maintain open fields for wildlife. These fields are used for nesting by open-land birds and for feeding by Sandhill cranes, deer, bear and a variety of other wildlife. Periodic mowing is needed to prevent shrub encroachment and to maintain vigorous growth of the grasses, which limit invasion by noxious weeds. There is a small localized demand for hay from the Refuge.

Availability of Resources: Administration of the haying program cost approximately \$1,000 in staff salary. Based on a review of the current Refuge budget, there is enough funding to ensure that administration of this program is compatible with the purpose for which Seney NWR was established.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Haying will result in short-term disturbances and long-term benefits to both resident and migratory wildlife using the refuge. Short-term impacts will include disturbance and displacement typical of any noisy heavy equipment operation. Cutting and removal of standing grasses will also result in short-term loss of habitat for those species requiring tall grasses for feeding and perching such as obligatory grassland species such as bobolink. Long-term benefits will accrue due to the increased vigor of the grasses which will improve conditions for those same species impacted in the short-term. A relatively small number of animals may be killed by mowing and baling operations however, restricting activities until after July 15th greatly reduces these impact.

Public Review and Comment: this compatibility determination was part of the Draft Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, which was in the Federal register and available for public comment for 30 days.

Determination:

Use is not compatible.

Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: To ensure compatibility with National Wildlife Refuge System and Seney NWR goals and objectives the activity can only occur under the following stipulations:

1. Haying will not occur until after July 15th,
2. Fertilizer will be added to the fields at a rate of 10 lbs/acre,
3. All equipment will be thoroughly cleaned before entering Refuge property.

Justification: Haying use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. It supports the goals and objectives of Seney NWR by maintaining grassland habitat at a minimal cost to the Refuge. Without the use of haying Refuge staff would have to engage in a more costly method of maintain the fields for wildlife.

Signature: Refuge Manager

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Mushroom and Berry Picking

Refuge Name: Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C & 715d

Refuge Purpose(s): Seney National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935...

“... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ...” Executive Order 7246, dated Dec. 10, 1935

“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

“... conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans...” 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

National Wildlife System Mission: to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Description of Use:

What is the use? Non-commercial harvest of berries and mushrooms for human consumption, primarily blueberries and occasionally morel mushrooms.

Where is the use conducted? These activities may occur throughout the 95,212 acres of Seney NWR. Approximately 100 people participate in this activity annually, and most access areas adjacent to existing roads and trails.

When is the use conducted? Mushroom and berry picking can occur throughout the spring, summer and fall. However most of the activity is concentrated during the few weeks when that the fruits ripen.

How is the use conducted? This is an activity that is often done in conjunction with other activities that are wildlife dependent, such as wildlife observation and photography. People typically walk, bike or drive along the Refuge roads and trails until they see a spot that looks promising, then they may venture off road. During the harvest seasons only 10 miles of roads are open to motorized vehicles and all harvesting is done by hand.

Why is the use being proposed? Mushroom and berry picking are traditional outdoor activities that bring families to the Refuge. It allows them to collect wholesome foods while enjoying the natural environment.

Availability of Resources: There is little or no cost to administer this program. It occurs in conjunction with other public uses and participation is low.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Historically, public participation in mushroom and berry picking has been low and future participation is also expected to be low. Most activity occurs adjacent to existing roads and trails, therefore disturbance to wildlife will be minimal. The relatively few mushrooms and berries harvested will not significantly reduce the food source for wildlife.

Public Review and Comment: this compatibility determination was part of the Draft Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment, which was in the Federal register and available for public comment for 30 days.

Determination:

Use is not compatible.

Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: All users must comply with Refuge specific regulations.

Justification:

This use has little impact to wildlife or habitat since it is recreational in nature and few people participate. In addition, a relatively small portion of the Refuge is accessed by mushroom and berry pickers, because most roads are not open to motorized vehicles. Ocular estimates of picked over areas reveal a very low percentage of total fruit picked, so no appreciable effect on wildlife mast is anticipated. This activity provides hours of enjoyable recreation and promotes a positive image of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2018