

# News Release

*National Wildlife  
Refuge System*



## Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

La Crosse District  
555 Lester Avenue  
Onalaska, WI 54650

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Makes Decision on Hunting and Trapping on Mathy Tract

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge today released the Final Environment Assessment on the issue of hunting and furbearer trapping on the 75-acre Mathy Tract on Brice Prairie near Onalaska, Wisconsin.

Based on a review of the assessment and comments received during a 30-day public review and comment period, Refuge Manager Don Hultman has decided to keep the tract permanently closed to hunting and trapping.

The tract was purchased for the primary purpose of providing a site for the refuge's La Crosse District office and shop facilities. Funding has not yet been secured for construction.

Hultman said they received 14 comments on the assessment, with 9 supporting the closure, 4 opposed, and 1 addressing a grassland bird concern.

"The tract's relatively small size, surrounding development, limited game potential, and future use as an administrative site also led to the no-hunting decision," Hultman said.

La Crosse District Manager Jim Nissen said planning is underway to restore the land, currently in agriculture, to sand prairie beginning in 2010. After restoration, walking trails and interpretative signing are planned to enhance opportunities for wildlife observation, photography, interpretation and environmental education.

Nissen said funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund were used to acquire the tract from Mathy Construction Company in August 2008. Money in the fund comes mainly from U.S. off-shore oil and gas lease fees and is targeted to land acquisition.

Copies of the Final Environmental Assessment and related decision documents are available at the Town of Onalaska in Midway, at the La Crosse District Office, and on the Refuge's website at: [www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver/curtop.html](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver/curtop.html) (the file name is FinalEAMathy.pdf)

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*In addition to being the most visited refuge in the country, the "Upper Miss" Refuge has the added complexity of a major navigation system, including 11 locks and dams, within its boundary. It is also a world-class fish and wildlife area which harbors 306 species of birds; 119 species of fish; more than 200 active bald eagle nests; thousands of heron and egret nests; spectacular concentrations of canvasback ducks, tundra swans, and white pelicans; and several threatened or endangered species.*