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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
Lyle Asell, Interim DIRECTOR

September 20, 2000

Mr. Jim Salyer  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Southern Missouri Ascertainment Office  
24385 State Highway 51  
Puxico, MO. 63960

RE: DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and EA

Dear Mr. Salyer:

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to review the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. The following comments specifically address the fish and wildlife issues presented in the Plan.

Water and related fisheries issues: Objective 1.7.1 is to study the possibility of reconnecting the lake with the Missouri River. Although the completion of the study does not necessarily mean the lake will be reconnected, we strongly discourage reconnecting the two water bodies. DeSoto Lake is a unique deep water, high quality oxbow - perhaps the only remnant in the basin resembling former bends associated with the wild river.

Under goal 1.8 dealing with exotics, we encourage the Service to monitor Eurasian water milfoil and implement treatment if found.

We are supportive of Objective 3.3, dealing with sport fish habitat and populations, including renovation. We encourage the Service to emphasize active fish management by moving beyond just monitoring fish population to include renovation as part of the overall process.

Objective 3.3.2 discusses removal of 20,000 pounds of rough fish annually to reduce competition with game fish. This is about 20 pounds per acre and will not accomplish this goal.

Land management and related wildlife issues: The reduction of existing row croplands to native grass and woodland will have impacts on existing resident wildlife populations and snow goose use. We view this as a positive management plan to bring more diversity to the refuge. At the same time it is an avenue for the Service to address the snow goose situation at the refuge. The Department encourages the Service to continue the use of recreation hunting opportunity and expand possibilities to include disabled and youth events.



There needs to be clarification as to what constitutes "crop" on cropland acres. For instance, are cool season hays (alfalfa, clovers and tame grasses) included in the crop rotation? This is an important forage source for resident refuge wildlife and supplements traditional grain crops.

The Plan references the refuge's Cropland Management Plan and the need to up-date every 5 years. The planned alteration of the habitat acres and the effects on resident wildlife populations may necessitate a review of the plan on a more frequent time schedule. A three year review would permit refuge staff to respond to wildlife issues in a timelier manner.

The native grassland composite list is impressive. A missing grass species being prairie cordgrass. The plan should include adding native forbs for greater plant diversity and also help meet goals set for the neotropical bird community.

In summary, the Department supports the Service preferred Alternative D as the plan of action for DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

ALLEN L. FARRIS, Administrator  
Fish and Wildlife Division