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Compatibility determinations were recently approved and are available for review for Wood Cutting/Timber Harvest on Becker WPA, a Weather Station on Becker WPA, Construction and Use of Boardwalk and Viewing Platform on Ulao Waterfowl Production Area, and Tesoro Pipeline Right-Of-Way.

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Collection of Edible Wild Plant Foods for Personal Use

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties - Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow public to collect plant food products on WPAs for personal use.

Some plants growing on WPAs produce edible products such as fruits and nuts. Apples, raspberries, and walnuts are examples of these products. Other items of interest include asparagus, wild mint, and mushrooms. These plants grow in the uplands, occupy a small percentage of the total upland acreage, and are often found at abandoned building sites which have been reclaimed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Harvest occurs during the daylight hours, usually in the late summer or fall and typically is of short duration. These items are hand harvested by picking, cutting the products from the plant, or gathering what has fallen to the ground.

Access to harvest sites is accomplished by walking from a designated parking area or public roadway.

Collection of these foods is not a wildlife-dependent recreational use and occurs infrequently. For a small number of people, this is a traditional, family oriented activity which provides an opportunity for those participating to collect wholesome, healthy foods while enjoying the beauty of the natural environment.

Availability of Resources:

Waterfowl Production Areas have been open to hunting since they were acquired. As a result, access trails, parking lots, signage and other facilities as well as staff to enforce regulations and maintain these facilities have been provided by the Service. These facilities will be maintained to meet the needs of the hunting public and will be used incidentally by those who are collecting edible wild plant foods. This use will not require an increase in additional maintenance or staff expenditures.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Historically, public participation in the collection of plant food products on WPAs was low, and future participation is also expected to be low. The quantity and frequency of plant food products removed is not expected to significantly diminish wildlife food sources or jeopardize wildlife survival.

Short-term disturbance to wildlife may occur during these activities, but will be insignificant.

Most of these activities occur in the late summer or fall, after ground-nesting birds have completed the nesting season. This activity should not result in short or long-term impacts that adversely affect the purpose of WPAs or the mission of the National Wildlife System.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The use of motorized vehicles or motorized water craft is prohibited except by permit or in designated parking areas, access trails or public roads.

1. Camping, overnight use and fires are prohibited.
2. Digging of plants or their roots is prohibited.
3. Plant food products cannot be sold.
4. Damage to trees is prohibited.

Justification:

This use will have limited and localized impacts when conducted within the stipulations above. Administration of the use will require little to no administrative time or funding. This use will not diminish the primary purposes of waterfowl production, or the conservation of other migratory birds and wildlife.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Cooperative Farming

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties - Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Cooperative farming is the term used for cropping activities done by a third party on land which is owned by the Service in fee title or controlled by the Service through a restrictive easement. This type of activity is usually done on a short term basis (three years or less) to prepare an optimum seed bed for the establishment of native prairie species. Soybeans are generally planted the last year because it provides a weed free seed bed with little crop residue that requires little additional preparation.

The cropping is done under the terms and conditions of a Cooperative Farming Agreement or Land Use Reservation issued by the Wetland District Manager. The terms of the Agreement or Reservation insure that all current Service and District restrictions are followed.

Cooperative farming activities are only compatible on previously disturbed areas which have unacceptable levels of chemical residue, invasive weeds, or non-native plant species or ecotypes, or in the case of a Land Use Reservation to honor the land use clauses of a purchase agreement. To ensure that all Service policies are met, all such land use clauses must be approved by the Wetland District Manager prior to Service acceptance of the purchase agreement.

Although the specific acreage of fields to be cooperatively farmed will vary by unit they would typically range from 5 to 160 acres.

In the case of Cooperative Farming Agreements, the farmer is generally required to perform mowing or other in-kind service(s), as part of the habitat management steps taken to achieve a successful grassland planting.

Availability of Resources:

The staff time necessary for development and administration of cooperative farming programs is already committed and available. Most of the work to prepare for this use would be done as part of routine grassland management duties. The additional time needed to coordinate issuance and oversight of the Cooperative Farming Agreement or Land Use Reservation is relatively minor and within existing District resources.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Cooperative farming to prepare suitable seed beds for native prairie plantings will result in short-term disturbances and long-term benefits to both resident and migratory wildlife using WPAs and Service managed upland easements. Short-term impacts will include disturbance and displacement typical of any noisy heavy equipment operation. Cropping activities in old fields or abandoned croplands will also result in short-term loss of habitat for wildlife species using those areas for nesting, feeding, or perching. Long-term benefits are extremely positive due to establishment of diverse nesting cover including native prairie species. The resulting habitat will greatly improve conditions for most of the same species affected by the short-term negative impacts. Strict time constraints placed on this use will limit anticipated impacts to these relatively minor areas.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plans for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

All farming activity will be limited to 3 years or less and comply with all appropriate Service regulations on chemical application and use.

Justification:

The cooperative farming of previously disturbed areas which are owned or under easement by the Service and have unacceptable levels of chemical residue, invasive weeds, or non-native plant species or ecotypes, or are being farmed to honor the land use clauses of a purchase agreement, to prepare an optimum seed bed for the establishment of native prairie species will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of Waterfowl Production Areas or easements for the following reasons:

1. Only areas that have already been significantly manipulated or altered by previous cropping activities will be affected. These areas contain few if any native plants and generally offer limited value to the ecological integrity of the unit or landscape.
2. Cooperative farming activities provide the fastest, most cost effective way to establish native prairie species on areas that have unacceptable levels of chemical residue, invasive weeds, or non-native plant species or ecotypes. District staff could complete all work, but that would require additional equipment and significant staff time. Hiring contractors to do this work but that could require additional funding. By using local farmers to conduct these farming activities, the Districts staff time and budget can be better allocated to completing the needed restoration (seeding of native grasses and forbs) on other lands which have already completed the farming cycle and are in good condition for seeding.
3. Short term impacts of farming small tracts of land are minor. No wildlife or habitat losses occur when agricultural land is purchased and then farmed for an additional period of 2-3 years. Low quality grassland which are farmed as a first step to conversion to higher-value native grasslands will result in habitat loss for trust resources during the farming period. The long term benefits to the ecological integrity of the district and landscape by restoring these degraded or row cropped areas to native prairie plant species are significant and exceed the short term losses incurred through the cropping process.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: One-time Recognition or Dedication Ceremonies on WPAs

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties - Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow One-time Recognition or Dedication Ceremonies on WPAs. The purpose of this use is to recognize the significant contributions made by individuals or organizations toward the conservation of our natural resources. These ceremonies highlight accomplishments resulting from cooperation with various partners. A ceremony may include speeches, presentation of Certificates of Recognition, luncheons and the erection of a permanent sign or cairn commemorating contributions by project partners. Participant numbers typically vary from 10 to 100 people.

These events are often located in an elevated grassland area with a vista over-looking a wetland. They are one day in duration and typically conducted from April through November. Events outside of this time frame are unlikely due to generally unfavorable weather conditions.

The event site would typically be one to two acres in size and may require mowing prior to the Ceremony. Temporary access trails to the site may be necessary and would be established by a one-time mowing. Access to the site could be accomplished by either walking or driving from a designated parking area or public roadway.

These ceremonies are important in recognizing the important contributions of Partners which were vital to the completion of specific projects or conservation programs. They provide well-deserved recognition for past efforts and build a foundation for continued cooperation necessary to the success of future projects. These events are not a wildlife-dependent recreational use and occur very infrequently, usually only once for an individual WPA.

Availability of Resources:

As a partner and participant in these ceremonies, the WMD may dedicate staff time and incur incidental expenses to plan, prepare and conduct these events. The WMD may occasionally provide vehicles or trailers for transportation, sound systems, or tables and chairs for use during these events. It is unlikely that a WMD will be involved in more than four of these events each year, so these activities do not present either a short-term burden or significant long-term commitment of resources. Financial and personnel resources are adequate for WMD participation in these events and will not materially

interfere with or detract from fulfillment of the WMD purpose or mission of the NWRS.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short-term disturbance to ground nesting birds and other wildlife may occur during these activities, but will be insignificant. Ceremonies should be scheduled when possible between July 15 and September 15 to minimize conflicts with ground nesting birds and the hunting season. The short duration, infrequency, and restricted area of these events will result in minor impact on vegetation and wildlife.

Ceremonies conducted during the hunting season could present a minor disturbance to the hunting public and should be scheduled or located to minimize this potential conflict. This activity will not result in result in significant short or long-term impacts that adversely affect the purpose of WPAs or the mission of the National Wildlife System.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plans for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Camping, overnight use and fires are prohibited.
2. A portable toilet is required for events longer than four hours in duration where food is served.
3. A Special Use Permit from the Wetland Manager is required prior to the requested activity.

Justification:

This use has only localized and short-duration impacts to the resources on any particular unit. The use is most often conducted outside of the waterfowl nesting season and thus will not materially interfere with or detract from the purpose of WPAs. Stipulations, which include the issuance of a special use permit as applicable, further safeguard and control the duration and intensity of the use. Managers will also select sites as to minimize disturbance to important habitat areas.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Disability Access to Waterfowl Production Areas

Refuge Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

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Description of Use:

Disability access is the term used to describe the process of granting exemptions to current Refuge Regulations that assist persons with disabilities in engaging in compatible activities on Waterfowl Production Areas. The most common type of exemption given will be via Letters of Authorization or Special Use Permits, of limited duration, which would allow the use of motorized vehicles on existing roads and trails. ATV use off of existing roads and trails would only be considered in limited circumstances and under specific conditions. All exemptions granted will comply with the general public safety regulations of the Department of Interior and the specific public safety guidance of the Service Compatibility Policy. Based on experience to date, it is expected that most disability access requests will be for hunting, but this policy also applies to the other priority public uses: wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, interpretation, and fishing. Waterfowl Production Areas on the Leopold District range in size from 20 acres to over 2,000 acres. The average size is about 240 acres.

Availability of Resources:

The staff time for authorizing motorized vehicle use on established roads and trails is already committed and available. Most of the work needed to prepare for this use would be done as part of routine Waterfowl Production Area management duties. The decision to allow such use would occur as part of normal facility management and inspection programs. The additional time needed to issue the occasional Special Use Permit or Letter of Authorization is relatively minor and within existing District resources.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

A small amount of additional motorized use, generally limited to established roads and trails will result in short-term disturbances to both resident and migratory wildlife using Waterfowl Production Areas. Short-term impacts will include disturbance and displacement typical of any motorized intrusion into wildlife habitat. Long-term impacts are not anticipated as most of the use will involve travel on roadways already used by District staff to conduct management surveys and other activities throughout the year.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Motorized access will generally be limited to existing roads and trails in good condition.
2. Motorized access for hunters is limited to transport of the disabled hunter, blind or other equipment, and the harvested animal(s). Disabled hunters must provide proof of having a Wisconsin DNR disability permit: Class A, B, or C.

Justification:

The Americans with Disabilities Act and ensuing Service policy require that all Service programs and facilities meet the needs of the disabled. Offering special access as described in this determination is one way that the Service can meet that obligation to the American public.

Authorizing motorized vehicle use on established roads and trails for persons with disabilities engaged in compatible uses will cause minimal disturbance and provide recreational opportunities for people who might otherwise not be able to visit Waterfowl Production Areas.

Issuance of permits for disability access will not be limited to a set number as it is expected that meeting the requested demand will still result in a very small amount of permits being issued, with only minimal wildlife disturbance as a consequence. At the expected level of use, this use is compatible as it will be below the threshold where unacceptable wildlife disturbance will occur. If demand far exceeds expectations within the time period covered by this determination and the disturbance threshold is exceeded, District staff will reevaluate the program and may limit the number of permits issued or the locations where such activity would be authorized.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Use of WPAs for Fire Department Training: Burning Structures

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties - Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

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FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow local volunteer fire departments to burn excess structures on Waterfowl Production Areas. The purpose of this activity is two fold; the FWS safely disposes of excess property and the fire department obtains valuable firefighting training. WPAs are occasionally acquired with existing structures that may include; old houses, barns, outbuildings, etc. These structures are excess federal property, are safety hazards, and eyesores to the public. The structures are of no historic, cultural, or monetary value (as determined by prior procedures, see stipulations).

Availability of Resources:

Removal of abandoned structures will result in decreased law enforcement staff time and will enable restoration of the site to a natural landscape and wildlife habitat. The District has resources available to administer this use.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

There will be short duration smoke emissions during the burn operation and impacts to vegetation (primarily non native) around the site during the burn operation. There will also be temporary disturbance to wildlife populations during the burn operation. These impacts are mitigated by the long term improvement to the wildlife habitat after restoration of the site, including the reduction of denning sites for known waterfowl nest predators such as skunks and raccoons.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plans for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. The activity is considered a prescribed fire and is subject to all FWS policies and guidelines for Fire Management, FWS Service Manual, Series Habitat Management, 621 FW 3.
2. FWS employees will not participate in structural fire suppression, FWS Service Manual, 621 FW 1, 3.8.
3. Prior to disposal of any structure the FWS will comply with all Service, State and local policies, laws, regulations, and guidelines regarding the disposal of excess federal property, cultural/historical/archeological review, air quality, solid waste disposal requirements, and burning permit requirements.
4. An agreement with the Fire Department must be in place. The agreement must clearly state the conditions under which the fire department may conduct the burn operation, liability waivers, qualification and personal protective equipment requirements or other items important to the burning operation. (FWS Service Manual, 621 FW 3, 3.6)

Justification:

Removal of surplus building sites by agreement with local fire departments is cost-effective, reduces public safety hazards, and restores WPA's to a more natural condition. Building removal also facilitates waterfowl production by removing predator den sites. The short term disturbance is offset by restoration of the building site, and will not materially interfere with waterfowl production.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Interpretation and Environmental Education

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

To allow wildlife interpretation and environmental education programs to be conducted on Waterfowl Production Areas. Wildlife interpretation and environmental education are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses on National Wildlife Refuge System lands. Formal programs include activities prepared, scheduled, and organized by Service staff and conducted for school-aged children or others. In most cases, curriculums and program schedules are prepared in advance. These curriculums may address a number of wildlife conservation issues including wetland and grassland conservation, migratory bird management, and the conservation of endangered species. Informal programs include nature trails, impromptu presentations and discussions of wildlife conservation issues with interested citizens, casual visitors, and unscheduled groups. The visitation and use of a Waterfowl Production Area by local educators and their classes on their own for the purposes of furthering their understanding of natural resource management issues would also be classified as an informal program.

In addition, this use includes the development of kiosks, interpretive panels on trails and at observation points and indoor interpretive areas within the Wetland Management District office. There are many purposes for these exhibits, including telling the story of waterfowl conservation and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:

Some staff and funding are available for a limited amount of interpretation and environmental education programming on Waterfowl Production Areas. Currently, however, staffing levels and funding are not adequate to fully capitalize on all of the opportunities to interpret wildlife conservation issues within these rural communities. The station Comprehensive Conservation Plan details the needed funding and staff to bring these programs up to Service standards.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

The overall impacts to Waterfowl Production Areas and the associated wildlife populations from this use will be minimal. There will be some disturbance to waterfowl and other wildlife, but at levels that will not likely interfere with waterfowl production. School buses and personal vehicles will utilize parking areas and access trails already constructed

for use by waterfowl hunters and Service employees conducting management activities. The limited number of nature trails and observation points that may be developed will minimize disturbance to vegetation and wildlife use of these areas.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulation Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Use of motorized vehicles is prohibited except by permit or in designated parking areas, access trails, or public roads/tour routes. Motorized boats are prohibited.
2. Managers will monitor use patterns and densities and make adjustments in timing, location and duration as needed to limit disturbance.

Justification:

This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. This use is being permitted as a priority public use and will not diminish the primary purposes of waterfowl production as well as conservation of migratory birds and other wildlife. This use will further the public understanding and knowledge of wildlife conservation and the National Refuge System.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Recreational Fishing

Refuge Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow public fishing on Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) in accordance with State regulations and seasons. Wisconsin recreational fishing regulations allow the traditional taking of game fish species with rod and reel from shore, a boat or through the ice, removal of rough fish by spear, harpoon, archery and dip net, as well as the taking of limited quantities of mussels, crayfish, frogs, minnows and turtles for personal use. All WPAs will be open to public fishing, provided that all forms of fishing or entry on all or any part of individual areas may be temporarily suspended by posting upon occasions of unusual or critical conditions of, or affecting land, water, vegetation, or wildlife populations. Although the entire wetland acreage of the district is open to fishing the opportunities are actually very limited. Acquisition of WPAs is ongoing and as lands are purchased they will be opened to fishing. The game fish season varies according to species and location with specific regulations in certain areas. Generally WPAs have access trails from public roads and for safety reasons small parking lots are provided where sufficient traffic exists. Fishing is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational activity on National Wildlife Refuge System Lands. The few WPAs with viable fisheries are generally connected to adjacent streams, rivers, or lakes that are located off Service lands. The State of Wisconsin manages for healthy game fish populations and allows harvest of surpluses though recreational fishing.

Availability of Resources:

WPAs by statute and regulation are open to waterfowl hunting and as a result access trails, parking lots, signage and other facilities as well as staff to enforce regulations and maintain these facilities have been provided by the Service. Given the anticipated light fishing pressure, staff levels are deemed adequate to administer and enforce laws related to fishing.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Fishing activities and harvest of other aquatic species may cause temporary disturbance to waterfowl and other wildlife using WPAs. This disturbance may displace individual animals to other parts of the WPA, however, this disturbance will be limited in scope due to: (1) the small number of WPAs with viable fisheries; (2) prohibition on use of motorized boats; (3) access which is predominately via foot travel; (4) lack of boat launching facilities. Installa-

tion and use of parking areas and access trails will result in minimal impacts as these parking areas and trails are used by waterfowl hunters as well as by Service employees conducting refuge management activities.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Use of motorized vehicles and watercraft is prohibited except by permit or on designated parking areas, access trails or public roads.
2. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
3. Littering and disposal of bait or entrails is prohibited.
4. All applicable State and Federal Regulations will apply.
5. Fishing is for personal use only, commercial harvest is prohibited.
6. Ice fishing shelters/houses must be removed at the end of each day.
7. Collection of bait is prohibited.

Justification:

Fishing at anticipated levels and on small areas of relatively few WPAs will have localized and short-duration impacts and will not materially interfere with the waterfowl production purpose of WPAs. Stipulations will help reduce or eliminate any unwanted impacts of the use. State regulations and monitoring help ensure that harvest levels of fish do not harm long-term populations.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Establishing Food Plots for Resident Wildlife

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Waterfowl Production Areas - The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties - Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. § 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas - "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "....all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions...." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds"

FmHA fee title transfer properties - "for conservation purposes...."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow the establishment of food plots on Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) throughout the Leopold Wetland Management District in accordance with the attached stipulations section. Food plots are small fields of agricultural crops with some or the entire crop left standing through the winter.

The food plots are planted to meet the requirements of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program. The Fish and Wildlife Service must follow the CRP contract requirements through the end of the contract on parcels purchased from private landowners. These plots are maintained by private conservation organizations through the end of the CRP contract. Food plots are sometimes rotated onto different sites within the same WPA to reduce the build-up of insect or plant pests within the food plot or to manage a stand of non-native vegetation through the use of periodic re-seeding following use as a food plot. The use of food plots also cultivates a strong sense of cooperation between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners.

Food plots are not a priority public use as identified in the Refuge Improvement Act. Food plots are a non-essential but helpful tool to facilitate two priority uses (hunting and wildlife observation) since they help maintain populations of species widely viewed as desirable to view and hunt.

Availability of Resources:

Establishment of food plots maintained by private organization or other agencies requires limited Service resources. Food plots are managed under cooperative farming agreement with private individuals or by local sporting clubs. There is a modest administrative cost associated with developing cooperative farming agreements with private coordinators. These costs typically involve a few hours of staff time for each food plot agreement with most agreements lasting 2 or 3 years.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Food plots may have significant impacts in that most plots are approximately 10 acres in size, effectively eliminating that land from use by nesting waterfowl or other migratory birds. Grassland bird research suggests that agricultural crops do not create the same harmful barrier to grassland bird use as tree plantings. (Some grassland birds avoid not

only the trees but also a zone around the trees or are prevented from making normal daily movements from one side of a tree line to another.) Many grassland bird species, possibly including waterfowl, have better nest success when nesting in large contiguous blocks of grassland. Careful siting of food plots can avoid breaking up a large grassland block into smaller fragments. Some migratory birds actually benefit from the effect of adding more vegetative edges and encouraging some annual weed growth in and around a grassland block. However, these tend to be species whose populations are less imperiled than those requiring large grassland blocks. Waterfowl impacts due to food plots can be reduced but not eliminated by siting the food plots strategically and confining their use to critical areas. Stipulations identified later in this document will prevent critical resources such as native prairie remnants or large, contiguous blocks of grassland habitat from being degraded or destroyed by food plots.

Agricultural chemical impacts due to food plots will be reduced with restrictions on allowable herbicides used. No insecticide use will be allowed on food plots. Runoff and erosion are minimized with proper food plot siting.

Food plots tend to be popular areas for hunting and the increased levels of hunting around food plots will cause increased levels of disturbance due to hunter activity. These periodic disturbances should be mainly limited to autumn and early winter hunting seasons. The impact to waterfowl should be small.

The planting, tending, and partial harvest of food plots creates brief episodes of intrusion with agricultural tractors and implements but the impact to wildlife and public use should be minor.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), one open house was held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Areas for food plots must be identified as critical wintering sites for resident wildlife.
2. Food plots will not have negative impacts on critical habitats such as wetlands and native prairie remnants. No unbroken native prairie habitat will be plowed to plant a food plot.
3. Food plots will be sited to minimize grassland fragmentation.
4. Allowable species for planting in food plots will include: corn, soybeans, sunflowers, wheat, barley, oats, rye, buckwheat, millet, and sorghum.
5. Food plots will be no greater than ten (10) acres and will occupy no more than 5 percent of the total acreage of the WPA on which the plot will be located.
6. No more than 20 percent of the WPAs in any Wetland Management District will contain a food plot.

Justification:

Restricted use of food plots will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which the units were established. Food plots create more significant interference with unit purposes and are thus more stringently controlled to ensure that they remain compatible. Allowing the use of food plots can lead to higher and more stable resident wildlife populations by reducing catastrophic population crashes during severe winters. These higher populations facilitate two priority public uses, hunting and wildlife observation. The impacts to waterfowl and other migratory birds are modest based on limiting the size and location of food plots, and the stipulations in place.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Controlled Grazing on Waterfowl Production Areas and Conservation Easements

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow the limited grazing by domestic livestock, chiefly cattle but potentially including other domestic livestock, on WPAs and easements to improve grassland vigor and health. Controlled grazing is recognized as a valuable tool to remove standing vegetation, reduce vegetative litter, and suppress woody vegetation.

Grazing may take place anytime from April through November. Most commonly, we will use short duration grazing pulses lasting 4 to 8 weeks and then require livestock removal. We will use three typical seasons of use. One season will be early spring (mid April to late May) on native prairie or seeded native grasses designed to reduce the vigor of exotic species and increase the vigor of native species. Summer grazing (July 15 - September 1) may be used, especially on non-native grasslands, to stimulate the grassland after the peak nesting season yet allow vegetative regrowth in the fall. Fall grazing (September 1 - October 31) will be designed to have effects similar to spring grazing, mostly on native prairie remnants or fields seeded with native tallgrass prairie species.

Fencing and control of livestock will be the responsibility of the cooperating private party. Market rate grazing fees will be required of permittees on WPAs. Market grazing fees will include typical market deductions for unusual fencing requirements, required cattle movement, or other factors limiting economic return for the permittees. Market rates will be determined annually in consultation with USDA on prevailing local grazing rates.

Frequency of grazing on any unit will be based on site-specific evaluation of the grassland unit being managed.

Grazing is not a priority public use as identified in the Refuge Improvement Act. As an economic use of Refuge System lands, a compatibility determination for grazing is mandatory.

Availability of Resources:

Developing grazing agreements and monitoring compliance and biological effects requires some Service resources. Most grazing costs (fencing, monitoring herd health, and so on) are assumed by the permittee. Some alternative grassland manage-

ment is required if we do not use grazing as a tool for grassland management. Typically, these other tools are prescribed burning, mowing, and haying. Haying has comparable costs to controlled grazing since it also requires administering special use permits. Mowing is more expensive since all costs are assumed by the agency. Prescribed burning is an effective grassland management tool but staff limitations prevent us from burning as many acres as desirable each year. Plus, there is likely an ecological benefit to rotating grassland management techniques and seasons over time so that a given field may be grazed one year and burned another.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Grazing by domestic livestock has severe short-term effects on grassland communities. Many of these effects are desirable and are designed to maintain and improve healthy grassland communities. Some of these effects include removing standing vegetation, trampling of other vegetation, and reducing populations of pioneering woody plants. Other effects of grazing are more harmful but generally short-lived. Grazing in the spring can cause direct loss of grassland bird nests due to trampling and loss of standing vegetation. Grazing at any time of year creates an aesthetic issue of concern for some people who enjoy using WPAs; seeing public land being grazed by domestic livestock reduces the appeal of the visit for many people. Fortunately, our controlled grazing would typically be of short duration and not occur annually on any unit. Grazing livestock can create minor direct disturbance of wildlife but any harm should be negligible. There is a slight potential for conflict between members of the public and livestock or the permittee, particularly in the autumn when most WPAs receive their heaviest use. All permittees will be advised that the unit is open to the public for hunting and other recreation. There is a very slight risk of injury to the public caused by livestock. Most visitors who are uncomfortable using property containing livestock are likely to select another unit or another time of year for their visit.

Public Review and Comment:

During drafting of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan, two open houses were held and written comments were solicited from the public about Wetland Management District operations including management techniques such as grazing. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Wetland Management District. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Grazing will not occur more frequently than 3 out of every 5 years on any tract without the preparation of a site-specific compatibility determination.
2. All fencing costs will be borne by the permittee.
3. No insecticides, including insecticidal dusting bags, will be used on WPAs or easements.
4. No supplemental feeding will be allowed without specific authorization of the Wetland District Manager.
5. Control and confinement of the livestock will be the responsibility of the permittee.

Justification:

Controlled grazing by domestic livestock will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which the units were established. Limited livestock grazing creates temporary disturbances to vegetation. Many of these disturbances are desirable for grassland management. Grazing produces an undesirable but short-term impact to grassland bird nesting and site aesthetics. Controlled grazing is an alternative management tool that can be used to replace or complement prescribed burning, mowing, or haying on grasslands. Without occasional disturbance caused by mowing, haying, burning, or grazing, the health of the grassland community would decline, as would the potential for waterfowl production.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Haying

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

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Description of Use:

Haying is generally the cutting and removal of grass or other forage, by baling and transport to an off-refuge location. The grass may be native or nonnative, warm season or cool season. Haying of this type is typically done by a cooperative farmer acting under authority of a Cooperative Farming Agreement, Land Use Reservation, or Special Use Permit issued by the Wetland District Manager.

Haying can be an effective management tool as part of an overall grassland management plan to improve and maintain district grasslands for the benefit of migratory birds. Grasslands need periodic renovation to maintain vigor, diversity, and the structure necessary for migratory bird use. Haying can be an alternative to burning, which is the primary means used by district staff to maintain grassland vigor. If local site conditions preclude use of prescribed fire due to hazards to neighboring property, smoke management issues, or a similar problem, then the removal of accumulated biomass through haying does serve to reduce unwanted overstory and reduce woody plant invasion, etc. Such removal will allow for more vigorous regrowth of desirable species following the haying, although results are neither as dramatic nor as positive as with prescribed fire.

Another possible use of haying on district grasslands involves the initial steps of removing unwanted vegetation prior to seeding the area to native grasses. Haying of a nonnative cool season field is an effective step in advance of spraying the field with herbicides to kill the existing vegetation. Removal of the heavy grass overstory by haying allows the chemical spray to more effectively treat the target plants. Better removal of the unwanted grasses will in turn ensure better success of the planted native grasses.

A more limited application for haying on Waterfowl Production Areas involves its potential use for establishing fire breaks for the prescribed fire program. A cooperative farmer would hay the grassland strips in early fall. That area would then green up earlier in the spring and would have no dead overstory biomass, allowing its use as a fire break.

Although specific acreages for fields to be hayed will vary by unit, they will typically range from 5 to 40 acres with only rare exceptions exceeding 75 acres. Hay acreages for fire breaks would be very

small, estimated at less than 5 acres per WPA per event.

Availability of Resources:

No additional fiscal resources are needed to conduct this use. The needed staff time is already committed and available. Most of the work needed to prepare for this use would be done as part of routine grassland management duties. The decision to use a cooperative farmer for haying would only follow as part of strategies developed during grassland management planning. The additional time needed to coordinate issuance and oversight of the needed Special Use Permit or Cooperative Farming Agreement for haying is relatively minor and within existing district resources.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Haying will result in short-term disturbances and long-term benefits to both resident and migratory wildlife using Waterfowl Production Areas. 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 cover, nesting, or feeding such as obligatory grassland species such as the bobolink or dickcissel. Long-term benefits will accrue due to the increased vigor of the regrowth or the establishment of highly desirable native tallgrass species, which will improve conditions for those same species affected by the short-term negative impacts. Strict time constraints placed on this use will limit anticipated impacts to these relatively minor areas.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Haying will only be allowed after July 15 to minimize disturbance to nesting migratory birds. In normal years, most birds are off the nest by this date.
2. Bales must be removed from the WPA within 2 days of baling.
3. Windrowed grass left lying to dry prior to baling must be raked and moved every 2 days if left on newly seeded native grass and in no cases should remain on the ground more than 6 days prior to baling.

Justification:

Haying will not materially interfere with waterfowl production if done within the necessary stipulations. Use of haying as a management tool, when other options are limited, can be a valuable technique for providing long-term habitat improvements to grassland that otherwise would degrade through natural succession or dominance of non-native plants. Without this tool, the areas may suffer encroachment of undesirable woody species such as box elder, or would remain in unwanted non-native cool season grasses such as brome. Use of the areas by trust species including waterfowl and grassland obligate songbirds such as bobolink, dickcissel, or grasshopper sparrow would slowly decline in the absence of haying or other similar management.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Hunting of Resident Game and Furbearers

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow public hunting of migratory game birds, upland game, and big game on Waterfowl Production Areas in accordance with Federal and State regulations and seasons. All Waterfowl Production Areas will be open to public hunting, with the exception of Blue Wing and Wilcox WPAs, provided that all forms of hunting or entry on all or any part of individual areas may be temporarily suspended by posting upon occasions of unusual or critical conditions of, or affecting land, water, vegetation, or wildlife populations. (Blue Wing WPA in Ozaukee County is closed due to public safety concerns. The Wilcox WPA in Waushara County is closed as a condition of the initial land acquisition.)

Hunting is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational activity on National Wildlife Refuge System Lands. Acquisition of Waterfowl Production Areas is ongoing and as lands are purchased they will be opened to hunting. Although open to all state seasons, the majority of use occurs from mid- September though the end of December. Many WPAs have small parking lots for use by hunters and other visitors. Federal and State regulations allow for the regulated harvest of surplus game animals though recreational hunting.

Availability of Resources:

Waterfowl Production Areas are by statute and regulation open to waterfowl hunting. These lands have been open to hunting since they were acquired and as a result access trails, parking lots, signage and other facilities, as well as staff to enforce regulations and maintain these facilities, have been provided by the Service. Existing Service personnel is generally sufficient to oversee this program and enforce hunting regulations.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Installation and use of parking areas and access trails will result in minimal impacts as these parking areas and trails are used by hunters as well as by Service employees conducting refuge management activities. Although hunting causes mortality and temporary disturbance to waterfowl and other wildlife, harvesting surplus animals is not detrimental to their populations and can prevent damage to the natural habitat.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Nontoxic shot must be used in accordance with current regulations.
2. Use of motorized vehicles and water craft is prohibited except by permit or in designated parking areas, access trails or public roads.
3. Camping, overnight use and fires are prohibited.
4. All applicable State and Federal Regulations will apply.

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 waterfowl production as well as conservation of migratory birds and other wildlife. 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: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Installation of Bird Nest Boxes or Structures by Individuals or Organized Groups

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

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Description of Use:

Allow the installation of nest structures such as bluebird nest boxes and wood duck boxes by individuals or groups on Waterfowl Production Areas. Site-by-site authorization will be made by the District Manager via a letter of authorization. Requests for installing nesting structures are occasionally made by individuals and sporting groups. The majority of requests are for bluebird and wood duck boxes. Some requests could also be for artificial mallard nesting structures or for other migratory birds such as ospreys. The structures are usually placed in late winter or early spring. Structures are generally affixed using posts or poles. Structures are occasionally mounted to existing trees although this is less desirable due to increased nest predation.

In all cases, the intention of the requestor is the enhancement of wildlife populations by providing safe nesting sites.

Placing artificial nesting structures on WPAs is not a priority public use as defined in the Refuge Improvement Act. The use is a non-essential contributor to other priority uses such as wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education.

Availability of Resources:

Installation of artificial nest structures on WPAs by private individuals or groups requires minimal resources. They are required to incur all costs associated with construction, placement, monitoring, and maintenance of the structures. Should cooperators fail to adequately maintain the structures, there may be some cost associated with removing abandoned structures.

Anticipated Impacts on Refuge Purpose(s):

The installation of artificial nesting structures has a minimal impact on the purposes for which WPAs were established. Waterfowl nesting structures may even increase the production of waterfowl by providing sites for nests where predators are less likely to destroy the nests. Other boxes or structures provide nesting sites for other migratory birds such as bluebirds. Artificial nesting boxes are widely credited with helping increase the population of eastern bluebirds in North America.

There is some small, temporary wildlife disturbance caused during placement and maintenance of the structures. This disturbance is minor.

There are some aesthetic costs associated with placing artificial structures in natural settings. These costs may be minimized by: 1)controlling the number and density of structures, and 2)requiring placement of non-waterfowl structures along the edges of WPAs in areas already appearing unnatural due to fences, signs, and adjacent roads or crop fields. Wood duck boxes and other waterfowl nesting devices are typically placed in or near wetlands. No access by motorized vehicles or other special access will be provided for installing nest structures.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Approval from Project Leader via a letter of authorization is required prior to installation.
2. Annual maintenance is required.
3. Structures may be removed upon Project Leaders' request. Some possible reasons include: lack of maintenance, poor placement, and variation from approved installation plan.
4. Ownership of any nest structure placed on any WPA by private individuals or groups will be forfeited to the Service upon installation.

Justification:

Artificial nesting structures do not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which the units were acquired. In fact, these structures likely contribute to the purposes of WPAs by providing secure nesting sites for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Nest success for ducks using artificial nest structures is higher than for ducks nesting in grasslands. Nesting boxes for cavity nesting birds like bluebirds and wood ducks can increase populations when natural cavities are scarce. At worst, nesting structures are neutral in their effect; likely there is a positive effect. The aesthetic costs of artificial nest structures are modest and can be minimized through appropriate siting.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Wildlife Observation and Photography (including the means of access such as hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and canoeing)

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties - Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow general public access during anytime of the year to Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) for the observation and photographing of associated flora and fauna. All WPAs will be open to the public for the observation and photography of wildlife unless specifically closed by the manager. Allowable forms of access to WPAs include hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, canoes, and other non-motorized boats. Access by motorized vehicles, bicycles, and horses will be limited to designated roads and parking lots. Motorized boats, including those with electric motors, will not be allowed within WPAs. Wildlife observation and photography are priority wildlife-dependent recreational activities on National Wildlife Refuge System Lands as identified in the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. Entry on all or portions of individual areas may be temporarily suspended, and posted as such, due to circumstances or conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety. WPAs will be open for these activities from dawn to dusk.

Access for wildlife observation and photography will allow public access and enjoyment of scenic views and an array of wildlife including waterfowl, other migratory birds, resident wildlife and natural landscapes.

Availability of Resources:

Wildlife observation and photography require minimal resources. These lands have been open to public use since they were acquired. Thus, access trails, parking lots, signs, and other facilities as well as staff to enforce regulations and maintain these facilities have been provided by the Service.

Some public use facilities are sub-standard. The WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan recognizes these problems and recommends solutions to improve public access opportunities. Some enhanced wildlife observation and photography opportunities will be provided upon implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Anticipated Impacts on Refuge Purpose(s):

Wildlife observation and photography pose minimal impacts on the purposes for which WPAs were established. Access is typically by individuals or small groups on foot or occasionally using snowshoes or skies. Damage to habitat by walking is minimal and temporary. There is some temporary disturbance to wildlife due to human activity on the land. The most likely impact to WPA purposes would be during spring and early summer nesting and brood rearing but the expected sporadic and limited use by the public should not create unreasonable impacts. Winter activities pose no impacts to nesting waterfowl and little to impact to vegetation. The winter disturbance to resident wildlife is temporary and minor. Large groups of visitors typically use established foot trails with little impact on vegetation. Disturbance to wildlife, such as flushing a nesting bird, is inherent to these activities; however, the disturbance is temporary and generally not malicious. Any unreasonable harassment would be grounds for the manager to close the area to these uses or restrict the uses to minimize harm.

To date, most WPAs receive only minor use for the purposes of wildlife observation and photography, and many visitors engaging in wildlife observation may never get off the adjacent public road.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

This determination is being developed as part of the WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan and will be subject to further public review during the review phase of the overall plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Certain modes of access such as motorized vehicle, bicycles, and horses will be limited to public roads and parking lots.
2. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited. Use is limited to dawn to dusk.
3. No photo or viewing blinds may be left over night.
4. Harassment of wildlife or excessive damage to vegetation is prohibited.

Justification:

This use has been determined compatible because wildlife viewing and photography will not materially interfere with or detract from unit purposes, including waterfowl production. The level of use for wildlife observation and photography is minor on most WPAs. The associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor. Wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses and instill visitors with the joys of abundant wildlife and wild lands. These uses also help fulfill the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Those WPAs with increased activities generally have facilities present to accommodate the public use with only minor impacts to the habitat.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Research by a Third Party

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

The Wetland Management District allows research on a variety of biological, physical, archaeological and social issues and concerns to address District management information needs or other issues. Studies are conducted by colleges, universities, agencies, organizations, and individuals. These activities would generally study some biological aspect of the Districts flora and fauna but could also include studies of hydrology, soils, ecological processes, habitat management and restoration, cultural resources, etc. Many such projects are done cooperatively with, or at the request of the District, but some studies may be initiated solely at the request of the researcher, such as a grad student wishing to utilize District lands as part of their project. The research would be conducted within the wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, and/or savanna habitats the District. Research activities could occur during all time periods of the year.

Written research proposals will be required for review and approval before access will be allowed. If approved, access to District lands and waters will be limited to the least invasive means available to accomplish the activities. All land disturbances will be at the minimal level necessary to accomplish goals of the proposed research. Any proposed soil disturbance will require approval of the Regional Historic Preservation Officer. Access to study locations off-road will be by foot for land locations and non motorized water craft, if possible.

Availability of Resources:

The District has resources available to administer this use. This activity will require the District staff to review proposals, issue a Special Use Permit for approved projects, and perhaps conduct random inspections of the project area.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Disturbance or removal of plants and wildlife would be a temporary impact. Repopulation of the removed individuals would be anticipated to occur over time. Vehicle traffic would be restricted to established roads and trails so disturbance to vegetation would be minimal. Some temporary dispersal of animals may occur from field activities. The results from these studies and surveys may prove beneficial by complementing the Districts biological and land management programs. This activity should not result in impacts that adversely affect

the purpose of WPAs or the mission of the National Wildlife System.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. All research proposals will be reviewed for their potential impact(s) to District purposes, wildlife, vegetation, and for potential benefits to future District management activities. Projects concerning endangered and threatened species will require greater scrutiny and control, including involvement of Ecological Services.
2. Copies of all results and/or published papers shall be provided to the District. Multi-year studies shall provide annual reports of project status and progress.
3. Annually, the District will review all ongoing projects to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
4. Archaeological researchers must obtain an Archaeological Resource Protection Act permit from the Regional Director prior to obtaining a special use permit from the District Manager.

Justification:

This use will have limited and localized impacts when conducted within the stipulations above. Administration of the use will require little administrative time or funding. This use will not diminish the primary purposes of waterfowl production, or the conservation of other migratory birds and wildlife, and may provide mutually beneficial data, results, and recommendations.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Placement of New, Small Parking Areas on Waterfowl Production Areas

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow the placement and construction of small parking areas on any Waterfowl Production Area where the Wetland Manager considers it necessary to provide safe off-road parking and access to the general public for the following permitted activities: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation, all priority wildlife-dependent recreational activities on National Wildlife Refuge System lands. In addition, these parking areas will be used by Service personnel in conducting management activities or biological surveys and assessments.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages approximately 12,000 acres of Waterfowl Production Areas in the Leopold WMD. Acquisition of Waterfowl Production Areas is ongoing and as new lands are acquired they are open to priority public uses.

These parking areas will be less than an acre and will be relatively primitive facilities with grass or gravel surfacing. Parking lots may also include various signage, brochure boxes, informational kiosks, or similar improvements. If necessary, barriers to contain motorized vehicles within the parking areas, and to identify the parking area boundary, may be constructed of wood posts, wire fence or rock barriers, as appropriate and available on a site specific basis.

Availability of Resources:

WPAs are open to all priority wildlife-dependent recreational activities and as a result access trails, signage and other facilities, as well as staff to enforce regulations and maintain these facilities, have been provided by the Service. Currently the staffing levels and facilities required for public programs and accessibility on WPAs do not meet Service public use standards. The station Comprehensive Conservation Plan details the needed funds and manpower to bring these programs up to Service standards.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Installation and use of these parking areas and access trails will result in minimal impact as the parking areas are used infrequently during most of the year by either the general public participating in authorized and permitted activities or by Service personnel. Peak use of these areas will generally

occur during fall hunting seasons when no disturbance to nesting waterfowl or other migratory birds will result. Impacts to habitat will be minimal due to their relatively small size (< 1 acre) by comparison to the average size of the WPA (average > 200 acres). Impacts will be lessened by selection of sites away from wetlands or native prairie. Generally, parking areas will be constructed at or near abandoned farm sites utilizing existing graveled driveways or previously constructed farm field approaches immediately off of public roadways. Parking lots constructed within the interior of a unit will be avoided whenever possible to minimize wildlife disturbance, impacts to wildlife habitat, and conflicts with other authorized public uses.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Parking areas will not be constructed in areas where negative wetland impacts will result.
2. Parking areas will not be constructed on native prairie habitat.
3. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
4. Location of parking areas within the interior of each unit should be avoided whenever possible.
5. An archaeological review of each selected site shall be made through the State Historic Preservation Officer and Regional Historic Preservation Officer prior to construction.

Justification:

This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. This use is permitted as it is deemed necessary to provide safe off-road access by the public to participate in appropriate and permitted priority uses and will not diminish the primary purposes of waterfowl production and the conservation of migratory birds and other wildlife. This use will meet the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System by providing resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife, and plant resources on these lands.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Short-term Upland Disturbance for Highway or Other Public Interest Projects with No ROW Expansion and Full Restoration.

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. § 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "....all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions...." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds"

FmHA fee title transfer properties - "for conservation purposes...."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow short-term disturbance to uplands for highway or other public interest projects with no right-of-way expansion and full restoration. Every year, requests are made by state and local government agencies and utility companies to do repairs and improvements to existing road ways and utility facilities associated with existing rights-of-way on WPAs throughout Wisconsin. Many of these requests require temporary work outside existing right-of-way boundaries, generally resulting in temporary disturbance to the associated vegetation. Frequently, the temporary work requested is required to reshape a slope immediately adjacent to a road right-of-way to improve transportation safety. Other times, the requested action can be merely for permission to turn around heavy equipment on land immediately adjacent to the right-of-way. Most often, the temporary work outside of the right-of-way is conducted during the summer and fall, when construction conditions are optimal. The work typically involves temporary disturbance to previously farmed uplands that are then reseeded to native vegetation by the requesting organization. This determination will allow approved work and temporary habitat disturbance outside the right-of-way boundary when long-term impacts are either beneficial or not significantly harmful.

Availability of Resources:

Minimal expense is required of the Service for these projects. Authorization of the projects will require the requesting organization to cover habitat restoration costs. There is a modest administrative cost to issuing and monitoring this work.

Anticipated Impacts on Refuge Purpose(s):

The impacts to the associated uplands with this use will be minimal and temporary. When the request includes unavoidable destruction of vegetation, approval will be limited to sites previously tilled or otherwise disrupted. No native prairie remnants or wetlands may be destroyed. Any areas with disturbed vegetation will be seeded by the requesting organization to a diverse mix of native species

that will lead to better long-term habitat than the vegetation originally disturbed.

Most of this work occurs in summer and fall, after the waterfowl nesting season. The duration of any single project is usually 1 to 8 weeks. Occasionally, work may occur during the nesting season but the size of the disturbance zone will be minimal. The quality of the habitat in the disturbed zone may be diminished for up to 3 years following the project but the disturbed zone will provide some migratory bird value by the year following the project. The long-term productivity of the disturbed zone will frequently increase due to the replacement of exotic, less desirable cover with native vegetation.

Most of the impacts will be along existing roads in areas already subject to significant habitat and aesthetic deterioration due to existing transportation rights-of-way. Rarely, a utility right-of-way can split an otherwise contiguous block of quality habitat. In these settings, the disturbance will still be temporary but the impact to waterfowl and other migratory birds is likely greater. The existing right-of-way already authorizes disturbance within the right-of-way so the larger impact of creating a disturbance within quality habitat will likely occur anyway. The decision to authorize temporary disturbance outside the right-of-way will slightly increase the magnitude of the disturbance.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), one open house was held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. All work done outside of existing rights-of-way must be approved by the Project Leader in the form of a letter of authorization.
2. Conditions stipulated in a letter of authorization such as seeding mixes, weed control, etc. must be followed to remain a compatible use.
3. No work that leads to permanent loss of wetlands or native prairie remnants will be allowed without a site-specific compatibility determination.

Justification:

This use will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which the units were established with the above stipulations in place. Almost all WPAs are constrained by one or more rights-of-way that were in place before acquisition by the federal government. Temporary disturbances to land adjacent to these rights-of-way will have only small, temporary harmful effects on wildlife and may lead to improved long-term productivity by replacing degraded, exotic vegetation with vigorous native vegetation. Work within the rights-of-way is beyond the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Service to regulate other than influencing the timing and scope to minimize wildlife harm. Allowing temporary work outside the right-of-way does little or no long-term harm to wildlife resources and allows the holder of the right-of-way to provide essential human services to our rural communities. Restoration of the disturbed sites can actually increase productivity by providing more robust vegetation.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

Compatibility Determination

Use: Wood Cutting/Timber Harvest

Refuge Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

County: multiple counties, Wisconsin

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

What is the use?

The removal of standing or fallen trees by private individuals. This Compatibility Determination applies to all wood removal activities regardless of the ultimate use of the wood (e.g. firewood, pulp, etc.). Differences in scope and necessary equipment will occur depending on the amount and type of wood available for removal. Impacts to the purpose of the WPAs and System mission are similar regardless of why the wood is removed. This activity will only occur where the Service has determined that a need exists to remove wood from WPAs for habitat management purposes.

Is this a wildlife-dependent use?

Wood cutting is not a priority public use, as defined by the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997, of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Where would the use be conducted?

Wood removal may occur at former home sites, along existing windbreaks, fence rows, woodlots, oak savanna restoration projects, or in areas where trees are encroaching on grassland habitats. Harvest sites may vary in size from less than an acre up to several hundred acres depending on the site and management objectives.

When would the use be conducted?

Wood removal activities may be authorized throughout the year. Most often, wood removal activities will occur during the winter months when frozen ground will facilitate access and afford protection to underlying soils and vegetation.

How would the use be conducted?

The scope of the activity will be determined by the management objective for the area and by the quantity and quality of available wood. Equipment used for harvest may range from chainsaws and axes, to traditional logging equipment such as feller-bunchers and log skidders. Access may be by ATV, pick-up truck, farm tractor, or larger traditional logging equipment.

Why is this use being proposed?

Harvest of wood products may be permitted on WPAs to stop, reduce, or reverse the encroachment and presence of trees on grassland and/or oak savanna habitats. Encroachment of woody vegetation due to fire suppression, absence of landscape-scale grazing, and tree planting practices continue to threaten these habitat types. Waterfowl Production Areas are established to produce waterfowl, and managing woody vegetation to enhance grassland nesting prairie habitat generally facilitates that purpose. In accordance with the System mission, management of grassland waterfowl nesting habitat is appropriate over most of the acreage in the Leopold WMD. Managing woody vegetation is an important means to that end. There may also be instances of woody vegetation removal for purposes of reducing fuels in the wildland-urban interface, complementing habitat management efforts described above.

Availability of Resources:

Resources involved in the administration and management of the use:

The time required to plan, issue permits/contracts, and monitor the implementation of a wood product harvest program would require the dedication of some existing staff hours to this activity. In permitting a wood products harvest, the manager has identified a management need and presumably has secured and prioritized station resources to that end.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

In permitting this type of activity, the potential exists to directly impact waterfowl production by displacement of birds from localized areas due to disturbance, or crushing of nests as a result of access for this activity. These impacts are easily avoided by timing of the activity in accordance with site specific characteristics. In limited and rare instances, a small number of individuals of tree-nesting species (e.g. wood duck, hooded merganser, etc.) may be displaced from a local area for obvious reasons.

Indirect impacts to waterfowl production will occur as a result of removing woody vegetation. In nearly every instance, these impacts will be positive. The removal of woody vegetation from historic prairie habitats impacts waterfowl production and the System mission by facilitating the restoration of tallgrass prairie and removing artificially created predator habitat from within the WPAs.

Access for the purpose of removing wood may impact habitat by rutting soils, destroying ground cover, creating weed seed beds, and increasing sedimentation due to runoff in nearby wetlands. These impacts can again be avoided by timing of the activity.

Public Review and Comment:

The Compatibility Determination and associated Environmental Action Statement will be posted for public review and comment at the District office for 30 days.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. If work is in an area where waterfowl nesting is likely, no large-scale cutting operations will be permitted from April through July 15.
2. Vehicle use will be regulated and monitored to prevent rutting, sub-surface disturbance, and excessive damage to vegetation.
3. A special use permit/contract will be issued so that site specific impacts can be reduced or eliminated and Service management goals are met.

Justification:

This project will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes of the District or fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission.

The control of woody vegetation on District grasslands is necessary to effectively manage the District for the purpose of waterfowl production: primarily mallards and blue-winged teal.

Any direct impacts on waterfowl production (take, disturbance, etc.) can be largely avoided by timing the activity so that it is not coincident with the waterfowl production season. Removal of trees in certain instances will, on occasion, eliminate wood

duck, hooded merganser, or other cavity-nesting species habitat. This would be an irregular and occasional impact and, since most wood harvest will be associated with restoration sites, it is unlikely that these areas would have provided historic nesting sites. Due to the benefits that would be realized by other waterfowl species, and the abundance of alternative nest sites for cavity-nesting species in the area, these impacts would not significantly detract from the Districts purpose or the System mission.

Impacts to the habitat as a result of access to WPAs for wood removal purposes are potentially significant, but also easily avoided. Areas where woody species are removed for the purpose of conversion of the habitat type to grassland/oak savanna will receive follow-up treatments to maintain and manage these preferred habitat types. Ground disturbance in these areas is less problematic and possibly desirable depending on the specific site. Access to and from these areas will need to be carefully controlled to avoid impacts such as rutting and increased sedimentation in area wetlands due to run-off. If existing roads are not present, access can be restricted to periods of frozen ground to avoid or minimize impacts to underlying vegetation and soils.

Other indirect impacts are generally considered positive and thus do not materially interfere with or detract from the purpose of waterfowl production or the System mission. The removal of trees from grasslands, fence rows, and over-grown oak savannas will benefit waterfowl and other migratory bird production by assisting with the restoration of grassland prairie habitats and eliminating predator habitat and perch sites. Individuals participating in the wood harvest program will be under special use permit/contract and thus site specific stipulations will ensure resource protection and achievement of management goals. Control of woody species encroachment on grassland habitats is a necessary management activity for the Leopold WMD in converting areas back to their historical condition and directly supports the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Trapping of Furbearers

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Waterfowl Production Areas – "...as Waterfowl Production Areas" subject to "...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]....except the inviolate sanctuary provisions..." and "...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

FmHA fee title transfer properties – "for conservation purposes..."

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Public trapping of furbearers on Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA) in accordance with State regulations. This Compatibility Determination does not apply to "commercial" trapping activities where the Service awards a contract, or permit, for the removal of a species to facilitate management, i.e. the Service needs muskrats removed from an area to protect a dike system.

Trapping is not a priority wildlife-dependent recreational activity of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as defined by the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997.

By regulation (50 CFR 31.16), lands acquired as WPAs are open to public trapping unless closed under the authority of 50 CFR 25.21. Trapping is permitted for a wide variety of species; however, muskrat, raccoon, mink, and red fox are probably the primary target species. As a result, most trapping activity on WPAs is concentrated in or near wetland areas.

Trapping seasons for various species of furbearers may run from mid-October through March. Several species of unprotected animals (opossum, skunk and weasel) may be trapped on a year-round basis. While State regulations technically permit such activity, there is no known trapping activity on the WPAs outside of the traditional fall and winter trapping seasons. Wisconsin regulations have established trap tending hours of 4 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Trappers may utilize leghold traps, snares, and body-gripping ("Conibear" type) traps. Each method is qualified under State regulation as to trap size and types of allowable sets in order to protect non-target species, and provide for the safe use of the area by others.

Access for trapping on most WPAs is almost exclusively by foot, although trappers may also utilize non-motorized boats on some of the larger wetlands. Travel on WPAs by highway vehicles, ATVs (3 and 4-wheelers), and snowmachine is prohibited at all times. Many WPAs have parking lots to facilitate all allowed public uses, including trapping.

Availability of Resources:

There is no incremental increase in administering this activity, above the stations general operating

costs, that would be directly attributable to the public trapping program.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Because of the temporal separation of trapping activities and waterfowl using the areas for production, direct impacts to waterfowl production by trappers is negligible. Beaver trappers using WPAs after early March, may disturb waterfowl on occasion, and cause temporary displacement of waterfowl from specific and limited areas. These impacts would be occasional, temporary, and isolated to small geographic areas. Any habitat change as a result of the physical impacts of trapping activity (trampling, etc.) is undetectable and insignificant.

Indirect impacts to waterfowl production do result from the removal of animals under a trapping program. In many instances, these impacts are positive. Many species that may be trapped are predators on waterfowl. Controlling populations of these predators has a generally positive impact on waterfowl production. Timing of the removal of predators, size of the WPA, and adjacent land use all affect the degree to which predator management, through a public trapping program, benefits waterfowl production.

Impacts to waterfowl production habitat occur as a result of removal of species such as beaver and muskrat. Due to the societal requirements to intensively manage water levels on WPAs, managing beaver and muskrat populations at reasonable levels through a public trapping program results in positive impacts to waterfowl production and minimizes the need to commit Service resources to the same end. Uncontrolled muskrat and beaver populations can cause damage or interfere with the operation of dikes, water control structures, etc.

When considering impacts to the System mission, impacts also include those to the furbearer populations themselves. However, the Wisconsin DNR regulates the trapping seasons to insure furbearer populations are healthy and the take by trapping is sustainable.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Trapping activity must be conducted in compliance with existing State regulations.
2. Trappers must comply with existing WPA access and use regulations.

Justification:

Direct impacts to the waterfowl production purpose are negligible due to the temporal separation of most trapping activity and the use of WPAs by waterfowl for production. Limited disturbance of individuals and pairs undoubtedly occurs from beaver trapping activity occurring after early March. These temporary and isolated disturbance events result in temporary displacement of birds from a specific location. Due to the duration of these events, the small number of individual waterfowl involved, and the limited geographic area impacted by the presence of one or a few individual trappers, these impacts on waterfowl production and the System mission are negligible.

Indirect impacts to waterfowl production occur as a result of the effects of trapping on the target, or non-target, species populations. Most species of interest to trappers and common "non-target" catches (i.e. skunk) are predators on waterfowl at some point in the production cycle. Management of red fox, raccoon, mink, otter, and skunk populations, through a regulated trapping program is, at worst, a neutral impact, and likely a positive one in most cases on the waterfowl production purpose. Due to edge effects and concentrations of nesting waterfowl, the impacts of predator management are likely inversely related to WPA size. Many WPAs are relatively small and fragmented. In these small parcels, the effects of only a few individual predators can be highly significant on waterfowl production in the local area. Timing of the removal of predators also affects the impact that this activity has on

waterfowl production. Again, depending on the time of year, impacts on waterfowl production may be neutral or positive. While there is considerable debate about the effects of the presence of coyotes on waterfowl production, the density and subsequent harvest of coyotes through the trapping program is insignificant.

Other indirect impacts on waterfowl production occur as a result of the manipulation of populations of species that affect habitat. Beaver and muskrat, by their nature, affect habitat that, in turn, may affect waterfowl production. Upon initial analysis, we often think of beaver and their wetland construction activities, and muskrat with their propensity to maintain open water, as beneficial to waterfowl production. In exceptionally large marshes and in pre-settlement times, this is/was likely the case. However, the landscape of Wisconsin has been so altered through agricultural conversion that few historic ecosystem functions remain intact. Other than the fact that water continues to flow downhill, the hydrology of this landscape bears little resemblance to its pre-settlement conditions. Dikes, levees, roads, culverts, tile lines, pumps, and water control structures work to move and confine water with calculated purpose. Ramifications of disruption to this system can include private property damage, public safety hazards, disgruntled neighbors, and legal liability. As a result, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intensely manages water on WPAs to provide for waterfowl production and to fulfill the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, while remaining within societal constraints. Left unchecked, beaver activity results in disruption to the water flow when culverts and water control structures are blocked. High muskrat populations are detrimental to levees and dikes as individuals burrow into these structures and compromise the structural integrity. Without the ability to control water levels, our waterfowl production purpose would suffer as would our ability to contribute to the System mission. A public trapping program facilitates management of beaver and muskrat populations at such levels that many benefits created by these species are realized, yet the ability of the Service to manage water levels is not compromised. On a statewide basis, beaver harvest has remained fairly stable over the past decade in spite of the decline in the number of trappers participating in the activity. The muskrat harvest fluctuates widely driven by fur prices and the natural fluctuations in muskrat populations.

Overall, trapping is a very minor public use of WPAs but is an important management tool in localized areas. The public trapping program on WPAs allows for public opportunity and management of furbearer populations. Consistent with the System mission, trapping on WPAs results in management of populations and is not a "control" program intending to eliminate components of the ecosystem for the benefit of others. Data from the State of Wisconsin, DNR, on trapping activity and wildlife populations indicates removal of individuals, under the current management scheme is not resulting in harm to the target populations. The public trapping program, as managed, does not materially interfere with or detract from the Service's ability to meet our purpose of waterfowl production or the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Placement of Wetland Accesses/Ramps in Support of Priority Wildlife-dependent Recreational Activities

Station Name: Leopold Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Waterfowl Production Areas – The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas"; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

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Refuge Purpose(s):

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National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

"...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."

Description of Use:

Allow the placement and/or construction of accesses/ramps on any Waterfowl Production Area where the Wetland Manager considers it beneficial to provide access by the general public for the following permitted activities: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation, all priority wildlife-dependent recreational activities on National Wildlife Refuge System lands. In addition, these ramps will be used by Service personnel in conducting management activities or biological surveys and assessments on the WPAs.

These accesses will be small, single ramp structures and will be relatively primitive facilities with grass or gravel surfacing. In rare cases where very high levels of use or site conditions dictate, the placement of a concrete ramp may be warranted.

Availability of Resources:

WPAs are open to all priority wildlife-dependent recreational activities and as a result access trails, informational and interpretive signs and other facilities as well as staff to enforce regulations and maintain these facilities have been provided by the Service. Currently the staffing levels and facilities required for public programs and accessibility on WPAs do not meet Service public use standards. The station Comprehensive Conservation Plan details the needed funds and staffing to bring these programs up to Service standards.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Installation and use of these accesses/ramps will result in minimal impacts as these areas are used infrequently during most of the year by either the general public participating in authorized and permitted activities or by Service personnel. Peak use of these areas will generally occur during fall hunting seasons when no disturbance to nesting or young animals will result. Impacts to habitat will be minimal due to their relatively small size by comparison to the average size of a WPA (average >200 acres). Impacts will be lessened by selection of sites that minimize the need for any wetland alterations and/or avoidance of native prairie. Accesses/ramps

constructed within the interior of a unit will be avoided when ever possible to minimize wildlife disturbance, impacts to habitat, and conflicts with other authorized public uses.

Public Review and Comment:

During the Scoping phase of the preparation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), two open houses were held to solicit public input and comment on all aspects of district management. This Compatibility Determination was prepared concurrently with and included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Leopold Wetland Management District in Wisconsin. Public review and comment will be solicited during the CCP comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Accesses/ramps must not be constructed in areas where negative wetland impacts or loss will result.
2. Accesses/ramps must not be constructed on native prairie habitat.
3. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
4. Location of ramps within the interior of each unit should be avoided whenever possible.
5. An archaeological review of each selected site shall be made through the State Historic Preservation Officer and Regional Historic Preservation Officer prior to construction.

Justification:

This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. This use is permitted as it is deemed necessary to provide safe off-road access by the public to participate in appropriate and permitted priority uses. The footprint of the access site is small and will not diminish the primary purposes of waterfowl production and the conservation of migratory birds and other wildlife. This use will meet the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System by providing resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife, and plant resources on these lands.

Signature: Project Leader

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2018