

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: RESEARCH

Refuge Name: Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Public Land Order 365, Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C & 715d, Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956

Refuge Purpose(s): Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1947...

"... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ..." Public Land Order 365

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

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

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

Description of Use:

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

A refuge research application accompanied by a written project proposal is required for review and approval before access is allowed. If approved, access to refuge lands and waters will be limited to the least invasive means required to accomplish the activities. Researchers will be carried out by professors, students, contractors, refuge staff and volunteers. Researchers will be required to sign in and out of the Refuge daily, provide written reports and make their data available to Refuge staff.

Where is the use conducted? Research activities will occur throughout the Michigan Islands NWR's eight islands (600 acres) and occasionally on adjacent state land.

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

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

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

Availability of Resources: Approximately \$10,000/year to administer the research program at Michigan Islands NWR. Much of the research and monitoring is funded by grants, government agencies and universities. Refuge staff involvement includes reviewing research proposals, supervising or monitoring research activities, reviewing reports, providing equipment and vehicles, and participating in field work. Based on a review of the current Refuge budget, there is adequate funding to ensure administration of this program is compatible with the purpose for which Michigan Islands NWR was established.

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

Public Review and Comment: This draft compatibility determination was made available for public comment for 15 days. The document was posted on the Shiawassee and National Wildlife Refuge web site. A copy was posted on display at the Seney NWR and Shiawassee NWR headquarters and visitor contact stations.

Determination:

Use is not compatible.

Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

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

1. Each research proposal is evaluated to insure the least invasive techniques are used. Preference is given to projects that focus on better understanding of refuge wildlife and habitat resources, provide information to improve adaptive management decisions, and increase life history information on species of concern.
2. Researchers must follow their study proposal and comply with the provisions of their Special Use Permit.
3. Coordination will be maintained with the biological staff.
4. A report must be submitted at the end of each field season and at the conclusion of the study.
5. Researchers must make any data collected while at the Refuge available for Refuge use.
6. Refuge research activities are evaluated annually to insure that their collective Impacts do not compromise the goals or objectives of Michigan Islands NWR.

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

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief: _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2019