Appendix F: Compatibility Determinations

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Introduction

Compatibility determinations are documents written, signed, and dated by the district manager and the regional chief of refuges that signify whether proposed or existing uses of the Wetland Management District (WMD, district) are compatible with its establishing purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS, Refuge System). This appendix provides copies of the compatibility determinations for Iowa WMD.

Before undertaking a compatibility review of a use, the district manager must first determine that the use is appropriate. A compatible use is any proposed or existing wildlife-dependent recreational use or other use of a district by the public or entity other than the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS, Service) that, based on sound professional judgment, will not materially interfere with or detract from fulfilling the mission of the Refuge System or the purposes of the district. The final policy and regulations required by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 provide guidance for determining compatibility.

If a proposed use is not appropriate, the use will not be allowed, and a compatibility determination will not be prepared.

A compatibility determination is required for activities on a refuge/district by the public or entity other than the Service including:

- all refuge/district recreational and educational programs;
- construction or expansion of recreational and educational facilities such as boardwalks and boat ramps;
- management activities performed by private parties in return for a market commodity, such as cooperative farming to provide food for wildlife; and
- granting or modifying rights-of-way through refuges/districts for pipelines, roads, or electrical transmission lines.

Activities when a compatibility determination is NOT required include:

- refuge/district management activities such as prescribed burning, managing water levels, and controlling invasive species;
- routine scientific monitoring, studies, surveys, and censuses;
- conducting historic preservation;
- law enforcement activities; and
- maintaining refuge/district facilities, structures, or improvements.

Although a refuge/district use may be both appropriate and compatible, the district manager retains the authority to not allow the use or modify the use. The Service's *Midwest Region Easements Manual* provides more direction on applying compatibility to easements (FWS, 2012c).

The virtual or waypoint geocaching compatibility determination that was included in the Draft CCP is no longer a stand-alone document, but has been incorporated into the environmental education compatibility determination. This change was made simply for consistency with other plans and refuges/districts.

Compatibility Determination

Use: Bicycle Riding on Roads and Trails Open to Vehicular Traffic

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Riding bicycles on the Iowa WMD for the purposes of pleasure, exercise, transportation, and wildlife viewing as environmentally sound transportation without noise or air pollution, typically associated with motor vehicles.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Proposed new use.

Is the use a priority public use?
No.

Where would the use be conducted?
On all roads and trails open to vehicular traffic, self-guided by regulatory signage on Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) within the WMD.

When would the use be conducted?
Year round; however, snow levels during the winter months make this use difficult

How would the use be conducted?
Self-guided. The number of users at any one time is expected to be minimal. The large size of the district is expected to keep users spread out; the frequency of users is expected to be irregular.

Why is this use being proposed?
Public request.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Few to no new resources will need to be utilized to allow bicycle riding on roads and trails open to vehicular traffic. Currently WPAs contain regulatory signs showing where vehicles can and cannot travel. Service roads are currently gated with chain gates restricting vehicles including bicycles. No new infrastructure is anticipated such as bicycle lanes, racks, etc. WPAs are currently set up for vehicles with parking areas and pull-offs, and are annually maintained. The approximate annual cost to maintain these parking areas is $4,000 and is completed regardless of this use.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
The short-term impact of bicycle riding on roads and trails open to vehicular traffic within the district will be conflicts with other users such as hunters, anglers, trappers, and wildlife observers. Impacts will be temporary and be less than that of other motor vehicles. Impacts may occur if bicycles travel off the designated open roads creating ruts and damage to wildlife habitat. Short-term temporary disturbance to waterfowl may occur but most likely will not negatively affect production due to infrequency. No long-term impacts are anticipated with this use.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*:** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Use limited to non-motorized pedal powered bicycles.
2. No infrastructure will be constructed for this use including construction of bicycle trails, racks etc.
3. Bicycle use will only be permitted on existing trails open to motorized travel, and parking areas open to the public.

Justification:

Use of bicycles by visitors to the Iowa Wetland Management District is an excellent method to observe wildlife. Bicycles are quiet and pose little to no effect to nesting waterfowl when they remain in designated areas. Using bicycles can enhance a priority public use of wildlife observation. This use provides a green solution to visitors wishing to get exercise and observe the wildlife of the district.

Signature: District Manager /Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief /Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

Compatibility Determination

Use: Environmental Education

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

A process designed to teach citizens and visitors the history and importance of conservation and the biological and the scientific knowledge of the Nation's natural resources. Environmental education within the Refuge System incorporates on-site, off-site, and distance learning materials, activities, programs, and products that address the audience's course of study, district purpose(s), physical attributes, ecosystem dynamics, conservation strategies, and the Refuge System mission. Methods may include GPS use (i.e. virtual geocaching-type activities); minimal collection of insects, aquatic invertebrates, plants or seeds for examination; off-trail and road experiences; and after hours use (stargazing). Programs across the district will include interpretation of wetland, tallgrass prairie resources, migratory birds, resident wildlife, and water quality. FWS staff or partner organizations including Iowa Department of Natural Resources, County Conservation Boards (CCBs), Friends organizations, colleges, and 4-H and scouting groups could conduct environmental education activities in the district.

Partner colleges and universities may use Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) to observe, and study prairie seeding and restoration efforts. Management of this use will be through a signed special use permit issued by the district manager or a similar agreement with the Iowa DNR.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Proposed new use.

Is the use a priority public use?
Yes.

Where would the use be conducted?
Across the district, except in prohibited areas.

When would the use be conducted?
Activities may be authorized throughout the year, but participants will be encouraged to abstain from activities during the primary waterfowl-nesting season (April through July).

How would the use be conducted?
Access for this use will be mainly by foot but may include snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and canoe/kayak (boating).

Why is this use being proposed?
Priority public use and public request.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Most of the district is managed by Iowa DNR biologists through a Memorandum of Understanding. Limited staff and funds are available to conduct and enhance environmental education opportunities on the WMD; however, partnering with neighboring CCBs and schools has proven to be a cost effective solution to staffing for this use. Staff time to develop and issue special use permits will be necessary for this use along with monitoring and working with partners on developing a message for the use. Some structures, boundary and regulatory signs, parking lots, and other minor facilities are currently on WPAs and will facilitate environmental education without any further costs.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes, if utilize partners.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
Overall, the impacts to WPAs and their associated wildlife populations from environmental education uses will be minimal. There will be temporary disturbance to waterfowl and other wildlife, but it will not likely interfere with waterfowl production. Special use permits for this use will be limited to times and locations that will have the least impact during pair bonding, nesting, and brood rearing of waterfowl. Group sizes will be limited to lessen possible impacts to waterfowl and WPA purpose. Vehicles and school busses will be limited to parking areas and service roads to minimize disturbance to vegetation and wildlife.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*.** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Environmental education may be authorized at various times of the year; however, partners are encouraged to avoid the primary nesting period (April through July).
2. GPS (virtual geocaching), plant or animal collection, after hours use, and travel off designated routes and parking areas are only allowed as stipulated in a special use permit.
3. All applicable federal, state, and special district regulations will apply.

Justification:

This use is a wildlife-dependent priority public use and will not diminish the primary purposes of the district, which is to serve as production areas for waterfowl and to provide habitat for migratory birds. This use will meet the mission of the Refuge System by furthering understanding and knowledge of the Nation's migratory bird status, needs, and conservation efforts. Use of WPAs for environmental education will increase the public's appreciation for conservation areas and local efforts, along with providing local schools and communities a look into the natural wildlife heritage of this area prior to settlement.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 16 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2028

Compatibility Determination

Use: Farming

Refuge Name: Iowa Wetland Management District (WMD)

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 Purposes:

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:

The Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is 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: Use Cooperative farming as a habitat management tool to enhance and restore WMD grasslands.

Is the use a priority public use?
Farming is not a priority public use in the National Wildlife Refuge System

Where would the use be conducted?
Farming occurs on approximately 5-10 percent of WMD lands annually, depending on acquisition of newly acquired lands and restoration needs and objectives of these lands.

When would the use be conducted?
Spring planting typically begins in early April and harvest typically concludes by November of each year.

How would the use be conducted?
The WMD will allow farming by private individuals for the purpose of habitat management. Cooperative farming is the term used for cropping activities (growing agricultural products) conducted by a third party on land that is owned by or managed as part of the WMD. This activity is implemented to prepare a quality seed bed for the establishment of native prairie species.

Cooperative farming activities will only be performed on previously disturbed areas such as previously farmed land which have unacceptable levels of chemical residue, noxious weeds, or non-native plant species or ecotypes.

Cooperators are selected through a drawing. The drawn applicant receives the contract for that area. Cooperative farming is conducted under the terms and conditions of a Special Use Permit or a Cooperative Farming Agreement issued by the Wetland District Manager. The terms of the Permit or Agreement ensure compliance with Service policy and area-specific stipulations to meet management objectives and safeguard resources.

Most cropping is conducted to convert recently acquired tracts from corn stubble into soybean stubble in preparation of seeding. These contracts are typically written for one year of cropping in soybeans. However, in some cases it may be necessary to extend contracts up to 5 years. Soybean stubble is the preferred substrate to seed native grasses and forbs into.

Conversion of non-native plant species and/or noxious weeds to native grasses and forbs requires a longer time period. These contracts are typically written for 3-5 years. The cooperator breaks up the ground the first year and then farms it for the remaining 2-4 years. The last year of the contract requires the cooperator to seed the field to soybeans in preparation of seeding.

Farming entails the use of mechanical equipment such as tractors, disks, and seeders. Each site is tilled prior to spring planting, once ground conditions permit the use of heavy equipment without damage to the soil. Tilling requires 1-2 days per site. Some sites may also be treated with herbicide prior to planting. Crops such as corn and soybeans are planted. Typically, planting is completed in one day or less on any individual site and planting on all sites usually begins as early as mid-April and is completed as late as early June depending on soil conditions and type of crop planted. Cooperators are limited to using only FWS approved herbicides. The use of Genetically Modified Crops (GMO crops), specifically Glyphosate-tolerant corn and soybeans, will be authorized on WMD lands consistent with current Regional Policy.

Beginning in calendar year 2012, the use of genetically-modified, glyphosate-tolerant corn and soybeans will be used only for the purpose of habitat restoration.

Harvest techniques are the same for both no-till and traditional farming practices. Harvest begins in the fall, using a self-propelled harvesting implement such as a combine, and usually takes about one day per site and is complete on all sites by late October.

Why is this use being proposed?
Farming is used to prepare seed beds for the WMD's grassland restoration program.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly (considering quality and compatibility) and safely administer use?
Most of the needed work to prepare for this use would be done as part of routine management duties. The decision to use cooperative farming as a management tool would occur as part of strategies developed under specific program or unit habitat management planning. The additional time needed to coordinate issuance and oversight of the needed Special Use Permit or Agreements is relatively minor and within existing WMD resources.

Are existing refuge resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
The needed staff time for development and administration of a cooperative farming program is available. The additional time needed to coordinate issuance and oversight of the needed Special Use Permit or Agreements is relatively minor and within existing WMD resources.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does farming affect Refuge purposes and the NWRS mission?
The use of farming provides a management tool that allows the WMD staff to meet the habitat goals and objectives. Service policy calls for maintaining or restoring WMD habitats to historic conditions if doing so does not conflict with refuge purposes (U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2001).

How does farming affect Fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats; and the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the refuge/NWRS?

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 WMD lands. 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 any animal or insect species using those areas for nesting, feeding, or resting. Long-term benefits are extremely positive due to establishment of diverse nesting cover utilizing local eco-type Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem plant 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. Farming and any associated impacts are expected to occur on approximately 5-10 percent of WMD lands annually.

Public Review and Comment:

This Compatibility Determination was available for public review from November 8, 2011 through November 23, 2011. No comments were received.

Determination:

Farming

___ Use is Not Compatible

X Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Farming activity will only take place on previously altered tracts of land within the refuge and must meet specific habitat and related wildlife objectives and contribute to the purposes of the WMD.
2. Cooperating farmers will be subject to Service policy and regulation regarding use of chemicals. Herbicide and pesticide use is restricted by type and to the minimum necessary amount applied.
3. Special conditions of Special Use Permits and Cooperative Farming Agreements will address unique local conditions as applicable.
4. Planting and harvest activities are restricted to minimize disturbance of wildlife species.
5. The use of GMO crops is limited to Glyphosate-tolerant corn and soybeans.
6. Beginning in calendar year 2012, the use of genetically-modified, glyphosate-tolerant corn and soybeans will be used only for the purpose of habitat restoration.

Justification: In view of the above and with the stipulations previously described, farming will not materially interfere with or detract from the NWRS mission or purposes of the WMD. As practiced at the Iowa WMD, farming, both conventional and with the use of Glyphosate-tolerant corn and soybeans, contributes to the achievement of WMDs purposes and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission because it helps enhance and restore grassland habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____ 12-12-11
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____ 12/13/11
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-Evaluation Date: ~~November~~ December 2021

Compatibility Determination

Use: Food Plot Cultivation for Wildlife

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Establishment of wildlife food plots on Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) throughout the Iowa Wetland Management District to provide important food and cover resources in harsh winter conditions. The vast majority of WPAs are managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Food plots are addressed in the MOU which authorizes the Iowa DNR to establish and maintain food plots at levels identified in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Habitat Management Plan (to be written), and individual unit plan.

Food plots are small agriculture fields typically ranging in size from three to 10 acres consisting mainly of corn, soybeans, sunflowers, wheat, barley, oats, rye, buckwheat, millet, and sorghum. Placement and movement of individual food plots within a WPA will vary based on factors such as food plot availability on neighboring properties, best conservation practices, shape and arrangement of other habitat types within a WPA, invasive species control, and wildlife disturbance factors. Establishment of food plots will provide winter cover and food resources to resident wildlife during harsh weather conditions.

Food plots are not a priority public use as identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Food plots are a nonessential but helpful tool to facilitate other priority public uses including hunting, wildlife observation, and photography. Food plots may also be helpful in reaching goals outlined in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) of growing hunters and other outdoor enthusiast groups to conserve and protect wetland areas. These plots may help provide desirable densities of wildlife for public viewing, hunting and photography.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Existing use.

Is the use a priority public use?
No.

Where would the use be conducted?
Select WPA tracts within the Iowa WMD that have been identified as a strategic location for a food plot.

When would the use be conducted?
Crops will typically be planted in spring and may be harvested in early spring the following year.

How would the use be conducted?
Food plots are generally planted and maintained by private individuals (cooperative farmers), other agencies (Iowa DNR) or sporting clubs. Cropping activities are controlled through an agricultural agreement between the cooperator and the Iowa DNR; however, the Service provides guidelines such as pesticide use.

Why is this use being proposed?
Wildlife management tool for the district.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
The staff time required for this use is already committed through partnership efforts with Iowa DNR and the MOU. The agriculture program in the district is the responsibility of the Iowa DNR. Service staff time will only include planning efforts to evaluate the need for food plots on newly acquired properties and reviewing management plans for food plot use. Service staff will be needed within the first year of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan implementation to review food plot locations in the district, along with preparing a Geographic Information System (GIS) map layer with food plot locations. On years following this evaluation, staff time will be required to update the GIS layers annually. Currently staff time is available and committed for this use.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
The proposed use will positively affect wintering Ring-necked Pheasants by providing reliable food resources near high quality cover, thus reducing exposure to predators and harsh weather conditions. Food plots also make high-energy grains available to waterfowl, Mourning Doves, and other migratory birds during spring and fall migration. The borders of food plots often contain annual forbs, which provide forage for a variety of sparrows and other songbirds. Some species of wildlife, such as white-tailed deer, will benefit from the type of habitat produced by the creation of a food plot.

Food plots help facilitate priority public uses that engage the public with wildlife such as hunting, wildlife observation, and photography. Good neighbors and an engaged public provide positive long-term support for the conservation of waterfowl and other migratory birds, as well as their habitats.

Minimal negative impacts are anticipated, because food plots will typically be smaller than10 acres in size. In addition, food plots will be limited to three percent or less of district uplands. Food plots will reduce the available nesting cover for waterfowl, migratory birds, and other wildlife. Grassland bird research suggests that birds will utilize crop fields for nesting; however, the disturbance common with farming practices may be detrimental to nest success (Warner 1994 and Best, 1986). Many grassland nesting birds and all upland nesting waterfowl species have better nesting success in larger contiguous blocks of grassland habitat (Winter and Faaborg, 1999 and Winter et al., 2000). Careful placement of food plots can lessen the impacts of edge and the fragmentation of habitat.

Impacts to waterfowl may be lessened by placing food plots strategically in the best locations for critical resident wildlife needs. The public uses associated with food plots may increase wildlife disturbance somewhat. However, the beneficial aspects of food plots for these uses are typically realized outside of the breeding season, and food plots can be used to concentrate these uses to areas where the associated disturbance is less detrimental (Korschgen and Dahlgren, 1992). Since WPAs are open to hunting, any increases in the white-tailed deer population related to food plots will be controlled. Soils will be impacted through the placement and management of food plots. Farming practices that disturb the soil by tilling create the potential for soil erosion. Chemical usage on food plots could potentially have negative effects on adjacent waters, vegetation, and associated wildlife. Food plot farming practices will use best management practices to lessen the effects of soil erosion and chemical usage. The stipulations listed later in this document will address the criteria needed for food plot placement and management in the district.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. No greater than three percent of the Iowa WMD uplands may be in food plots at any one time.
2. Food plot species will be limited to corn, soybeans, milo, sunflowers, wheat, barley, oats, rye, buckwheat, millet, and sorghum. The entire crop will remain standing through the winter. Manipulation of the crop such as mowing is not allowed.
3. Food plot farming and maintenance will comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act 16 U.S.C. 703–712 P.L. 105–312 and 50 CFR 20.11–21 and not constitute baiting.
4. Crop seeds used in food plots will be from a non-genetically modified seed source.
5. Chemicals used on food plots must be approved through the pesticide use proposals. No insecticides will be allowed on food plots.
6. New WPA acquisitions requesting food plot placement will need project leader approval.

Justification:

Food plot use in the Iowa WMD is a compatible practice when the above stipulations are in place. This use as proposed will not materially detract from the waterfowl and migratory bird purposes of the district. Allowing the use of food plots will assist the Iowa DNR in reaching their resident wildlife goals and provide the public with opportunities to recreate on district properties. Use of food plots may also grow the number of hunters that will support a goal of the NAWMP. An MOU between the Service and Iowa DNR establishes that food plots are an acceptable practice in the district. Any negative impacts to waterfowl will be lessened by following the stipulations and evaluating the effects of the program.

The goals of the NAWMP focus on engaging people with nature and growing the number of hunters. Within Iowa, the Iowa DNR and the public generally view food plots as a positive practice providing excellent viewing and hunting opportunities. Allowing food plots on WPAs within the district, albeit limited, will assist the Iowa DNR (a key Service partner) in providing hunting opportunities that will in turn gain public support for waterfowl and wetland protection.

Signature: District Manager /Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief /Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

Compatibility Determination

Use: Hay Harvest

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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 cutting and removal, by baling and transport to an off-district location, of grasses and forbs, either non-native cool season species such as brome or native warm or cool season species. This use is typically completed by a cooperative farmer under authority of a cooperative farming agreement or special use permit issued by the district manager or Iowa Department of Natural Resources district biologists.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Existing use.

Is the use a priority public use?
No.

Where would the use be conducted?
Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) tracts in Iowa average 100 acres in size and are intermingled with private and other public lands. Although specific acreages for fields to be hayed will vary by

unit, they will typically range from five-acre firebreaks to 80-acre units. In that case, haying could possibly occur over the entire unit and up to several hundred acres. Hay acreages for firebreaks will be very small, estimated at less than five acres per WPA.

When would the use be conducted?
Seasonally, after July 15 of each year.

How would the use be conducted?
Haying can be an effective management tool as part of an overall grassland management plan to improve and maintain grasslands for the benefit of migratory birds. Grasslands need periodic renovation to maintain vigor, diversity, and the structure necessary for migratory bird use. Haying is an effective alternative to burning or grazing, which are the two other primary means used to maintain grassland vigor. If local site conditions preclude use of prescribe fire due to hazards to neighboring property or a similar challenge, removal of accumulated biomass through haying will reduce unwanted overstory cover and encroaching woody vegetation. This will allow for more vigorous regrowth of desirable species following the haying, although results are neither as dramatic nor as positive as with the use of prescribed fire.

Haying of a nonnative cool season field is an effective preparatory step prior to spraying the field with herbicide to kill all existing vegetation. Removal of the heavy grass overstory through haying allows the chemical to be more effective at treating the target plants. Thorough removal of the unwanted grasses ensures greater success of the planted native grasses for both interseeding or plowing the soil prior to seeding. Haying is also effective at preparing WPAs for wetland restoration activities. The haying can be used to remove the tall vegetation and facilitate the construction of dikes, water control structures, and rerouting drainage tile. Finally, haying can be used to establish firebreaks that facilitate safe prescribed fire. Strategically placed grass strips are hayed in early fall, so the vegetation green-ups earlier in the spring with no dead overstory biomass. Firebreaks have also been developed on WPAs and hayed annually to create defensible space for houses and other Wildland Urban Interface structures. Haying of these firebreaks creates a green space between neighboring houses and dense grass fuels.

Why is this use being proposed?
District management tool.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Planning for this use will not require any additional resources and will be a normal part of grassland management. Staff time will be need to complete the hay bid process, develop public notices, and issue special use permits and bills for collection.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
Haying will result in short-term disturbances and long-term benefits to both resident and migratory wildlife that use WPAs. Short-term impacts will include disturbance and displacement typical of any noisy heavy equipment operation. Cutting and removal of standing grasses will also result in short-term loss of habitat for those species requiring tall grasses for feeding and perching (i.e., Bobolink and Dickcissel). Long-term benefits will result as increased vigor of regrown grasses and establishment of highly desirable native tallgrass species improves conditions for those same species affected by the short-term negative impacts. Longer-term negative impacts may occur to resident wildlife species such as pheasant that could lose overwintering habitat in the hayed areas. However, strict time constraints placed on this use will limit anticipated impacts to these relatively minor areas.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the 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 two days of baling.
3. Windrowed grass left lying to dry prior to baling must be raked and moved every two days if left on newly seeded native grass and under no circumstances should remain on the ground more than six days prior to baling.

Justification:

Haying will not materially interfere with waterfowl production if completed within the necessary stipulations. Use of haying, as a management tool 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 would suffer encroachment of undesirable woody species such as box elder or ash or would remain in unwanted non-native cool season grasses such as brome. Use of the areas by waterfowl or grassland-dependent species such as Bobolink, Dickcissel, or Grasshopper Sparrow would slowly decline in the absence of haying or other similar management.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

Compatibility Determination

Use: Hunting in Accordance with State Regulations (includes motorboat use)

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Shooting migratory game birds, upland game birds and mammals, and big game on Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) throughout the district in accordance with state seasons and governed by both federal and state regulations. Hunting on WPAs may be suspended due to unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, or wildlife populations. Hunting will facilitate four other priority public uses: wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Existing use.

Is the use a priority public use?
Yes.

Where would the use be conducted?
On all open WPAs; see Determination section below.

When would the use be conducted?
The majority of the use occurs in the fall, from mid-September through the end of December. Spring turkey hunting occurs on a few WPAs with a state season running from early April to the end of May.

How would the use be conducted?
This use must occur In accordance with state regulations. Some WPAs have trails to them from public roads to gain access. Most WPAs have parking areas, usually less than one acre in size, to keep vehicles and traffic off public roads. The State of Iowa uses hunting as a management tool through appropriate season setting and harvest objectives. This tool allows for wildlife-dependent public recreation and supports the harvest of surplus wildlife.

Why is this use being proposed?
Regulation, wildlife management tool, priority public use, and public request.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Few additional fiscal resources are necessary to conduct this use. WPAs are open by statue to hunting, fishing, and trapping and have provided such opportunities since acquired. As a result, some infrastructure is already in place to facilitate this use. The majority of the WPAs in the district are managed cooperatively through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which includes some law enforcement responsibilities.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes, by partnering with the Iowa DNR staff of conservation officers and local wildlife biologists.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
Although hunting causes mortality and temporary disturbance to migratory birds and other wildlife, harvesting populations to the carrying capacity of existing habitat ensure s long-term health and survival for the species and its habitat. Most hunting occurs well after the breeding season for migratory birds and other wildlife so there will be little or no disturbance to the district's central purpose. Since most access for hunting occurs by foot traffic, some disturbance is anticipated; however, it will be temporary. Hunting on WPAs will assist in promoting an understanding and appreciation of wetland and prairie natural resources as well as management of land administered by the Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*.** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Travel in, or use of, any motorized or other vehicle is prohibited except by special use permit. Parking in designated areas or on public roads is permissible for access, but use of horses is not permissible.
2. Personal property may not be left unattended or abandoned.
3. Hunting tree stands that are not removed daily must have the hunter's name or Iowa hunting license number clearly marked on the stand. Tree stand installation and removal will comply with regulations for state Wildlife Management Areas. Current regulations: seven days prior to hunting season and removal seven days after hunting season.
4. All watercraft are restricted to no larger than 15 horsepower motors.
5. All applicable federal, state, and special district regulations apply.

Justification:

WPAs are open to hunting of migratory game birds, upland game, and big game by regulation and in accordance with state law. Hunting will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which these units were established. As a management tool, hunting can be used to ensure healthy wildlife populations and sustainable habitat. Hunting is a priority wildlife-dependent public use and will facilitate four other priority public uses: wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation. The use of hunting will assist the district in meeting the mission of the Refuge System by managing the Nation's wildlife and plant resources for the benefit of the American public.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: __2028__

Compatibility Determination

Use: Interpretation

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the audience and the resource. Programs may include activities, talks, publications, audio-visual media, signs, and exhibits that convey key natural and cultural resource messages to visitors. Programs across the district will include interpretation of wetland, tallgrass prairie resources, migratory birds, resident wildlife, and water quality. Service staff or partner organizations including Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), County Conservation Boards (CCBs), Friends organizations, colleges, and 4-H and scouting groups could conduct environmental education activities in the district.

Partner colleges and universities may use Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) to observe, and study prairie seeding and restoration efforts. Management of this use will be through a signed special use permit issued by the district manager or a similar agreement with the Iowa DNR.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Proposed new use.

Is the use a priority public use?
Yes.

Where would the use be conducted?
Across the district, except in prohibited areas.

When would the use be conducted?
Activities may be authorized throughout the year, but participants will be encouraged to abstain from activities during the primary waterfowl-nesting season (April through July).

How would the use be conducted?
Access for this use will be mainly by foot but may include snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and canoe/kayak (boating).

Why is this use being proposed?
Priority public use and public request.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Most of the district is managed by Iowa DNR biologists through a Memorandum of Understanding. Limited staff and funds are available to conduct and enhance interpretation opportunities on the WMD; however, partnering with neighboring CCBs and schools has proven to be a cost effective solution to staffing for this use. Staff time to develop and issue special use permits will be necessary for this use along with monitoring and working with partners on developing a message for the use. Some structures, boundary and regulatory signs, parking lots, and other minor facilities are currently on WPAs and will facilitate interpretation without any further costs.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes, if utilize partners.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
Overall, the impacts to WPAs and their associated wildlife populations from interpretation will be minimal. There will be temporary disturbance to waterfowl and other wildlife, but it will not likely interfere with waterfowl production. Special use permits for this use will be limited to times and locations that will have the least impact during pair bonding, nesting, and brood rearing of waterfowl. Group sizes will be limited to lessen possible impacts to waterfowl and WPA purpose. Vehicles and school busses will be limited to parking areas and service roads to minimize disturbance to vegetation and wildlife. If auto tour roads are proposed to facilitate this use, they will be designed to minimize disturbance to waterfowl during the spring breeding/nesting season.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*.** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Interpretation may be authorized at various times of the year; however, partners are encouraged to avoid the primary nesting period (April through July).
2. Travel off designated routes and parking areas is prohibited, except as stipulated in a special use permit.
3. All applicable federal, state, and special district regulations will apply.

Justification:

This use is a wildlife-dependent priority public use and will not diminish the primary purposes of the district, which is to serve as production areas for waterfowl and to provide habitat for migratory birds. This use will meet the mission of the Refuge System by furthering understanding and knowledge of the Nation's migratory bird status, needs, and conservation efforts. Use of WPAs for interpretation will increase the public's appreciation for conservation areas and local efforts, along with providing local schools and communities a look into the natural wildlife heritage of this area prior to settlement.

Signature: District Manager /Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief /Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: __2028__

Compatibility Determination

Use: Photography (includes creative nature writing and art)

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Year round general public access to Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) to photograph, write creatively about, or draw/paint nature and its associated flora and fauna. Access for photography, creative nature writing and art will allow for public enjoyment of an array of wildlife and plant species including waterfowl, grassland birds, resident mammals, tallgrass prairie, and wetland plants. WPAs provide the public with a view into the past of landscapes that early Iowa pioneers and Native Americans saw.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Proposed new use.

Is the use a priority public use?
Yes.

Where would the use be conducted?
All open WPAs. Allowable access to the WPAs includes hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and non-motorized boating. Limited motorized and bicycle access for this use will be allowed in designated parking areas, and open designated routes of travel. Entry on all or portions of WPAs may be suspended, by posting, upon occasion of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety.

When would the use be conducted?
Year round. The frequency is expected to be irregular, the large size of the district is expected to spread out users, so the intensity of use is expected to be minor as well.

How would the use be conducted?
Typically individuals or small groups on foot either moving through a WPA or sitting at a location of interest for a longer period to capture the flora, fauna, or scenery. Artist's easels, camera tripods, cameras, sketchpads, notebooks, or other small and minor equipment may be used to facilitate the use.

Why is this use being proposed?
Priority public use and public request.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Photography, creative nature writing, and art require little to no additional resources. Since WPAs have been open by regulation to hunting, fishing, and trapping, infrastructure is in place for public use. Parking areas and regulatory signs are present at most WPAs. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) assumes most management and maintenance responsibilities of the WPAs in the district though a Memorandum of Understanding. Iowa DNR conservation officers provide the primary enforcement of the public use regulations. Updated brochures will be developed for each of the Iowa DNR's six geographic units within the WMD. The Service also provides some law enforcement support; however, it is lacking a dedicated officer to the WMD. Assistance from the zone law enforcement officer in Prairie City, Iowa has been utilized in the past. It is not anticipated that this use will entail any greater enforcement issues than what currently exist.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
Photography, creative nature writing, and art pose minimal impact on the purpose for which WPAs were established. Access is typically by individual or small groups on foot. Damage to habitat by foot traffic is minimal and temporary. There may be some temporary disturbance to wildlife due to human activity on the ground. The most likely impact to breeding waterfowl will be during the spring and early summer nesting and brood rearing period; however, the expected sporadic and limited use by the public should not create unreasonable impacts. Disturbance to wildlife, such as flushing a nesting bird, is inherent to these activities; however, the disturbance is temporary and generally not malicious. Many WPAs are located in sparsely populated rural areas, compared to a few that are located near highly populated areas. Monitoring of this use

will be needed to ensure anticipated impacts are not exceeded. Winter activities pose no impacts to nesting waterfowl and little impact to vegetation. The winter disturbance to resident wildlife will be temporary and minor.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*.** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Certain modes of access such as motorized vehicles and bicycles are limited to designated trails, public roads, and parking lots. All watercraft are restricted to no larger than 15 horsepower motors.
2. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
3. No photo or viewing blinds may be left overnight.
4. Harassment of wildlife including hazing and calling at birds and other wildlife is prohibited.
5. All applicable federal, state, and special district regulations apply.

Justification:

Photography, creative nature writing, and art will not materially interfere with or detract from the district purposes, including waterfowl production. The level of use for photography, creative writing, and art is moderate on most WPAs.

The associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor. Photography is a priority public use and inspires visitors with the joys of abundant wildlife and wild lands. These uses also help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System. Those WPAs with increased activities generally have facilities present to accommodate the public use with minor impacts to the habitat.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2028

Compatibility Determination

Use: Prescribed Livestock Grazing

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

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Description of Use:

Limited removal of grass and forb vegetation by domestic livestock, chiefly cattle, but potentially including other domestic livestock to improve grassland vigor and health. Prescribed controlled grazing is recognized as a valuable tool to remove standing vegetation, reduce vegetative litter, and suppress undesirable woody vegetation.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Proposed new use.

Is the use a priority public use?
No.

Where would the use be conducted?
Across the district, as necessary for management .

When would the use be conducted?
Grazing may take place anytime from April through November. Most commonly, the grazing will be of high intensity and short-term duration, for example, 200 yearlings for one month on 40 acres. There will be three typical seasons of use:

1. 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.
2. Summer grazing (July 15 to 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.
3. Fall grazing (September 1 to 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.

How would the use be conducted?
Fencing and control of livestock will be the responsibility of the cooperating livestock producer. Market rate grazing fees will be required of permittees. Market grazing fees will include typical market deductions for unusual fencing requirements, required cattle movement, or special watering needs. Rates will be assessed in Animal Unit Months (AUM). One AUM is equal to one adult cow for one month (thirty days). One cow/calf pair is equal to 1.20 AUM. Market rates will be determined annually in consultation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture based on prevailing local average grazing rates.

Frequency of grazing on any unit will be based on site-specific plans and availability of other management tools such as prescribed fire and haying. Typically, a unit will be grazed for either one or two years and then will not be grazed for several years, allowing a period of rest. Cooperating livestock producers will be selected by closed bid process, drawing, or the priority system outlined in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge Manual 6 RM 9 (1982).

Why is this use being proposed?
District management tool.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Developing grazing agreements and monitoring compliance and biological effects will require some Service resources. Most grazing costs, such as fencing, monitoring herd health, and so on, are assumed by the permittee. Station resources will be used to acquire some unit infrastructure such as boundary fencing and electrical fencing. Some alternative grassland management tools such as prescribed burning, mowing, or haying will be required if grazing is not utilized. 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 burning as many acres as is desirable each year. In addition, there is an ecological benefit to rotating grassland management techniques and seasons, such as grazing one year and burning another.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
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; seeing public land being grazed by domestic livestock reduces the appeal of the visit for some visitors. Fortunately, controlled grazing is typically of short duration and does 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 Waterfowl Production Areas 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:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Grazing will not occur more frequently than three out of every five years without the preparation of a site-specific compatibility determination.
2. No insecticides, including insecticidal dusting bags, will be used on WPAs.
3. Control and confinement of the livestock will be the responsibility of the permittee.

Justification:

Prescribed 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 of which many are desirable for grassland management. Grazing produces an undesirable but short-term impact to grassland bird nesting and site

aesthetics. Prescribed 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 will decline, as will the potential for waterfowl production.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

Compatibility Determination

Use: Recreational Fishing in Accordance with State Regulations (includes motorboat use)

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Recreational fishing on Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) throughout the district in accordance with State of Iowa regulations. Fishing on WPAs may be suspended due to unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, or wildlife populations. Fishing will facilitate four other priority public uses: wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Existing use.

Is the use a priority public use?
Yes.

Where would the use be conducted?
Although the entire wetland acreage is open to recreational fishing only about one percent of the wetlands provide water deep enough to support viable fisheries. The few WPAs with viable

fisheries are generally connected to adjacent streams or lakes, located off Service property, and aquatic species move between these bodies of water.

When would the use be conducted?
Year round. The frequency is expected to be irregular, the large size of the district is expected to spread out users, so the intensity of use is expected to be minor as well.

How would the use be conducted?
The State of Iowa uses recreational fishing to help maintain healthy populations of these species. Some WPAs have trails necessary to gain access from public roads and for safety reasons in high traffic areas; parking lots, usually less than one acre in size, may exist.

Why is this use being proposed?
Priority public use, regulation, and fish management.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Few additional fiscal resources are necessary to conduct this use. WPAs are open by statue to hunting, fishing, and trapping and have provided such opportunities since acquired. As a result, some infrastructure, such as parking lots, signs, etc., is already in place to facilitate this use. The majority of the WPAs in the district are managed cooperatively through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which includes some law enforcement and facility management responsibilities. Currently, Iowa DNR staff of conservation officers and local wildlife biologist are adequate to support this public use; however, some staff time will be needed to develop and maintain a brochure for fishing in the district.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
Recreational fishing activities may cause brief disturbance to migratory birds and other wildlife using WPAs, which may temporarily displace individual animals to other parts of the WPA. However, this brief disturbance will be limited in scope due to the small number of WPAs with viable fisheries, limited access to fishing (mainly by foot travel), and lack of boat launching facilities. Recreational fishing at anticipated levels and on small areas of relatively few WPAs should not materially interfere with the district's purpose. Recreational fishing will promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on all land included in the Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*.** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Travel off designated routes and parking areas is prohibited, except as stipulated in a special use permit; travel by horse is not permissible.
2. All watercraft are restricted to no larger than 15 horsepower motors.
3. All applicable federal, state, and special district regulations apply.

Justification:

WPAs are open to fishing by regulation. Fishing will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which these units were established. Fishing is a priority public use and will facilitate four other priority public uses: wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation. The use of fishing will assist in meeting the mission of the Refuge System by facilitating the management of the Nation's wildlife and plant resources for the benefit of the American public.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 16 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: __2028__

Compatibility Determination

Use: Recreational Trapping in Accordance with State Regulations (includes motorboat use)

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Trapping of furbearers is a consumptive public use of Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) in the Iowa WMD. Furbearer trapping in the State of Iowa continues to be a popular public use but tends to fluctuate with the fur prices. WPAs are open to trapping as authorized by the Code of Federal Regulations which states, "Lands acquired as 'waterfowl production areas' shall be open to public trapping without federal permit . . . " (50 CFR Ch. 1 (10-1-12 Edition) Part 31, Subpart B, Section 31.16). Trappers are required to comply with Iowa State trapping laws and regulations. A copy of the current Iowa Trapping Regulations may be viewed at www.iowadnr.gov. Furbearer trapping for most species occurs from early November through the end of January, with the exception of spring beaver trapping, which is open through mid-April. According to the Iowa DNR's 2012 *Furbearers Report*, the most numerous mammal species trapped in Iowa is the raccoon with 236,943 harvested during the 2010–2011 season. The second most popular furbearer trapped in Iowa is the muskrat with a total 2010–2011 season harvest of 98,079 (Iowa Department of Natural Resources [DNR], 2012). Both of these species occur on most WPAs within the district.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Existing use.

Is the use a priority public use?
No.

Where would the use be conducted?
All open WPAs; the majority of the trapping activity on WPAs concentrates around wetland areas.

When would the use be conducted?
Trapping seasons for most of the Iowa furbearers run from November through the end of January. Beaver trapping season runs from November through the middle of April most years. With the exception of the early spring beaver trapping, most of the trapping use occurs during the late fall and winter months. Trap tending typically occurs during daylight hours; however, state regulations do not restrict trap-tending times.

How would the use be conducted?
Trappers may use leg hold traps, snares, "body gripping Conibear" style, and live box traps. Iowa DNR sets regulations for trap dimensions and set locations for the various permitted trap types These regulations are contained in Iowa Code 481a and 483a and are available in the *Iowa Hunting and Trapping Regulations* guide at www.iowadnr.gov. Access for trappers using WPAs is primarily by foot; however, they also may use snowshoes or cross-country skis. Some WPAs contain large enough waterways to allow use of both motorized and non-motorized boat use for trapping. Travel onto WPAs using wheeled motorized vehicles such as ATVs, trucks and passenger vehicles, and motorcycles is restricted to parking areas and designated open roads. The majority of trappers will access the WPAs by foot and park their vehicles in the parking areas.

Why is this use being proposed?
Regulation and wildlife management.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Few additional fiscal resources are necessary to conduct this use. WPAs are open by statue to hunting, fishing, and trapping and have provided such opportunities since acquired. As a result, some infrastructure is already in place to facilitate this use. The majority of the WPAs in the district are managed cooperatively through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Iowa DNR, which includes some law enforcement responsibilities. Currently, the Iowa DNR staff of conservation officers is adequate to support this public use.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
Recreational trapping can potentially affect the waterfowl production of WPAs both directly and indirectly. Direct impacts may include such effects as killing or displacing of waterfowl during the pair bonding/nesting season or destruction of nest by trampling. Indirect impacts may include catch of target and not-target species that are predators on waterfowl and/or nests or removal of species that induce habitat change (i.e., beaver and muskrat). Impacts, either direct or indirect, may be positive, neutral, or negative.

With the exception of beaver season (November to April 15), all the other trapping seasons are during periods that will not negatively affect waterfowl production. Beaver trappers will be checking traps daily during the pair bonding and early nest cycle. These disturbances are temporary and generally of short duration. Most of the impacts from this use will be during the fall migration time. The greatest impact times will be during the trap-setting phase; however, this is still short and temporary. Trap line checks are required daily and represent a frequent but short-lived disturbance.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*.** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Travel in or use of any motorized or other vehicle is prohibited except by special use permit. Parking in designated areas or on public roads is permissible for access, but use of horses is not permissible.
2. Traps must be attended and tagged by the owner in accordance with State of Iowa trapping regulations. Traps and personal property may not be left unattended or abandoned.
3. All watercraft are restricted to no larger than 15 horsepower motors.

4. All applicable federal, state, and special district regulations apply.

Justification:

Most trapping use occurs outside the time for pair bonding, nesting, and brood rearing (waterfowl production), so this use will have little to no direct impact on waterfowl production. Spring beaver trapping is the one exception. Its impact, however, will be temporary and isolated due to the short duration of the visits, small number of waterfowl involved, and the limited geographic area impacted by the presence of one or a few individuals. These impacts on waterfowl production and the WMD mission are negligible.

Most species of interest to trappers and common "non-target" catches such as skunks and free-ranging house cats are predators on waterfowl at some point in the production cycle. Management of red fox, raccoon, mink, opossum, and skunk populations through a regulated trapping program is, at worst, a neutral impact and likely a positive. Due to edge effects and concentrations of nesting waterfowl, the impacts of predator management are likely inversely related to WPA size. The average size of WPAs in the Iowa WMD is 100 acres. 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 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. The harvest through the trapping program of other species such as those permitted by state regulations (coyote, muskrat, badger, beaver, otter, and bobcat) that may or may not be predators of waterfowl is insignificant.

Waterfowl production is also impacted by the natural habits of beaver and muskrat populations. Upon initial analysis, it is often thought that beaver and their wetland construction activities and muskrat with their propensity to maintain open water are beneficial to waterfowl production. In exceptionally large marshes and in pre-settlement times, this was likely the case. However, the landscape of the district has been so altered through agricultural conversion that few ecosystem functions remain intact. Current hydrologic function resembles very little of that from pre-settlement. 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 Service and Iowa DNR manage wetlands in WPAs through manipulating water levels, providing for the needs and stages of target waterfowl. Left unchecked, beaver activity results in disruption to the water flow when culverts and other 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, the waterfowl production purpose of the district would suffer, as would the Refuge System mission.

A public trapping program facilitates management of beaver and muskrat populations at such levels that the many benefits created of these species are realized, yet the ability of the district to manage water levels is not compromised. According to the Iowa DNR's 2012 *Furbearer's Report* for Iowa on a statewide level, beaver harvest has depended on the weather and conditions and fluctuating fur prices. Total Iowa beaver harvest during the 2010–2011 trapping season was 5,382 (Iowa DNR, 2012). Muskrat harvest in Iowa has also tends to fluctuate with fur prices and populations.

Overall trapping is a minor public use of WPAs but is an important management tool in localized areas. Trapping on WPAs will provide the public the opportunity to assist the WMD with furbearer management. Consistent with the mission for the Refuge, 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 Iowa DNR on trapping indicate that the current level of furbearer harvest is not resulting in harm to these populations. The public trapping program as managed by state regulations does not materially interfere with or detract from the Service's ability to meet the district's purpose of waterfowl production or the mission of the Refuge System.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023

Compatibility Determination

Use: Wildlife Observation

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Visitors observing wildlife. This can instill an appreciation for the value of and need for fish and wildlife habitat conservation. Access for wildlife observation will allow for public enjoyment of an array of wildlife and plant species including waterfowl, grassland birds, resident mammals, tallgrass prairie, and wetland plants. Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) provide the public with a view into the past of landscapes that early Iowa pioneers and Native Americans saw.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Proposed new use.

Is the use a priority public use?
Yes.

Where would the use be conducted?
All open WPAs, entry on all or portions of WPAs may be suspended, by posting, upon occasion of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public

safety. Certain modes of transportation for wildlife viewing will be limited to designated roads, trials, and parking lots.

When would the use be conducted?
Year round.

How would the use be conducted?
Allowable access to the WPAs includes hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and non-motorized boating. Limited motorized and bicycle access for this use will be allowed in designated parking area, and open designated routes of travel.

Why is this use being proposed?
Priority public use.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Wildlife observation requires little to no additional resources. Since WPAs have been open by regulation to hunting, fishing and trapping, infrastructure is in place for public use. Parking areas and regulatory signs are present at most WPAs. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) assumes most management and maintenance responsibilities of the WPAs in the district though a Memorandum of Understanding. Iowa DNR conservation officers provide the primary enforcement of the public use regulations. Updated brochures will be developed for each of the Iowa DNR's six geographic units within the WMD. The Service also provides some law enforcement support; however, it is lacking a dedicated officer to the WMD. Assistance from the zone law enforcement officer in Prairie City, Iowa has been utilized in the past. It is not anticipated that this use will entail any greater enforcement issues than what currently exist.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
Wildlife observation poses minimal impact on the purpose for which WPAs were established. Access is typically by individual or small groups on foot. Damage to habitat by foot traffic is minimal and temporary. There may be some temporary disturbance to wildlife due to human activity on the ground. The most likely impact to breeding waterfowl will be during the spring and early summer nesting and brood rearing period; however, the expected sporadic and limited use by the public should not create unreasonable impacts. Disturbance to wildlife, such as flushing a nesting bird, is inherent to these activities; however, the disturbance is temporary and generally not malicious. Many WPAs are located in sparsely populated rural areas, compared to a few that are located near highly populated areas. Monitoring of this use will be needed to ensure anticipated impacts are not exceeded. Winter activities pose no impacts to nesting waterfowl and little impact to vegetation. The winter disturbance to resident wildlife will be temporary and minor.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*.** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Certain modes of access such as motorized vehicles and bicycles are limited to designated trails, public roads, and parking lots. Non-motorized boats are permitted with the exception of state designated waterfowl refuge sites (see above).
2. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
3. No photo or viewing blinds may be left overnight.
4. Harassment of wildlife including hazing and calling at birds and other wildlife is prohibited.
5. All applicable federal, state, and special district regulations apply.

Justification:

Wildlife observation will not materially interfere with or detract from the district purposes, including waterfowl production. The level of use for wildlife observation is moderate on most WPAs. The associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor. Wildlife observation is a priority public use and inspires visitors with the joys of abundant wildlife and wild lands. These uses also help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System. Those WPAs with increased activities generally have facilities present to accommodate the public use with minor impacts to the habitat.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2028

Compatibility Determination

Use: Wood Cutting (including firewood)

Refuge/District Name: Iowa Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (Duck Stamp), March 16 1934, (16 U.S.C. § 718–718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85–585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of "Waterfowl Production Areas."

Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 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. § 715, 715d–715r).

Refuge/District Purposes:

Iowa Wetland Management District was established in 1979:

" . . . as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to . . . all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929] . . . except the inviolate sanctuary provisions . . . " 16 U.S.C. § 718(c) " . . . for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the Refuge System is 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:

Removal of standing and/or fallen trees applies to all wood removal activities regardless of the ultimate use of the wood (firewood, lumber, pulp, etc.). Wood cutting by the public is considered an economic use of a district natural resource and will be allowed in the district under the authority of a special use permit issued by the district manager.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?
Existing use.

Is the use a priority public use?
No.

Where would the use be conducted?
Harvest could occur throughout the district varying in size from a portion of an acre up to several hundred acres depending on the management objective of the area, as well as the quantity and quality of the wood. These sites are typically be found at abandoned farmsteads, along existing

shelter belts and windbreaks, and in other areas where trees are encroaching on grassland and wetland habitats.

When would the use be conducted?
Wood cutting activities could be authorized throughout the year; however, the majority of activity will occur during the winter months when frozen ground facilitates access and afford protection to underlying soils and desired vegetation.

How would the use be conducted?
The district is located at the southernmost portion of the Prairie Pothole Region, an area known for its duck production. Land is primarily acquired, restored, and managed for the production of waterfowl. These uplands and wetlands provide the first suitable breeding habitat available to waterfowl on their northern flight. They also benefit other migratory birds and resident wildlife as well. Today, the tallgrass prairie ecosystem is globally endangered, and most of Iowa's wetlands have been drained. As a result, many grassland- and wetland-dependent migratory birds are in great peril.

The majority of the district is comprised of restored and intact grassland in the uplands and restored wetlands in the lowlands. These habitat complexes contain both native and nonnative grass and forb species, as well as encroaching woody vegetation. If left untreated, overtime, the encroaching woody vegetation reduces or eliminates desirable prairie/wetland herbaceous vegetation growth necessary for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Typically, prescribed burning, haying, and grazing are used as tools to inhibit the encroaching woody vegetation. However, various factors can limit the use of these tools on all or portions of some Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs). Nevertheless, active removal of the encroaching woody vegetation by wood cutting is often less limiting. Therefore, wood cutting will be another tool used to accomplish the same objectives by promoting the reestablishment of the grasses and forbs in the uplands and maintain healthy wetlands. Due to the loss of large wildfires and large-ungulate grazing prior to European settlement and the fast-growing nature of many tree species, wood cutting has become a more frequently utilized tool to help restore and maintain the tallgrass prairie community and its associated wetlands. This is especially true as funding and other factors limit the use of primary grassland management tools.

Equipment used for harvest depends on the site and its management objectives, as well as the permittee's capabilities and may include axes, chainsaws, tractor-mounted shredders and shears, and traditional logging equipment.

Why is this use being proposed?
District management tool and public request.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?
Staff time will be needed to administer special use permits for wood cutting, along with mapping and designating areas that need woody encroachment removed. Approximately twelve staff hours per year are anticipated for this use.

Are existing district resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?
Yes.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect district purposes, the Refuge System mission, and district goals and/or objectives?
In permitting this type of activity, the potential exists to directly impact waterfowl production. This could happen by displacement of birds from localized areas due to disturbance, or crushing of nests because 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 after their nest trees are removed. The indirect impacts to waterfowl production that will occur are primarily beneficial by facilitating the restoration of tallgrass prairie and removing artificially created predator habitat from within the WPAs. Access for removing wood may affect habitat by rutting soils, destroying ground cover, creating weed seedbeds, and increasing sedimentation due to runoff in nearby wetlands. However, these impacts can also be avoided by regulating the timing of the activity.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination is available for public review as part of the *Iowa WMD Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan* from Monday, August 19th, 2013 to Tuesday, September 17th, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final Iowa WMD Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

__X__ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations*

***According to state regulations Iowa Code 52.1(3) *Waterfowl refuges*.** "The following areas under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources are established as waterfowl refuges where posted. It shall be unlawful to hunt ducks and geese on the following areas, where posted, at any time during the year. It shall be unlawful to trespass in any manner on the following areas, where posted, during the dates posted, both dates inclusive . . . " **This compatibility determination does not apply to at least some portion of the following WPAs: Jemmerson Slough (Dickinson County), Elk Creek Marsh (Worth County), and Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth Counties).**

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Travel off designated routes, will be limited to periods when ground is frozen.
2. Wood harvest activities will avoid the primary nesting period for waterfowl and migratory birds.
3. Special use permits are required for this use.
4. Best management practices will be implemented to avoid disturbance, erosion, desirable habitat damage, weed dispersal and migratory bird take.
5. All applicable federal, state, and special district regulations will apply.

Justification:

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 will 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 will be realized by other waterfowl species, and the abundance of artificial and natural nest sites for cavity-nesting species in the area, these impacts will not significantly detract from the WPAs' purpose or Refuge System mission.

Impacts to the habitat because 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 prairie will likely receive follow-up treatments of burning, farming, or both. 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 via special use permit to avoid impacts such as rutting and increased sedimentation in area wetlands due to runoff. 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 Refuge System mission. The removal of trees along trails, in shelterbelts, and within old homesites will benefit waterfowl production by assisting with the restoration of prairie habitat and eliminating predator habitat and perch sites. Individuals participating in the wood harvest program will be under special use permit, and thus site-specific stipulations will ensure resource protection and achievement of management goals. Control of woody species encroachment on prairie habitats is a necessary management activity for the district in converting areas back to their historical grassland condition and directly supports the mission of the Refuge System.

Signature:	District Manager	/Timothy A. Miller/ 01 / 08 / 2014 (Signature and Date)
Concurrence:	Regional Chief	/Charles W. Blair/ 01 / 17 / 2014 (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2023