

**Seedskafee National Wildlife Refuge
White-tailed Deer and Elk Hunt Plan**

February 1, 2019

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Seedskafee National Wildlife Refuge
PO Box 700
Green River, WY 82935**

Submitted By:
Project Leader

Signature

Date

Concurrence:
Refuge Supervisor

Signature

Date

Approved:
Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

Signature

Date

SEEDSKADEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WHITE-TAILED DEER AND ELK HUNTING PLAN

I. Introduction

National Wildlife Refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), the purposes of an individual refuge, Service policy, and laws and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

SeedsKadee National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1965 pursuant to:

- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-667e)
- Colorado River Storage Project Act (43 U.S.C. 620g)
- Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715d)

Refuge purpose(s) include:

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

... shall be administered by him [Secretary of the Interior] directly or in accordance with cooperative agreements ... and in accordance with such rules and regulations for the conservation, maintenance, and management of wildlife, resources thereof, and its habitat thereon, ..." 16 U.S.C. § 664 (Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act) "

... to acquire lands necessary for the construction, operation, and maintenance ..." of "... (1) public recreational facilities on lands withdrawn or acquired ..." for the Colorado River project in order to "... conserve the scenery, the natural, historic, and archeological objects, and the wildlife on said lands, and to provide for public use and enjoyment of the same and of the water areas created by these projects ... and (2) facilities to mitigate losses of and improve conditions for, the propagation of fish and wildlife." The Secretary may "... dispose of ..." the facilities "... to Federal ... agencies ... upon such terms and conditions as will best promote their development and operation in the public interest." 43 U.S.C. § 620g (Colorado River Storage Act)

SeedsKadee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is located in southwestern Wyoming, 37 miles northwest of the City of Green River. The Refuge is managed by the Service as a component of the NWRS. The entire refuge is within Sweetwater County, Wyoming and within the Green River Basin. Geographically, the Refuge is long and narrow, and bisected throughout its length by the Green River. The north boundary of the Refuge is seven miles downstream from Fontenelle Dam. From here, the Refuge extends 37 miles downstream and ranges in width from one to two miles.

The mission of the NWRS, as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), is to:

“... 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.”

The NWRSA mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the System to (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4):

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the NWRS;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the NWRS are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the NWRS described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
- Ensure effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the States in which the units of the NWRS are located;
- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of each refuge;
- Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the NWRS through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
- Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Therefore, it is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the Refuge was established and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Hunting is a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Hunting originally opened on Seedskadee NWR in 1969, and in accordance with the Refuge Hunting Plan (1986) and Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (2002). Hunting is currently allowed on the Refuge in accordance with 50 CFR 32.55 for big game (mule deer, pronghorn, and moose), upland game bird and small game (sage grouse, cottontail rabbit, skunk, fox, jackrabbit and raccoon) and migratory game bird (duck, coot, dark goose, merganser, dove, snipe, and rail). This Compatibility Determination supports the amended 2019 Hunting Plan for Seedskadee NWR to expand hunting to include white-tailed deer and elk.

Seedskaadee NWR is open to recreational public hunting in accordance with State of Wyoming seasons and regulations established for each area. This wildlife dependent, priority public use would allow for the additional hunting opportunity of white-tailed deer and elk on those portions of the Refuge open to big game hunting (Figure 1).

There are an estimated 3,000 hunter visits on refuge complex lands, while annual visitation may average 16,000 or more visits.

II. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of a white-tailed deer and elk hunting program on Seedskaadee NWR are to provide:

- The public with a recreational experience on more refuge lands and increase opportunities for hunters.
- Wildlife-dependent public recreation as mandated by and according to Service law and policy.
- Increase dispersal of elk onto adjacent lands where they would be available to more hunters, and to harvest a percentage of the population on the Refuge, thereby lessening the impacts to all native species, including migratory birds.
- Improved habitat conditions, reducing the impact on establishment and long-term health of cottonwood and willow stands.

Hunting is consistent with the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (USFWS, 2002) objective to manage elk and deer population levels to achieve the CCP's larger habitat restoration goal to, 'Protect and restore riparian habitats along the Green River to provide for the annual needs of migratory birds and native wildlife utilizing the Green River Basin.'

III. Description of Hunting Program

A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting

Hunting of certain species is an existing use that occurs in designated areas of the Refuge. Approximately 24,437 acres are currently open to hunting. Currently, two closed areas exist on the Refuge. Approximately 1,089 acres are closed to migratory bird hunting below Highway 28. A second area of approximately 1,548 acres is closed to all hunting and protects refuge buildings and primary wetland impoundments. This amended hunting opportunity would be allowed on fee-title lands within the boundaries of Seedskaadee NWR (Figure 1).

B. Species to be Taken, Hunting periods, Hunting Access

BIG GAME HUNTING: White-tailed deer and elk. Season dates for authorized species are consistent with Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) regulated hunting seasons for Big Game.

Bag limits and harvest methods for authorized species are consistent with WGFD rules and regulations for big game hunting and specific refuge rules and regulations as published in the Federal Register and Refuge Hunting Brochures.

Firearms, muzzleloader, and archery hunting all occur on the Refuge. Hunters make use of boat ramps and parking lots at various locations on the Refuge, and also park along existing roadways.

C. Hunter Permit Requirements (if applicable)

Hunters will be required to possess all required state licenses, tags, and permits. See “Hunter Permit Application and/or Registration Procedures” below.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

Discussions between refuge staff and the WGFD concerning establishing populations of white-tailed deer and elk, began over a decade ago. Refuge staff meet with area WGFD employees a number of times each year to talk about our hunting and fishing programs, coordinate environmental education activities, and plan and complete fish and wildlife habitat improvement projects. The refuge will adopt WGFD regulations for hunting white-tailed deer and elk, aligning with their management goals. The WGFD is in agreement with the Refuge’s Hunt Plan including white-tailed deer and elk, as it will help meet their goals and objectives as well as the Refuge’s goals.

E. Law Enforcement

Enforcement of refuge violations normally associated with management of a National Wildlife Refuge is the responsibility of commissioned Federal Wildlife Officers. Currently there is a refuge complex Federal Wildlife Officer stationed at Seedskadee NWR. Other officers, Special Agents, State Conservation Officer and Sweetwater County Sheriff’s Office provide additional assistance when requested.

The following methods are used to control and enforce hunting regulations:

- Refuge and hunt area boundaries will be clearly posted;
- The refuge will provide a brochure that shows hunt areas;
- Seedskadee NWR law enforcement staff will randomly check hunters for compliance with Federal and State Laws.
- High visibility law enforcement activities as well as covert operations would be conducted to dissuade hunters from impacting wildlife other than the target species.
- Refuge-Specific Regulations will be in effect to minimize disturbance and to protect flora and fauna in the area.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

The cost to operate a white-tailed deer and elk hunt program is estimated to be \$10,000 annually for labor and materials to update and print maps, maintain signs, coordinate with the WGFD, and conduct law enforcement patrols.

Existing refuge staff would administer the hunting program. The refuge manager would set station priorities to assure that required support staff is adequate. As this hunt program evolves over the years, refuge-specific regulations, systems of control to limit number of hunters, and fee costs may occur or change at the Refuge manager's discretion.

Refuge staff would prepare the annual refuge hunting regulations brochure, make changes to the White-tailed Deer and Elk Hunt Plan and regulations as needed, edit the hunting leaflet annually, post and replace appropriate signage, respond to public inquiries about the hunt program, and conduct hunter use surveys. In addition to staff expenses, the Refuge would incur costs for signs, vehicle maintenance, road repair and maintenance, leaflet printing, and miscellaneous supplies.

Currently, sufficient resources are available to administer the expanded program to include additional species. It is anticipated that funding would continue to be sufficient to continue the hunting program at Seedskadee NWR in the future.

IV. Conduct of the Hunting Program

A. Hunter Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures (if applicable)

White-tailed deer and elk hunters wanting to hunt these species at Seedskadee NWR must possess a valid license for the species hunted, which is issued by the WGFD. Application and selection is made through the WGFD application system.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

Listed below are refuge-specific regulations that pertain to hunting big game on Seedskadee NWR as of the date of this plan. These regulations may be modified as conditions change or if refuge expansion continues/occurs.

- We prohibit all hunting between Highway 28 and 0.8 miles (1.28 km) north of the Refuge headquarters on the west side of the Green River. We post the boundary for this area with refuge signs stating "No Hunting Zone".
- We only allow hunters to retrieve downed game from closed areas with consent from a refuge employee or State game warden.
- You must unload and either case or dismantle all firearms (see §27.42(b) of this chapter) when transporting them in a vehicle or boat under power.
- We open the Refuge to the general public from 1/2 hour before legal sunrise to 1/2 hour after legal sunset.

C. Relevant State Regulations

White-tailed deer and elk hunters using a firearm and born on or after January 1, 1966 must have completed and can demonstrate they have obtained a certificate of competency and safety in the use of handling firearms. Attendance and successful completion of a hunter safety course offered by an association or governmental agency approved by the WGFD satisfies the requirement.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting Program

The refuge maintains a mailing list, for news release purposes, to local newspapers, radio, and websites. Special announcements and articles may be released in conjunction with hunting seasons. In addition, information about the hunt will be available at Seedskadee NWR headquarters and or on the Seedskadee NWR website.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting Program

Numerous requests have been made by the public and WGFD to allow white-tailed deer and elk hunting on Seedskadee NWR. Based on the comments received during the CCP (2002) the Service anticipates support for the white-tailed deer and elk hunting program. Hunting has already been allowed on Seedskadee NWR for more than 50 years and little negative public reaction is expected. Hunting is an important economic and recreational use of Wyoming's natural resources. Some individuals may have concern with white-tailed deer and elk hunting in areas where trumpeter swans may be present.

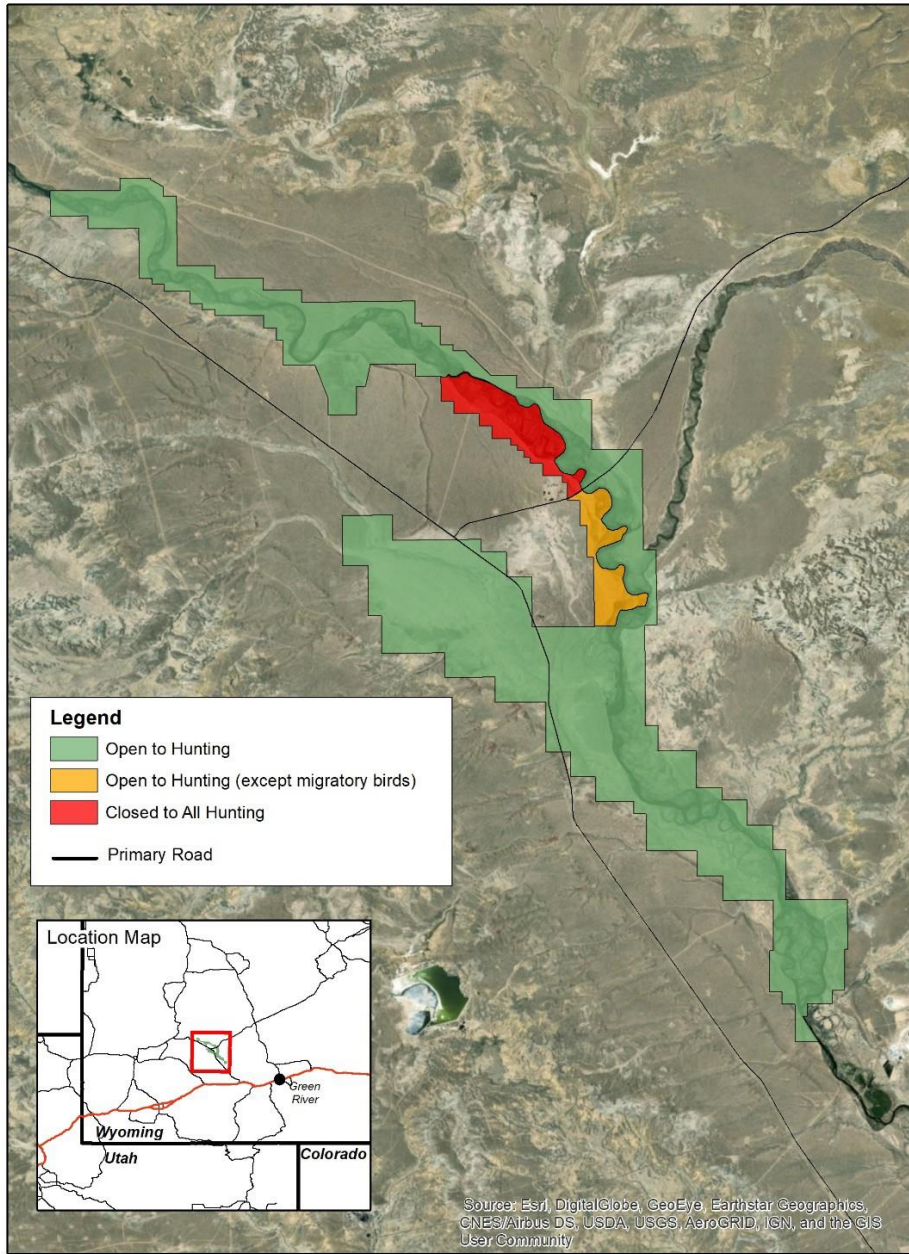
C. How Hunters Will Be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations

General information regarding hunting and other wildlife-dependent public uses can be obtained by contacting Seedskadee NWR headquarters by phone at (307)875-2187, mail at PO Box 700, Green River, WY 82935, or stopping in at the Refuge Headquarters during normal business hours. Information about the Refuge's hunt program can be obtained online at: [Link to further information about the Refuge's hunt program](#)

VI. Compatibility Determination

Hunting and all associated program activities proposed in this plan are compatible with the purposes of the Refuge. See attached Compatibility Determination on Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge for recreational hunting – white-tailed deer and elk.

Figure 1.



**Compatibility Determination
On
Seedskafee National Wildlife Refuge**

Use: Recreational Hunting – white-tailed deer and elk

Refuge Name: Seedskafee NWR

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Seedskafee NWR:

- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-667e)
- Colorado River Storage Project Act (43 U.S.C. 620g)
- Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715d)

Refuge Purpose(s):

- “...shall be administered by him/her (Secretary of the Interior) directly or in accordance with cooperative agreements....and in accordance with such rules and regulations for the conservation, maintenance and management of wildlife, resources thereof, and its habitat thereon,” 16 U.S.C. 664 (Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act)
- “In connection with the development of the Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP) and of the participating projects, the Secretary is authorized and directed to investigate, plan, construct, operate, and maintain (1) public recreational facilities on lands withdrawn or acquired...” for the Colorado River Storage Project or participating projects in order to “...conserve the scenery, the natural, historic, and archaeological objects, and the wildlife on said lands, and to provide for public use and enjoyment of the same and of the water areas created by these projects by such means as are consistent with primary purposes of said projects...and (2) facilities to mitigate losses of and improve conditions for, the propagation of fish and wildlife.” The Secretary may “. . . dispose of . . .” the facilities “. . . to Federal . . . agencies . . . upon such terms and conditions as will best promote their development and operation in the public interest.” 43 U.S.C. 620g (Colorado River Storage Act)
- “use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds” 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

Though the Refuge has acquisition authorities under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (MBCA), no funds have been expended on acquisition of refuge lands. Thus, while this is a purpose under MBCA, the Refuge does not have to adhere to the 60/40 inviolate sanctuary requirements for hunting activities.

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:

What is the use? Is the use a wildlife-dependent public use?

Hunting is a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Hunting originally opened on Seedskaadee NWR in 1969, and in accordance with the Refuge Hunting Plan (1986) and Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (2002). Hunting is currently allowed on the Refuge in accordance with 50 CFR 32.55 for big game (mule deer, pronghorn, and moose), upland game bird and small game (sage grouse, cottontail rabbit, skunk, fox, jackrabbit and raccoon) and migratory game bird (duck, coot, dark goose, merganser, dove, snipe, and rail). This Compatibility Determination supports the amended 2019 Hunting Plan for Seedskaadee NWR to expand hunting to include white-tailed deer and elk.

Seedskaadee NWR is open to recreational public hunting in accordance with State of Wyoming seasons and regulations established for each area. This wildlife dependent, priority public use would allow for the additional hunting opportunity of white-tailed deer and elk on those portions of the Refuge open to public hunting (Figure 1).

There are an estimated 3,000 hunter visits on refuge complex lands, while annual visitation may average 16,000 or more visits.

Where would the use be conducted?

Hunting of certain species is an existing use that occurs in designated areas of the Refuge. Approximately 24,437 acres are currently open to hunting. Currently, two closed areas exist on the Refuge. Approximately 1,089 acres are closed to migratory bird hunting below Highway 28. A second area of approximately 1,548 acres is closed to all hunting and protects refuge buildings and primary wetland impoundments. This amended hunting opportunity would be allowed on fee-title lands within the boundaries of Seedskaadee NWR (Figure 1).

When would the use be conducted?

Season dates for authorized species are consistent with Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) regulated hunting seasons for Big Game.

How would the use be conducted?

Bag limits and harvest methods for authorized species are consistent with WGFD rules and

regulations for big game hunting and specific refuge rules and regulations as published in the Federal Register and Refuge Hunting Brochures.

Firearms, muzzleloader, and archery hunting all occur on the Refuge. Hunters make use of boat ramps and parking lots at various locations on the Refuge, and also park along existing roadways.

Parking areas, interpretive panels, and signs and other structures would need to be maintained to facilitate this program.

Why is this use being proposed?

Hunting is a priority general public use of the NWRS that is also an important wildlife management tool. The Service recognizes hunting as a healthy, traditional outdoor pastime, deeply rooted in the American heritage (USFWS, 2006). Hunting can instill a unique understanding and appreciation of wildlife, their behavior, and their habitat needs. Hunting programs can promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on lands and waters in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Big Game (Elk)

During different times of the year elk are found on the Refuge, though they are most commonly found in meadow and riparian areas of the Refuge. In the last several years they have become a very abundant big game species on Seedsdakee NWR, with wintering elk numbers increasing on the Refuge in recent years. Currently herd size ranges from 75 to 100 animals.

The primary objective of the elk hunt is to increase the dispersal of elk onto adjacent lands where they would be available to more hunters, and to harvest a percentage of the population on the Refuge, thereby lessening the impacts to all native species, including migratory birds. The elk hunt would also provide a new, quality hunting opportunity for hunters. It is advisable to take management action before the elk population reaches a point where it does long-term damage to the environment, adversely affects other native flora and fauna species and impacts adjacent landowners.

The reduction in elk numbers that inhabit the Refuge would reduce the impact on establishment and long-term health of cottonwood and willow stands, maintaining or improving habitat conditions for many species increasing habitat objectives. If the elk population on the Refuge continues to increase, eventually the habitat would not be able to support a healthy population, exceeding carrying capacity. Elk foraging on adjacent private lands used for grazing and agriculture and for other wildlife would also increase. The current browse monitoring conducted on the Refuge indicates that browsing pressure on riparian habitats within the Refuge are at unsustainable levels and this pressure needs to be reduced to improve habitat health.

Movement of the elk population across refuge boundaries is not restricted by the wildlife-friendly interior fencing used for grazing management, perimeter boundary fencing, or by terrain or topography. The growing elk population is adequate to provide high-quality hunting

opportunities while maintaining elk on the Refuge for other priority public uses. These conditions, coupled with continued monitoring of the population, coordination with the WGFD, hunter participation, and WGFD established bag limits, would ensure the population would not be adversely affected by managed hunting. If populations, habitat, or hunter success rates adversely impact refuge resources; modifications to the hunt program would be addressed.

Big Game (White-tailed Deer)

Seedskaadee NWR has been open to mule deer hunting since 1969. Mule deer primarily inhabit the Green River bottomlands or riparian zone and portions of shrub-steppe uplands throughout the Refuge. Mule deer may be present on Seedskaadee NWR during the spring, summer, fall, and winter months. Mule deer hunting is popular within the hunt management unit established by WGFD. Monitoring of the population, coordination with the WGFD, hunter participation, and WGFD established bag limits has ensured the population has not be adversely affected by managed hunting.

Although, white-tailed deer are not as common as mule deer on the Refuge, their numbers are increasing and hunting opportunities will be available. White-tailed deer were not historically found on Seedskaadee NWR and have now become established here. Current herd size ranges from 50 to 75 animals. White-tailed deer are known to out-compete or dominate mule deer in the river bottom habitats. The increase in white-tailed deer numbers is a concern for the Refuge and the WGFD from a habitat quality standpoint and keeping a balance between mule and white-tailed deer numbers. Monitoring of the population, coordination with the WGFD, hunter participation, and WGFD established bag limits, would ensure the population would not be adversely affected by managed hunting. If populations, habitat, or hunter success rates adversely impact refuge resources; modifications to the hunt program would be addressed.

In addition to the biological reasoning, numerous requests have been made by the public and WGFD to allow white-tailed deer and elk hunting on Seedskaadee NWR. This action would provide the public with additional hunting opportunities on public lands in Wyoming. Public hunting opportunities are also available nearby on a significant amount of adjacent Bureau of Land Management administered lands. This action would be consistent with hunting opportunities on other refuge lands within the Refuge complex, Cokeville Meadows and Pathfinder NWRs specifically, and align with State regulations.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly (considering quality and compatibility) and safely administer use?

The present refuge hunting program is designed to be administered with minimal refuge resources. Refuge regulations mirror state regulations in large part, which allows WGFD Conservation Officers to assist in law enforcement. Refuge staff would prepare the annual refuge hunting regulations brochure, make changes to the White-tailed Deer and Elk Hunt Plan and regulations as needed, edit the hunting leaflet annually, respond to public inquiries about the hunt program, and conduct hunter use surveys and conduct law enforcement patrols and hunter

contacts. There is a small amount of vehicle and road repair and maintenance, mowing, leaflet/brochure printing and other upkeep performed that is funded as part of regular refuge management activities. Approximately \$10,000 annually is required for labor and materials to update and print maps, and maintain signs. Currently, sufficient resources are available to administer the expanded program to include additional species.

Are existing refuge resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?

At the present level of hunting use there are adequate refuge resources to implement the hunting program. Law enforcement is the primary tool necessary to ensure proper and safe administration of this use. Currently there is a refuge complex Federal Wildlife Officer stationed at Seedskadee NWR. Additionally, the local State Conservation Officer and Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office provide additional assistance when requested.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short and Long-term Impacts:

Accommodating this wildlife-dependent use is expected to result in minimal impacts. Although hunting causes mortality to wildlife, season dates and bag limits are set with the long-term health of populations in mind. Temporary disturbance would exist to wildlife in the vicinity of the activity. Closed areas would minimize conflicts between hunters and other visitors, and provides a safety zone around administrative areas.

Opening additional areas for hunting would increase opportunities for hunters. However, the lands proposed for this opportunity have been open for public hunting for many years and the increase in hunter activity is not expected to be significant.

Other Uses and Public Safety:

Hunting is not expected to adversely affect other refuge uses or public safety. No conflicts of consequence are expected between sport fishermen, big game and upland/small game hunters. Overlap of hunting area usage between sport fishermen, migratory bird hunters, and big game hunters may occur, but is expected to be minimal due to the dissimilar nature of these activities and the areas of the Refuge where these activities may be expected to occur.

The demand for non-consumptive wildlife-oriented use on Seedskadee NWR continues to grow. Conflicts between hunters and non-consumptive users may occur. Providing non-consumptive users access to wildlife viewing areas as described in the White-tailed Deer and Elk Hunt Plan, notifications of when users are entering a hunting area, and even closing a hunting area to non-consumptive users if appropriate would reduce conflicts. In addition, restrictions on hunting methods and restrictions on hunting near designated public use facilities and trails should aid in reducing potential conflicts between hunters and non-consumptive users.

If public use levels on Seedskadee NWR expand across time, unanticipated conflicts between

user groups may occur. The refuge's Visitor Services programs would be adjusted as needed to eliminate or minimize each problem and provide a quality wildlife-dependent recreational opportunity, which includes promoting public safety. Experience on many national wildlife refuges has proven that time and space zoning (e.g., establishment of separate use areas, use periods, and restrictions on the number of users) is an effective tool in eliminating conflicts between user groups. Decisions will be based on minimizing impacts to various user groups, and best management practices for wildlife. Overall, the cumulative impacts of hunting on other wildlife-dependent recreation or public safety at Seedskadee NWR are expected to be minor.

Seedskadee NWR has been a popular hunting area for many years. The refuge hunting program is designed to provide for the use of refuge lands within a framework designed to protect wildlife populations and provide for public safety. The continuance of these traditional uses has been widely supported by the public both before and since the establishment of the Refuge. It is expected that this support would continue.

Public Review and Comment:

Public review and comment will be solicited through public posting of notices at the Refuge headquarters, notices in local newspapers and on refuge website and through other refuge and WGFD digital media sites.

Determination (check one below):

- Use is Not Compatible
 Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Hunting must be in accordance with Federal and State regulations.
2. Hunting on Seedskadee NWR will take place in a manner that will minimize disturbance to migrating waterbirds.
3. Hunting will be evaluated to provide a safe hunt (reduce conflicts between hunt seasons).
4. The refuge deer, pronghorn, elk and moose hunts will be coordinated with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to determine the number of permits to manage the populations.
5. Monitor all hunting uses to assure they do not interfere with and are compatible with other wildlife-dependent recreational activities.
6. During critical wintering periods for waterbirds or for the protection of special wildlife species/habitats, areas may be closed and access limited to minimize any wildlife disturbances.
7. Refuge areas closed to hunting must be re-evaluated to ensure adequate habitat for migrating, feeding, and resting waterfowl and other wildlife is available. A closed area inclusive of some portion of the main stem of the Green River must be created to

ensure compatibility of the hunting program.

Justification:

In view of the above and with the stipulations previously described, hunting would not materially interfere with or detract from the Refuge System mission or purposes of the Refuge. Hunting is a priority public use of the Refuge System, and providing a hunting program contributes to achieving one of the Refuge goals. Disturbance of wildlife would occur, but limitations on hunting mean areas of the Refuge would be free of disturbance. Hunting is not expected to adversely affect the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge or the Refuge System.

The Service and the State of Wyoming consider hunting an acceptable and desirable form of public use and wildlife-dependent recreation. Hunting is considered an educational and recreational opportunity to increase the public’s awareness of wise stewardship and management of wildlife resources in the public’s trust. Recreational public hunting is a historic wildlife dependent use of the Refuge system and is one of the six priority public uses established by Executive Order 12996 (March 25, 1996) and legislatively authorized by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-57).

Infrastructure is already in place to support hunting programs, and current staffing levels and funding are adequate. Special regulations are in place to minimize negative impacts to the Refuges and associated wildlife. Wyoming state law further controls hunter activities. Hunting is a legitimate wildlife management tool that can be used to control wildlife populations. Hunting harvests a small percentage of the renewable resources, which is in accordance with wildlife-management objectives and principles.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
Date

Review: Refuge Supervisor _____
Date

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
Date

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-Evaluation Date: February 2024

References:

Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge Hunting Plan. 1986.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2002. Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2006. Wildlife-Dependent Recreation: Hunting. 605 FW 2. National Wildlife Refuge System, Department of Interior. Available URL: <http://www.fws.gov/policy/605fw2.html>.