

Compatibility Determination Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Use

Waterfowl hunting.

Refuge names, establishing and acquisition authorities, and purposes

Each National Wildlife Refuge is established under specific legislation or administrative authority . Similarly, each refuge has one or more specific legal purposes for which it was established. The establishing legislation or authority and the purposes for each refuge in the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Refuge Complex) are given below.

Block Island National Wildlife Refuge

Date Established: 2 November 1973

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Block Island National Wildlife Refuge (Block Island Refuge) was established under 16 U.S. Code 667b, Public Law 80 - 537, an Act Authorizing the Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife, or other Purposes.

Purpose(s) for which Refuge was established: Lands acquired under 16 U.S. code 667b, Public Law 80-537 were for. . . “particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program.”

Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge

Date Established: 12 August 1970

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge (Ninigret Refuge) was established under 16 U.S. Code 667b, Public Law 80 - 537, an Act Authorizing the Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife, or Other Purposes. Additions to the refuge were acquired under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 715d.

Purpose(s) for which Refuge was established: Lands acquired under 16 U.S. code 667b, Public Law 80-537 were established for their. . . “particular value in carrying out the national Migratory Bird Management Program.” Additional lands acquired under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. ss 715d) were. . . “for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.”

John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge at Pettaquamscutt Cove

Date Established: 5 November 1988 (originally established as Pettaquamscutt Cove National Wildlife Refuge)

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge (Chafee Refuge) was established under an Amendment to the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act (102 Stat. 3177) and the National Wildlife Refuge Administrative Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 668dd - 668ee; 80 STAT 927).

Purpose(s) for which Refuge was established: The purposes for which the refuge was established and managed for are: “(1) to protect and enhance the populations of black ducks and other waterfowl, geese, shorebirds, terns, wading birds, and other wildlife using the refuge; (2) to provide for the conservation and management of fish and wildlife within the refuge; (3) to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States respecting fish and wildlife; and (4) to provide opportunities for scientific research, environmental education, and fish and wildlife-oriented recreation” (102 Stat. 3177).

Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge

Date Established: 3 November 1970

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge (Sachuest Point Refuge) was established under the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 and the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956.

Purpose(s) for which Refuge was established: Sachuest Point Refuge was established “...for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources” and

for “(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development; (2) protection of natural resources, and (3) conservation of endangered or threatened species” (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962).

Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge

Date Established: 15 August 1974

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: The Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge (Trustom Pond Refuge) was established under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, 16 USC 715-715R and by the Refuge Recreation Act, 16 USC c - 1.

Purpose(s) for which Refuge was established: For lands acquired under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, as amended, the purpose of the acquisition is “. . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act) and for “. . . (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development; (2) the protection of natural resources; and (3) the conservation of endangered or threatened species. . .” as authorized by the Refuge Recreation Act, 16 USC. c - 1.

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 fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

Description of Uses

Is the use a priority public uses?

Hunting is identified as a priority, wildlife-dependent recreational use by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Refuge Improvement Act; P.L. 105-57).

Where would the use be conducted?

- Ninigret Refuge, on the barrier beach marshlands and in the vicinity of Coon Cove;
- Chafee Refuge, in Pettaquamscutt Cove; and
- Trustom Pond Refuge, on a 20 acre upland field.

When would the use be conducted?

Hunting would occur according to state regulated seasons.

Why is the use being proposed?

Waterfowl hunting helps us achieve refuge purposes and management goals and objectives, as outlined in refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans. In addition, waterfowl hunting in these areas is an historic, traditional and sustainable activity.

How would the use be conducted?

The activity includes waterfowl hunting , as well as access across refuge lands to hunting opportunities on state waters. All hunting would adhere to state regulations for seasons, bag limits, species, and methods of taking. Additional refuge regulations may be determined necessary during development of the required Hunt Plan.

Ninigret Refuge

Currently, no hunting is allowed on the refuge. However, hunting is a popular activity on the adjacent Ninigret Pond, which is state waters. We are proposing to allow waterfowl hunting and associated dog retrieval, by boat only, in the marshes along the barrier beach parcel. Following restoration of wetland habitat at Coons Cove, we will provide for waterfowl hunting at this site as well. We would administer this hunting opportunity in cooperation with RI DEM.

Chafee Refuge

Currently, no hunting is allowed on this refuge. We are proposing a waterfowl hunt and associated dog retrieval, by boat access only, in Pettaquamscutt Cove. We would administer this hunting opportunity in cooperation with RI DEM.

Trustom Pond Refuge

Currently, hunting of Canada geese occurs on 20 acres of refuge upland grasslands (cool season grasslands). Bag limits and seasons are determined by Federal and State regulations, which allow two split seasons for geese. Hunter parking is provided on the refuge and access to the upland fields is by foot only. We would administer this hunting opportunity in cooperation with RI DEM.

Availability of Resources

Annual costs required to administer and manage waterfowl hunting activities:

Maintenance of Parking Areas	\$ 500
Law Enforcement	\$ 7,000(Seasonal LEO)
Signs / Pamphlets	\$ 1,000
Administration	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
TOTAL	\$ 9,500

Some costs would be significantly reduced due to cooperative management with the State. Law enforcement officers from the Complex would have limited involvement.

Anticipated Impacts of Waterfowl Hunting

Migratory birds are managed on a flyway basis. Hunting regulations are established in each state based on flyway data. Current numbers of such birds would be reduced, within allowable limits, as determined by State and Federal agencies. Direct disturbance to non-target birds would likely occur from hunting, but would be short term. For example, noise from shotguns would cause some birds to flush and go elsewhere. These impacts are of a temporary nature and would also be reduced by the presence of adjacent refuge habitat where hunting does not occur, and where birds can feed and rest relatively undisturbed.

Public Review and Comment

In the Draft Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment (December 2000), a compatibility determination was written which included all six of the priority public uses. After a 51 day public review, and consideration of comments received, we made modifications to several of these programs, including hunting. We are issuing this new, separate compatibility determination for hunting as required by Service policy and because we have decided to offer new waterfowl hunting opportunities on Chafee and Ninigret refuges.

A draft of this Compatibility Determination was made available for public review from December 20, 2001 through January 11, 2002, in conjunction with issuance of our response to public comments on the CCP. All persons on our mailing list received a copy, press releases invited comments, and the draft CD was available for public review at our Charlestown Office. We received comments from four respondents both in support of, and opposed to, waterfowl hunting.

One respondent was concerned about the potential high rate of crippling losses as a result of wounded animals. It is likely that, as refuges are opened to hunting, we will require hunter report cards to assess take and crippling losses.

Two respondents expressed support for waterfowl hunting as proposed. Another respondent objected to the potential for loud noise and gunfire, potential disturbance to waterfowl and other wildlife, and was

opposed to recreational hunting on wildlife refuges. Hunting is one of the six priority public uses on national wildlife refuges. Areas slated for hunting either already have hunting adjacent to them or are the required distance from residences.

The Town of Narragansett pointed out that it is illegal to discharge firearms within the City limit. Our hunt programs will not allow hunting with firearms within the City limits.

Determination

The use is compatible X.
 The use is not compatible ___.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility

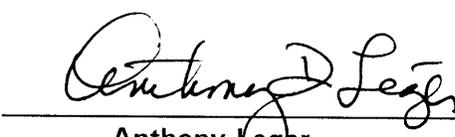
All hunting will adhere to state and local (Town and City ordinances) regulations for hunting seasons, species, bag and possession limits, and method of take. Additional refuge regulations may be identified during development of the Hunt Plan.

Justification

Hunting does not materially interfere with or detract from the Mission of the System, and contributes to refuge purposes and management goals and objectives. Hunting is another priority wildlife-oriented activity that provides outstanding recreational benefit to the public and promotes an appreciation of wildlife and the outdoors. Hunting is also a valid means of population control, and can serve to keep populations of wildlife in check. In particular, the hunting program at Trustom Pond Refuge will contribute to the reduction of local resident Canada geese and reduce the public nuisance of these birds. Waterfowl hunting at these refuges will help us to manage populations of resident Canada geese, contributing to the Mission of the Refuge System and the purposes for which these refuges were established. The resources needed to administer this program are well within the means of the refuge to do so.

Signature – Refuge Manager: 
 Charles E. Vandemoer

Date: 3/20/02

Concurrence – Regional Chief: 
 Anthony Leger

Date: 5/7/2002

Mandatory 15-year Reevaluation

Date: 5/7/2017

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