

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### Environmental Assessment for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed the Environmental Assessment for Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. (EA) to evaluate effects on the human environment associated with opening portions the Lake Lowell Unit of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge for an annual controlled deer hunting program beginning in 2012. The hunt is designed to alleviate depredation to local agricultural lands and other lands surrounding the Refuge as well as provide for a safe and quality recreational opportunity providing a reasonable opportunity to harvest game.

The Refuge will implement a controlled deer hunt and depredation hunt seasons on portions of the Lake Lowell Unit consistent with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) seasons, bag limits, and special conditions for Game Management Unit (GMU) 38, which surrounds Lake Lowell. Annually, a set total of forty-five permits would be let for the Refuge seasons. Detailed descriptions of the hunts are contained in the EA, the Hunt Plan for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge (Hunt Plan) and the Compatibility Determination for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

Three alternatives were considered and site specific effects and cumulative impacts analyzed in the EA. Alternative B was selected for implementation because it is most likely to meet the goals and objectives identified in the Hunt Plan as well as allow for management flexibility as deer herd and other management conditions change. It has the most potential to affect deer herd distribution and size which will reduce depredation to local agricultural lands and other lands surrounding the Refuge.

As described in detail in the EA, implementation of Alternative B would be expected to result in the following environmental, social, and economic effects: It will reduce deer depredation, financial loss to local agricultural interests, and expenditures by the State related to depredation management through reduction in local deer populations. The presence of hunters may cause some slight disruption to wildlife and habitats. In addition, the hunt will provide more recreational hunting opportunities for interested area hunters but may reduce Refuge visitation experience by non-hunters and hunters of waterfowl and upland game. There may be increased deer viewing opportunities in other portions of the Refuge and surrounding lands as deer move to avoid areas open to hunters. It will have a minor positive impact on the local economy.

Measures to minimize adverse effects have been incorporated into the proposal. These measures include:

1. Stipulations described the Compatibility Determination for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

2. The Refuge and State law enforcement programs and closely regulated seasons will insure hunt regulation compliance and protect refuge resources.

As described in detail in the EA, implementing the deer hunting program is not expected to have any significant effects on Refuge resources or other elements of the human environment because of the limited numbers of hunters and numerous stipulations designed to minimize adverse effects to Refuge resources and adjacent landowners.

The proposal has been thoroughly discussed and coordinated with IDFG has been coordinated with interested and affected parties. A public review and comment period for the EA, Hunt Plan and Compatibility Determination opened on December 5, 2011 and ended on January 5, 2011. Notification of the comment period was published in the local newspaper and Deer Flat NWR website. Letters were mailed to adjacent landowners and other interested parties informing them of the comment period. Copies of the Hunt Plan, EA, and Compatibility Determination were made available for public review at the Refuge office and on the Deer Flat NWR website. Notification of the availability the Hunt Plan, EA, and Compatibility Determination and public comment period was sent to the IDFG, Canyon County Commissioners, and other Federal, State and local agency representatives.

During the comment period 22 comment communications were received by U.S. mail and email. Responding to comments resulted in several clarifications being added to the EA; otherwise detailed responses were developed for all other comments.

Based on the information above and references below, it is my determination that the proposal does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. Copies of supporting references are available upon request from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, 13751 Upper Embankment Road, Nampa, ID 83686 – 8046. Phone Number: 208-467-9278.

Supporting documents for this decision include relevant office file material and the following references:

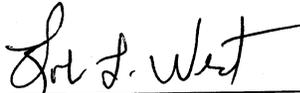
Environmental Assessment for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. 2012.

Hunt Plan for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. 2012.

Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation for the Hunt Plan for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. 2012

Compatibility Determination for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake Lowell Unit  
of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. 2012

Responses to comments received on the Hunt Plan, Environmental Assessment,  
and Compatibility Determination for a Controlled Deer Hunt on the Lake  
Lowell Unit of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. 2012.



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Regional Chief, Pacific Region  
National Wildlife Refuge System

1-25-12

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Date