

# Appendix N: Standard Eligibility Questionnaire for the use of Genetically Modified Crops on National Wildlife System Lands

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System Genetically Modified Crops (GMC) Eligibility Questionnaire

Name of FWS representative: Dean Bossert  
Title of FWS representative: Wildlife Refuge Specialist  
Date: March 30, 2011  
Refuge(s): Big Muddy NFWR  
Refuge Purpose(s): The advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources.

Instructions: Use this questionnaire to determine if GMCs are eligible for use on your refuge(s). If you determine that GMCs are eligible for use, you may submit the completed questionnaire to your Regional Chief with a memo requesting approval of the use of specific GMCs. Approval must be obtained prior to the use of GMCs. NEPA documentation, compatibility determination, and ESA Section 7 consultation addressing the use of GMCs must also be finalized prior to the use of GMCs. Once GMC approval is obtained, no renewal process is required.

1. Is it practicable to achieve refuge purposes by managing native plant communities and without growing domesticated crops?

Yes? Stop here. GMCs are not permitted and farming will not be practiced.

No? Describe why and go to Question 2.

Our goal is to restore acquired farmland back to wildlife habitat. We do not always have the resources to take large acreages of farmland out of production and restore it to native vegetation when we acquire it. We take some acres out of production every year but in order to keep the noxious weeds under control we utilize cooperative farming on the acres that have been farmed during the past year.

2. Is it possible to grow conventional crops (non-GMCs) in a quantity sufficient to achieve refuge purposes without using pesticides or herbicides?

Yes? Stop here. Pesticides, herbicides, and GMCs are not permitted. Conventional crops may be used without the use of pesticides or herbicides.

No? Describe why and go to Question 3.

Crop production is not necessarily our goal, weed control is. In order for us to prepare an area for planting of native vegetation we need to have had the noxious weeds controlled so as to give the natives a competitive advantage.

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3. Are there any federal or state laws or regulations that prohibit the planting or production of GMCs on the refuge or in the area in which the refuge is located? (Contact the local County Extension Service in your area for updated information pertaining to this question.)

Yes? Stop here. GMCs are not permitted. (Please identify the law(s) or regulation(s) below for FWS informational purposes.)

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No? Go to Question 4.

4. Which GMCs do you seek approval for using?

Corn and soybeans

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5. Are there any known wild relatives of the GMCs listed above on or within 6 miles of the refuge?

Yes? Stop here. GMCs are not permitted. (Please identify the known wild relatives below for FWS informational purposes.)

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No? Go to Question 6.

6. Is the use of the GMCs listed under Question 4 considered essential for achieving refuge purposes?

Yes? Go to Question 7.

No? Stop here. GMCs are not permitted. Conventional crops may be used, with or without the use of pesticides.

7. Describe briefly how and where on the refuge(s) you would use the GMCs listed under Question 4, and why these GMCs are considered essential for fulfilling refuge purposes. (Include detailed information on refuge purposes. Also include information on how the use of these GMCs would assist with accomplishing habitat and population objectives. Attach another page if necessary.)

The purposes for which Big Muddy NFWR was established are to preserve and restore natural river floodplain, manage fish and wildlife habitats, and provide compatible public use.

GMC's would be used on recently acquired land that was farmed the previous year. Land would be farmed on a short term basis (2 to 3 years) for several reasons, including 1) to control the invasion of noxious weeds, 2) to prepare an optimum seed bed for the establishment of native species, 3) to keep an area open until plans are developed and funds obtained, or 4) to honor a land use clause or purchase agreement. (see attached page)

## 7. Continued

Big Muddy NFWR has an active acquisition program and we are periodically acquiring active farmland. Because of limited funds for restoration and the limit on time that we have to make restoration plans, it is essential that we be able farm the large tracts that have had active farming operations on them in order to control noxious weeds until we can restore them. It is important that we be able to use GMC's in these short-term situations for several reasons. Roundup is a relatively safe chemical on the environment, and it has proven to be effective. GMC seed is readily available, non-GMC seed is often not readily available. It is difficult to find a farmer who will work with our restrictive requirements on a short term basis. Without cooperative farmers and GMC's, the restoration of these sites would be more expensive and less effective.



10. Do Section 7 consultations indicate that using the GMCs listed under Question 4 is likely to adversely impact or adversely modify a listed species or critical habitat in and around the immediate area in which GMCs will be planted? (Attach the biological opinion to the questionnaire.)

Yes? GMCs are not permitted.

No? Go to Question 11.

11. Is the use of the GMCs listed under Question 4 addressed in final NEPA documents?

Yes? Go to Question 12.

No?. Approval for the use of GMCs may be requested after NEPA documentation is finalized. See also Question 12.

12. Is the use of the GMCs listed under Question 4 addressed in a published compatibility determination?

Yes? Regional Chief's approval for the use of GMCs may be requested. The request must be in writing (hardcopy or email) and must include this questionnaire.

No? Approval for the use of GMCs may be requested after a compatibility determination is published or in press.

Thomas B. Bell  
Signature of FWS Representative Completing Questionnaire

4-12-11  
Date

Request Approved

Request Denied

Regional Refuge Chief

Rick Schuff

Date 4/19/2011