

Appendix G: Compatibility Determinations

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DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Compatibility Determination

Use: Upland and Big Game Hunting

Refuge Name: DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1969 (16 U.S.C., 715d)

Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C., 460k-460k-4)

Refuge Purposes:

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge was established March 12, 1958:

“ . . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)

“ . . . suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962*)

*This purpose was applied post facto to DeSoto NWR.

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:

Hunting of game is a public use granted under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and is considered a priority public use of the Refuge System.

With lands in both Iowa and Nebraska, the refuge established a reciprocal agreement with the states in 2003. The agreement allows hunters with a license in either state to hunt in designated areas of the refuge. Reciprocity has enabled the refuge to conduct hunts with greater ease for both the hunters and management staff.

The refuge manages the deer herd by offering quality weekend (deer gun) hunt events. During the hunts the refuge is closed to other visitors. The number of hunt events conducted each year typically ranges from two to four and depends on the size of the deer herd. The hunts are generally held in October, December, and/or January. The hunts are scheduled in coordination with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Upland game hunting, specifically Ring-necked Pheasant and Wild Turkey, is also offered on the refuge. Special weekend (turkey gun) hunting events are held in the spring for persons with disabilities and for youth hunters. Hunt event dates are selected to fit within the seasons of both Iowa and Nebraska. Youth hunters are required to hunt under the supervision of a parent or a mentor chosen by their parent. Disabled hunters hunt with a companion. The refuge also provides a limited number of hunting blinds for disabled hunters that do not otherwise have access to blinds. Ring-necked Pheasant hunting in the fall is scheduled during the seasons of both states. The pheasant and turkey hunts are carefully scheduled, organized, and limited so that they can occur without closing the refuge to other visitor uses.

Archery deer hunting in the fall and archery turkey hunting in the spring are also offered. The seasons are set to fall within the two states' seasons. The refuge is not closed to the public during these hunts.

Why is the use being proposed?

Hunting is a priority public use of the Refuge System and an important wildlife management tool. The Service recognizes hunting as a healthy, traditional outdoor activity, deeply rooted in American heritage. Hunting can instill a unique understanding and appreciation of wildlife, animal behavior, and habitat needs. Hunting programs can promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on the lands and waters of the Refuge System.

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

Hunting is an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Hunting is a priority public use of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

Road maintenance, mowing, and other grounds upkeep will be required, but these activities are considered a part of routine refuge management and maintenance activities. There is also time spent by refuge staff on deer herd monitoring and hunt program planning. Administrative time is required for hunt program implementation, including answering questions, making maps, etc. Law enforcement is an essential tool for proper and safe administration of this use. The refuge has a full time officer dedicated to this function. Based on a review of the current refuge budget, there is adequate funding to ensure compatibility and to administer and manage this public use.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short-term impacts: Providing carefully planned and managed hunting events with restricted access to specified refuge hunting zones will generally minimize disturbance to wildlife populations, the refuge environment, infrastructure, and non-consumptive users. Hunting causes mortality of target species with the intent of harvesting populations to the carrying capacity of existing habitat. By limiting take to harvestable surplus, the refuge can ensure the long-term health and survival of game species, populations, and their associated ecosystem. The presence and activity of hunters may cause disturbance to other wildlife in the area, but these impacts are minor and temporary. There is the potential to impact non-target species that are sensitive to disturbance, especially during spring turkey hunts when many animals are breeding or nesting. For visitors, non-hunting public uses may be temporarily disrupted or

postponed during hunt events. Visitor safety is the highest priority when designing and planning all hunting activities on refuges. Vehicle traffic will increase slightly during hunting events, and the sound of gun shots will temporarily reduce the serenity for the non-hunting public. Loss of vegetation from foot traffic is minor or temporary. Soil and plant disturbance may occur in ingress and egress routes but will be minor and temporary because of the limited and controlled use associated with the managed hunts.

Long-term impacts: No adverse long-term impacts from hunting are anticipated as long as wildlife populations are monitored through the refuge biological program or by state officials. Long-term beneficial impacts of this use include the ability to manage targeted wildlife populations to levels that fall within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem. When deer populations grow beyond a sustainable capacity herbivory can have profound negative impacts to the local environment, native plants, and other wildlife species.

Cumulative impacts: There are no anticipated cumulative impacts. Harvest on the refuge would be limited by management and would fall within the state's population management goals, which are based on the best available science. All hunts would follow all applicable laws, regulations, and policies including title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, the mission and goals of the Refuge System, and the purposes, goals, and objectives of DeSoto NWR. Careful management of this public use maintains the safety of the area's citizens, contributes to the refuge's wildlife and habitat goals, and supports several of the primary objectives of the refuge.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

To ensure compatibility with Refuge System and DeSoto NWR goals and objectives, hunting activities can only occur under the following stipulations:

1. All hunting will adhere to the hunting section of the refuge's visitor services step-down management plan.
2. All applicable state and federal regulations apply.
3. Hunting is prohibited on, across, or within 100 feet of refuge roads or parking lots.
4. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
5. During hunting activities, the refuge is open two hours before the legal shooting time and one hour after the legal shooting time.

6. Refuge-specific authorization is required for all special hunts.
7. No motorized vehicles are allowed within the hunting units except at designated parking areas or as specified by a special use permit.

Justification:

This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. This use is being permitted because it is a priority public use and will not diminish the primary purposes of the refuge. This use will meet the mission of the Refuge System by providing renewable resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife, and plant resources on refuge lands.

Hunting is one of the six priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Service policy directs us to provide hunting opportunities when compatible with refuge management. Managed hunting programs help promote an understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management. Additionally, managed hunts on the refuge provide a traditional recreational activity with minimal adverse impacts to the biological integrity or sustainability of refuge resources.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

 12-12-13

(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Fishing

Refuge Name: DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1969 (16 U.S.C., 715d)
Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C., 460k-460k-4)

Refuge Purposes:

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge was established March 12, 1958:

“ . . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)

“ . . . suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962*)

*This purpose was applied post facto to DeSoto NWR.

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:

Allow general public access during specific times of the year to open areas of the refuge for sport and commercial fishing. Archery and spearfishing are permitted (for rough fish only). An Iowa or Nebraska fishing license is required. State and federal regulations apply; refuge specific regulations also apply.

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

Fishing is an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Sport fishing is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Where would the use be conducted?

Use consists of bank (shoreline and pier) and boat fishing on DeSoto Lake under state regulations, ice fishing on DeSoto Lake during appropriate conditions, bank fishing on the Missouri River, and bank fishing on all other refuge bodies of water (small ponds and scour holes) in open areas of the refuge unless specifically closed by refuge management. Fishing is

most active in DeSoto Lake and Bullhead Pond. Boat fishing is also allowed on the Missouri River, but this use is regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Allowable forms of access on the refuge include hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, motorized and nonmotorized boats, and motorized vehicles. Horses, all-terrain vehicles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, and jet skis are not allowed on the refuge.

When would the use be conducted?

DeSoto NWR is open during daylight hours. Open water fishing is permitted during the nonmigration periods (April 15 through October 14); ice fishing is permitted when conditions allow—typically from January 2 to the end of February; and bank fishing on the Missouri River has no seasonal restrictions.

Entry to any or all portions of the refuge may be suspended by refuge management in the case of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety. Any closures would be accompanied by appropriate signage and notifications.

How would the use be conducted?

Public and commercial fishing opportunities are articulated in an approved Fishery Management Plan. Refuge resources to facilitate fishing include boat-launching ramps, docks, fully accessible fishing piers, and pedestrian accessible fishing jetties. All motorized boating is no wake only.

Why is this use being proposed?

Access for fishing is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use of the Refuge System, and available refuge resources can support this activity. Fishing activities provide enjoyment of scenic views and a variety of wildlife not usually available on adjacent private land.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

Visitors coming to the refuge for fishing on refuge waters, including bank fishing on the Missouri River, need access via road. Once on the refuge, visitors might use parking lots, hiking trails, fishing jetties, piers, and boat launches. Appropriate refuge funding as well as visitor services, facility maintenance, and law enforcement staff are needed to provide and maintain facilities and ensure public safety.

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

The refuge has been open for many years to this priority public use. Fishing often occurs in tandem with other public uses such as boating (both motorized and nonmotorized), hiking, and auto touring. Fishing use often occurs as youth group or family related activities. Because fishing requires the same accommodations as other appropriate and compatible public uses, refuge roads, parking lots, trails, boat launches, and other visitor services infrastructure are adequate to accommodate this public use. The refuge also has adequate staff to provide enjoyable and safe fishing opportunities to the public.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?

Fishing is a priority public use, and those participating in this activity are exposed to the Refuge System and its mission. Fishing is a great way to introduce young people to the outdoors and to the values of our natural resources.

Regulated fishing poses no appreciable impact on the purposes for which the refuge was established. Fishing and boating on DeSoto Lake is prohibited during spring and fall migrations from October 15 through April 14—the period most likely to impact refuge purposes. Damage to habitat by foot traffic is limited to developed or designated fishing waterfront areas. Littering is one visible impact of fishing but is of minor consequence to wildlife and is attended to by staff and volunteers. There are minor wildlife impacts when anglers inadvertently disturb duck broods, shorebirds, or other wildlife in and around the water. Refuge access by motorized vehicles and bicycles is limited to established trails, public roads, and parking lots. Water access is typically by foot or boat, from individuals or small groups arriving via non-commercial vehicle at developed fishing access areas. Motorized boating is limited to slow speeds and no wake conditions to minimize impacts to wildlife. No other associated impacts from fishing are considered to be substantial constraints to achieving the refuge purpose and the mission of the Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Only day-use activities are permitted on DeSoto NWR. Fishing seasons are set to avoid conflicts with migratory bird concentrations and waterfowl hunting. All fishing is regulated by state and refuge-specific regulations.
2. Modes of access including motorized vehicle and bicycles are limited to designated trails, public roads, and parking lots.
3. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
4. Harassment of wildlife and excessive damage to vegetation are prohibited.

Justification:

Fishing is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use of the Refuge System.

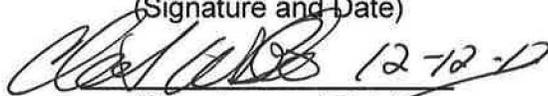
Fishing has been determined to be a compatible use of DeSoto NWR because this use will not materially interfere with or detract from management objectives, refuge purposes, or the Refuge System mission. This activity introduces the public to fishing, wetland ecology, and the mission of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; it enhances their understanding of the natural environment and of the need for fish and wildlife conservation. The level of fishing use is moderate throughout the entire length of the permitted season (April 15 – October 14) and the associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

Handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. J. ...', with the date '12-12-13' written to the right.

(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Wildlife Observation and Photography (including the means of access such as hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, motorized and nonmotorized boating, and motorized vehicles)

Refuge Name: DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1969 (16 U.S.C., 715d)
Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C., 460k-460k-4)

Refuge Purposes:

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge was established March 12, 1958:

“ . . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)

“ . . . suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962*)

*This purpose was applied post facto to DeSoto NWR.

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:

Allow general public access during anytime of the year to open areas of the refuge for the observation and photographing of associated flora and fauna. DeSoto NWR is open during daylight hours. All of the refuge will be open to the public for photography unless specifically closed by refuge management. Allowable forms of access to the refuge include hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, motorized and nonmotorized boats, and motorized vehicles. Access by motorized vehicles and bicycles is limited to established trails, public roads, and parking lots. Horses, all-terrain vehicles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, and jet skis are not allowed on the refuge. Wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses on Refuge System lands as identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Entry to any or all portions of the refuge may be suspended by refuge management in the case of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety. Any closures would be accompanied by appropriate signage and notifications. Access for wildlife observation and photography will allow public access for enjoyment of scenic views and an array of wildlife including waterfowl, other migratory birds, tallgrass prairie plants, and resident wildlife. Wildlife refuges provide opportunities for wildlife enjoyment not usually available on adjacent private land.

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

Wildlife observation and photography are existing uses.

Is the use a priority public use?

Wildlife observation and photography are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

Visitors that come to the refuge for wildlife photography and observation would need access via road. Once on the refuge, visitors might use parking lots, hiking trails, and boat launches. Visitor services staff and law enforcement are needed to provide safe facilities and security to the public.

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

The refuge has been open for many years to these priority public uses. Wildlife photography and observation usually happen hand-in-hand with other public use such as hiking and auto touring. Thus, the facilities and services needed for wildlife observation and photography overlap with numerous other public uses. The refuge has adequate roads, parking lots, trails, boat launches, etc., to accommodate photography and observation by the public. The Service has provided the facilities for the activities and staff to enforce regulations.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?

Wildlife observation and photography pose minimal impacts on the purposes for which national wildlife refuges were established. Access is typically by individuals or small groups on foot or using snowshoes or skis along established trails. Access by motorized vehicles and bicycles is limited to established trails, public roads, and parking lots. Damage to vegetation from walking is minimal and temporary. Visitors typically use established foot trails with little impact on vegetation. There is some temporary disturbance to wildlife due to presence of humans, such as flushing a nesting bird. The most likely impact to wildlife, related to the refuge purposes, would occur during spring and fall migrations, but the sporadic and limited use by the public should not create unreasonable impacts. Winter activities pose no impacts to waterfowl and little impact to vegetation. The winter disturbance to resident wildlife is also temporary and minor. Any unreasonable wildlife harassment would be grounds for law enforcement or for refuge management to restrict access or close an area to these uses.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Certain modes of access such as motorized vehicles and bicycles will be limited to designated trails, public roads, and parking lots.
2. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
3. No photo or viewing blinds may be left overnight.
4. Harassment of wildlife and excessive damage to vegetation are prohibited.

Justification:

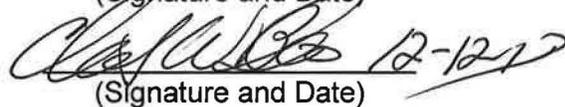
This use has been determined compatible, because wildlife viewing and photography will not materially interfere with or detract from refuge purposes. The level of use for wildlife observation and photography is moderate. The associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor. Wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses and inculcate visitors with an appreciation for wildlife and an enthusiasm for nature and the outdoors. These uses also help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

 12-12-13

(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Interpretation and Environmental Education

Refuge Name: DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1969 (16 U.S.C., 715d)
Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C., 460k-460k-4)

Refuge Purposes:

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge was established March 12, 1958:

" . . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)

" . . . suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species . . ." 16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962*)

*This purpose was applied post facto to DeSoto NWR.

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:

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

Interpretation and environmental education are existing uses of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Interpretation and environmental education are priority wildlife-dependent recreation uses under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Where would the use be conducted?

The use would occur in all areas of the refuge open to the public and selected closed sites as warranted by the specific situation and staff judgment. Areas for environmental education activities and interpretive tours are scheduled and planned to avoid interference with wildlife management goals.

When would the use be conducted?

These uses occur year round.

How would the use be conducted?

Environmental education activities are provided by the refuge staff, volunteers, teachers, or leaders of visiting groups. All environmental education visits are curriculum based, and lessons help students meet state educational standards. Interpretation includes staff-led or volunteer-led services such as interpretive walks, talks, tours, and roving interpretation plus non-staffed services such as exhibits, signs, and brochures.

Why is this use being proposed?

These uses are being proposed to continue and build on successful environmental education and interpretation programs already in place at the refuge. These uses are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

Staff time from a visitor services specialist is needed to properly and safely administer these uses.

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

Existing refuge resources are adequate to maintain current level of environmental education and interpretive services. Increases or decreases in available resources require correlated changes in the interpretation and environmental education programs.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?

Environmental education and interpretation are priority public uses listed in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. By providing for these uses on the refuge, the participant's knowledge and appreciation of fish and wildlife ecology are enhanced, leading to increased public awareness of the ways healthy wildlife populations and natural habitats benefit present and future generations. Increased public awareness of natural and cultural environments contributes to the achievement of the refuge's purposes and the mission of the Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Environmental education and interpretation activities will be reviewed annually to ensure the quality of their contributions to visitors and students and that the associated impacts to fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats are not detracting from biological management of the refuge.

Justification:

This use has been determined compatible. Environmental education and interpretation will not materially interfere with or detract from the refuge purposes. The level of use for environmental education and interpretation is moderate. The associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor. Environmental education and interpretation are priority public uses that promote visitor understanding of, and increased appreciation for, America's natural and cultural resources. All activities and programming are designed to provide safe, informative, enjoyable, and accessible interpretive opportunities, products, and facilities. These uses also aid in the development a sense of environmental stewardship leading to actions and attitudes that reflect interest and respect for wildlife resources, cultural resources, and the environment. These uses also help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

 12-12-13

(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Gathering Mushrooms

Refuge Name: DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1969 (16 U.S.C., 715d)
Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C., 460k-460k-4)

Refuge Purposes:

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge was established March 12, 1958:

" . . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)

" . . . suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species . . ." 16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962*)

*This purpose was applied post facto to DeSoto NWR.

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:

Allow general public access in all open areas of the refuge to gather mushrooms.

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

Gathering is an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Gathering is not a priority use of the Refuge System.

Where would the use be conducted?

Access for gathering mushrooms is allowed in all areas of the refuge open to the public, including the Public Use, East Dike South, and West Side Units. Refuge kiosk maps, brochure map, and other handouts show the areas open to mushroom gathering (see also figure 4-4 in chapter 4 of the CCP for a map depicting future visitor services at DeSoto NWR).

Entry to any or all portions of the refuge may be suspended by refuge management in the case of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety. Any closures would be accompanied by appropriate signage and notifications.

When would the use be conducted?

Mushroom gathering is allowed during daylight hours and within areas open to the public whenever the mushrooms are present. The actual season of mushroom growth varies from year-to-year depending on temperatures and moisture.

How would the use be conducted?

Refuge resources to facilitate gathering include refuge roads and hiking trails. Allowable forms of access to the refuge include hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, motorized and nonmotorized boats, and motorized vehicles. Horses, all-terrain vehicles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, and jet skis are not allowed on the refuge. Spot checks of gatherers are made to assess the harvest success and compliance with the rules.

Why is this use being proposed?

Access for gathering is a non-priority, wildlife-dependent recreational use of the Refuge System. However, refuge resources can support this activity, which also provides enjoyment of natural scenery and a diversity of wildlife not usually available on adjacent private lands. Access for mushroom gathering is a high priority for many refuge visitors.

Availability of Resources:**What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?**

The primary means of visitor access to the refuge for gathering is public and refuge roads. Once on refuge roads, visitors may also use existing parking lots and hiking trails. Visitor services, facility maintenance, and law enforcement staff are needed to provide and maintain safe facilities and security to the public.

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

The refuge has been open to this non-priority public use for many years during which time the Service has provided the facilities and staff for this use. Gathering can occur in tandem with other public use such as hiking, wildlife observation, photography, and auto touring. This use requires the same services and infrastructure as other public uses on the refuge. The refuge has adequate roads, parking lots, and trails to accommodate mushroom gathering by the public.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:**How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?**

The opportunity for mushroom gathering leads to the public enjoyment of outdoor activities and nature. Gathering is a great way to introduce people to the refuge and to the values of local natural resources. Although gathering is a non-priority public use, it offers participants exposure to the Refuge System and its mission. This activity also accompanies and supports a number of priority public uses including wildlife observation and photography, and it provides practical and applied environmental education.

Gathering poses no substantial adverse impacts on the purposes for which the refuge was established. Some wildlife and habitat disturbance may occur during mushroom gathering, but the impacts are minimal, limited by designated areas and seasonal restrictions, and do not detract from the refuge purposes and the mission of the Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Mushroom gathering is only allowed in refuge areas open to the public. Refuge staff will monitor this activity to ensure that gathering is done in modest quantities for personal consumption only.
2. Certain modes of access including motorized vehicles and bicycles will be limited to designated trails, public roads, and parking lots.
3. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
4. Harassment of wildlife and excessive damage to vegetation are prohibited.

Justification:

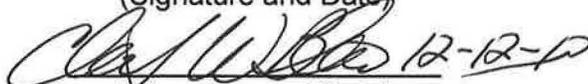
Mushroom gathering is a non-priority recreational use of the Refuge System. This use has been determined compatible at DeSoto NWR, because gathering will not materially interfere with or detract from refuge purposes. This activity facilitates the public appreciation of nature and the outdoors, and provides opportunities to learn about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It also reinforces and enhances the public's understanding of the natural environment and of the need for fish and wildlife conservation

The level of gathering activity is moderated through designated areas and seasons; the associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief


(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Research Programs

Refuge Name: DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1969 (16 U.S.C., 715d)
Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C., 460k-460k-4)

Refuge Purposes:

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge was established March 12, 1958:

" . . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)

" . . . suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species . . ." 16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962*)

*This purpose was applied post facto to DeSoto NWR.

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:

Research is the planned, organized, and systematic gathering of data to discover or verify facts. In principle, research conducted on the refuge by universities, cooperative units, nonprofit organizations, and other research entities furthers refuge management and serves the purposes, vision, and goals of the refuge. The refuge hosts research from a variety of research institutions, including various universities and private research groups. All research activities, whether conducted by governmental agencies, public research entities, universities, private research groups, or any other entity, shall be required to obtain special use permits from the refuge. Approved refuge special use permits will contain conditions under which researchers must operate to help minimize negative impacts to refuge resources. Refuge staff will oversee all research activities. Priority consideration will be given to projects that are fish and wildlife management-oriented and that provide needed information for refuge operation and management.

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

Research programs are an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Research programs are not a priority public use of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:**What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?**

Needed resources include the administration of associated special use permits and oversight by refuge staff.

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

Yes

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:**How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?**

Disturbance is expected with some research activities, especially where researchers are entering sensitive habitats and/or working with species of concern. Researcher disturbance would include altering wildlife behavior, temporarily displacing wildlife, collecting soil and plant samples, or trapping and handling wildlife. However, most of these effects would be short-term, and only the minimum number of samples (e.g., water, soils, vegetative litter, plants, and wildlife) required for identification, experimentation, and statistical analysis would be permitted; captured and marked wildlife would be released. It is possible that direct or indirect mortality could result as a by-product of research activities. Mist netting, for example, can cause mortality directly through the capture method, in trap predation, and indirectly through capture injury or stress caused to the organism. Overall, allowing well designed and properly reviewed research is likely to have very little impact on refuge wildlife populations. The refuge does not anticipate adverse impacts on non-target species or other resources from research activities as these activities are typically geared towards benefiting refuge management of trust resources.

Negative impacts to public use activities are not expected, and no adverse socioeconomic impacts are anticipated. The proposed use will cause only minor and short-term disturbances to some wildlife and little or no disturbance to refuge visitors. The continuance of research projects is an important management tool that can have considerable beneficial effects on refuge lands and waters. Research findings will assist refuge staff in providing quality wildlife and habitat management and enhance the primary purposes for which this refuge was acquired. Furthermore, research can allow refuge staff to meet management goals at a modest cost to the refuge. This use should not result in short-term or long-term impacts that adversely affect the purpose for this refuge or the mission of the Refuge System. The cumulative impacts are minor, as evidenced by the durability of the terrain, the resiliency of vegetation, and the number and diversity of wildlife that remains in the area throughout years of high public use.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

All research conducted on the refuge must further the purposes of the refuge and the mission of the Refuge System. All research will adhere to established refuge policy on research and policy on collecting specimens (Directors Order Number 109). To ensure that research activities are compatible, the refuge requires that a special use permit be obtained before any research activity may occur. Research proposals and/or research special use permit applications must be submitted in advance of the activity to allow for review by refuge staff to ensure minimal impacts to the resources, staff, and programs of the refuge. Each special use permit may contain conditions under which the research will be conducted. Each special use permit holder will submit annual reports or updates to the refuge on research activities, progress, findings, and other information. Further, each special use permit holder will provide copies of findings, final reports, publications, and/or other documentation at the end of each project. The refuge may deny permits for research proposals that are determined not to serve the purposes of the refuge and the mission of the Refuge System. The refuge will also deny permits for research proposals that are determined to negatively impact resources, or that materially interfere with or detract from the purposes of the refuge. All research activities are subject to the conditions of their special use permits.

Justification:

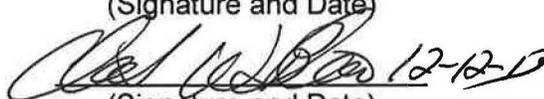
There is a continuing need for research for the conservation of federal trust and focal species that occur on DeSoto NWR. The Service encourages scientific research to further the understanding of refuge natural resources. Many research needs, if undertaken, would support refuge conservation and management efforts. Some of these research needs are to meet the objectives found in various plans and federal mandates. Priority will be given to research projects that can be applied to current wildlife management or conservation issues, thereby contributing to adaptive refuge management practices and management decisions that are based on the best available science. There will be no notable, permanent negative impacts to any refuge wildlife. This use will not diminish the primary purpose for the refuge and will help meet the mission of the Refuge System by sustaining natural resources for the benefit of the American public and conserving fish, wildlife, and plants on these lands. Scientific research on DeSoto NWR is consistent with the refuge and Refuge System objectives and thus compatible.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief


12-12-13
(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Wood Cutting

Refuge Name: DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1969 (16 U.S.C., 715d)
Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C., 460k–460k-4)

Refuge Purposes:

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge was established March 12, 1958:

“ . . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)

“ . . . suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 460k–460k-4 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962*)

*This purpose was applied post facto to DeSoto NWR.

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:

This compatibility determination is for the removal of fallen trees by private individuals and applies to all wood removal activities regardless of the ultimate use of the wood (e.g., firewood, pulp, etc.). Differences in the scope of the activities and the necessary equipment will occur depending on the amount and type of wood available for removal. This activity will only occur if the Service has determined that a management need exists to remove wood from the refuge consistent with DeSoto NWR's CCP or other management purposes.

Wood cutting is not a priority public use of the Refuge System, as defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Wood removal may occur within former homesites, along existing windbreaks/shelter belts, and in other areas of the refuge where trees are dying or otherwise undesirable. Harvest sites will vary in size from a portion of an acre up to several hundred acres depending on the site and management objectives. Wood removal activities may be authorized throughout the year. Most often, wood removal activities occur during the winter months when frozen ground facilitates access and affords protection to underlying soils and vegetation. The main application of this use is the collection of firewood along refuge roads by individuals for personal use. Large trees fall along the roads and must be cleaned up by the staff. Allowing the public access to this wood saves time and money for the refuge.

The scope of the activity will be determined by the management objective for the area and by the quantity and quality of available wood. Equipment used for harvest may range from chainsaws and axes to traditional logging equipment such as feller bunchers and log skidders. Access may be pickup truck, farm tractor, or larger traditional logging equipment.

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

Wood cutting is an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Wood cutting is not a priority public use of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

A staff member will be responsible for writing special use permits when needed. Law enforcement during regular patrols will check for violations regarding refuge wood harvest.

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

Yes

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

In permitting this type of activity, the potential exists to directly impact nesting birds both on the ground and in the trees. These impacts are easily avoided by careful timing of the activity. Wood cutting will be done, if at all possible, during the winter months when birds are not nesting. Access for removing wood may impact habitat by rutting soils, destroying ground cover, creating weed seedbeds, and increasing runoff and sedimentation in nearby wetlands. These impacts can again be avoided by careful timing of the activity. Allowing access during the winter months when the ground is frozen will avoid these impacts.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. If at all possible, wood cutting will take place during winter months to avoid nesting birds and soil disturbance.

2. A special use permit will be issued so that site-specific impacts can be reduced or eliminated and Service management goals are met.

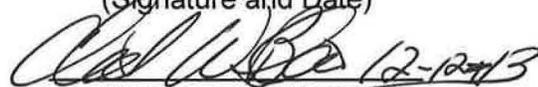
Justification:

Impacts to the habitat as a result of access to the refuge for wood removal purposes are potentially substantial, but can be avoided. 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. Areas that do not have roads will be protected by issuing special use permits only during winter months when the ground is frozen. Individuals participating in the wood harvest program will be under special use permit, and site-specific stipulations will ensure resource protection and achievement of management goals.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief


(Signature and Date)

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

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Compatibility Determination

Use: Upland and Big Game Hunting

Refuge Name: Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (U.S.C. 742a–742j)

Refuge Purposes:

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge was authorized in August of 1992, opened to the public via MOU in September of 1995, and was established in September of 1997:

“ . . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

“ . . . for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

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:

Hunting of game is a public use granted under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and is considered a priority public use of the Refuge System.

The refuge manages the deer herd by offering quality weekend (deer gun) hunt events. During the hunts the refuge is closed to other visitors. The number of hunt events conducted each year typically ranges from one to three, and depends on the size of the deer herd. The hunts are generally held in October, December, and/or January. The hunts are scheduled in coordination with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. No land within the authorized refuge boundary has been acquired in the State of Iowa.

Archery deer hunting in the fall is proposed for the refuge as a part of the comprehensive conservation plan (CCP). A season would be set according to the State of Nebraska's season. Selected areas of the refuge would be open to archery hunting.

Upland game hunting, specifically Ring-necked Pheasant and Wild Turkey, is also proposed for the refuge in the CCP. Special turkey and pheasant gun hunting events could be held in the spring or fall. These hunt dates would be selected to fit within the state seasons.

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

Hunting is an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Hunting is a priority public use of the Refuge System and an important wildlife management tool. The Service recognizes hunting as a healthy, traditional outdoor activity, deeply rooted in American heritage. Hunting can instill a unique understanding and appreciation of wildlife, animal behavior, and habitat needs. Hunting programs can promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on the lands and waters of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:**What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?**

Road maintenance, mowing, and other grounds upkeep will be required, but these activities are considered a part of routine refuge management and maintenance activities. There is also time spent by refuge staff on deer herd monitoring and hunt program planning. Administrative time is required for hunt program implementation, including answering questions, making maps, etc. Law enforcement is an essential tool for proper and safe administration of this use. The refuge has a full time officer dedicated to this function. Based on a review of the current refuge budget, there is adequate funding to ensure compatibility and to administer and manage this public use.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short-term impacts: Providing carefully planned and managed hunting events with restricted access to specified refuge hunting zones will generally minimize disturbance to wildlife populations, the refuge environment, infrastructure, and non-consumptive users. Hunting causes mortality of target species with the intent of harvesting populations to the carrying capacity of existing habitat. By limiting take to harvestable surplus, the refuge can ensure the long-term health and survival of game species, populations, and their associated ecosystem. The presence and activity of hunters may cause disturbance to other wildlife in the area, but these impacts are minor and temporary. There is the potential to impact non-target species that are sensitive to disturbance, especially during spring turkey hunts when many animals are breeding or nesting. For visitors, non-hunting public uses may be temporarily disrupted or postponed during hunt events. Visitor safety is the highest priority when designing and planning all hunting activities on refuges. Vehicle traffic will increase slightly during hunting events, and the sound of gun shots will temporarily reduce the serenity for the non-hunting public. Loss of vegetation from foot traffic is minor or temporary. Soil and plant disturbance may occur in ingress and egress routes but will be minor and temporary because of the limited and controlled use associated with the managed hunts.

Long-term impacts: No adverse long-term impacts from hunting are anticipated as long as wildlife populations are monitored through the refuge biological program or by state officials. Long-term beneficial impacts of this use include the ability to manage targeted wildlife populations to levels that fall within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem. When deer populations grow beyond a sustainable capacity herbivory can have profound negative impacts to the local environment, native plants, and other wildlife species.

Cumulative impacts: There are no anticipated cumulative impacts. Harvest on the refuge would be limited by management and would fall within the state's population management goals,

which are based on the best available science. All hunts would follow all applicable laws, regulations, and policies including title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, the mission and goals of the Refuge System, and the purposes, goals, and objectives of Boyer Chute NWR. Careful management of this public use maintains the safety of the area's citizens, contributes to the refuge's wildlife and habitat goals, and supports several of the primary objectives of the refuge.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

To ensure compatibility with Refuge System and Boyer Chute NWR goals and objectives of the activity can only occur under the following stipulations:

1. Hunting will only occur during special, managed hunting events.
2. All hunting will adhere to the hunting section of the refuge's visitor services step-down management plan.
3. All applicable state and federal regulations apply.
4. Hunting is prohibited on, across, or within 100 feet of refuge roads or parking lots.
5. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
6. During hunting activities, the refuge is open two hours before the legal shooting time and one hour after the legal shooting time.
7. Refuge-specific authorization is required for all special hunts.
8. All personal property, including stands, must be removed at the end of each day.
9. No motorized vehicles are allowed within the hunting units except at designated parking areas or as specified by a special use permit.

Justification:

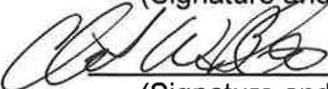
This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. This use is being permitted because it is a priority public use and will not diminish the primary purposes of the refuge. This use will meet the mission of the Refuge System by providing renewable resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife, and plant resources on refuge lands.

Hunting is one of the six priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Service policy directs us to provide hunting opportunities when compatible with refuge management. Managed hunting programs help promote an understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management. Additionally, managed hunts on the refuge provide a traditional recreational activity with minimal adverse impacts to the biological integrity or sustainability of refuge resources.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

DEC 12 2013
(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Waterfowl Hunting

Refuge Name: Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (U.S.C. 742a-742j) and the Emergency Wetland Resource Act of 1986 (U.S.C. 3901-3931)

Refuge Purpose(s):

"... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources ..." 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) "... for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude ..." 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1)(Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956).

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:

Allow public waterfowl hunting on the Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge. Hunting is a priority public use on National Wildlife Refuge system lands. Only a small portion of the Refuge is open to waterfowl hunting, as to reduce wildlife disturbance, and conflict with other Refuge users. Hunting regulations are generally consistent with state regulations, with a few Refuge-specific regulations.

Availability of Resources:

Adequate resources are available to manage the existing hunting program at the current level of participation.

The designated areas open to public hunting are open in accordance with state and Refuge regulations and require no preparation and administration of special hunts.

A Refuge Waterfowl Hunting Regulations brochure and map is available from the Refuge office, to inform the public of hunting opportunities and Refuge regulations. Waterfowl hunting regulations and map are also posted in the informational kiosks.

Hunters utilize the existing network of walk-in trails or use a boat to access the area open to waterfowl hunting. Parking lots, restrooms, leaflets, information kiosks, and signs are provided by the Refuge for use by hunters. The Refuge also provides staff to maintain these facilities and disseminate information to visitors. Refuge law enforcement officers, Service special agents, and state conservation officers enforce state and Refuge hunting regulations.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Accommodating this wildlife-dependant use is expected to result in minimal impacts. Migratory birds currently hunted on the Refuge include only ducks, geese, and coots. The Refuge waterfowl hunting area is small in area as to reduce conflict with other Refuge users. Additionally, under current regulations, conflicts between other Refuge user groups have been few, largely because migratory bird hunting seasons occur in the fall or late winter when fewer people use the Refuge. Populations of migratory waterfowl species are monitored by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and season dates and bag limits are set with the long-term health of populations in mind. Therefore, this activity will have insignificant cumulative impacts on waterfowl populations.

Disturbance to other wildlife may also result from hunting activity. This disturbance is expected to be limited in scope and duration. All motor vehicle use is restricted to designated roads, trails, and parking areas which reduces disturbance to wildlife. Disturbance to habitat is minimal given the nature of this hunting and restriction of vehicle use.

Public Review and Comment:

A Draft Environmental Assessment, titled "Waterfowl Hunting at Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge", was available for public comment from March 17-April 17, 2007.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations:

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

To ensure compatibility with Refuge purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, managed waterfowl hunting can occur on the Refuge if the following stipulations are met:

- 1 Hunts must be conducted in accordance with state and federal regulations, and special Refuge regulations published in the Refuge Hunting Regulations and Public Use Regulations brochures.
- 2 To minimize potential conflicts between user groups, waterfowl hunting area should be limited in size and located in areas of low public use.
- 3 Hunts are subject to modification if on-site monitoring by Refuge personnel or other authorized personnel results in unanticipated negative impacts to natural communities, wildlife species, or their habitats.

Justification:

Migratory bird hunting seasons and bag limits are established by the states within a framework set nationally by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These restrictions ensure the continued well-being of overall populations of migratory birds. Hunting does result in the taking of many individuals within the overall population, but restrictions are designed to safeguard an adequate breeding population from year to year. Most of the wetland habitat on Boyer Chute NWR is closed to hunting, and provides feeding and resting areas for migratory birds during the hunting season. Disturbance to other fish and wildlife does occur, but this disturbance is generally short-term and adequate habitat occurs in adjacent areas. Loss of plants through boat traffic or blind construction is minor, or temporary since hunting occurs mainly after the growing season.

Conflicts between hunters are localized and are addressed through law enforcement, public education, and proposed changes to hunting regulations. Conflicts between other various user groups are minor given the season of the year for hunting, and the location of most hunting in marsh habitat and more remote shorelines.

Stipulations above will ensure proper control of the means of use and provide management flexibility should detrimental impacts develop. Allowing this use also furthers the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System by providing renewable resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife, and plant resources on the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager: (signature and date) *Larry Blind* 4/18/08

Concurrence: Regional Chief: (signature and date) *Tom Worthington* 5/21/2008
Tom Worthington
Acting Regional Chief

Mandatory 10-or 15 year Re-evaluations Date: ~~2021~~ MAY, 2023

Compatibility Determination

Use: Fishing

Refuge Name: Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (U.S.C. 742a–742j)

Refuge Purposes:

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge was authorized in August of 1992, opened to the public via MOU in September of 1995, and was established in September of 1997:

“ . . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

“ . . . for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

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:

Allow general public access during specific times of the year to open areas of the refuge for sport and commercial fishing. Archery and spearfishing are permitted (for rough fish only). An Iowa or Nebraska fishing license is required. State and federal regulations apply; refuge specific regulations also apply.

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

Fishing is an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Fishing is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Where would the use be conducted?

Bank fishing is permitted on all open waters of refuge units open to the public, including the Missouri River, Boyer Chute, ponds, and scour holes unless specifically closed by refuge management. Bank fishing access consists of shorelines and fishing piers. Certain areas are closed during the migration period (September 14 to April 15). Bank fishing is allowed on all portions of the Boyer Chute during the warm season but is not permitted in the Chute when it is covered by ice. For safety reasons, all watercraft including kayaks and canoes are prohibited in

the Boyer Chute. Boat fishing is also allowed on the Missouri River, but this use is regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Allowable forms of access to the refuge include hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, and motorized vehicles. Horses, all-terrain vehicles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles and jet skis are not allowed on the refuge.

When would the use be conducted?

Boyer Chute NWR is open during daylight hours. Year round use is permitted unless specifically closed by refuge management. Entry to any or all portions of the refuge may be suspended by refuge management in the case of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety. Any closures would be accompanied by appropriate signage and notifications.

How would the use be conducted?

Refuge resources to facilitate fishing include fully accessible fishing piers and pedestrian accessible shorelines.

Why is this use being proposed?

Access for fishing is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use of the Refuge System, and available refuge resources can support this activity. Fishing activities provide enjoyment of scenic views and a variety of wildlife not usually available on adjacent private land.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

Visitors coming to the refuge for fishing on refuge waters, including from the banks of the Boyer Chute and Missouri River, need access via road. Once on the refuge, visitors might use parking lots, hiking trails, and piers. Appropriate refuge funding as well as visitor services, facility maintenance, and law enforcement staff are needed to provide and maintain facilities and ensure public safety.

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

The refuge has been open for many years to this priority public use. Fishing often occurs in tandem with other public use such as hiking and auto touring. Fishing use often occurs as youth group or family related activities. Because fishing requires the same accommodations as other appropriate and compatible public uses, refuge roads, parking lots, trails, and other visitor services infrastructure are adequate to accommodate this public use. The refuge also has adequate staff to provide enjoyable and safe fishing opportunities to the public.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?

Fishing is a priority public use, and those participating in this activity are exposed to the Refuge System and its mission. Fishing is a great way to introduce young people to the outdoors and to the values of our natural resources.

Regulated fishing poses no appreciable impact on the purposes for which the refuge was established. Damage to habitat by foot traffic is limited to developed or designated fishing waterfront areas. Littering is one visible impact of fishing but is of minor consequence to wildlife

and is attended to by staff and volunteers. There are minor wildlife impacts when anglers inadvertently disturb duck broods, shorebirds, or other wildlife in and around the water. No other associated impacts from fishing are considered to be substantial constraints to achieving the refuge purpose and the mission of the Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Only day-use activities are permitted on Boyer Chute NWR. All fishing is regulated by state and refuge-specific regulations.
2. Modes of access including motorized vehicle and bicycles are limited to designated trails, public roads, and parking lots.
3. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
4. Harassment of wildlife and excessive damage to vegetation are prohibited.

Justification:

Fishing is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use of the Refuge System.

Fishing has been determined to be a compatible use of Boyer Chute NWR because the use will not materially interfere with or detract from management objectives, refuge purposes, or the Refuge System mission. This activity introduces the public to fishing, wetland ecology, and the mission of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; it enhances their understanding of the natural environment and of the need for fish and wildlife conservation. The level of fishing use is moderate throughout the year and the associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

 12-12-13
(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Wildlife Observation and Photography (including the means of access such as hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, motorized and nonmotorized boating, and motorized vehicles)

Refuge Name: Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (U.S.C. 742a–742j)

Refuge Purposes:

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge was authorized in August of 1992, opened to the public via MOU in September of 1995, and was established in September of 1997:

“ . . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

“ . . . for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

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:

Allow general public access during anytime of the year to open areas of the refuge for the observation and photographing of associated flora and fauna. Boyer Chute NWR is open during daylight hours. All of the refuge will be open to the public for photography unless specifically closed by refuge management. Allowable forms of access to the refuge include hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, motorized and nonmotorized boats, and motorized vehicles. Horses, all-terrain vehicles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, and jet skis are not allowed on the refuge. Wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses on Refuge System lands as identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Entry to any or all portions of the refuge may be suspended by refuge management in the case of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety. Any closures would be accompanied by appropriate signage and notifications. Access for wildlife observation and photography will allow public access for enjoyment of scenic views and an array of wildlife including waterfowl, other migratory birds, tallgrass prairie plants, and resident wildlife. Wildlife refuges provide opportunities for wildlife enjoyment not usually available on adjacent private land.

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

Wildlife observation and photography are existing uses of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Wildlife observation and photography are priority wildlife-dependent recreation uses under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

Visitors coming to the refuge for wildlife photography and observation would need access via road. Once on the refuge visitors might use parking lots and hiking trails. Visitor services staff and law enforcement are needed to provide safe facilities and security to the public.

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

The refuge has been open for many years to these priority public uses. Wildlife photography and observation usually happen hand-in-hand with other public use such as hiking and auto touring. Thus, the facilities and services needed for wildlife observation and photography overlap with numerous other public uses. The refuge has adequate roads, parking lots, trails, boat launches, etc., to accommodate photography and observation by the public. The Service has provided the facilities for the activities and staff to enforce regulations.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?

Wildlife observation and photography pose minimal impacts on the purposes for which national wildlife refuges were established. Access is typically by individuals or small groups on foot or using snowshoes or skis along established trails. Access by motorized vehicles and bicycles is limited to established trails, public roads, and parking lots. Damage to vegetation from walking is minimal and temporary. There is some temporary disturbance to wildlife due to the presence of humans, such as flushing a nesting bird. The most likely impact to wildlife, related to the refuge purposes, would occur during spring and fall migrations, but the sporadic and limited use by the public should not create unreasonable impacts. Winter activities pose no impacts to waterfowl and little impact to vegetation. The winter disturbance to resident wildlife is also temporary and minor. Visitors typically use established foot trails with little impact on vegetation. Any unreasonable harassment would be grounds for law enforcement or for refuge management to restrict access or close an area to these uses.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Certain modes of access such as motorized vehicles and bicycles will be limited to designated trails, public roads, and parking lots.
2. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
3. No photo or viewing blinds may be left overnight.
4. Harassment of wildlife and excessive damage to vegetation are prohibited.

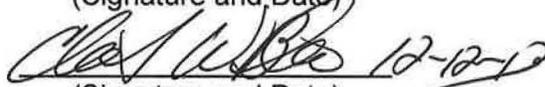
Justification:

This use has been determined compatible, because wildlife viewing and photography will not materially interfere with or detract from refuge purposes. The level of use for wildlife observation and photography is moderate. The associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor. Wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses and inculcate visitors with an appreciation for wildlife and an enthusiasm for nature and the outdoors. These uses also help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief


(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Interpretation and Environmental Education

Refuge Name: Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (U.S.C. 742a–742j)

Refuge Purposes:

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge was authorized in August of 1992, opened to the public via MOU in September of 1995, and was established in September of 1997:

“ . . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

“ . . . for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

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:

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

Interpretation and environmental education are existing uses of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Interpretation and environmental education are priority wildlife-dependent recreation uses under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Where would the use be conducted?

The use would occur in all areas of the refuge open to the public and selected closed sites as warranted by the specific situation and staff judgment. Areas for environmental education activities and interpretive tours are scheduled and planned to avoid interference with wildlife management goals.

When would the use be conducted?

This use occurs year round.

How would the use be conducted?

Environmental education activities are provided by the refuge staff, volunteers, teachers, or leaders of the visiting group. All environmental education visits are curriculum based, and lessons help students meet state educational standards. Interpretation includes staff-led or

volunteer-led services such as interpretive walks, talks, tours, and roving interpretation plus non-staffed services such as exhibits, signs, and brochures.

Why is this use being proposed?

These uses are being proposed to continue and build on successful environmental education and interpretation programs already in place at the refuge. These uses are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

Staff time from a visitor services specialist is needed to properly and safely administer these uses.

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

Existing refuge resources are adequate to maintain current level of environmental education and interpretive services. Increases or decreases in available resources require correlated changes in the interpretation and environmental education programs.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?

Environmental education and interpretation are priority public uses listed in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. By providing for these uses on the refuge, the participant's knowledge and appreciation of fish and wildlife ecology are enhanced, leading to increased public awareness of the ways healthy wildlife populations and natural habitats benefit present and future generations. Increased public awareness of natural and cultural environments contributes to the achievement of the refuge's purposes and the mission of the Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Environmental education and interpretation activities will be reviewed annually to ensure the quality of their contributions to visitors and students and that the associated impacts to fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats are not detracting from biological management of the refuge.

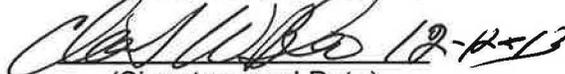
Justification:

This use has been determined compatible. Environmental education and interpretation will not materially interfere with or detract from the refuge purposes. The level of use for environmental education and interpretation is moderate. The associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor. Environmental education and interpretation are priority public uses that promote visitor understanding of, and increased appreciation for, America's natural and cultural resources. All activities and programming are designed to provide safe, informative, enjoyable, and accessible interpretive opportunities, products, and facilities. These uses also aid in the development a sense of environmental stewardship leading to actions and attitudes that reflect interest and respect for wildlife resources, cultural resources, and the environment. These uses also help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief


(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Gathering of Mushrooms

Refuge Name: Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (U.S.C. 742a–742j)

Refuge Purposes:

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge was authorized in August of 1992, opened to the public via MOU in September of 1995, and was established in September of 1997:

“ . . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

“ . . . for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

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:

Allow general public access in open areas of the refuge to gather mushrooms.

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

Gathering is an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Gathering is not a priority use of the Refuge System.

Where would the use be conducted?

Access for gathering mushrooms is allowed in all areas of the refuge open to the public, including the Northwest, Wildflower, Rail, West Chute, Island, Horseshoe, and Yellowlegs Units. Refuge kiosk maps, brochure map, and other handouts show the areas open to mushroom gathering (see also figure 4-5 in chapter 4 of the CCP for a map depicting future visitor services at Boyer Chute NWR).

Entry to any or all portions of the refuge may be suspended by refuge management in the case of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife populations, or public safety. Any closures would be accompanied by appropriate signage and notifications.

When would the use be conducted?

Mushroom gathering is allowed during daylight hours and within areas open to the public whenever the mushrooms are present. The actual season of mushroom growth varies from year-to-year depending on temperatures and moisture.

How would the use be conducted?

Refuge resources to facilitate gathering include refuge roads and hiking trails. Allowable forms of access to the refuge include hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, and motorized vehicles. Horses, all-terrain vehicles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, and jet skis are not allowed on the refuge. Spot checks of gatherers are made to assess the harvest success and compliance with the rules.

Why is this use being proposed?

Access for gathering is a non-priority, wildlife-dependent recreational use of the Refuge System. However, refuge resources can support this activity, which also provides enjoyment of natural scenery and a diversity of wildlife not usually available on adjacent private lands. Access for mushroom gathering is a high priority for many refuge visitors.

Availability of Resources:**What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?**

The primary means of visitor access to the refuge for gathering is public and refuge roads. Once on refuge roads, visitors may also use existing parking lots and hiking trails. Visitor services, facility maintenance, and law enforcement staff are needed to provide and maintain safe facilities and security to the public.

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

The refuge has been open to this non-priority public use for many years during which time the Service has provided the facilities and staff for this use. Gathering can occur in tandem with other public use such as hiking, wildlife observation, photography, and auto touring. This use requires the same services and infrastructure as other public uses on the refuge. The refuge has adequate roads, parking lots, and trails to accommodate mushroom gathering by the public.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:**How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?**

The opportunity for mushroom gathering leads to the public enjoyment of outdoor activities and nature. Gathering is a great way to introduce people to the refuge and to the values of local natural resources. Although gathering is a non-priority public use, it offers participants exposure to the Refuge System and its mission. This activity also accompanies and supports a number of priority public uses including wildlife observation and photography, and it provides practical and applied environmental education.

Gathering poses no substantial adverse impacts on the purposes for which the refuge was established. Some wildlife and habitat disturbance may occur during mushroom gathering, but the impacts are minimal, limited by designated areas and seasonal restrictions, and do not detract from the refuge purposes and the mission of the Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Mushroom gathering is only allowed in refuge areas and units of the refuge open to the public. Refuge staff will monitor this activity to ensure that gathering is done in modest quantities for personal consumption only.
2. Only day-use activities are permitted on Boyer Chute NWR.
3. Certain modes of access including motorized vehicles and bicycles will be limited to designated trails, public roads, and parking lots.
4. Camping, overnight use, and fires are prohibited.
5. Harassment of wildlife and excessive damage to vegetation are prohibited.

Justification:

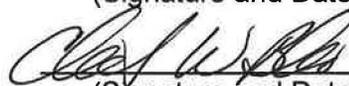
Mushroom gathering is a non-priority recreational use of the Refuge System. This use has been determined compatible at Boyer Chute NWR, because gathering will not materially interfere with or detract from refuge purposes. This activity facilitates the public appreciation of nature and the outdoors, and provides opportunities to learn about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It also reinforces and enhances the public's understanding of the natural environment and of the need for fish and wildlife conservation

The level of gathering activity is moderated through designated areas and seasons; the associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

 12-12-13
(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Research Programs

Refuge Name: Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (U.S.C. 742a–742j)

Refuge Purposes:

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge was authorized in August of 1992, opened to the public via MOU in September of 1995, and was established in September of 1997:

“ . . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

“ . . . for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

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:

Research is the planned, organized, and systematic gathering of data to discover or verify facts. In principle, research conducted on the refuge by universities, cooperative units, nonprofit organizations, and other research entities furthers refuge management and serves the purposes, vision, and goals of the refuge. The refuge hosts research from a variety of research institutions, including various universities and private research groups. All research activities, whether conducted by governmental agencies, public research entities, universities, private research groups, or any other entity, shall be required to obtain special use permits from the refuge. Approved refuge special use permits will contain conditions under which researchers must operate to help minimize negative impacts to refuge resources. Refuge staff will oversee all research activities. Priority consideration will be given to projects that are fish and wildlife management-oriented and that provide needed information for refuge operation and management.

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

Research programs are an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Research programs are not a priority public use of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:**What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?**

Needed resources include the administration of associated special use permits and oversight by refuge staff.

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

Yes

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:**How does the use affect refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and refuge goals and/or objectives?**

Disturbance is expected with some research activities, especially where researchers are entering sensitive habitats and/or working with species of concern. Researcher disturbance would include altering wildlife behavior, temporarily displacing wildlife, collecting soil and plant samples, or trapping and handling wildlife. However, most of these effects would be short-term, and only the minimum number of samples (e.g., water, soils, vegetative litter, plants, and wildlife) required for identification, experimentation, and statistical analysis would be permitted; captured and marked wildlife would be released. It is possible that direct or indirect mortality could result as a by-product of research activities. Mist netting, for example, can cause mortality directly through the capture method, in trap predation, and indirectly through capture injury or stress caused to the organism. Overall, allowing well designed and properly reviewed research is likely to have very little impact on refuge wildlife populations. The refuge does not anticipate adverse impacts on non-target species or other resources from research activities as these activities are typically geared towards benefiting refuge management of trust resources.

Negative impacts to public use activities are not expected, and no adverse socioeconomic impacts are anticipated. The proposed use will cause only minor and short-term disturbances to some wildlife and little or no disturbance to refuge visitors. The continuance of research projects is an important management tool that can have considerable beneficial effects on refuge lands and waters. Research findings will assist refuge staff in providing quality wildlife and habitat management and enhance the primary purposes for which this refuge was acquired. Furthermore, research can allow refuge staff to meet management goals at a modest cost to the refuge. This use should not result in short-term or long-term impacts that adversely affect the purpose for this refuge or the mission of the Refuge System. The cumulative impacts are minor, as evidenced by the durability of the terrain, the resiliency of vegetation, and the number and diversity of wildlife that remains in the area throughout years of high public use.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

All research conducted on the refuge must further the purposes of the refuge and the mission of the Refuge System. All research will adhere to established refuge policy on research and policy on collecting specimens (Directors Order Number 109). To ensure that research activities are compatible, the refuge requires that a special use permit be obtained before any research activity may occur. Research proposals and/or research special use permit applications must be submitted in advance of the activity to allow for review by refuge staff to ensure minimal impacts to the resources, staff, and programs of the refuge. Each special use permit may contain conditions under which the research will be conducted. Each special use permit holder will submit annual reports or updates to the refuge on research activities, progress, findings, and other information. Further, each special use permit holder will provide copies of findings, final reports, publications, and/or other documentation at the end of each project. The refuge may deny permits for research proposals that are determined not to serve the purposes of the refuge and the mission of the Refuge System. The refuge will also deny permits for research proposals that are determined to negatively impact resources, or that materially interfere with or detract from the purposes of the refuge. All research activities are subject to the conditions of their special use permits.

Justification:

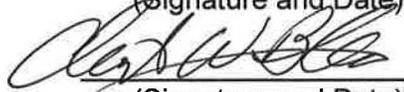
There is a continuing need for research for the conservation of federal trust and focal species that occur on Boyer Chute NWR. The Service encourages scientific research to further the understanding of refuge natural resources. Many research needs, if undertaken, would support refuge conservation and management efforts. Some of these research needs are to meet the objectives found in various plans and federal mandates. Priority will be given to research projects that can be applied to current wildlife management or conservation issues, thereby contributing to adaptive refuge management practices and management decisions that are based on the best available science. There will be no notable, permanent negative impacts to any refuge wildlife. This use will not diminish the primary purpose for the refuge and will help meet the mission of the Refuge System by sustaining natural resources for the benefit of the American public and conserving fish, wildlife, and plants on these lands. Scientific research on Boyer Chute NWR is consistent with the refuge and Refuge System objectives and thus compatible.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

 DEC 12 2013
(Signature and Date)

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

Compatibility Determination

Use: Wood Cutting

Refuge Name: Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (U.S.C. 742a–742j)

Refuge Purposes:

Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge was authorized in August of 1992, opened to the public via MOU in September of 1995, and was established in September of 1997:

“ . . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

“ . . . for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude . . . ” 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) (The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

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:

This compatibility determination is for the removal of fallen trees by private individuals and applies to all wood removal activities regardless of the ultimate use of the wood (e.g., firewood, pulp, etc.). Differences in the scope of the activities and the necessary equipment will occur depending on the amount and type of wood available for removal. This activity will only occur if the Service has determined that a management need exists to remove wood from the refuge consistent with Boyer Chute NWR's CCP or other management purposes.

Wood cutting is not a priority public use of the Refuge System, as defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Wood removal may occur within former homesites, along existing windbreaks/shelter belts, and in other areas of the refuge where trees are dying or otherwise undesirable. Harvest sites will vary in size from a portion of an acre up to several hundred acres depending on the site and management objectives. Wood removal activities may be authorized throughout the year. Most often, wood removal activities occur during the winter months when frozen ground facilitates access and affords protection to underlying soils and vegetation. The main application of this use is the collection of firewood along refuge roads by individuals for personal use. Large trees fall along the roads and must be cleaned up by the staff. Allowing the public access to this wood saves time and money for the refuge.

The scope of the activity will be determined by the management objective for the area and by the quantity and quality of available wood. Equipment used for harvest may range from chainsaws and axes to traditional logging equipment such as feller bunchers and log skidders. Access may be pickup truck, farm tractor, or larger traditional logging equipment.

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

Wood cutting is an existing use of the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Wood cutting is not a priority public use of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

A staff member will be responsible for writing special use permits when needed. Law enforcement during regular patrols will check for violations regarding refuge wood harvest.

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

Yes

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

In permitting this type of activity, the potential exists to directly impact nesting birds both on the ground and in the trees. These impacts are easily avoided by careful timing of the activity. Wood cutting will be done, if at all possible, during the winter months when birds are not nesting. Access for removing wood may impact habitat by rutting soils, destroying ground cover, creating weed seedbeds, and increasing runoff and sedimentation in nearby wetlands. These impacts can again be avoided by careful timing of the activity. Allowing access during the winter months when the ground is frozen will avoid these impacts.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was made available for public review as part of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Environmental Assessment and Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan from September 19 to November 8, 2013. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. If at all possible, wood cutting will take place during winter months to avoid nesting birds and soil disturbance.
2. A special use permit will be issued so that site-specific impacts can be reduced or eliminated and Service management goals are met.

Justification:

Impacts to the habitat as a result of access to the refuge for wood removal purposes are potentially substantial, but can be avoided. 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. Areas that do not have roads will be protected by issuing special use permits only during winter months when the ground is frozen. Individuals participating in the wood harvest program will be under special use permit, and site-specific stipulations will ensure resource protection and achievement of management goals.

Signature: Refuge Manager

/Tom Cox/ <12/06/2013>
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief

 12-12-12
(Signature and Date)

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