

**Final John W. and Louise Seier National Wildlife Refuge
Hunting Plan**

July 2020

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**John W. and Louise Seier National Wildlife Refuge
Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge Complex
39983 Refuge Road, Valentine, NE 69201**

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John W. and Louise Seier National Wildlife Refuge

Hunting Plan

I. Introduction

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

In 1990, the Service and the Seier family, John W. and Louise Seier (brother and sister), exchanged a series of letters and met concerning the donation of their ranch to the Service. The Service agreed to accept the property and assisted them in drafting language in preparation of a trust to deed the property to the Service upon their death. John passed away in 1997 and Louise passed away in 2002. The Service began managing the land in 2003 as the John W. and Louise Seier (Seir) National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

The refuge was established pursuant to The John W. and Louise Seier Living Trust. The primary purpose of the refuge is “for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources . . .” (16 U.S. Code a 742fl:[a][4]) and “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. Code a 742 f[b][1]).

The mission of the Refuge System, as outlined by the NWRSA, as amended by the Improvement Act (16 U.S. Code 668dd et seq.), 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.”

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

- provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the Refuge System;
- ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- ensure that the mission of the Refuge System described at 16 U.S. Code 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;

- ensure effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the states in which the units of the Refuge System are located;
- assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the Refuge System and the purposes of each refuge;
- recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the Refuge System through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- ensure that opportunities are provided within the Refuge System for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
- monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

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

II. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of a resident game and migratory bird hunting program on the refuge are to:

- provide the public with more opportunity to hunt resident game and migratory birds; and
- provide wildlife-dependent public recreation as mandated by and according to Service policy.

Hunting also helps to accomplish a goal in the conceptual management plan to facilitate compatible, wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities on refuge lands.

III. Description of Hunting Program

A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting

The entire refuge is open to hunting. The hunting area is approximately 2,400 acres (see Figure 1).

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

Resident Game: Resident game hunting will cover all non-migratory wildlife hunted in Nebraska under the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) hunting regulations. Resident game species are white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, badger, beaver, bobcat, coyote, fox, long-tailed weasel, mink, muskrat, opossum, prairie dog, porcupine, rabbit and hare, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, woodchuck, greater prairie chicken, grouse, partridge, pheasant, quail, and turkey.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

John W. and Louise Seier National Wildlife Refuge

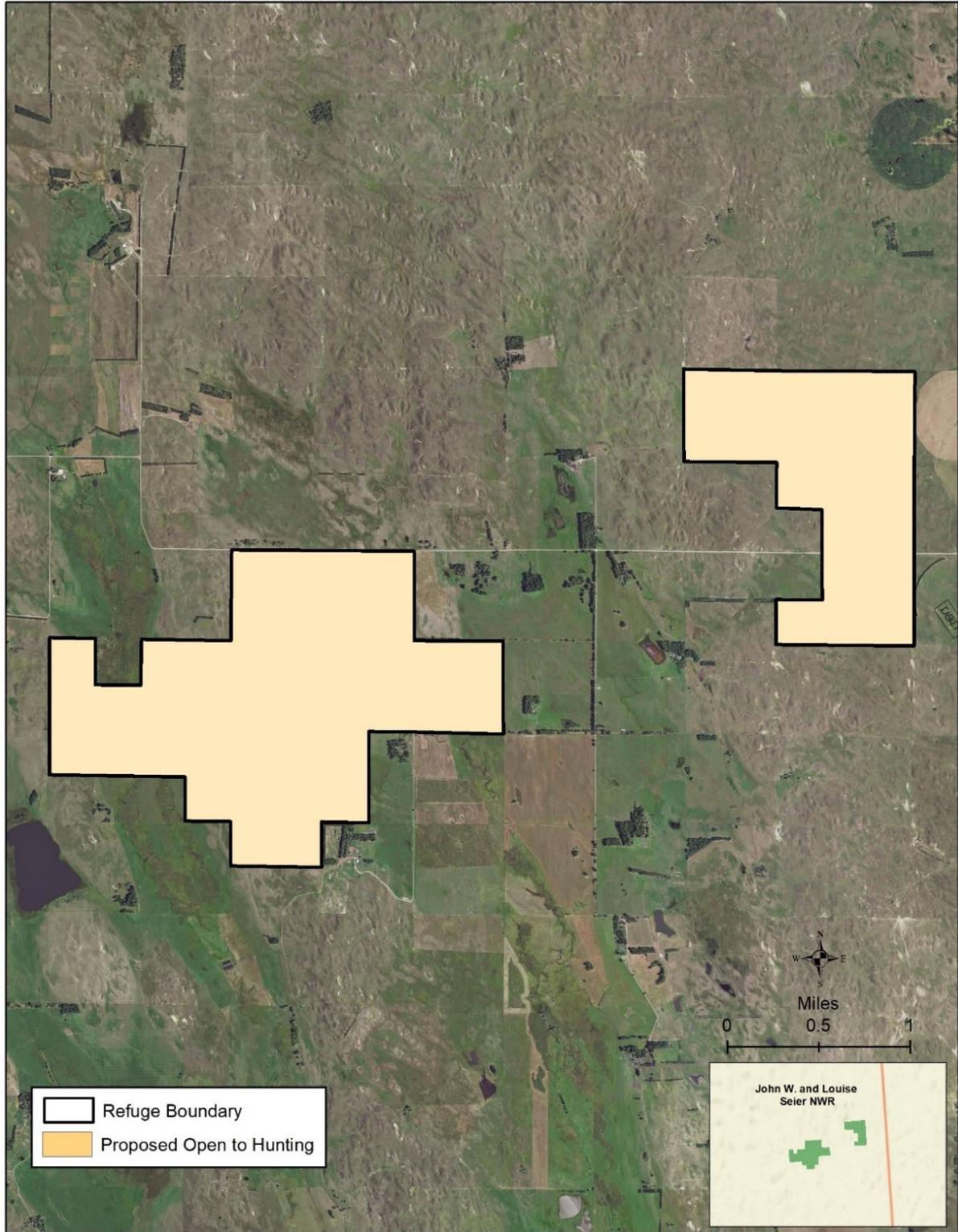


Figure 1. John W. and Louise Seier National Wildlife Refuge Map and Hunting Area.

Migratory Birds: Migratory bird hunting will cover waterfowl, dove, crow, rail, snipe, and woodcock.

- Nontoxic shot will be required for all shotgun hunting.
- Hunter access will be allowed from two hours before legal sunrise until two hours after legal sunset. Shooting hours for coyote, porcupine, prairie dog, woodchuck, and State-defined hutable furbearers are one half-hour before legal sunrise to one half-hour after legal sunset. All other shooting hours for proposed species will fall within the refuge access hours by state regulation.
- Bag limits will generally be according to state regulations. Special deer bag limits such as antlerless-only, bonus tags, and mule deer doe will be negotiated with the NGPC and published in its regulations.

C. Hunter Permit Requirements

License requirements and season dates will be established according to state regulation.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

State coordination will be limited to the consideration of the July 10, 2018, NGPC Suggestions for Hunting and Fishing Opportunities and Related Regulations and phone conversations with local NGPC Biologists.

E. Law Enforcement

Enforcement of refuge and state regulations normally associated with management of a national wildlife refuge will be the responsibility of commissioned refuge law enforcement officers. Other federal wildlife officers, national park service rangers, special agents, state conservation officers, and the local sheriff's department often assist the full-time Sandhills NWR Complex officer.

The following methods will be used to control and enforce hunting regulations:

- Refuge and hunting area boundaries will be clearly posted.
- The refuge will provide a brochure that shows hunting areas and contains pertinent rules and regulations.
- Sandhills NWR Complex law enforcement staff will routinely check hunters for compliance with federal and state laws.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

Annual hunting program administration costs for the refuge, including, salary, equipment, law enforcement, brochures, and analysis of biological information, will total approximately \$5,000. Sandhills NWR Complex administrative and maintenance funds will be used to maintain signs, purchase brochures, perform biological inventory and monitoring, and coordinate with the state. Sandhills NWR Complex law enforcement money will be used to watch hunting and enforce

regulations. We anticipate that money will continue to be sufficient to continue the hunting program at the refuge in the future; however, Sandhills NWR Complex-wide law enforcement funding will not be adequate to provide enough law enforcement for the entire refuge complex.

IV. Conduct of the Hunting Program

A. Hunter Permit Application, Selection, and Registration Procedures

The refuge will not require Service hunting applications or reports. All licenses and permits will be issued by the NGPC.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

Listed below are refuge-specific regulations that will pertain to hunting on the refuge as of the date of this plan. These regulations may be modified as conditions change or if refuge expansion occurs. Because this refuge will be newly opened to hunting, the 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) will need to be modified to provide a place for the following regulations.

50 CFR 32.46 Nebraska

(d) John W. and Louise Seier National Wildlife Refuge—

(1) Migratory game bird hunting. We allow migratory game bird hunting to include coot, crow, dark goose, dove, duck, light goose, merganser, rail, snipe, teal, and woodcock on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) Hunters may access the refuge from 2 hours before legal sunrise until 2 hours after legal sunset.

(ii) You must remove all blinds and decoys at the conclusion of each day's hunt (see Section 27.93 of this chapter).

(iii) We allow the use of dogs from August 1 through April 31.

(2) Upland game hunting. We allow upland game hunting to include badger, bobcat, coyote, fox, long-tailed weasel, mink, opossum, prairie dog, porcupine, rabbit and hare, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, woodchuck, greater prairie chicken, grouse, partridge, pheasant, quail, and turkey on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) The conditions set forth at paragraphs (d)(1)(i) and (iii) of this section apply.

(ii) You may only possess nontoxic shot when hunting turkey (see Section 32.2(k)).

(iii) Shooting hours for coyote, porcupine, prairie dog, woodchuck, and state-defined huntable furbearers are ½ before legal sunrise to ½ hour after legal sunset.

(3) Big game hunting. We allow hunting of deer, elk, and pronghorn antelope on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) The condition set forth at paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section applies.

(ii) We allow portable tree stands and ground blinds to be used from August 16 through January 31.

(4) [Reserved]

C. Relevant State Regulations

Relevant state regulations are generally covered in the annual Nebraska Guides. The guides are not intended to be a complete digest of state regulations, orders, and statutes. A complete listing may be found at (<http://outdoornebraska.gov/regulations/> (Regulations and Orders) and <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/browse-chapters.php?chapter=37> (Nebraska Revised Statutes).

D. Other Refuge Rules and Regulations for Hunting

- Fires – Open fires are not permitted.
- Camping – Camping is not permitted.
- Gates – Gates opened to enter the hunting area from designated access points must be closed immediately after passing through.
- Refuge and Cultural Resources – All government property, including natural items such as antlers, bison skulls, plants, and historic and archaeological features, are protected by federal law. Searching for or removal of any of this property is strictly prohibited.
- Weapons – Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of state and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32).
- Carrying, possessing, or discharging fireworks or explosives on national wildlife refuges is prohibited. The use of possession of air guns, spears, gigs, or other weapons on national wildlife refuges is prohibited.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting Program

The refuge maintains a mailing list, for news release purposes, to local newspapers, radio, and websites. Special announcements and articles may be released in conjunction with hunting seasons. In addition, information about the hunting program will be available on the Seier NWR website or at Sandhills NWR Complex headquarters, 39983 Refuge Road, Valentine, NE.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting Program

We will probably receive positive, negative, and neutral comments about this revised hunting plan. Some individuals may have concern with waterfowl hunting in areas where whooping cranes may be present. Some people might be concerned with opening up hunting without opening up other public uses.

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

General information regarding hunting and other wildlife-dependent public uses can be obtained at Sandhills NWR Complex headquarters at 39983 Refuge Road, Valentine, NE 69201, or by calling (402) 376-3789. Information about hunting will be available on the Seier NWR website at www.fws.gov/refuge/john_W_and_Louise_Seier/ and at the Fort Niobrara NWR Visitor Center. Information about hunting and fishing in Nebraska will be available at the NGPC office located at 2200 N. 33rd St., Lincoln, NE 68503, by calling (402) 471-0641, or at www.outdoornebraska.gov/.

VI. Compatibility Determination

Hunting and all associated program activities proposed in this plan are compatible with the purposes of the refuge. View the Final Compatibility Determination for Hunting on John W. and Louise Seier NWR at www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/huntfish.php#.