

**Final Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
Hunting and Fishing Plan**

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

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Stafford, KS 67578**

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Final Quivira National Wildlife Refuge Hunting and Fishing 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 covers the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (NWRCAA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act), Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected parts of the Code of Federal Regulations and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

On May 3, 1955, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in central Kansas (Figure 1) was established under the following authorities and for these purposes:

- “. . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds” (Migratory Bird Conservation Act 1929 [16 U.S. Code Section 715d]).
- “. . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources” (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 [16 U.S. Code Section 742f(a)(4)]).
- “. . . for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services” (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 [16 U.S. Code Section 742f(b)(1)]).

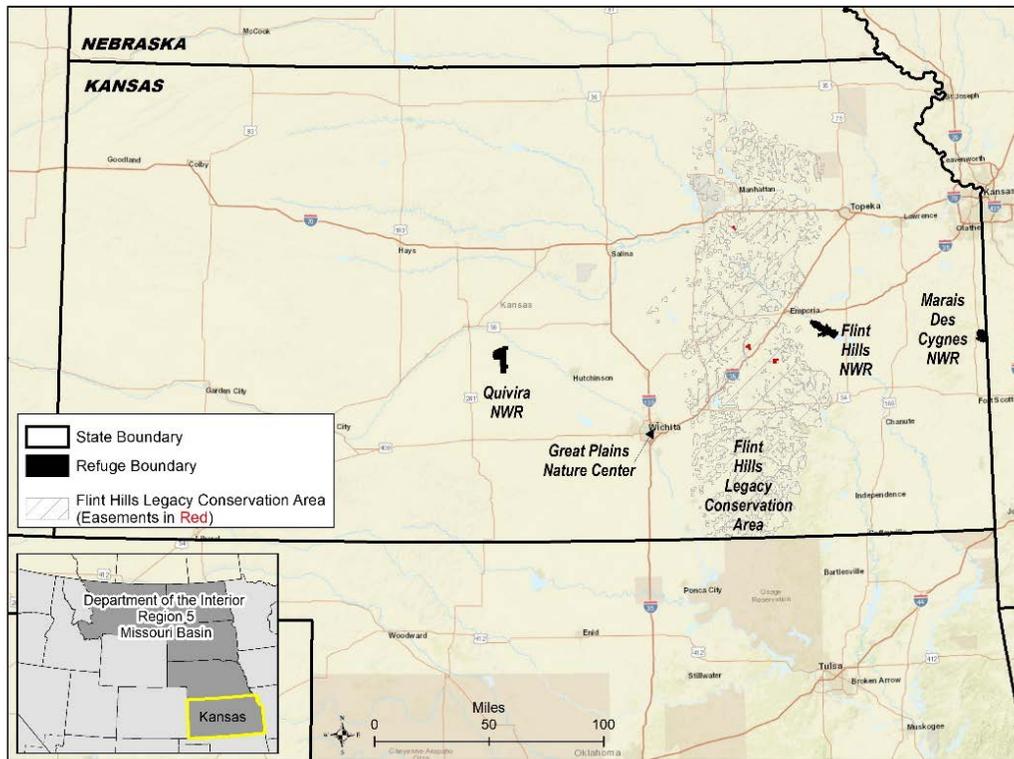


Figure 1. Location of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge.

Quivira NWR is a sand prairie-wetland complex intricately linked with the Rattlesnake and Salt Creek tributaries of the Arkansas River. Perhaps, the most distinct natural features are two expansive inland salt marshes. The refuge has abundant and diverse wildlife and associated habitat supported by a productive environment that is centrally located in migration corridors and ecological transition zones. For decades, many thousands of waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wildlife have relied on natural resources on the refuge to satisfy life requirements, most notably during migration.

The mission of the Refuge System, as outlined by the NWRSAA, 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 NWRSAA 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 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 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.

Hunting is a primary traditional activity of central Kansas. Before the refuge was established, there were many private duck (hunt) clubs in the area of the Big and Little Salt Marshes. Refuge management has continued to support hunting and fishing as compatible wildlife-dependent activities. During past years, hunting and fishing opportunities on public lands have become

increasingly appreciated, with more than 97 percent of Kansas in private land and changes in land use.

II. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of a fishing and deer, turkey, coyote, small game, furbearer, upland game bird, migratory game bird hunting program on Quivira NWR are to provide the public with added, compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses, and new opportunities for youth and those with special needs. These expanded uses attract new users and, therefore, opportunities for environmental education, appreciation of natural resources, and inspiration to take part in other refuge uses that support the Refuge System mission.

III. Description of Hunting Program

A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting

Areas to Be Opened or Closed to Hunting

- Parts of Quivira NWR are posted as hunting areas and are shown on the map in the brochure (Figure 2). Hunting is not permitted outside the hunt area or from across roads, trails, or parking areas.
- Refuge hunting areas are open for hunting activities occurring September through February, as described in the hunting and fishing plan and newly published Code of Federal Regulations associated with the hunting and fishing plan.

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

Hunting Hours

The refuge is open to the public 1½ hours before sunrise to 1½ hours after sunset. Hunting hours follow state regulations, but only within the refuge open hours. No night hunting or waiting, or set-up during refuge closed hours, is allowed, as it will otherwise be considered camping.

Parking, Camping, Fires, and Boating

- Motorized vehicles are permitted only on developed roads and parking areas. Driving off roads, or on roads marked as closed by signs or barriers, is prohibited. Parking in front of gates or on bridges or water control structures is prohibited.
- Overnight camping is prohibited.
- Fires of any type are prohibited within the refuge.
- The use of boats, canoes, and any other watercraft is prohibited.

Refuge and Cultural Resources

Federal law protects all government property, including natural items such as antlers, plants, historic, and archaeological features. Searching for or removing objects of antiquity or other value is strictly prohibited.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

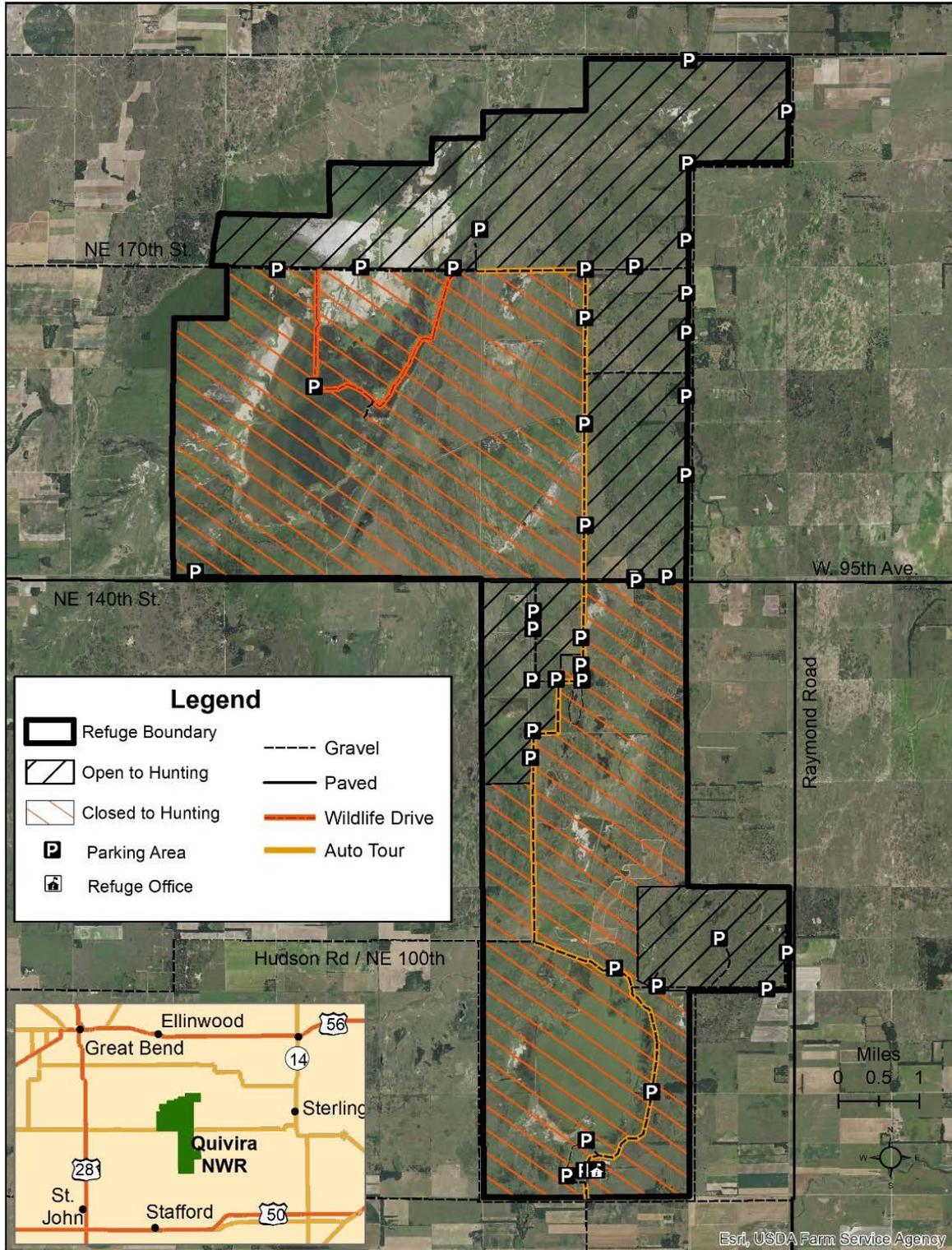


Figure 2. Areas to be Opened to Hunting on Quivira National Wildlife Refuge.

Closures

The refuge supports many species of conservation concern. All areas on the refuge may be closed to hunting for the protection of whooping cranes or other species, habitat, or the public as decided by the Service. Closed area signs apply to all public use activities. The Service may close hunting of species on the refuge if there is a concern about a long-term decline or sudden decline in the population at regional, state, or larger scales, though the state traditionally adjusts hunting and fishing regulations based on population trends.

Blinds

Portable devices or temporary blinds of natural (native) vegetation are permitted. Permanent blinds or pits are not permitted. All devices must be removed daily. An accessible hunting blind is available on Unit 30. Reserve the blind by contacting staff at the refuge office (headquarters).

Game Retrieval

Retrieving non-permitted species is prohibited on all refuge lands. Retrieving permitted species from areas closed to hunting is also prohibited.

Methods of Take (Overall)

Methods of take prohibited on the refuge include centerfire rifle, rimfire rifle, pistol, falconry, trapping, running coyote or furbearers, and hunting from vehicles. Methods of take allowed on the refuge include shotgun; muzzleloader rifle or musket, such as for deer, coyote, and furbearers; and archery. The refuge permits nontoxic ammunition (shot or bullets) only. Specific methods of take by species, or group of species, are identified under “Species to be Taken” and regulations described in more detail below.

Special Hunt Definition

For clarification, the use of the term “special hunt” in this plan (and the associated environmental assessment) is in accordance with how the state recognizes special hunts. The Service traditionally considers a hunt to be a special hunt if it occurs outside of a regular season, while the state recognizes special hunts that occur within regular state seasons that may differ in the time, such as days or months regularly allowed. A special hunt or draw and other state-used programs with use of a state-issued refuge access permit allows the Service to limit or control the number of hunters, amount of take by species, hunt area, time, and method of take, but it is typically administered through the state.

Species to be Taken – Deer (State-Defined: White-Tailed Deer and Mule Deer)

- Deer will be permitted to be hunted with a state-issued refuge access permit. The Service limits deer hunting opportunities to state-used programs and special hunts that require a state-issued refuge access permit to maintain authority (flexibility) of hunting regulations, such as take, number of access permits, the days of hunting, and methods of take.
- With authorization under a state-issued refuge access permit, Deer Youth/Disabled Hunt Season occurs during the second weekend or week in September (now September 7

through 15). Allowable methods of take include archery, muzzleloader rifle or musket, according to state regulations with use of nontoxic ammunition (shot or bullets) only.

- With authorization under a state-issued refuge access permit, Deer Muzzleloader Hunt and Archery-Only Season (to occur at separate times) in September, following the Deer Youth/Disabled Hunt Season. The Service will decide the number of hunters and access permits, the days of hunting, and weapon choice. Administration will occur in cooperation with the state.
- With authorization under a state-issued refuge access permit, Deer Extended Firearm Whitetail Antlerless-only in January with muzzleloader (as described above) and shotgun method of take.
- With authorization under a state-issued refuge access permit, Deer Extended Archery Whitetail Antlerless-only in January in concurrence with state regulations.

Species to be Taken – Turkey

- Turkey will be allowed to be hunted with a state-issued refuge access permit. The Service limits turkey hunting opportunities to state-used programs and special hunts that require a state-issued refuge access permit to maintain authority (flexibility) of hunting regulations, such as take, number of access permits, the days of hunting, and methods of take.
- As authorized in a state-issued refuge access permit, opportunities will occur during the fall season, as the second split is now scheduled December 16 through January 31). The refuge is closed to all hunting during the spring season (April).
- As authorized in a state-issued refuge access permit, methods of take include archery and shotgun (nontoxic shot only), in concurrence with state regulations.
- Use of dogs for turkey hunting is prohibited.

Species to be Taken – Coyote

- The Service limits hunting opportunities to state-used programs and special hunts that require a state-issued refuge access permit to maintain authority (flexibility) of hunting regulations, such as coyote take, number of access permits, the days of hunting, and methods of take.
- For hunting authorized in a state-issued refuge access permit, opportunities will not occur from March through August, when refuge hunt areas are closed.
- As authorized in a state-issued refuge access permit, method of take covers shotgun, muzzleloader rifle and musket, or archery.
- No use of vehicles, radios, dogs, or bait.

Species to be Taken – Small Game (Squirrel, Rabbit [Cottontail, Jackrabbit])

- The refuge will permit hunting of squirrel and rabbit (cottontail, jackrabbit).

- Methods of take permitted are shotgun, and muzzleloading shotgun, no larger than 10 gauge with nontoxic shot and archery.
- Use of bait is not allowed.
- Use of decoys (except live decoys), and calls, including electronic calls, is permitted (consistent throughout the Kansas NWR Complex).
- Current seasons for the refuge will be kept, including state seasons that fall within September through February and excluding March through August.

Species to be Taken – Furbearers (State-Defined Hunted Species: Badger, Bobcat, Red Fox, Gray Fox, Swift Fox, Mink, Muskrat, Opossum, Raccoon, Striped Skunk, and Weasel)

- The Service limits hunting opportunities to state-used programs and special hunts that require a state-issued refuge access permit to maintain authority (flexibility) of hunting regulations, such as furbearer take, number of access permits, the days of hunting, and methods of take.
- As authorized in a state-issued refuge access permit, new state-defined furbearer species permitted to be hunted on the refuge include badger, bobcat, fox, mink, muskrat, opossum, raccoon, and striped skunk, and weasel.
- Hunting of otter and beaver are not permitted, consistent with state regulations.
- As authorized in a state-issued refuge access permit, the use of calls and decoys may be permitted.
- No hunting is allowed at night. The refuge is open 1½ hours before sunrise to 1½ hours after sunset.
- As authorized in a state-issued refuge access permit, methods of take include archery, muzzleloader rifle and musket, and shotgun (nontoxic shot and bullets).
- No use of dogs for furbearer hunting.

Species to be Taken – Upland Game Bird (Pheasant and Quail [Bobwhite])

- Retain current hunting regulations with the addition of archery as a new method of take. Overall, permitted methods of take will be shotguns and muzzleloading shotguns that are no larger than 10 gauge with shot only, and bow and arrow.

Species to be Taken – Migratory Game Birds (State-Defined)

- The refuge will permit hunting of migratory mourning dove, duck, coot, and dark geese in concurrence with state regular seasons and limits (no Extended Falconry season).
- Nontoxic ammunition (shot and bullets) only are allowed on the refuge.
- No Extended Falconry season on the refuge.

- The refuge permits hunting of light geese in concurrence with state regulations during regular seasons. No light geese hunting under the Spring Conservation Order or Extended Falconry seasons.
- No hunting of rail, common snipe, woodcock, or sandhill cranes.
- Crow is a new species of migratory game bird that may be hunted.
 - Limited season to align with the state season (starting in mid-November), but extending only through February. The refuge is closed to all hunting March through August.
 - Method of take allowed includes bow and arrow and shotgun no larger than 10 gauge and incapable of holding more than three shells.
 - Take limit, of which there is now none, will be in concurrence with state regulations.

Species to be Taken – Fish

All refuge waters are open to sport fishing in accordance with state fishing regulations, with the exceptions below.

- Legal Species – Fish species listed in the state fishing regulations may be taken. All other wildlife species, such as turtles, frogs, crayfish, snakes, and other wildlife, are protected and may not be disturbed or removed from the refuge.
- Kid’s Fishing Pond – The Kid’s Fishing Pond is open for youth 15 years and younger. Adults may fish at this pond only if accompanying a youth. Only one fish may be taken per person per day.
- Exceptions – Fishing with trotlines and setlines is prohibited. The use of seines for taking bait is not permitted. Worms are the only form of live bait permitted. Fishing from water control structures and bridges is prohibited

C. Hunter Permit Requirements

All state permit rules apply on refuge lands besides refuge-specific rules. For deer, turkey, coyote, and furbearers, a state-issued refuge access permit is required.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

Representatives of the Kansas NWR Complex (Flint Hills, Marais des Cygnes, and Quivira NWRs) met with the Secretary of Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism (KDWPT) and a KDWPT Wildlife Research Supervisor migratory bird specialist about potential future hunting opportunities on the refuges on October 30, 2019, in Hartford, Kansas. The state shared organization and public interests and responded to proposed hunting opportunities, including operations and regulations, at the meeting and in follow-up verbal and written communications. The Service asked about recommendations and review of hunt programs, specifically special hunts and the use of state-coordinated programs, such as iSportsman. The Service specifically asked the state about including the refuge and complex in state hunt registration or administered programs to keep consistency and coordination. The Service responded to state recommendations

to improve alignment with state and among refuges in the complex. Overall, the state is supportive of the Service's proposals of expanded hunting opportunities, and both agencies confirmed the continuance of a strong partnership. The state regional office reviewed and concurred with the refuge-specific regulations. We, the Service, have and will continue to consult and coordinate on specific aspects of the hunting and fishing plan. The state agrees with the refuge and complex hunting and fishing plan(s), as it will help meet state objectives.

E. Law Enforcement

Enforcement of refuge violations on Quivira NWR is the responsibility of commissioned refuge law enforcement officers. Other refuge officers, special agents, state game wardens, and the local sheriff's department may aid the full-time officer at the refuge. Any law enforcement officer may enforce state laws on the refuge. The following methods are used to inform the public and enforce hunting and fishing regulations: publication of the Code of Federal Regulations; a refuge brochure indicating the area open and closed to hunting (excluding temporary closures for the protection of wildlife and the public); signage along refuge boundaries; and sometimes other communications, such as website or phone). Refuge law enforcement officers will randomly check hunters for compliance with federal and state laws.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

Hunting and fishing activities are time-consuming and costly. It is estimated that law enforcement may involve about 30 to 35 hours per week, from September through February. Transportation costs associated with law enforcement is estimated at nearly \$400 per week but will fluctuate with fuel and maintenance costs. Operation of open and closed signs, as well as communication related to the protection of whooping cranes (or other species of concern or public safety), requires an estimated 8 to 10 hours in a season. Monitoring and management of whooping cranes is not all hunting-related; it is also of interest to nonconsumptive users and required for biological purposes, such as Recovery Act Action. However, more time is spent checking whooping cranes during hunting season, an estimated two additional hours per week during migration. Many hours are required to provide information to the public, such as through phone, website, visitor's center, brochures, and news releases, throughout the hunting season. Costs are associated with printing hunting and fishing information for kiosks and the visitor center, and with maintenance of Refuge infrastructure (such as roads, parking lots, signs, facilities). Monitoring related to other species (such as waterfowl) involves at least 150 hours per year. Time and cost are associated with public communications and coordination and administration with the state (such as special hunts). Monitoring will involve assessment of many species, but much of the information will be used from state surveys and volunteer efforts (such as deer surveys).

IV. Conduct of the Hunting Program

A. Hunter Permit Application, Selection, and Registration Procedures

Hunter permit application, selection, and registration procedures are conducted in coordination with KDWP. Where appropriate, refuges within the Kansas NWR Complex try to align regulations.

For special hunt opportunities, such as how the state will designate the proposed deer, turkey, coyote, and furbearer hunts on the refuge, the Service will keep control and flexibility in limiting the number of hunters and access permits, the days of hunting, and the methods of take. The Service will follow procedures and schedules according to state-used programs and special hunt operations.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

Listed below are refuge-specific regulations that pertain to hunting on Quivira NWR as of the date of publication of the revised Code of Federal Regulations and the final rule in the Federal Register. These regulations may be modified as conditions change or if refuge expansion continues or occurs.

50 Code of Federal Regulations Section 32.35 – Kansas

(d) Quivira National Wildlife Refuge—

(1) Migratory game bird hunting. We allow hunting of coot, crow, duck, goose, and mourning dove on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

- (i) We open refuge hunting areas from September 1 through February 28.*
- (ii) The refuge is open from 1½ hours before legal sunrise to 1½ hours after legal sunset.*
- (iii) We prohibit the retrieval of game from areas closed to hunting.*
- (iv) You must remove portable hunting blinds and decoys at the end of each day's hunt (see Section 27.93 of this chapter).*
- (v) We prohibit shooting from or over roads and parking areas.*
- (vi) We allow the use of dogs when hunting migratory birds.*
- (vii) We only allow shotguns and archery equipment.*

(2) Upland game hunting. We allow hunting of coyote, pheasant, quail, State-defined furbearers, squirrel, and rabbit on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

- (i) The conditions set forth at paragraphs (d)(1)(i) through (iii), (v), and (vii) of this section apply.*
- (ii) We allow the use of dogs when hunting upland game, except that we prohibit the use of dogs when hunting coyotes and furbearers.*
- (iii) We prohibit the harvest of beaver and otter.*
- (iv) You must possess a state-issued refuge access permit for coyote and State-defined furbearer hunting.*

(3) Big game hunting. We allow hunting of white-tailed deer and turkey on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

- (i) You may possess only approved nontoxic ammunition for turkey and deer hunting (see Section 32.2(k)).*

(ii) You must possess a state-issued refuge access permit for deer and turkey hunting.

(iii) We allow one portable blind or stand per hunter. You may place your stand on the refuge no more than 14 days prior to the season, and you must remove it within 14 days of the close of the season. You must remove portable blinds at the end of each day's hunt (see Section 27.93 of this chapter). You must label portable blinds and stands with the owner's name and KDWPT number. Labels must be clearly visible from the ground.

(iv) We prohibit the use of dogs when hunting turkey.

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

(vi) We only allow muzzleloaders, shotguns, and archery equipment.

(4) Sport fishing. We allow sport fishing on all waters on the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) We prohibit taking of reptiles and amphibians.

(ii) We prohibit the use of trotlines and setlines.

(iii) We prohibit the use of seines for taking bait.

(iv) We prohibit fishing from water control structures and bridges.

(v) We restrict fishing in the designated "Kid's Pond," approximately 1/4 mile (.4 kilometers) west-southwest of headquarters, to youth age 15 and younger, and to a parent and/or guardian age 18 or older accompanying a youth.

(vi) The creel limit for the Kid's Pond is one fish per day.

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

(viii) The only live bait we allow is worms; we prohibit all other live bait.

C. Relevant State Regulations

All other state regulations apply and are available from the KDWPT.

D. Other Refuge Rules and Regulations for Hunting

Parking, Camping, Fires, and Boating

- Motorized vehicles are permitted only on developed roads and parking areas. Driving off roads, or on roads marked as closed by signs or barriers, is prohibited. Parking in front of gates, on bridges, or water control structures is prohibited.
- Overnight camping is prohibited.
- Fires of any type are prohibited within the refuge.
- The use of boats, canoes, and any other watercraft are prohibited.

Refuge and Cultural Resources

Federal law protects all government property, including natural items such as antlers, plants, historic, and archaeological features. Searching for or removing objects of antiquity or other value is strictly prohibited.

Closures

The refuge supports many species of conservation concern. All areas on the refuge may be closed to hunting for the protection of whooping cranes or other species, habitat, or the public as decided by the Service. Closed area signs apply to all public use activities. The Service may close hunting of species on the refuge if there is a concern about a long-term decline or sudden decline in the population at regional, state, or larger scales, though the state traditionally adjusts hunting and fishing regulations based on population trends.

Blinds

Portable devices or temporary blinds are allowed. The Service encourages use of synthetic materials for blinds to reduce potential establishment and spread of invasive species. Permanent blinds or pits are not permitted. All devices and blinds must be removed daily. An accessible hunting blind is available on Unit 30. Reserve the blind by contacting staff at the refuge office (headquarters).

Tree Stands

One portable blind or stand per hunter is allowed. Stands may not be placed until 14 days before the season and must be removed within 14 days of the close of the season. Portable blinds must be removed at the end of each day's hunt. Portable blinds and stands must be labeled with the owner's name and KDWPT number. Labels must be clearly visible from the ground.

Game Retrieval

Retrieving non-permitted species is prohibited on all refuge lands. Retrieving permitted species from areas closed to hunting is not allowed.

Light

Use of artificial light or light-gathering equipment is not permitted.

Bait

Baiting or the use of bait for hunting is not permitted on the refuge.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting Program

Initial outreach and public input about hunting and fishing occurred as part of development of the comprehensive conservation plan for Quivira NWR (signed in 2013). There was a 30-day review period associated with this more detailed step-down plan. On approval, the public is

notified of the hunting and fishing plan through news releases to local newspapers and the refuge website. Special announcements and articles may be released, especially before hunting seasons. Information about the hunting and fishing plan will be available at the refuge office and the refuge website.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction of the Hunting Program

Based on the comments received during the comprehensive conservation plan (signed 2013), reactions about added or expanded hunting opportunities will be mixed. While hunting has already been allowed on the refuge for decades, there are concerns about species of conservation concern, such as the whooping crane, and the balance of compatible consumptive and nonconsumptive uses. Hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and other wildlife-based activities are important economic and recreational uses in Kansas.

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

Information about hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-dependent public uses may be obtained at the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge office at 1434 NE 80th Street, Stafford, KS 67578 or by calling 620-410-4011. Dates, forms, directions, maps, and application and permit rules will be available at the office and visitor's center, as well as information posted on the refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge/quivira/.

VI. Compatibility Determination

Hunting and all associate program activities proposed in this plan are compatible with the purposes of the refuge. See the Final Compatibility Determination for Hunting and Fishing on Quivira NWR (www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/huntfish.php#).