

Appendix E: Interim Compatibility Determination

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I. STATION NAME: Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge

II. DATE ESTABLISHED: 1992

III. ESTABLISHING AUTHORITY: The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j) and the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of November 10, 1986 (16 U.S.C. 3901-3931)

IV. PURPOSE FOR WHICH ESTABLISHED: The primary purpose for the Refuge under the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 is "... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources ..." 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 ..."

The primary purpose for the Refuge under the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 is "... the conservation of the wetlands of the Nation in order to maintain the public benefits they provide and to help fulfill international obligations contained in various migratory bird treaties and conventions..."

V. DESCRIPTION OF USE: Wildlife-dependent recreational activities currently are limited within the 11,145 acre study area. Existing agricultural uses include growing row crops and grazing livestock. The tilled and grazed land does not provide for concentrated use by wildlife. Wildlife observation, photography, environmental interpretation and hunting opportunities are available and occur on Marais des Cygnes NWR (9,300 acre acquisition area) and Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area (7,500 acres), located immediately west of the addition area. Fishing opportunities exist in the area. The county and township roads provide access for local bird watchers. Annual visitation for the existing Refuge is estimated at 10,000 people for an average of about 27 visitors/day. The spring and fall are the busiest times of the year and mid summer is the slowest.

The same wildlife-dependent uses are being considered for lands acquired for the Refuge. Hunting will be conducted within the framework of applicable state and Federal regulations. Control of deer numbers through hunting will help minimize crop damage from increased wildlife numbers.

Existing wildlife-dependent uses will be continued and promoted to help realize the Refuge goal of increasing opportunities for outdoor recreation and education. All Refuge lands, except those sensitive communities identified as requiring exclusion of use, will be open to recreational uses year-round. Hunting and fishing would occur within state-established seasons. Wildlife recreational use will help promote understanding, appreciation and support for wetland and prairie restoration and other conservation efforts.

VI. ESTIMATE DEMAND FOR PRE-EXISTING WILDLIFE-DEPENDENT RECREATIONAL USE PLUS OTHER WILDLIFE-DEPENDENT RECREATIONAL USES CONSIDERED IF LANDS BECOME REFUGE DOMAIN:

Demand for the existing wildlife-dependent recreational uses described above should increase significantly if subject lands are acquired for a refuge. The availability and increased accessibility of refuge lands is likely to be attractive to local users as well as those in the Kansas City area. Waterfowl and deer hunting opportunities and demand should increase as wetlands and grasslands are restored. There also should be a significant increase in the number of non-consumptive users for such activities as wildlife photography and wildlife viewing. Preserving and restoring a more pristine prairie/wetland environment will directly and indirectly improve conditions and demand for wildlife and related outdoor activity.

The completed project could attract 20,000 to 30,000 day visitors per year (based on current and projected visitation rates on the existing refuge area). Increased demands would result through local community organizations desiring additional tourism revenues. Partnerships between the Service and these organizations could be established to develop and promote compatible recreational opportunities.

VII. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF PROPOSED USE/EXISTING USE ON REFUGE PURPOSE:

The continuation of existing wildlife-dependent recreational use is consistent with fish and wildlife management principals in that it recognizes, in the case of hunting, the concepts of harvestable surplus and carrying capacity. White-tailed deer and Canada goose numbers can increase to levels causing increased cropland damage without the control provided by hunting. The potential of floral and faunal degradation reduces biodiversity and negatively impacts other wildlife using the same habitat, including threatened and endangered species. The refuge goal to maintain diversity and increase abundance of waterfowl and other migratory bird species could be impaired without an active hunting program to manage big game and predator populations.

VIII. STIPULATIONS THAT WOULD MAKE PROPOSED USE/EXISTING USE COMPATIBLE WITH REFUGE PURPOSE:

- All hunting activities will be in conformance with applicable state and Federal regulations.
- Sensitive or rare plant communities may be excluded from consideration of public recreational use on limited acreage if that use would severely damage or extirpate the natural community type.
- Wildlife-dependent uses will be subject to modification if on-site monitoring uncovers unanticipated negative impacts to natural communities, wildlife species or their habitats.

IX. JUSTIFICATION: Recreation, including hunting and fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation has minimal impact on refuge resources and is a positive result of proper wetland, bottomland forest, and prairie restoration. These proposed wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities would generate increased public support for the Service's biological and land acquisition programs. People, when able to experi-

