

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

*Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Federal Assistance Project
Proposed Construction of the Wildcat Hills Shooting Range
Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared this document in accordance with the procedures for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as it applies to the Federal Aid in Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts (64 Stat. 430; 16 U.S.C. Sec. 777 et. seq. and 50 State 916; 16 U.S.C. Sec. 669 et. seq.).

A final Environmental Assessment entitled “Wildcat Hills Outdoor Heritage Center” was prepared in compliance with the NEPA to assist in agency decision-making in determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. The purpose of the proposed action is to develop and construct a public outdoor shooting facility at the Wildcat Hills Outdoor Heritage Center located on the Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area to provide safe and responsible public recreation opportunities and to enhance hunter education efforts for the Scotts Bluff County and surrounding area.

Two alternatives were evaluated:

No Action - With this action, no development would take place and the location of the proposed project area would be allowed to continue succession to a more natural state and at this time, recreational use or land/wildlife management activities remain unspecified. The main effect of “No Action” would be a continuation of public dissatisfaction at not having a safe, public, outdoor location for recreational shooting.

Preferred Action - The preferred action includes development of the Outdoor Heritage Education Center in the Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area as described in the project summary. As previously stated, the facility will consist of a rimfire shooting range, an air rifle range with a steel building, an archery range, a trap range, a CXT pit toilet, and a parking area with a concrete access road.

The rimfire range will be constructed with side berms, an end/impact berm, and baffling to create a no blue sky view. If possible, material from the berms will come from leveling the ranges. The final layer of fill would be screened for rocks before being incorporated into the berm. If excavation at the site does not provide enough suitable fill material for berm construction, suitable clean fill material will be sourced locally in the most cost effective manner. This material would most likely come from the Scottsbluff/Gering area located approximately 10 miles north of the site in the North Platte River Valley.

The archery range will be constructed with a side berm on the west side, an end/impact berm, and baffling to create a no blue sky view. No side berm is necessary on the east side of this range due to the facility design and surrounding land use. If possible, material from the berms will come from leveling the ranges. The final layer of fill will be

screened for rocks before being incorporated into the berm. As with the rimfire range, if additional fill is needed, clean fill will be sourced from the Scottsbluff/Gering area.

No berms will be constructed as part of the shotgun trap range. The trap range will have a trap house and pellet shot size will be restricted to #9 shot for safety reasons.

The air rifle range will be located indoors. The building constructed for the air rifle range will be a pre-engineered 50 by 56 foot (approximately) steel building with insulation, lighting, and heat. At this time, it is planned to have drinking water hauled in and restroom facilities will be provided by a CXT pit toilet.

The range will allow muzzle-loading firearms, high caliber rifles, air rifles, pistols, bows, and crossbows at appropriate ranges. All shotgun gauges will be allowed at the trap and skeet course; however, as stated above, pellet shot size will be limited to #9. Fifty caliber and larger firearms, fully automatic firearms, and tracer/armor-piercing ammunition will be prohibited.

Construction of the Wildcat Hills Shooting Range (Preferred Action) will not result in any significant adverse effects to floodplains, wetlands, prime or unique farmland; Federally-listed species; or archaeological, cultural, or historical resources.

The availability of the draft Environmental Assessment was announced in a news release, distributed in western Nebraska to all newspapers. The draft Environmental Assessment was also made available online at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/federalassistance/nepa/index.html>. No comments were received on the draft Environmental Assessment during the 30 day public review period.

The Nebraska Game and Park Commission staff working on the project contacted members of the community, including key partners, organizations, and surrounding neighbors to discuss and review the scope of the project in the publicly open "Planning Meeting for Shooting Range Needs in Nebraska." The public discussion between the public and local Commission staff was met with support for the project.

Based on review of the final Environmental Assessment and evaluation of the effects of the proposed action, I have determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. I also find that all reasonable alternatives were considered in the evaluation of this project and that this project complies with the intent of Endangered Species Act of 1973, Executive Order 11988 "Floodplain Management" and Executive Order 11990 "Protection of Wetlands." Consequently, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.


Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 6

9.8.14
Date

Deputy