



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Lamar National Fish Hatchery
and Northeast Fishery Center
Draft Recreational Fishing Plan
March 2020



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**United States Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Lamar National Fish Hatchery
and Northeast Fishery Center
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I. Introduction

Lamar National Fish Hatchery and Northeast Fishery Center (Center) is part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) program. The FAC program works throughout the country to restore habitat across the landscape, prevent and control invasive species, assist Native American Tribes and other partners in managing their fish and wildlife resources, advance fisheries and aquatic sciences and technologies, foster outdoor recreational opportunities, educate the public on the economic and ecological benefits of aquatic species and their habitats, and address new and emerging challenges—such as climate change.

The Center was authorized in 1930 under the White Act (46 Stat. 371) by the U.S. Congress under the Bureau of Fisheries and constructed in 1933 as the Lamar Fish Culture Station. It was operated as a fish production hatchery until 1966 when the Lamar Fish Cultural Development Center was established on the grounds. In 1984, the facility was re-named the Fish Technology Center and combined with the existing Fish Health Center. A Population Ecology/Conservation Genetics Branch was added to the Center in 2002. The program has continued to address culture- and management-related issues pertinent to the restoration and recovery of threatened, endangered, and imperiled aquatic species.

The Center comprises approximately 152 acres in Lamar, Porter Township in Clinton County, Pennsylvania. The site is located one mile south of Interstate 80 and one-half mile east of State Route 64. The property contains a Fish Health Center and Fish Technology Center to assist the region's FAC program in making decisions that build sustainable fisheries, recover endangered and threatened species, and maintain healthy ecosystems and habitats throughout the northeastern United States and along the Atlantic Coast.

Fishing Creek is the only recreational fishing opportunity within the Center that is open to the general public. Fishing Creek is a tributary of the Bald Eagle Creek, in the Susquehanna River drainage, that runs along the east edge of the Center's property with a mean depth of approximately two feet. The Center currently maintains public access and use areas near Fishing Creek that consists of a paved visitor's parking area and a dirt trail from which Fishing Creek can be accessed by foot traffic (Figure 1). This angling opportunity is in compliance with Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recreational fishing regulations with the exception that access is only allowed from legal sunrise until legal sunset at the station.

Fishing is also allowed on the Recreational Fishing Pond, but access to this fenced, man-made asset is restricted to scheduled fishing events regulated by station personnel for targeted user groups (e.g. youth, veterans, seniors, assisted living groups). Recreational fishing is closed to the general public on the Recreational Fishing Pond other than for these designated special events.

The purpose of this document is to support bringing the Center into compliance with Federal regulations by formally opening the station to public recreational fishing along Fishing Creek. It is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the station was established and the mission of the Service.

II. Statement of Objectives

The objective of a recreational fishing program at the Center is to provide the public with access to Fishing Creek from legal sunrise until legal sunset.

This recreational fishing plan is consistent with Secretarial Order 3356, “continues the Department of the Interior's efforts to enhance conservation stewardship; increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, including opportunities to hunt and fish; and improve the management of game species and their habitats for this generation and beyond.” Therefore, the Service is proposing to allow public access for sport fishing on Fishing Creek within the Center’s property in accordance with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s fishing laws from legal sunrise until legal sunset.

III. Description of Fishing Program

A. Areas to be Opened to Fishing

Recreational fishing is allowed on Fishing Creek from existing public access points on Center property in accordance with applicable State regulations, with the exception that access is only allowed from legal sunrise until legal sunset at the station. Fishing can be conducted along the banks of the creek. Fishing on all other bodies of water within Center property is closed to the general public. Public recreational fishing is only allowed on Fishing Creek (Figure 1).

B. Species to be Taken, Fishing Seasons, Fishing Access

The primary angling opportunities at Fishing Creek are for brook, brown, and rainbow trout. Public fishing on Fishing Creek is conducted according to laws and regulations established and published by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), including licensing requirements, season dates, fishing methods, and harvest with additional hatchery-specific restrictions (described in Part IV).

Anglers can use existing access points, parking lots, and trails to access Fishing Creek. Fishing Creek may be accessed by the public on foot, as it runs along the east edge of the Center property, with vehicle parking in an existing visitor’s parking lot north of the station’s administrative center (Figure 1).

C. Fishing Permit Requirements

Recreational fishing is conducted on Fishing Creek in accordance with current published fishing laws, updated annually by PFBC. No additional permits are required to fish on Fishing Creek beyond what is required by Pennsylvania’s recreational fishing laws. All anglers are required to abide by Pennsylvania recreational fishing licensing requirements.

Current Commonwealth of Pennsylvania fishing laws can be obtained from the PFBC and permits can be purchased online through an electronic point-of-sale (POS) system and in

person through license issuing agents.

PFBC Fishing License Helpline: (877)-707-4085

PFBC Fishing Regulations: <https://www.fishandboat.com/Fish/FishingRegulations>

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

National fish hatcheries conduct fishing programs within the framework of State and Federal regulations. All authorized fishing is regulated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This plan and the associated environmental assessment (EA) have been reviewed and are supported by the PFBC. The Center will continue to consult and coordinate with the PFBC annually to ensure the recreational fishing plan is consistent with State regulations.

E. Law Enforcement

State waters are under the jurisdiction of PFBC law enforcement officers. Federal law enforcement officers may monitor the public-use areas on Center property. Law enforcement officers may randomly check anglers for compliance with laws and regulations of the State.

F. Funding and Staff Requirements

The costs of maintaining public access to the State waters for recreational fishing comes out of the Center's annual budget. Expenses include parking lot and road maintenance, facility maintenance, gate maintenance, and other fishing-specific activities.

IV. Conduct of the Fishing Program

A. Angler Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures

Other than fishing licenses required by Pennsylvania law, anglers do not need a permit to access these waters. There is no fee or check-in required.

B. Station-Specific Fishing Regulations

Access to Fishing Creek from Center property is from legal sunrise until legal sunset.

C. Relevant State Regulations

Recreational fishing is conducted according to laws and regulations established and published by the PFBC, including licensing requirements, season dates, fishing methods, and harvest with the exception of the station-specific regulations (described above).

D. Other Station Rules and Regulations for Fishing

There are no additional regulations or rules for fishing at the station.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Fishing Program

To inform the public of the recreational fishing program, any updates will be posted at the Center administrative office and on the Center's official website. Any outreach is intended to educate the public of the changes/updates to the fishing program; and inform the public where to get information regarding the program. The Center will also address public comments received and review them for incorporation into the recreational fishing plan.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Fishing Program

An estimated 1,000 people visit the Center annually. Visitors currently use the Center to enjoy wildlife-dependent activities such as educational tours, fishing events for youth, photography, leashed dog-walking, wildlife observation, and general fishing access. Visitors engaged in these activities have historically co-existed without conflicts. We anticipate that this will not change as a result of this administrative action.

We estimate that 5 people per day during the summer months could visit Fishing Creek. Visitors of the Center are expected to be supportive of the fishing program as it is expanding public recreational opportunities while still maintaining the integrity of the Center. Allowing recreational fishing at the Center would not cause a large increase in visitation, and would promote an appreciation of local natural resources.

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

Information regarding statewide fishing regulations are available from the PFBC website. Additional information regarding rules and regulations specific to fishing on Fishing Creek will be provided at the Center and on the station website. Anglers may address questions to staff by calling, writing, e-mailing, or visiting the Center.

VI. Compatibility Determination

Under the proposed action, the Service's ability to reach its fish and wildlife population goals would not be negatively affected. Fishing activities proposed in the Center's 2020 Recreational Fishing Plan are compatible with the purpose of the Center. Recreational fishing, as outlined in the plan, "is not detrimental to the propagation and distribution of fish or other aquatic animal life" (50 CFR Ch. 1 71) at the Center.

VII. References

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. (2019). *2019 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary, Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Retrieved from <https://pfbc.pa.gov/fishpub/summaryad/2019summaryComplete.pdf>.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2015). *Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior. Retrieved from https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/pdf_files/FAC_StrategyPlan_2016-2020.pdf

VIII. **Figure 1**

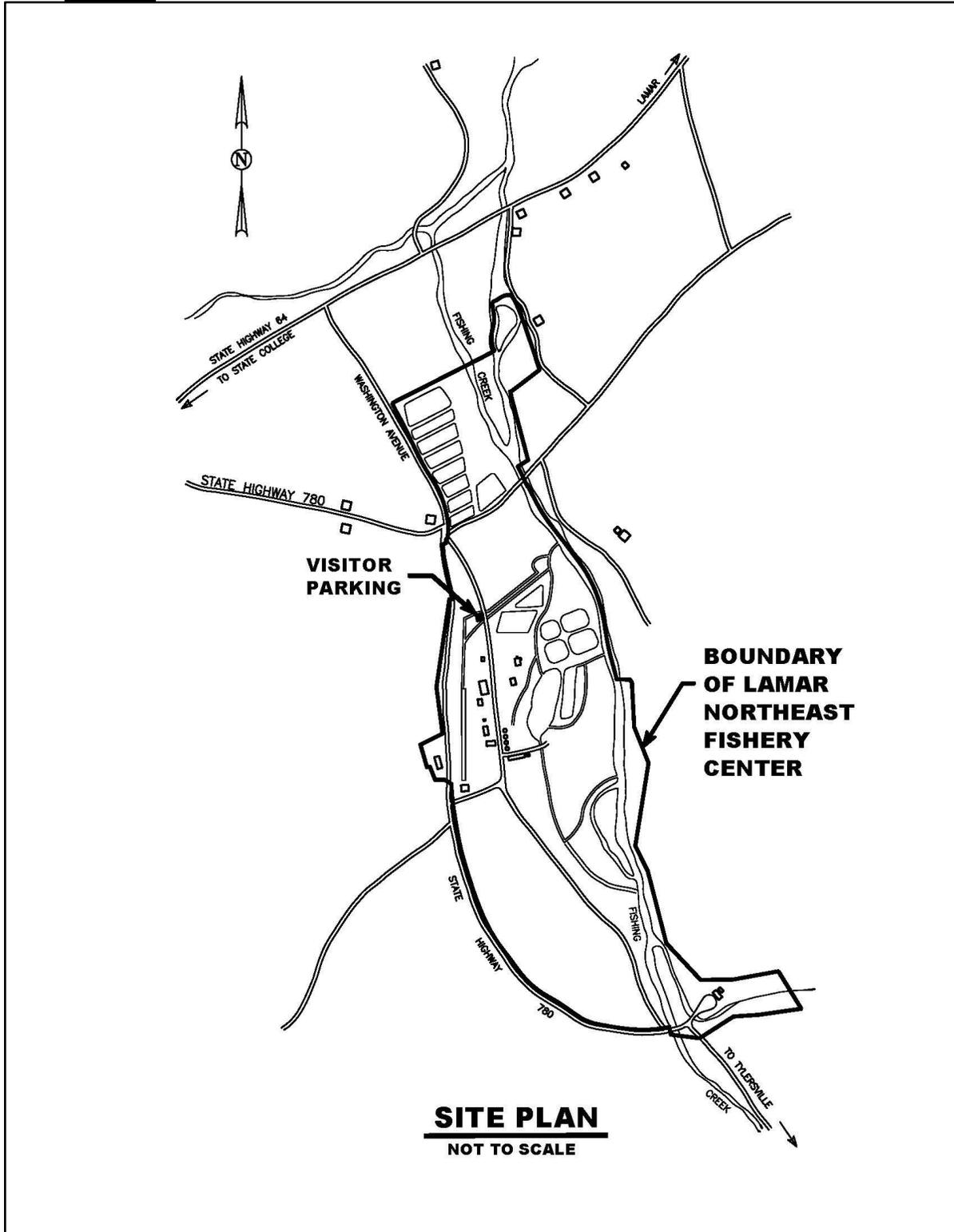


Figure 1. The Center's Boundary and Recreational Fishing Access.

Environmental Assessment for Lamar National Fish Hatchery and Northeast Fishery Center Fishing Plan and Other Recreation

This environmental assessment (EA) evaluates the anticipated effects associated with the proposed actions and complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1509) and Department of the Interior (43 CFR 46; 516 DM 8) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (550 FW 3) policies. NEPA requires examination of the effects of proposed actions on the natural and human environment.

Proposed Action

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing to continue allowing recreational fishing on Lamar National Fish Hatchery and Northeast Fishery Center (Center) in accordance with the Center's Recreational Fishing Plan. The plan is generally consistent with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's fishing regulations, with the following hatchery specific exceptions:

The Proposed Action Alternative opens the public-use areas along Fishing Creek during daylight hours for fishing. In addition, the Service is proposing to continue allowing other forms of public recreation including photography, wildlife observation, and leashed dog-walking on public-use areas during daylight hours within Center property.

Background

The Center is part of the Service's Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) program. The FAC program works throughout the country to restore habitat across the landscape, prevent and control invasive species, assist Native American Tribes and other partners in managing their fish and wildlife resources, advance fisheries and aquatic sciences and technologies, foster outdoor recreational opportunities, educate the public on the economic and ecological benefits of aquatic species and their habitats, and address new and emerging challenges—such as climate change.

The Center was authorized in 1930 under the White Act (46 Stat. 371) by the U.S. Congress under the Bureau of Fisheries and constructed in 1933 as the Lamar Fish Culture Station. It was operated as a fish production hatchery until 1966 when the Lamar Fish Cultural Development Center was established on the grounds. In 1984, the facility was re-named the Fish Technology Center and combined with the existing Fish Health Center. A Population Ecology/Conservation Genetics Branch was added to the Center in 2002. The program has continued to address culture- and management-related issues pertinent to the restoration and recovery of threatened, endangered, and imperiled aquatic species.

The Center also provides technical, management, and educational support to fish culture and

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fishery management programs in the North Atlantic-Appalachian Region and the rest of the country. Current research emphasis supports the Center's core competencies of captive propagation-related technology, population ecology, and conservation genetics. The property's Fish Health and Fish Technology Centers assist the region's FAC program in making decisions that build sustainable fisheries, recover endangered and threatened species, and maintain healthy ecosystems and habitats throughout the northeastern United States and along the Atlantic Coast. Current research projects at the Center include:

- Genetics-parental assignment, broodstock management, and stock structure of endangered Atlantic salmon;
- Genetic and population structure studies that contribute to recovery efforts for endangered and/or imperiled aquatic species including pallid sturgeon, brook trout, and red-bellied cooter;
- Population dynamics of species of concern, including American shad, lake sturgeon, and American eel;
- Fish culture technology and evaluation including fish marking agents, diet evaluations, and reduction of hatchery effluents; and
- Coregonine (cisco and bloater) restoration projects in Lake Ontario.

It is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the station was established and the mission of the Service.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

Fishing is a healthy, traditional recreational use of renewable natural resources deeply rooted in America's heritage. Federal laws and the Service's policies permit fishing on national fish hatcheries when those activities are compatible with the purposes for which the station was established and the mission of the Service. The purposes of these proposed actions are to (i) formally open the Center to public recreational fishing so that recreational angling can occur at the station consistent with the Center's Recreational Fishing Plan, and (ii) formally allow other recreational activities that currently occur on the station such as photography, wildlife observation, and leashed dog-walking during daylight hours. These proposed actions are aligned with the purpose of Secretarial Order 3356 to increase access to public lands for hunting, shooting, and fishing, and put a new and greater emphasis on recruiting and retaining new sportsmen conservationists, with a focus on engaging youths, veterans, minorities, and other communities that traditionally have low participation in outdoor recreational activities.

The need of the proposed actions is to meet the Service's priorities and mandates as outlined by the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to "recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general uses of the Federal Lands and "ensure that opportunities are provided within the National Fish Hatchery System for compatible wildlife-dependent

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recreational...”

Recreational fishing and outdoor recreational activities are priority public uses of the FAC program as identified in the core goals of the *Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020* (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 2015).

Alternatives Considered

No Action Alternative - Center Closed to Recreational Fishing and Other Recreation

Under the No Action Alternative, the Center would be closed to public recreational fishing access and other forms of recreation such as photography, wildlife observation, and leashed dog-walking. This alternative is being included in the EA for analytical purposes only, as under the status quo, recreational fishing and other listed recreational uses currently occur at the station. For the purposes of this analysis, under the No Action Alternative, the station would be closed to public fishing and other recreational uses. Implementation of this alternative would not facilitate wildlife-dependent priority uses that have been found to be compatible with the purposes of the Center and the mission of the National Fish Hatchery System.

Proposed Action Alternative – Center Open to Recreational Fishing and Other Recreation

The Proposed Action Alternative opens public access to Fishing Creek for fishing at the Center in accordance with the Center’s Recreational Fishing Plan and the annually-updated laws and regulations established by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), including licensing requirements, season dates, fishing methods, and harvest (PFBC, 2019).

The following additional restrictions are in place on public access: public access to Fishing Creek is restricted to daylight hours (legal sunrise until legal sunset). In addition, the station is proposing to formally allow other forms of recreation including photography, wildlife observation, and leashed dog-walking (referred to as “other listed forms of recreation” in this document) during daylight hours as part of the Proposed Action Alternative.

Affected Environment

The Center comprises approximately 152 acres in Lamar, Porter Township in Clinton County, Pennsylvania. The site is located one mile south of Interstate 80 and one-half mile east of State Route 64 (Figure 1). The property contains a Fish Health Center and a Fish Technology Center. Access to the station is via Washington Avenue off of State Route 64.

Fishing Creek is the only recreational fishing opportunity within the Center that is open to the general public. Fishing Creek is a tributary of the Bald Eagle Creek, in the Susquehanna River drainage, that runs along the east edge of the Center’s property with a mean depth of approximately two feet. The Center currently maintains public access and use areas near Fishing Creek that consists of a paved visitor’s parking area and a dirt trail from which Fishing Creek can be accessed by foot traffic (Figure 1). This angling opportunity is in compliance with Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s recreational fishing regulations with the exception that access is only allowed from legal sunrise to legal sunset.

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Fishing is also allowed on the Recreational Fishing Pond, but access to this fenced, man-made asset is restricted to scheduled fishing events regulated by station personnel for targeted user groups (e.g. youth, veterans, seniors, assisted living groups). Recreational fishing is closed to the general public on the Recreational Fishing Pond other than for these designated special events.

Other listed forms of recreation including photography, wildlife observation, and leashed dog-walking are allowed on the public-use areas within station property.

Environmental Consequences of the Action

This section analyzes the environmental consequences of the action on each affected resource, including direct and indirect effects. This EA only includes the analyses of the environmental consequences on a resource when the impacts on that resource could be more than negligible and therefore considered an “affected resource.” Any resources that will not be more than negligibly impacted by the action have been dismissed from further analyses.

Impact Types:

Direct effects are those which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

Indirect effects are those which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable.

Cumulative impacts result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions.

Impacts to Fish Populations

The primary angling opportunities at Fishing Creek are species such as brook, brown, and rainbow trout.

No Action: For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers the Center closed to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. Anglers would not have public access to Fishing Creek within the bounds of Service lands, and human activity would be decreased significantly. Therefore, there would be no impact from recreational fishing and other recreation uses to fish species or populations.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action Alternative considers the Center officially opened for recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. These listed forms of recreation besides recreational fishing are not anticipated to affect fish populations since they occur on land and have no impact on fishing or fish populations with no significant adverse effects on aquatic species. However, recreational fishing potentially could cause negative impacts to fish populations if it occurs at unsustainably high levels or is not managed properly.

Potential impacts from fishing include direct mortality from harvest and catch and release; injury to fish caught and released, changes in age and size class distribution, changes in reproductive capacity and success, loss of genetic diversity, altered behavior, and changes in ecosystems and food webs (Lewin et al. 2006, Cline et al. 2007). Recreational fishing may also lead to introduction of non-native fish that may negatively affect native fish, wildlife, or vegetation.

In general, anglers tend to target older and larger fish which tend to have greater reproductive capacity. Their selective removal may reduce the population's overall reproductive success. Catch and release fishing can also have impacts on individual fish, including injury and immediate or delayed mortality. The likelihood of mortality depends on type of fishing gear used, where the fish was hooked, how the fish is handled, angler experience, and environmental conditions. Fish caught and released with non-lethal injuries could be exposed to parasites, or bacterial or fungal infections. Handling fish also increases stress, which may lead to changes in physiology and behavior (Lewin et al. 2006).

Since fishing generally removes individuals from a population, at high levels it can lead to reduced population sizes and loss of genetic diversity. The loss of genetic diversity can ultimately reduce a population's fitness, resilience, and ability to adapt to environmental changes and stressors. The higher the fishing mortality, the greater these types of impacts will be (Lewin et al. 2006).

While fishing does remove individuals from the population, we do not anticipate that the projected level of fishing pressure will affect the fish population in Fishing Creek. All fishing regulations (including catch limits aimed at ensuring sustainable populations) are to be consistent with current Federal and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's regulations with the exception being that access is only allowed from legal sunrise until legal sunset at the station. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that there will be no negative effect on affected fish species or populations on a regional and continent-wide basis. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania strives to ensure maintenance of healthy and diverse fish species populations. Anglers must abide by the Commonwealth seasons, catch limits, and regulations to protect the fish populations. Recreational angling has been occurring on Fishing Creek for many decades and the fishing pressure at the Center is projected to be sustainable.

State waters are under the jurisdiction of PFBC law enforcement officers, and Federal law enforcement officers may monitor the public-use areas on Center property. Law enforcement officers may randomly check anglers for compliance with laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to help reduce the potential for unwanted introductions.

Other Wildlife and Aquatic Species

No Action: For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers the Center closed to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreational activity. There would be much reduced public recreational fishing on Fishing Creek and reduced human activity on Center property; therefore, there would likely be reduced impacts to other wildlife and aquatic species.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action Alternative considers the Center officially opened for

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recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. Therefore, fishing has the potential to increase disturbance to wildlife that use Fishing Creek, including waterfowl and wading birds. The fishing season in Pennsylvania coincides in part with spring and early summer nesting periods for many species of waterbirds. Human activity, including photography, wildlife observation, leashed dog-walking, has the potential to affect the behavior, distribution, and abundance of waterbirds due to disturbance. Although disposal of trash is prohibited, there is some limited risk of fishing gear being lost which could result in bird, reptile, or amphibian entanglement. This will be mitigated by the presence of trash receptacles present on Center property.

Disturbance from recreational activities vary with the wildlife species involved and the activity's type, level, frequency, duration, and the time of year it occurs. Anglers and other recreational users may disturb nesting birds by approaching too closely to nests, causing nesting birds to flush. Flushing may expose eggs to predation or cooling, resulting in egg mortality. Anglers can use existing public-use areas to access the recreational fishing. Given the habitat types near the public-use areas and observation from staff, anglers would have minimal effect on nesting birds of conservation concern. No species of concern have been observed nesting in areas that anglers would utilize. Station staff would close areas, as needed, to fishing if sensitive nest sites were ever to occur.

Therefore, public fishing and other listed forms of recreation are not anticipated to have a negative impact on other wildlife or aquatic species.

Threatened, Endangered, and Other Special Status Species

To check for effects on threatened, endangered, and other special status species as a result of the proposed actions, the Center coordinated with the Pennsylvania Ecological Services Field Office. There are few threatened, endangered, and special status species that occur in the vicinity of the Center, including the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*). In addition, bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940, have been observed flying over Center property and in nearby trees.

No Action: For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers the Center closed to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. While there would be much reduced public recreational fishing on Fishing Creek and reduced human activity on Center property, existing State and Federal laws are in place to protect threatened or endangered species and other special status species. Therefore, there would be no impact from recreational fishing and other forms of recreation to these species under the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action Alternative considers the Center officially opened for recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. The Center evaluated the species of concern found in the vicinity of the station. The determinations are summarized below.

The northern long-eared bat is listed as federally threatened throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with the exception of larger cities such as Philadelphia. The Indiana bat is listed as federally endangered in the central and southern parts of Pennsylvania, including the town of

Lamar. Opening the Center to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation on public-use areas is not anticipated to impact or interfere with important habitat features for bats, such as mature trees. Furthermore, all fishing access and other recreational activities are not permitted after legal sunset, when bats are most active. Thus, there are no anticipated effects to northern long-eared bats as a result of the proposed actions.

Bald eagles have been observed flying over Center property and in trees on the property. However, the proposed actions are not anticipated to have any impact on bald eagles given that they have been present while these proposed actions have taken place.

Therefore, public fishing and other listed forms of recreation are not anticipated to have a negative impact on threatened, endangered, or other special status species. Thus, the Service reached a ‘no effect’ determination for the federally listed species described above. Where potential exists for impacts attributable to public access from the Center, the staff would minimize disturbance by implementing area closures or restrictions such that threatened or endangered or at-risk species are not impacted by fishing and other recreational activities.

Geology, Soils, and Vegetation

The Center property is situated on Silurian Rose Hill formation strata with fossiliferous shale, limestone and fine- to coarse-grained ferruginous sandstone (Figure 2). Soils are generally stony alluvial type, made up of very stony, cobbly, gravelly, sandy material in nearly level to gently sloping areas. The property is on narrow flood plains of Fishing Creek and consists of a mixture of soils that are well drained and poorly drained. The land type contains many cobblestones, pebbles, and other stones. Vegetation is typical of riparian areas.

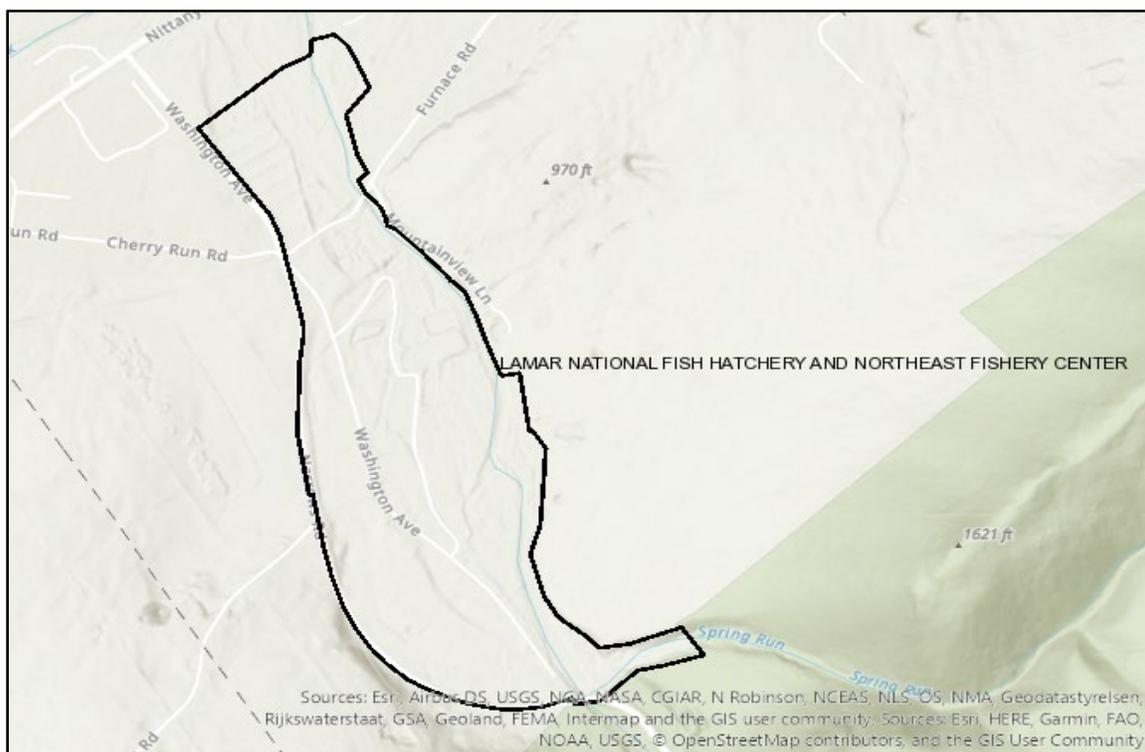


Figure 2. Topographical Map of the Center.

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No Action: For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers the Center closed to recreational fishing and other listed recreational activities. Therefore, there would be no impact from recreational fishing or other recreation to vegetation or soils on the Center property.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action Alternative considers the Center officially opened for recreational fishing and other listed recreational activities. Therefore, bank erosion from foot traffic may affect/alter riparian or creek vegetation and habitat and increase aquatic sediment loads of streams and rivers. Additionally, current levels of use by visitors and anglers (approximately 5 anglers per day during the summer months) at these access points have been sustainable and the Center has not observed adverse effects on vegetation and soil. Other listed recreational uses have also historically existed on Center property without adverse effects on the vegetation or soils. Therefore, we do not anticipate soil erosion to increase because of foot traffic related to fishing and other recreation.

Visitor Use and Experience

Approximately 1,000 visitors currently use the Center to enjoy wildlife-dependent activities such as educational tours, fishing events for youth, photography, leashed dog-walking, and general fishing access. Visitors engaged in these activities have historically co-existed without conflicts. Of the estimated that 125 to 175 people that visit the Center each summer month, 5 to 10 are recreational anglers.

No Action: For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers the Center closed to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. There would be a loss of approximately 1,000 annual visitations to the Center as a result of the No Action Alternative that would prevent recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation on hatchery property. This may negatively impact station visitation and result in a lost opportunity to promote the Service's work to the angling community and recreational users. While the loss of public access to Fishing Creek negatively affect anglers that want to fish the waterway, it is anticipated that those anglers would substitute other nearby fishing opportunities.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action Alternative considers the Center officially opened for recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. This alternative would provide the hatchery with 1,000 recreational-use visitors per year. These actions should not impact each other because anglers currently use the public-use areas without conflict because there is little spatial overlap among the photography, wildlife observation, and leashed dog-walking activities with angling. The Service plans to continually monitor for conflicts and evaluate mitigation measures that may be necessary to solve or to minimize conflicts between users should the need arise.

Cultural Resources

Although the Center was constructed in 1933, there are very few extant features relating from the early history of the Center. The original stone buildings constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps remain mostly intact today, and are used by existing operations at the Center. Under both alternatives there will be no construction of facilities, ground disturbing actions, or modifications

of structures over 50 years of age. There are no known Indian Trust Resources on this hatchery and this action will not impact any Indian Trust Resources. Thus, the Proposed Action Alternative, that considers the Center officially opened for recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation, would not impact any cultural, historical, or Tribal resources nor would the No Action Alternative.

Land Use and Administration

No Action: For the purposes of analysis, the No Action Alternative considers the Center closed to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. Therefore, there would be no impact from recreational fishing or other human activity to use of Center facilities (roads, trails, parking lots) because they would be closed to the public for the proposed actions. There would also be fewer administrative and maintenance responsibilities as a result of fewer visitors.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action Alternative considers the Center officially opened for recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. Therefore, an increase in the use of station roads, trails, and parking lots may occur. No negative impacts to land use are expected because the public-use areas including existing access points, parking lots, and trails to access Fishing Creek are well established. Given that the Center is closed at night, it is in the best interest of the Center to continue to limit fishing access and recreational activities to daylight hours. The administrative resources would remain at the current level.

Socioeconomics

According to data provided by the U.S. Census, the population in Clinton County, Pennsylvania, has been declining slightly with an estimated 38,684 residences in 2018 and a negative growth rate of approximately -1.4 percent since 2010. The population of Pennsylvania has slightly increased with a positive growth rate of 0.8 percent over the same period. According to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, approximately 1.1 million residents and non-residents fished in Pennsylvania. All fishing-related expenditures in Pennsylvania totaled \$485 million in 2011. Additionally, approximately 3.6 million residents and non-residents participated in wildlife-watching, including wildlife observation and photography, in Pennsylvania in 2011. All wildlife-watching expenditures in Pennsylvania totaled \$1.3 billion in 2011.

Neither alternative is expected to have negative impacts on socioeconomics because it is anticipated that anglers would substitute other nearby fishing and recreational opportunities.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires all Federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and policies on minorities and low-income populations and communities.

The Service has not identified any potential high and adverse environmental or human health impacts from these proposed actions or any of the alternatives. The Service has identified no

minority or low-income communities within the impact area. Minority or low income communities will not be disproportionately affected by any impacts from these proposed actions or any of the alternatives.

Indian Trust Resources

There are no known Indian Trust Resources on the Center and this action will not impact any Indian Trust Resources.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Cumulative impacts are defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 1508.7).

Fishing

Fishing and other listed forms of recreation have been allowed on Fishing Creek and Center property for many years. Under the proposed actions, there are no anticipated impacts to the fisheries in Fishing Creek because fishing is conducted in accordance with State regulations with the exception that access is only allowed during daylight hours to ensure sustainable fish populations and reduce adverse impacts. Furthermore, the other listed forms of recreation are not anticipated to affect fisheries since they currently occur on land and have minimal contact and interference with fish populations with no significant adverse effects on aquatic species.

A valid fishing license from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is required to fish Fishing Creek from the Center property (PFBC, 2019). No Federal permit or other compliance is necessary. The current proposed alternative would allow public access to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation during daylight hours from legal sunrise to legal sunset. In contrast, adopting the No Action Alternative would reduce angling in Fishing Creek by closing public access and reducing recreational opportunities for anglers and other recreation.

Other Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the use of the public-use areas might negatively affect individual wildlife species that are disturbance-sensitive, such as certain migratory birds during the nesting season, reptiles, and amphibians. Such impacts would be minimal, and are not expected to increase from current use. It is unlikely that continuing public use will affect the population viability of such species, including listed, proposed, or candidate species.

Land Use

There are no new or additional anticipated effects to land use as a result of the Proposed Action Alternative given that public-use areas are established and the area has been developed since 1933. There are no new or additional anticipated effects to soil, vegetation, or land use ownership from the proposed actions since the access area has been in use since 1933.

Mitigation Measures and Conditions

Recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation currently occur on Fishing Creek and Center property. Thus, the Proposed Action Alternative represents the status quo and does not present unknown or unique environmental risks. The Proposed Action Alternative is not expected to have any adverse effects on ecologically critical areas, historic, cultural, or archeological resources, air quality, fisheries resources, public health and safety, or water quality, including drinking water. No land use changes are expected. No hazardous wastes will be generated, transported, stored, or disposed of as a result of the implementation to any of the alternatives.

A valid fishing license from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is required to fish on Fishing Creek from the Center property (PFBC, 2019). No Federal permit or other compliance is necessary to fish on Fishing Creek.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the fish populations on Fishing Creek will continue to be the responsibility of PFBC. The station staff plans to evaluate public access and use on an annual basis and modify, as needed, to protect fish, wildlife, their habitats, and station infrastructure. The station staff also plans to monitor for impacts related to fishing (e.g., garbage thrown in the public-use areas, along the shoreline, access related erosion, damage to restored vegetation, etc.) to these areas and may close properties or impose restrictions if needed. Alternatively, the Center can engage with the local community to help with needed clean-ups and any ongoing repairs to shoreline and vegetation that might become necessary. The PFBC is interested in increasing public fishing opportunities by maximizing public access throughout the Commonwealth.

The Service plans to continually monitor for conflicts and evaluate mitigation measures that may be necessary to solve or to minimize conflicts between users. Visitors currently use the station to enjoy wildlife-dependent activities such as educational tours, fishing events for youth, photography, wildlife observation, leashed dog-walking, and general fishing access. Visitors engaged in these activities have historically co-existed without conflicts. We anticipate that this will not change as a result of these proposed administrative actions.

Compatibility Determination

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the Service's ability to reach its fish and wildlife population goals would not be negatively affected. Fishing activities proposed in the Center's Recreational Fishing Plan and other listed forms of recreation are compatible with the purpose of the station. Recreational fishing, as outlined in the plan, and other listed forms of recreation are "not detrimental to the propagation and distribution of fish or other aquatic animal life" (50 CFR 71) at the Center.

Summary of Analysis

This EA provides evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The term “significantly” as used in NEPA requires consideration of both the context of the action and the intensity of effects.

No Action

Under this alternative, the Center would close public access to recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation. Disadvantages of the No Action Alternative include: not being able to promote priority public uses of the National Fish Hatchery System and the inability to meet Secretarial Order 3356 that “continues the Department of the Interior's efforts to enhance conservation stewardship; increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, including opportunities to hunt and fish; and improve the management of game species and their habitats for this generation and beyond.” There is no cost associated with this alternative. There would be no impact to the environment.

Proposed Action

The Service believes that maintaining public access and recreational fishing on the Center in accordance with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s fishing regulations, with the additional restriction of limiting access to daylight hours, does not have any significant impacts on habitat, wildlife, or the human environment. Opening the Center to fishing and other listed forms of recreation during daylight hours would promote Secretarial Order 3356 that “continues the Department of the Interior's efforts to enhance conservation stewardship; increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans, including opportunities to hunt and fish; and improve the management of game species and their habitats for this generation and beyond.”

The proposed actions do not establish a precedent for future actions that have significant effects on resources, nor do they lead to a violation of Federal, State, or local environmental laws. The effects of the proposed actions on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.

The Service is proposing to open recreational fishing and other listed forms of recreation including photography, wildlife observation, leashed dog-walking at the Center, as analyzed above under the Proposed Action Alternative, which does not have any significant impacts on the human environment.

List of Preparers

Mike Millard, Project Leader, Lamar National Fish Hatchery and Northeast Fishery Center

State Coordination

The Service reviewed applicable fishing laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and has contacted the PFBC about the actions described in the Recreational Fishing Plan and this EA including fishing and other recreational activities. The PFBC is --- of the Center’s Recreational Fishing Plan and --- public access to Fishing Creek as well as other listed forms of recreation.

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Tribal Consultation

The Service will contact the federally recognized Tribes with historic presence in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania about the Center’s Recreational Fishing Plan. The Service will incorporate and comments received in the final version of these documents.

Public Outreach

This EA and the Center’s Recreational Fishing Plan will be provided to the public for a 30-day comment period. We will inform the public through local venues and on the station’s official website. Comments received from the public will be considered, and modifications may be incorporated into the final plan and decision documents.

List of Sources, Agencies, and Persons Consulted

- Timothy Schaeffer - Executive Director, PFBC
- Robert Anderson - Service Assistant Field Office Supervisor, Pennsylvania Ecological Services Field Office (Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation)
- Amy Wood - Regional Historic Preservation Officer, North Atlantic-Appalachian Regional Office (National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Consultation)

Determination

This section will be filled out upon completion of any public comment period and at the time of finalization of the Environmental Assessment.

- The Service’s action will not result in a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. See the attached **“Finding of No Significant Impact”**.
- The Service’s action **may significantly affect** the quality of the human environment and the Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

Preparer Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name/Title/Organization: _____

Reviewer Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name/Title: _____

References

- Cline, R., Sexton, N., and Steward, S.C. (2007). *A human-dimensions review of human-wildlife disturbance: a literature review of impacts, frameworks, and management solutions*. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Geological Survey, Open-File Report 2007-1111.
- Lewin, W.C., Arlinghaus, R., and Mehner, T. (2006). *Documented and potential biological impacts of recreational fishing: insights for management and conservation*. *Reviews in Fisheries Science*, 14, 305-367.
- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. (2019). 2019 Pennsylvania Fishing Summary, Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Retrieved from <https://pfbc.pa.gov/fishpub/summaryad/2019summaryComplete.pdf>.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). Table of Population Estimates as of July 1, 2018 (Pennsylvania; Clinton County, Pennsylvania). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/PA,clintoncountypennsylvania/PST045218>.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). *2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: Pennsylvania (Revised Edition)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/fhw11-pa.pdf>.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (2015). *Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2016-2020*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior. Retrieved from https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/pdf_files/FAC_StrategyPlan_2016-2020.pdf.

OTHER APPLICABLE STATUTES, EXECUTIVE ORDERS & REGULATIONS

Cultural Resources

- American Indian Religious Freedom Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1996 – 1996a; 43 CFR Part 7
- Antiquities Act of 1906, 16 U.S.C. 431-433; 43 CFR Part 3
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. 470aa – 470mm; 18 CFR Part 1312; 32 CFR Part 229; 36 CFR Part 296; 43 CFR Part 7
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470-470x-6; 36 CFR Parts 60, 63, 78, 79, 800, 801, and 810
- Paleontological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 470aaa – 470aaa-11
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013; 43 CFR Part 10
- Executive Order 11593 – Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 36 Fed. Reg. 8921 (1971)
- Executive Order 13007 – Indian Sacred Sites, 61 Fed. Reg. 26771 (1996)

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Fish and Wildlife

- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668-668c, 50 CFR 22
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531-1544; 36 CFR Part 13; 50 CFR Parts 10, 17, 23, 81, 217, 222, 225, 402, and 450
- Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, 16 U.S.C. 742 a-m
- Lacey Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 3371 et seq.; 15 CFR Parts 10, 11, 12, 14, 300, and 904
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 703-712; 50 CFR Parts 10, 12, 20, and 21
- Executive Order 13186 – Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds, 66 Fed. Reg. 3853 (2001)

Natural Resources

- Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401-7671q; 40 CFR Parts 23, 50, 51, 52, 58, 60, 61, 82, and 93; 48 CFR Part 23
- Wilderness Act, 16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.
- Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species, 64 Fed. Reg. 6183 (1999)

Water Resources

- Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, 16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.; 15 CFR Parts 923, 930, 933
- Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (commonly referred to as Clean Water Act), 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.; 33 CFR Parts 320-330; 40 CFR Parts 110, 112, 116, 117, 230-232, 323, and 328
- Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 401 et seq.; 33 CFR Parts 114, 115, 116, 321, 322, and 333
- Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, 42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.; 40 CFR Parts 141-148
- Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Management, 42 Fed. Reg. 26951 (1977)
- Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands, 42 Fed. Reg. 26961 (1977)