

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge
Modified Deer Hunting Program

Introduction

In September 2011 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) adopted a Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Ankeny, Baskett Slough, and William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuges. The CCP was adopted for implementation after developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (CCP/EA) for the three Refuges. The CCP/EA evaluated three management options (alternatives) for the CCP and disclosed anticipated effects for each alternative, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347). Appendices provided supporting information. The CCP/EA was available for public comment and review from May 25, 2011 through June 30, 2011. After evaluating comments received on the CCP/EA and responding to public comments, the Service adopted Alternative 2 in the CCP/EA, which had been identified as the Service's Preferred Alternative, for implementation.

The CCP sets forth management guidance for the Refuges over the next 15 years, as required by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 688dd - 688ee, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997).

The CCP analyzed the refuges' public-use programs to ensure that adequate consideration of the six Refuge System wildlife-dependent uses (wildlife observation, wildlife/nature photography, environmental education, interpretation, hunting, and fishing) had occurred. In addition, the CCP identified improvements or alterations to be made to the current programs and services offered to Refuge visitors, especially in light of a growing regional population, changing demographics, desired outcomes for visitor experiences, and new compatibility requirements.

As part of the effort to provide improved programs, the CCP and accompanying hunt plan (appendix G to the CCP/EA) introduced and evaluated minor modifications to the deer hunting program at William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge (W.L. Finley Refuge or NWR). A new option to hunt either sex deer (more consistent with State of Oregon regulations and management plan) was planned to be added on W.L. Finley Refuge and new upland locations are slated to be available for deer hunting during a portion of the restricted firearms season. These program modifications are designed to be more consistent with State of Oregon regulations and black-tailed deer management plan.

Detailed descriptions of existing hunt program and modified deer hunting program and the environmental effects associated with providing modified deer hunting opportunities at W.L. Finley Refuge were described in the hunt plan, the compatibility determination, in the rationale for changing the deer hunting in Refuge Objective 10d (CCP/EA Chapter 2), and in the Environmental Consequences Chapter (Chapter 6) of the CCP/EA.

Supplemental Environmental Assessment

In March 2012, The Service prepared a Supplemental Environmental Assessment, tiered from the Final CCP/EA (September 2011), for the modified deer hunt program at W.L. Finley Refuge. The Supplemental Environmental Assessment was developed to consolidate

the information pertaining to modified deer hunting opportunities at W.L. Finley Refuge in an effort to provide reviewers a more succinct evaluation and analysis of the effects on the human environment associated with modified black-tailed deer hunting opportunities at W.L. Finley Refuge.

As described in detail in the Supplemental Environmental Assessment, implementing the modified deer hunt program would be expected to result in the following environmental, social, and economic effects:

Table 1. Anticipated Effects of the Deer Hunts

Effects	Conclusion
Effects to target populations	Negligible; unlikely that more than 20 deer would be taken annually which equates to 0.2% of 2008 deer harvest in the Willamette Unit.
Effects to non-target species	Negligible to minor. Hunting occurs outside of the breeding season and the low level of hunting expected would be unlikely to pose any significant impacts to foraging or resting activities of resident or migratory species. The timing and locations of the deer hunt is designed to avoid disturbance to waterfowl, especially geese. Existing sanctuary areas would be maintained for the full wintering period under all alternatives.
Effects to refuge habitats	Approximately 85% of W.L. Finley Refuge would be open to hunting. However, because deer hunting is expected to remain a low intensity use with < 100 participants per year during a period when the vegetation is no longer actively growing, only temporary and minor effects are expected to vegetation from trampling. Riparian habitat may receive more visitation related disturbance from hunting than other habitat types.
Effects to listed species	Negligible impact; potential for minor trampling but any listed plants in the area will have senesced by the start of the season. No impact to Fender's blue butterfly habitat or listed fish.
Effects to other priority public uses	Approximately 85% of Finley's main unit would be open for hunting during archery season and during the first week of restricted firearms season. The impact to other priority public uses is expected to be minor, because the majority of other refuge users typically concentrate along trails and roads in the western part of the main unit, where hunting would remain closed. During the second week of the shotgun season, the Bald Top area and Mill Hill Trail would be closed for approximately 7 days each year to allow hunting in this area. Although other refuge users engaged in other priority public uses will experience some new restrictions, this effect is considered minor in the context of trail availability at the three refuges over the year.
Effects to the local economy	Projected revenue reduction due to an anticipated reduction in hunter use days are negligible in the context of the Benton County economy dominated by agriculture production (\$85 million in 2002) and tourism (\$89 million in 2007).

Despite the direct and indirect impacts associated with sport hunting, deer populations are unlikely to be affected significantly by the hunting program on the Refuge. Deer population objectives and allowable harvests are determined by the State of Oregon. Limited hunt seasons at the Refuge, no hunt zones, and established winter sanctuary ensure that deer, as well as non-target species, can find adequate areas for food and rest areas even in the midst of the hunting season. It is anticipated that wildlife populations will find sufficient food resources and resting places such that their abundance and use of the Refuge will not be measurably lessened. The relatively limited number of individuals of plant and animal species expected to be adversely affected due to hunting activities will not cause wildlife or plant populations to materially decline, the physiological condition and production of refuge wildlife species will not be impaired, their behavior and normal activity patterns will not be altered dramatically, and their overall welfare will not be negatively impacted.

Public Involvement

The modified deer hunt program for W.L. Finley Refuge has been coordinated with interested and affected parties. The Supplemental Environmental Assessment was made available for public review and comment from March 22, 2012 to April 16, 2012. Notification of the availability of the Supplemental Environmental Assessment was by posting on the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex website. Copies of the Supplemental Environmental Assessment were made available for public review at the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex office and on the Refuge Complex website.

No comments were received from Tribal interests or city, county, other State, or Federal agencies or officials. The modified deer hunt proposal was thoroughly discussed and coordinated with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

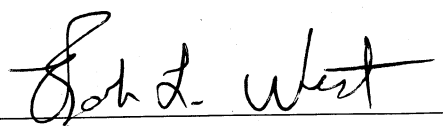
Conclusion

Therefore, it is my determination that the modified deer hunt program at W.L. Finley refuge does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. Copies of supporting references are available upon request from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 26208 Finley Refuge Road, Corvallis, OR 97333 and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System, 911 NE 11th Avenue, Portland, OR 97232.

Supporting documents for this decision include relevant office file material and the following references:

William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge Modified Deer Hunt Program Supplemental Environmental Assessment. 2012.

Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment. 2011.



Regional Chief,
Pacific Region
National Wildlife Refuge System

4-17-12

Date