

DRAFT

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Research

Refuge Name: Flattery Rocks, Quillayute Needles, and Copalis, National Wildlife Refuges

Establishing Authority: These three Refuges, located off Washington State's Pacific coastline in Grays Harbor, Jefferson and Clallam Counties were established by Executive Orders 704, 705 and 703 by President Theodore Roosevelt on October 23, 1907.

Refuge Purposes:

The 1907 establishing purpose for all three refuges is “a preserve and breeding ground for native birds and animals” (Executive Orders 703, 704, and 705).

Purposes of the Wilderness Act of 1964, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136) became additional purposes of the refuges, except for Destruction Island, with passage of Public Law 91-504 and establishment of the Washington Islands Wilderness. The purposes of the Wilderness Act are:

- To secure an enduring resource of wilderness;
- To protect and preserve the wilderness character of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS); and
- To administer the NWPS for the use and enjoyment of the American people in a way that will leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: “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.” (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.)

Description of Use: The Refuge receives periodic requests (less than one per year) to conduct scientific research. Priority would be given to studies that support refuge purposes, goals and objectives. This would include, for example, studies that contribute to the enhancement, protection, use, preservation, and management of native Refuge wildlife populations and their habitats, including the wilderness resource. Research applicants must submit a proposal that would outline: 1) objectives of the study; 2) justification for the study; 3) detailed methodology and schedule; 4) potential impacts on Refuge wildlife and/or habitat, including disturbance (short and long term), injury, or mortality; 5) potential impacts to wilderness; 6) personnel required; 7) costs to Refuge, if any; and 8) end products (i.e. reports, publications). Research proposals would be reviewed by Refuge staff, Regional Office Branch of Refuge Biology, and others as appropriate. Evaluation criteria will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1) Research that will contribute to management will have higher priority than other requests.

- 2) Research that will conflict with higher priority research, monitoring or management programs may not be granted.
- 3) Research projects that can be done elsewhere off-Refuge, and outside wilderness, are less likely to be approved.
- 4) Research which causes undue disturbance or is intrusive, will likely not be granted. Level and type of disturbance will be carefully weighed when evaluating a request. All requests will be carefully considered because many seabird and marine mammal species are very sensitive to disturbance. Also, habitats, particularly soils that support burrowing seabirds are prone to compaction by foot traffic, and burrows are easily crushed.
- 5) Research evaluation will determine if any effort has been made to minimize disturbance through study design, including considering adjusting location, timing, scope, number of permittees, study methods, number of study sites, etc.
- 6) If staffing or logistics make it impossible for the Refuge to monitor researcher activity in a sensitive area, this may be reason to deny the request.
- 7) The length of the project will be considered and agreed upon before approval. Projects will not be open-ended, and at a minimum, will be reviewed annually.

Availability of resources: Direct costs to administer research activities are primarily in the form of staff time, transportation, and equipment acquisition and maintenance. It is estimated that the following level of involvement by Refuge staff will be required annually to adequately manage and monitor research activities over the long term.

Position & GS/WG Level	Involvement	FTE	Cost
Project Leader/Deputy Project Leader-GS 11/12	Oversight-review proposals Prepare SUP	0.04	\$2,493
Wildlife Biologist-GS-11	Review proposals, biological monitoring to ensure compatibility, report review	0.15	\$8,448
Admin. Support Asst-GS-06	Provide general administrative support including fund tracking	0.02	\$ 614
Maintenance Worker-WG-8	Maintain refuge boats & equipment used; monitor research activities	0.05	\$2,145
Total FTE and Costs		0.26	\$13,700

Additionally, \$2,500 would be required to obtain and/or replace materials/equipment (gas, video and still cameras, overflights, etc) needed to conduct biological monitoring to ensure compatibility of research projects. A minimal annual operating budget of \$16,200 is required.

Anticipated Impacts of Use: Consistent with the stipulations itemized below, minimal impact to Refuge wildlife and habitats will be expected with research studies. Some level of disturbance is expected with all research activities since most researchers will be entering areas that are

normally closed to the public and may be collecting samples or handling wildlife. Special Use Permit conditions will include special conditions to ensure that impacts to wildlife and habitats are kept to a minimum.

Public Review and Comment: This Compatibility Determination was distributed for public review and comment as an appendix to the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment for Flattery Rocks, Quillayute Needles, and Copalis National Wildlife Refuges.

Determination:

Use is not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations necessary to ensure compatibility: If the proposed research methods would impact or potentially impact refuge resources (habitat or wildlife), it must be demonstrated that the research is essential (i.e., critical to survival of a species; refuge islands provide only or critical habitat for a species; or assessment and/or restoration after cataclysmic events), and the researcher must identify the issues in advance of the impact. Highly intrusive or manipulative research is generally not permitted in order to protect native bird and marine mammal populations.

Potential researchers must submit a written study proposal with their request.

Anyone requesting to conduct research in wilderness (all islands except Destruction Island) must prepare a minimum requirement analysis consistent with FWS Policy and adhere to the requirements of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136).

Researchers are responsible for acquiring and/or renewing any necessary State and Federal permits prior to beginning or continuing their project.

Research that doesn't involve birds will be conducted outside of the breeding season of avian species using the refuge.

Research will adhere to current species protocols for data collection.

Approved research projects will be conducted under a refuge-issued special use permit which will have additional project-specific stipulations.

Special use permits will be valid for one year only. Renewals will be subject to refuge manager review of research data, status reports, compliance with compatibility determination and permit stipulations, and permits.

Refuge Manager can suspend/modify conditions/terminate on-refuge research that is already

permitted and in progress, should unacceptable impacts or issues arise or be noted.

Justification:

Research projects will contribute to the enhancement, protection, use, preservation, and management of native Refuge wildlife populations and their habitats. In view of the potential impacts research activities can have on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's ability to achieve Refuge purposes, sufficient restrictions would be placed on the researcher to ensure that disturbance is kept to a minimum. This program as described is determined to be compatible.

Mandatory Re-Evaluation Date :

_____ Mandatory 15-year Re-Evaluation Date (for priority public uses)

X Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date (for all uses other than priority public uses)

NEPA Compliance for Refuge Use Decision:

_____ Categorical Exclusion without Environmental Action Statement

_____ Categorical Exclusion and Environmental Action Statement

X Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

_____ Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

Refuge Determination

Project Leader

Approval:

(Signature)

(Date)

Concurrence

Refuge Supervisor:

(Signature)

(Date)

Regional Chief,
National Wildlife
Refuge System:

(Signature)

(Date)