

Sport Hunting
Decision Document Package
for
St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Contents

4. Compatibility Determination

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Introduction: The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) reviewed hunting for compatibility while developing the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) (2006), which included extensive public involvement. We also completed a Pre-Acquisition Compatibility Determination with the Land Protection Package for the Expansion of St. Marks NWR in 2011, which also included public involvement. This Compatibility Determination (CD) updates and replaces the existing hunting CD (2006) to continue waterfowl hunting, to continue big game and upland game hunting, to incorporate recently purchased acreage (500 acres) into sport hunting on the refuge and to add a youth spring turkey hunt to an area already open for youth white-tailed deer hunting (2,576 acres). The development of this CD is based upon the public involvement process that helped inform the development of the 2012 Sport Hunt Plan and Environmental Assessment.

Use: Sport Hunting

Refuge Name: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

County: Wakulla, Taylor, and Jefferson

Date Established: October 31, 1931

Establishing and Acquisition Authority:

Executive Order 5740 - established St. Marks Migratory Bird Refuge on October 31, 1931

Presidential Proclamation No. 1982 - established the Executive Closure Area on December 24, 1931

Executive Order 7222 - added acreage on November 1, 1935

Executive Order 7749 - added acreage on November 22, 1937

Presidential Proclamation No. 2264 - December 13, 1937 - expanded Executive Closure Area

Executive Order 7977 - added acreage on September 19, 1938

Presidential Proclamation No. 2416 July 25, 1940 - changed name to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Executive Order 9119 - added acreage on April 1, 1942

Secretary's Order - modified the Executive Closure Area on October 22, 1953

Secretary's Order - enlarged and established a new closure order boundary on October 15, 1960.

16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)

16 U.S.C. 461k-1 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962)

Refuge Purposes: These purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System are fundamental to determining the compatibility of proposed uses for St. Marks NWR. The purposes of St. Marks NWR are:

- "...as a refuge and breeding ground for wild animals and birds..." (Executive Order 5740);
- "...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." (Migratory Bird Conservation Act);
- "...suitable for (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreation development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species..." (Refuge Recreation Act);
- "...for "conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans" (National Wildlife System Administration Act); and
- as a Wilderness Area for "...certain lands in the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge, Florida which comprise approximately seventeen thousand seven hundred and forty-six acres...as the St. Marks Wilderness. (Public Law 92-363).

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: "The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is 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" (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended) [16 U.S.C. §668dd-668ee].

Other Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Policies:

Antiquities Act of 1906 (34 Stat. 225)

Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (15 U.S.C. 703-711; 40 Stat. 755)

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 (16 U.S.C. 715r; 45 Stat. 1222)

Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of 1934 (16 U.S.C. 718-178h; 48 Stat. 451)

Criminal Code Provisions of 1940 (18 U.S.C. 41)

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d; 54 Stat. 250)

Refuge Trespass Act of June 25, 1948 (18 U.S.C. 41; 62 Stat. 686)

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j; 70 Stat. 1119)

Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4; 76 Stat. 653)

Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131; 78 Stat. 890)

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470, et seq.; 80 Stat. 915)

National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd, 668ee; 80 Stat. 927)
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq; 83 Stat. 852)
Use of Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands (Executive Order 11644, as amended by Executive Order 10989)
Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq; 87 Stat. 884)
Refuge Revenue Sharing Act of 1935, as amended in 1978 (16 U.S.C. 715s; 92 Stat. 1319)
National Wildlife Refuge Regulations for the Most Recent Fiscal Year [50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Subchapter C; 43 CFR 3101.3-3]
Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (S.B. 740)
North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1990
Food Security Act (Farm Bill) of 1990 as amended (HR 2100)
The Property Clause of the U.S. Constitution Article IV 3, Clause 2
The Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 8
The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-57, USC668dd)
Executive Order 12996, Management and General Public Use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, March 25, 1996
Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 25-33
Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979
Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990

Description of Use:

Hunting at St. Marks NWR includes big game, upland game and waterfowl. Big game hunting at St. Marks NWR consists of refuge-sponsored hunts for deer, wild turkey and feral hogs on the Wakulla, Panacea and St. Marks units. Upland game hunting at St. Marks NWR consists of refuge-sponsored small game (e.g., gray squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, and hogs) hunts on the Wakulla, Panacea and St. Marks units. Waterfowl hunting at St. Marks NWR consists of refuge-sponsored hunts for waterfowl (e.g., ducks, coots, and geese) on Piney Island. Prior to the 2013-2014 hunt year, hunting was open on 70,000 acres of the refuge on the Wakulla, Panacea and St. Marks units (big game and upland game) and on Piney Island (waterfowl) within State bag limits and with limited seasons.

Waterfowl hunting would continue on Piney Island in the Panacea Unit in accord with the Hunt Plan and applicable regulations. Beginning in the 2013-2014 hunt year, the refuge would open approximately 500 acres to big game and upland game hunting in the St. Marks Unit, making the total acreage open to hunting on the refuge 70,500 acres, which is the entire refuge, and would expand hunting on a 2,576-acre tract in the Port Leon area of the St. Marks Unit that is already open to hunting. The 500 acres would be open to big game and upland game hunting for the species listed above concurrent with Flint Rock Wildlife Management Area, which is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission under State regulations. The 2,576 acres of the Port Leon area

of the St. Marks Unit would be opened to one youth spring turkey hunt (supporting approximately 5 hunting parties consisting of youth and licensed/permitted hunter safety certified adult).

Hunting on the Wakulla and Panacea units occurs as listed.(See Sport Hunting Plan Appendix 2 current Hunt area map).

- One 5-day archery hunt is conducted for white-tailed deer and feral hog in each unit on different dates, which are set before the season begins.
- One 3-day modern gun hunt is conducted for white-tailed deer and feral hog in each unit on different dates, which are set before the season begins.
- One approximately 2-week small game season is conducted for feral hog, gray squirrel, rabbit and raccoon concurrently in both units, the dates for which are set before the season begins.
- One 5-day spring turkey hunt is conducted in both units, the dates for which are set before the season begins.
- One 3-day mobility impaired hunter opportunity is conducted in one unit, the dates and unit for which are set before the season begins.
- Waterfowl hunting of ducks and coots occurs on Piney Island of the Panacea Unit concurrent with State and Federal Regulations.

Hunting on the St. Marks Unit occurs as listed.

- One youth deer hunt is conducted in the Port Leon area of the St. Marks Unit. This hunt is conducted in partnership with the Hunter Safety and Range Ranges Section of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The dates for this hunt are set before the season begins.
- A small game hunt is conducted in the portion of the St. Marks Unit east of the Aucilla River concurrently with the hunts in the Panacea and Wakulla units, the dates for which are set before the season begins.
- A youth spring turkey hunt would be conducted in the Port Leon area of the St. Marks Unit, the dates for which would be set before the season begins.

Hunting activities are permitted with a valid refuge hunt permit and appropriate state licenses. The refuge hunt program is an excellent wildlife management tool, which provides quality recreational opportunities for the public while regulating specific animal populations at desired levels. Overabundance of animals, such as hogs and white-tailed deer can have detrimental impacts to native habitats. In addition to recreational opportunities, hunting to control populations of feral hogs and deer will be beneficial to native species and habitats, and therefore will be considered compatible with refuge purposes. The refuge hunt plan was developed to ensure that associated public recreation and wildlife management objectives are met in a responsible and consistent manner.

Hunting can occur on any portion of the refuge; however, all or parts of the refuge may be closed to hunting at any time if necessary for public safety, to provide wildlife sanctuary, or for administrative reasons. All hunting seasons are established annually through coordination with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Bag limits are within the State's recommendations for the management of each

species. National Wildlife Refuge System properties will be restricted to waterfowl, white-tailed deer, raccoon, gray squirrel, Eastern cottontail rabbit, marsh rabbit, feral hog and turkey.

Hunters access the refuge on open roads, by boat, by foot, and bicycles and are limited to designated trails.

The majority of hunting opportunities in North Florida are on publically managed lands. Hunting opportunities on private land are virtually non-existent unless a person is willing and able to purchase hunting rights through hunting leases.

See the current hunt brochure for the applicable restrictions for hunting on St. Marks NWR.

Availability of Resources: The cost of administering the hunt program for fiscal year 2013 is estimated to be about \$47,900, of which only 20 percent is covered by fees collected from hunters. Refuge law enforcement, public use, administrative, managerial, and biological staff all allocate a portion of their time to this program. Maintenance of roads and building of check stations also are costs absorbed within the refuge operating budget. Thus, funds are available to sustain the hunt program.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Impacts of hunting on St. Marks NWR were most recently evaluated in the Environmental Assessment (2006) for the refuge's CCP. The impacts of adding 500 acres to the refuge's hunting program and adding a youth spring turkey hunt were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment for the 2012 Sport Hunt Plan on St. Marks NWR (for more detailed information regarding impacts, see the 2012 Environmental Assessment for the Sport Hunt Plan); parts of this analysis are summarized here. Significant impacts are not anticipated from the outlined hunting activities on the refuge; significant impacts are not anticipated to other users, public safety, habitat, cultural resources, refuge facilities, non-target species or target species.

Short-term impacts:

National wildlife refuges administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been open to hunting for decades. Hunting on St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge has occurred since 1978 with no noticeable impacts on the species hunted, including waterfowl, white-tailed deer, feral hogs and turkey. While managed hunting opportunities may result in localized disruption of individual animals' daily routines, including wounding and mortality of individuals, no noticeable effect on these populations has been documented. Further, hunting of deer helps to manage deer population health and limit the negative impacts to wildlife and habitat from over browsing. Hunting of feral hogs helps to reduce this detrimental species and limit negative wildlife and habitat impacts from foraging (e.g., habitat disturbance and associated erosion impacts), out competing native species for food and predating certain

species (e.g., small mammals, deer fawns, and eggs and young found in nests of ground nesting birds).

Long-term impacts:

To date, there is no indication of adverse biological impacts associated with the refuge's hunting program. However, should it become necessary, the refuge has the latitude to adjust hunting seasons and bag limits annually, or to close the refuge entirely if there are safety issues or other concerns that merit closure. This latitude, coupled with monitoring of wildlife populations and habitat conditions by the refuge and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, would ensure that long-term negative impacts to either wildlife populations and/or habitats on the refuge are unlikely.

Should hunting pressure increase on the refuge, alternatives such as reduction of number of hunters selected for quota hunts, a reduction in the number of days of hunting, or restrictions on that part of the refuge open to hunting could be utilized to limit impacts. These types of actions would help to ensure compatibility of hunting on the refuge.

Cumulative impacts:

Lands in the St. Marks NWR acquisition boundary that are not currently owned or managed under the refuge have traditionally been hunted as a part of the Florida Wildlife Management Area system. Deer, feral hog turkey and waterfowl hunting has been occurring on lands adjacent to the refuge and on the refuge for many years. The lands proposed to be opened to hunting have been hunted prior to coming into the National Wildlife Refuge System with more liberal seasons and bag limits than would be allowed on a refuge hunt. Hunting seasons for white-tailed deer, turkey, raccoon, gray squirrel, and rabbits are coordinated with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Populations of game species in the state have remained stable while being hunted under the State's guidelines. Therefore, hunting on St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge with a more restricted season and regulations should not have negative cumulative impacts on deer, turkey, raccoon, gray squirrel, and rabbit populations.

Since hogs are invasive, they are not a priority species in refuge management considerations. Feral hogs are considered a threat to the biological integrity of the refuge and reducing their numbers is a priority for refuge management. Cumulative negative impacts on hog populations are desired; however, because they are prolific breeders, it is likely the refuge will have a sustaining hog population in the future.

Significant cumulative impacts are not anticipated from hunting activities on St. Marks NWR.

Public Review and Comment: The St. Marks NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan process included extensive public involvement (please see the final CCP for more information about public involvement in the CCP). In August 2000, a series of six public

scoping meetings were held in the surrounding communities of Panacea, St. Marks, Perry, Monticello, Crawfordville and Tallahassee. More than 100 people attended these meetings to learn about the comprehensive conservation planning process, refuge management programs, refuge vision, and to provide input on the changes in public uses, visitor facilities, and programs they would like to see over the next 15 years. Also, as part of this public scoping process, a packet of information and a questionnaire were mailed to over 400 interested citizens, neighbors, organizations, public officials, and friends of the refuge in order to educate them about the planning process and to gauge their interests and concerns about the refuge. Responses were received from 5 organizations and 85 individuals. The public review and comment period for the Draft CCP/EA was from January – March 21, 2006; at least 56 persons attended the three public meetings held on the draft CCP/EA during March 2006. Thirty written comment letters were received by mail or email from 32 persons. Twenty-six written responses were from individuals and seven were from organizations. Notices of the plan's availability and public meeting were sent to over 500 persons on the St. Marks CCP mailing list, including six representatives of the following five tribes: The Miccosukee Tribe of Florida, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, Poarch Band of Creek Indians of Alabama, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma. No comments were received from the designated tribal liaisons. The plan was circulated through the Florida State Clearinghouse to 10 state, regional, and local governments.

Building on the management direction outlined in the refuge's CCP, the Service solicited public comment for the 2012 Sport Hunt Plan and associated Environmental Assessment. A 14-day review period began November 14 and ended on November 28, 2012. Copies of the document were placed in the local libraries and availability of the document was advertised in the local newspapers. The document was made available on the St. Marks Refuge website and the St. Marks Refuge Association website. The availability of the plan for comment was posted on the St. Marks and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge Facebook page and the St. Marks Refuge Association Facebook page. A total of 1 public comment was received on the Sport Hunt Plan, EA, and CD (see Appendix 4 in the Sport Hunt Plan for a summary). Based on the 2012 Sport Hunt Plan and Environmental Assessment and to ensure continued involvement of the public, this Compatibility Determination was also offered for public comment May 16 through May 23. Copies of the document were placed in the refuge office. The document was also made available on the St. Marks Refuge website (<http://www.fws.gov/saintmarks/>) and the St. Marks Refuge Association website (<http://www.stmarksrefuge.org/>). The availability of the plan for comment was posted on the St. Mark and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge Facebook page and the St. Marks Refuge Association Facebook page.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: Hunting will be in accordance with applicable state regulations and the refuge hunt plan. A refuge hunt brochure with a self-issuing permit will be produced each year to provide specific hunt information and restrictions. For all hunts except upland (small game), weapon restrictions are in accordance with State of Florida regulations. Vehicles are restricted to existing roads. Spring turkey hunting is restricted to a portion of the state season to minimize nest disturbance. All hunts will be designed to provide quality user opportunities based upon estimated wildlife population levels and biological parameters. Hunt season dates and bag limits will be adjusted as needed to achieve balanced population levels within carrying capacities, regardless of impacts to user opportunities. As additional data are collected and the Hunt Plan is revised, additional refuge-specific regulations could be implemented. These regulations could include, but may not be limited to, season dates that differ from those in surrounding state zones, refuge permit requirements, and closed areas on a permanent or seasonal basis to reduce disturbance to specific wildlife species or habitats, such as bird rookeries, wintering waterfowl, or threatened/endangered species, or to provide for public safety.

Refuge-specific regulations that would be added in advance of the 2013-2014 hunt year are listed.

Refuge-specific Hunting Regulations for St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

- A. Migratory Game Bird Hunting. We allow hunting of duck and coot on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:
 - 1. Hunters must remove blinds daily (see 27.93 of this chapter).
 - 2. We allow retriever dogs to recover game.
 - 3. We prohibit migratory game bird hunting in the Executive Closure Area on the refuge.
 - 4. Hunters may access the hunt area by boat.

- B. Upland Game Hunting. We allow hunting of gray squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, and feral hog in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:
 - 1. We require refuge permits for hunting upland game. Permits are available at no cost from the refuge office. Each hunter must possess and carry a signed permit while participating in a hunt.
 - 2. All visitors must wear 500 square inches (3,250 cm²) of fluorescent orange above the waistline while in a designated hunting unit during a refuge hunt.
 - 3. Hunters may use .22 caliber or smaller rim-fire rifles, shotguns, with nontoxic shot (#4 bird shot or smaller)(see 32.2(k)), or muzzleloaders to harvest squirrel, rabbit, and raccoon. In addition, shotgun slugs, buckshot, or archery equipment, or pistols may be used to take feral hogs. We prohibit the use of other weapons.
 - 4. Leashed dogs can be used for trailing injured or harvested game. Unleashed dogs are prohibited.
 - 5. There is no limit on the size or number of feral hogs that hunters may take.

6. We allow hunting on designated areas of the refuge. Contact the refuge office for specific dates.
 7. We prohibit hunting from any named or numbered road (with the exception of persons hunting during the mobility impaired hunt).
 8. We prohibit cleaning of game within 1,000 feet (390 m) of any residence, developed public recreation area, or game check station.
 9. All game harvested must be checked out at a game check station.
 10. We prohibit the use of flagging, paint, blazes, or reflective trail markers.
 11. Vehicle access is limited to permitted hunters during the hunts.
 12. Portions of the refuge adjacent to Flint Rock Wildlife Management Area (as specified in the hunt brochure) will be open concurrent with Flint Rock WMA seasons and regulations except only feral hog, gray squirrel, rabbit and raccoon may be harvested.
- C. Big Game Hunting. We allow hunting of white-tailed deer, feral hog, and turkey in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:
1. We require refuge permits. There is a fee for permits. Permits are non-transferrable. There is an additional fee for duplicate permits. Each hunter must possess and carry a signed permit when participating in a hunt. Prior to hunting each day, you must check in at a hunt check station as specified in the refuge hunt brochure. You must check out upon completion of hunting each day.
 2. Conditions B2, B4 through B11 apply.
 3. You may access the refuge hunt areas by vehicle for pre-hunt scouting 2 days prior to the hunt for which you are drawn. (lottery administered by the State)
 4. There is a two-deer limit per hunt as specified in C8 below. The limit for turkey is one per hunt. There is no limit on feral hog.
 5. We prohibit the use of deer decoys.
 6. There are two fall archery hunts: Hunters may harvest either-sex deer, feral hog, and either sex turkey during the fall archery hunts. There will be a fall archery hunt on the Panacea and Wakulla Units.
 7. There are two modern gun hunts. Hunters may harvest deer, feral hog, and bearded turkey. Modern guns must meet State requirements. We will hold one hunt on the Panacea Unit and one hunt on the Wakulla Unit. See condition C8 for game limits. Contact the refuge office for specific dates.
 8. The bag limit for white-tailed deer is two deer per scheduled hunt period. We allow hunters to harvest two antlerless deer per scheduled hunt period (we define antlerless deer un-antlered deer or deer with antlers less than 5"). Hunters may harvest one antlerless deer and one antlered deer per hunt. Hunters must ensure that antlered deer have at least 3 points, 1 inch (2.5 cm) or greater in length on one antler to be harvested. There is no limit on feral hogs.
 9. There is one youth hunt, for youth ages 12 to 17, on the St. Marks Unit in an area to be specified in the refuge hunt brochure. Hunters may harvest two deer, either two un-antlered deer as defined in C.8 or one un-antlered deer

and one antlered deer. An adult age 21 or older acting as a mentor must accompany each youth hunter. One youth turkey hunt will be conducted in a similar manner. The limit will be one gobbler per hunter.

10. Only the youth hunter may handle or discharge firearms. Contact the refuge office for specific dates.
11. There is one mobility-impaired hunt. Hunters may have an assistant accompany them. You may transfer permits issued to assistants. We limit those hunt teams to harvesting white-tailed deer and feral hogs within the limits described in condition C8. Contact the refuge office for specific dates
12. There is one spring gobbler turkey hunt. You may harvest one bearded turkey per hunt. You may only use shotguns or archery equipment to harvest turkey. Contact the refuge office for specific dates. We prohibit hunting after 1 p.m.
13. Portions of the refuge adjacent to Flint Rock Wildlife Management Area (as specified in the hunt brochure) will be open concurrent with Flint Rock WMA seasons and regulations except only white-tailed deer, feral hog and turkey may be harvested.

Refuge-specific hunting regulations are detailed and regularly updated in the Code of Federal Regulations (50 CFR part 32).

Justification: Hunting, a wildlife-dependent recreational activity, has been identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 as a priority public use, provided it is compatible with the purpose for which the refuge was established. As outlined, the Service determined that hunting at St. Marks NWR does not materially detract from or interfere with the fulfillment of the purposes of the refuge or the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Hunting activities at St. Marks NWR are not expected to adversely impact the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the refuge or the National Wildlife Refuge System. Hunting is an acceptable form of wildlife-dependent recreation compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established. National wildlife refuges are managed first and foremost for wildlife, with a focus on wildlife populations, not individuals. While hunting does cause mortality and wounding of individuals, it is regulated to ensure that the perpetuation of wildlife populations is not threatened. The effects of hunting are monitored across the states and across the nation; these effects are considered in the setting of annual bag limits.

Hunting at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge supports refuge management goals and objectives as outlined in the 2006 Comprehensive Conservation Plan, including goals 1 (Wildlife Habitat and Population Management), 3 (Migratory Birds), 4 (Visitor Services), 6 (Wilderness), and 7 (Refuge Administration).

While waterfowl hunting does occur on the refuge, the majority of the waterfowl habitat on the refuge is closed to waterfowl hunting, providing waterfowl with ample sanctuary; waterfowl hunting is considered compatible with refuge purposes.

Hunting of feral hogs and deer is beneficial to native species, including deer, and is therefore considered compatible with refuge purposes. The harvest of surplus animals is one tool used to maintain wildlife populations at a level compatible with wildlife and habitat management goals and objectives. Overabundance of animals, such as hogs and deer, can have detrimental impacts to native habitats and wildlife. In addition to recreational opportunities, hunting to control populations of feral hogs and deer will be beneficial to native species and habitats, and is therefore considered compatible with refuge purposes.

Turkey hunting is a wildlife-dependent activity; as outlined, turkey hunting at St. Marks NWR does not negatively impact the refuge's or area turkey populations. Turkey hunting is considered compatible with refuge purposes.

Small game (e.g., gray squirrel, Eastern cottontail rabbit, marsh rabbit, and raccoon) hunting is a wildlife-dependent activity. Studies examining the impacts of hunting on cottontail rabbit and gray squirrel have shown that their populations are not affected by hunting, but are limited by available food resources. Small game such as gray squirrel, Eastern cottontail rabbit, marsh rabbit, and raccoon are prolific breeders whose populations are not significantly impacted by hunting activities. Small game hunting is considered compatible with refuge purposes.

NEPA Compliance for Refuge Use Description:

- Categorical Exclusion without Environmental Action Statement
- Categorical Exclusion and Environmental Action Statement
- Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact
- Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

Mandatory 15-Year Re-evaluation Date: 05/23/2028

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Approval of Compatibility Determination

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