

Draft Compatibility Determination

Compatibility Determination for Target Shooting, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Use Category

Outdoor Recreation (General)

Refuge Use Type(s)

Target shooting

Refuge

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Purpose(s) and Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies)

“...for the preservation and enhancement of highly significant wildlife habitat...for the protection of migratory waterfowl and other wildlife, including species known to be threatened with extinction, and to provide an opportunity for wildlife-oriented recreation and nature study...” (86 Stat. 399, June 30, 1972)

“...particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program.” 16 U.S.C. 667b (An Act Authorizing the Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife, or other purposes)

“...to conserve (A) fish or wildlife which are listed as endangered species or threatened species....or (B) plants ...” 16 U.S.C. 1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)

“...for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources ...” 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) “...for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude ...” 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

“... 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 Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (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 (Pub. L. 105-57; 111 Stat. 1252).

Description of Use

Is this an existing use?

No.

What is the use?

We propose to allow target shooting when requested by groups. Target shooting on the Refuge would involve “shooting bows and arrows, crossbows, or other similar weapons at targets (not associated with hunting). Groups would need to have individuals trained in target shooting to safely lead the use. The purpose of this use is for teaching and practicing target shooting (including hunter safety training), not for hunting of wildlife.

The number of people participating in the activity would be appropriate with the size of the area such that crowding is not created. Likely no more than 12 people at one time.

Is the use a priority public use?

No

Where would the use be conducted?

Because the Refuge has no archery ranges, location can vary. This use would take place in designated areas as deemed appropriate by refuge staff. Generally, this will be away from high-foot traffic trails, observation decks, and other areas where people may congregate. This use would be generally conducted in developed, upland areas (generally ruderal lands) with good visibility, while following all safety precautions as designated by refuge staff. The use would not be allowed in or immediately adjacent to sensitive areas (e.g., habitat for special status species such as endangered plants and wildlife). We anticipate the use would take place in areas well below a half-acre.

When would the use be conducted?

This use is permitted only during refuge open hours only, during daylight hours. We expect each group request to be short in duration, from a few days to 1-2 weeks.

How would the use be conducted?

Participation will be limited to the use of bows and arrows. The anticipated maximum number of participants per session is twelve. Activities must be supervised by individuals with demonstrated expertise and certification in target shooting or hunter safety training, as determined by refuge staff.

Currently, the Refuge does not have designated archery ranges. All necessary equipment, including bows, targets, and associated materials, must be provided by the group. Any facilities or structures erected must be pre-approved by refuge staff and follow all safety rules. They must be temporary and removed upon completion of the activity.

A Special Use Permit is required. Temporary signage will be installed by refuge staff to inform visitors when the activity is taking place. Other recreational activities within the Refuge are expected to experience minimal disruption.

Why is this use being proposed or reevaluated?

The Refuge is considering target shooting due to requests from groups such as youth camps.

Availability of Resources

To comply with the Refuge Recreation Act (Public Law 87-714), the Project Leader must determine whether sufficient resources—financial, staffing, facilities, or other infrastructure—are available to support the proposed use without materially interfering with the refuge purpose(s) or the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. This determination should be informed by a review of current capacity and, where applicable, the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

Assessment of current resources and capacity

Table 1. Costs to Administer and Manage Target shooting

Category and Itemization	One-time Cost	Recurring Annual Expenses
Staff time (law enforcement, maintenance administration and	\$X,000	\$1,000

management) (1 week per year)		
Total one-time expenses	\$0	
Total recurring annual expenses		\$1,000
Offsetting revenues	-\$0	-\$0
Total expenses	\$0	\$1,000

Refuge staff are needed to administer activities such as preparation of the SUP, coordination with users prior to and during the activity, and overseeing the activity, maintenance preparation of the site beforehand, as well as to ensure that the stipulations are met, and to monitor and evaluate impacts of the refuge use. We estimate that these functions require two percent (or one week) of an FTE (made up of several refuge employee(s)). The Refuge expects to support 1-3 requests annually at an estimated recurring cost of \$1,000 of staff time.

Impacts of changes to resources and capacity

The availability of resources is subject to change and the level of use provided may vary based on current staffing, partner support, funding, or infrastructure conditions. Costs may increase over time, in relation to changes in the costs for equipment, maintaining facilities, etc. A substantial increase to the number of requests may also create the need for additional resources to administer the use. The Project Leader will use sound professional judgment in evaluating whether the refuge or its partners can develop, operate, and maintain the use in a compatible manner.

For other refuge uses, if resource conditions shift such that the refuge can no longer sustain the use in a compatible manner, the Project Leader may modify or suspend the use pursuant to 50 CFR 25.21 (or 50 CFR 36.42 for Alaska). The public will be notified of any changes to refuge uses, including temporary modification or suspension, re-evaluation of compatibility and/or discontinuing of refuge uses.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use

Potential impacts of a proposed use on the refuge's purpose(s) and the Refuge System mission

The effects and impacts of the proposed use to refuge resources, whether adverse or beneficial, are those that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship to the proposed use. This CD includes the written analyses of the environmental consequences on a resource only when the impacts on that resource could be more than negligible and therefore considered an “affected resource.”

Threatened and endangered species and other special status species; geology and soils; air quality; water quality; floodplains; wilderness; cultural resources; and socioeconomics will not be more than negligibly impacted by the action and have been dismissed from further analyses.

Short-term impacts

Wildlife, including upland bird species (e.g., finch and swallow species), and small mammals (e.g., ground squirrels) that use the upland areas of the Refuge could be temporarily flushed from roosting and foraging in the area due to the presence of people and associated noise from the activity. Individual animals may be disturbed by human contact to varying degrees. Human activities on the Refuge can result in direct effects on wildlife through harassment, a form of disturbance that can cause physiological effects, behavioral modifications, or death (Smith and Hunt 1995). Flushing from an area can cause birds to expend more energy, be deterred from using desirable habitat, affect resting or feeding patterns, and increase exposure to predation or cause birds to abandon sites with repeated disturbance (Smith and Hunt 1995).

Depending on the species, some birds may habituate to some types of disturbance, and either are not disturbed or will immediately return after the initial disturbance (Hockin et al. 1992; Burger et al. 1995; Knight and Temple 1995; Madsen 1995; Fox and Madsen 1997). Wildlife will be able to return to the area in the evening when activities are done.

Ruderal habitat not vital to special status species will be selected for the use. Nevertheless, participants could trample vegetation and spread invasive seeds from their shoes and clothing. These impacts are expected to be temporary in nature. Other Refuge uses such as wildlife observation and hiking might be briefly interrupted due to the increased noise and visitors, but participants should generally be able to carry on with their activities.

Additional time from refuge management and operations may be needed to prepare for the use in the form of vegetation management at the site where the use will occur. Administrative tasks such as coordinating with the group and preparing a Special Use Permit will add to refuge management and operation responsibilities.

Long-term impacts

No long-term impacts are expected from the use. Each event is only expected to last a few to several days. Adherence to the stipulations outlined in this document and conditions outlined in SUPs will ensure that long-term impacts do not occur.

Public Review and Comment

The draft compatibility determination will be available for public review and comment for 14 calendar days from July 8, 2026 to July 22, 2026. The public will be made aware

of this comment opportunity through social media, websites, and communication with potentially interested people such as adjacent landowners, states, and tribes, or other places/media outlets. A hard copy of this document will be posted at the Refuge Headquarters at 1 Marshlands Road, Fremont, CA 94555. It will be made available electronically on the refuge website <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/don-edwards-san-francisco-bay>. Please let us know if you need the documents in an alternative format. Concerns expressed during the public comment period will be addressed in the final determination.

Determination

Is the use compatible?

Choose an item.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility

1. The use must comply with NWRS-related regulations, including Prohibited Acts listed in 50 C.F.R § 27, and Public Entry Regulations in 50 C.F.R. § 26.
2. A Special Use Permit is required for this use.
3. Permittee(s), designated representatives, and associates shall comply with terms and conditions within the SUP as provided by the Refuge Manager or his/her designee. The SUP will provide terms and conditions to eliminate or reduce impacts to Refuge resources. Failure to adhere to SUP terms and conditions may result in discontinuation of the use, at the discretion of the Refuge Manager.
4. Refuge Manager or designee may supervise permittee activities. If adverse effects of the use are detected and cannot be eliminated or mitigated to protect refuge resources, the Service may discontinue the use.
5. Only archery equipment is permitted for this use, no firearms.

Justification

The stipulations outlined above would help ensure that the use is compatible at Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Target shooting, as outlined in this compatibility determination, would not conflict with the national policy to maintain the biological diversity, integrity, and environmental health of the refuge. Based on available science and best professional judgement, the Service has determined that the target shooting at Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, would not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purpose of the Refuge. Rather, appropriate and compatible target shooting would be a use of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay

National Wildlife Refuge through which the public can develop an appreciation for wildlife and wild lands.

Signature of Determination

Refuge Manager Signature and Date

Signature of Concurrence

Assistant Regional Director Signature and Date

Mandatory Reevaluation Date

July 2036

Literature Cited/References

Burger, J., M. Gochfeld, and L.J. Niles. 1995. Ecotourism and birds in coastal New Jersey: contrasting responses of birds, tourists, and managers. *Environmental Conservation*, 22(1), pp.56-65.

Fox, A.D. and J. Madsen. 1997. Behavioural and distributional effects of hunting disturbance on waterbirds in Europe: implications for refuge design. *Journal of applied ecology*, 34, pp.1-13.

Hockin, D., M. Ounsted, M. Gorman, D. Hill, V. Keller and M.A. Barker. 1992. Examination of the effects of disturbance on birds with reference to its importance in ecological assessments. *Journal of environmental management*, 36(4), pp.253-286.

Knight R.L. and S.A. Temple. 1995. Origin of wildlife responses to recreationists. In *Wildlife and recreationists: coexistence through management and research*. R.L. Knight and K.J. Gutzwiller, eds. Island Press, Washington, D.C., pp. 81-91.

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Smith, L. and J.D. Hunt. 1995. Nature tourism: impacts and management. In *Wildlife and recreationists: coexistence through management and research*, R.L. Knight and K.J. Gutzwiller, eds. Island Press, Washington, D.C., pp. 203-219.