

Draft Compatibility Determination

Title

Draft Compatibility Determination for Dog Walking on the Coquille Point Unit of Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Use Category

Outdoor Recreation (General)

Refuge Use Type(s)

Pets

Refuge

Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge

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

“ . . . for recreational purposes or for the creation of permanent reservations of such rocks or islands as have long been occupied by breeding waterfowl and other native birds.” (E.O. 4364, January 7, 1926)

“ . . . for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” (16 U.S.C. 715, Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929).

“ . . . as a refuge for the protection of sea lions” (E.O. 5702, September 1, 1931)

“ . . . as a refuge and breeding ground for wild birds and animals.” (E.O. 7035, May 6, 1935).

“ . . . for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources” (16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(5) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)).

“A wilderness. . . an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area. . . without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions” (Wilderness Act of 1964, PL 88-577).

“ . . . suitable for: incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development; protection of natural resources; conservation of endangered or threatened species; carrying out at least two of these purposes on lands adjacent to or within the conservation areas.” (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962/Recreational Use of Conservation Areas Act of 1962, as amended (16 USC 460k-1)).

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, otherwise known as 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?

Yes. This compatibility determination reviews and replaces the 2009 compatibility determination for dog walking which was prepared concurrently with the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CPP) for the Oregon Island, Three Arch Rocks, and Cape Meares National Wildlife Refuges (USFWS 2009).

What is the use?

Allowing people to walk dogs on a leash using the established paved interpretive trail at Coquille Point while engaging in one or more of the existing compatible wildlife-dependent public uses that include: wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation. Visitors walking their dogs on leash would be required to pick up after their dog(s) and remove all feces from the Refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

No

Where would the use be conducted?

The Coquille Point Unit, located within the city limits of Bandon, receives over 385,000 visitors a year and annual visitation grows. This is the only part of Oregon Islands NWR that is open to public use. Refuge facilities involved in this use include a half-mile self-guided, accessible, paved hiking trail; two sets of stairs that provide beach access; and a parking lot. Both sets of stairs provide access to the state-owned beach where dogs are allowed. Dogs would be required to remain on the paved trail and leashed while on refuge lands.

When would the use be conducted?

Leashed dogs (pets) on the designated trail would be allowed concurrent with other public use on a year-round basis during daylight hours.

How would the use be conducted?

Visitors would be required to leash their dog(s) and pick up after their dog(s),

removing all feces from the Refuge. The Refuge Complex, in cooperation with the City of Bandon, would maintain existing leash and “pick up after your dog” signs (city and federal ordinances) at the entry to the trail, and would enforce these regulations through warnings and ticketing by refuge law enforcement or City of Bandon officers. Dog walking and its potential impacts would be monitored by refuge staff and volunteers to ensure it does not interfere with compatible, wildlife-dependent uses or impact wildlife.

Why is this use being proposed or reevaluated?

Prior to and since USFWS acquisition of the property, dog walking has been, and continues to be, a popular use of the Coquille Point interpretive trail, often occurring in conjunction with wildlife-dependent public uses. As an activity that occurred on the site prior to refuge acquisition, dog walking is considered a historical use at Coquille Point and is also an allowable use on adjacent Oregon Parks & Recreation Department lands that are accessed through the refuge’s parking and trail facilities. The Code of Federal Regulations states that no dog shall be permitted to roam at large on refuge lands (50 CFR 26.21(b)). The City of Bandon municipal codes require dogs to be under complete control by an adequate leash within the corporate limits of the city (City of Bandon Municipal Code 6.12.030). In addition, no person owning or in charge of any dog shall allow the dog to soil, defile, or defecate on public sidewalks or paths within the City and they are required to immediately remove and dispose of all feces deposited by the dog in a sanitary manner (City of Bandon Municipal Code 6.12.040).

The Coquille Point Unit is the only unit of Oregon Islands NWR with a specific on-site public use purpose. Initially the unit served to protect headland and beach access, and it now serves as a buffer from human activities that would disturb wildlife. The public comes to Coquille Point with several objectives: (1) to view wildlife; (2) to walk their dogs while enjoying the open wildlands and wildlife on the paved interpretive trail; and (3) to access the beach using the refuge stairs. To support the purposes for acquiring Coquille Point, the Refuge Complex invested in the development of public use facilities at this site. Native plant restoration has occurred on the headland, but the site receives consistent and frequent visitor use, rendering the overall value of the open space to wildlife as low. By drawing the public to these onsite interpretive facilities, the site serves the wildlife-dependent public use needs and functions effectively as a buffer zone, keeping people and pets away from sensitive wildlife and seabird habitat on adjacent offshore rocks and islands.

Dog walking at Oregon Islands NWR Coquille Point Unit was previously found to be compatible (USFWS 2009). Dog walking is being re-evaluated due to the 10-year renewal period ending (603 FW 2.11 H.).

Availability of Resources

The analysis of cost for administering and managing each use will only include the incremental increase above general operational costs that we can show as being directly caused by the proposed use. The following funding/annual costs would be required to administer and manage dog walking as described above.

Table 1. Costs to Administer and Manage Dog Walking

Category and Itemization	One-time Cost	Recurring Annual Expenses (\$/year)
Installation and Maintenance of Pet Waste Removal Stations	\$2,000	\$650
Installation and Maintenance of Leash Law Signs	\$750	\$200
Clean-up after Non-compliant Pet Walkers' Pets	unknown	unknown
Law Enforcement (\$320/day x 13 days/year)	N/A	\$4,160
Monitoring & Administration (\$320/day x 13 days/year)	N/A	\$4,160
Total one-time expenses	\$2,750	
Total recurring annual expenses		\$8,970
Total expenses	\$11,720	

Anticipated Impacts of the Use

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.” Soils,

Air, water, cultural resources, and socioeconomic resources will not be more than negligibly impacted by the action and have been dismissed from further analyses.

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

Potential impacts from dog-walking include pet/wildlife disturbance, disease from excrement, and conflicts with other users/dogs. Migratory birds, native birds, and wildlife may be impacted by the presence of dogs and people. This presence may cause disturbance to native species and their habitat potentially causing behavioral changes, mortality, or habitat alteration. These impacts can be contained most effectively, mitigating the overall effect on refuge wildlife and on visitors engaged in wildlife-dependent uses, by ensuring that dogs are always on leash and remain on the paved interpretive trail and within the areas designated for public use and that adequate pet waste disposal stations and bags are made available. Although the City of Bandon municipal codes and refuge regulations require dogs to be under complete control by an adequate leash within the corporate limits of the city (City of Bandon Municipal Code 6.12.030), dogs are occasionally documented as unleashed at the site. Dog walking and any potential impacts from this public use will continue to be monitored by refuge law enforcement and managers to ensure it does not interfere or have any negative impacts to compatible, wildlife-dependent uses or wildlife resources.

The relatively low wildlife value and sparse vegetative cover surrounding the interpretive trail at Coquille Point harbor very little wildlife which indicates that disturbance to wildlife from dogs on leash is likely to be low. Coquille Point Unit's primary purposes as a buffer area for the offshore wildlife habitat and as a wildlife-dependent public use site would not be substantially impacted by leashed dogs using the interpretive trail, parking lot, and beach access stairs.

Short-term impacts

Short term impacts of dog-walking may include the presence of trash related to collection of feces. It is common that trash bags with feces are left behind after owners leave the refuge. To mitigate this impact, the refuge has placed dog feces collection bags and trash bins near the paved trail. Volunteers, staff and members of the public pick trash up on the refuge frequently and are generally able to mitigate any long-term impacts from this littering.

The presence of dogs on the upland portions of the Coquille Point refuge may temporarily impact roosting shorebirds. Shorebirds have been documented regularly roosting in the grassy areas at Coquille Point during high tide at spring and fall migration. Though the birds use the interior of the trails, in most cases observations suggest they are undisturbed by dog-walkers whose dogs are on a short leash.

Temporary disturbance like barking or dogs that are off leash may cause these roosting birds to flush.

The presence of dogs could temporarily impact other users' enjoyment of the refuge if dogs are not kept under control, if excessive barking disrupts natural noises of the coastal environment, or if conflicts between dogs or visitors occurs. These impacts would be short term and should not result in measurable harm to wildlife or to meeting the purposes of the refuge.

Long-term impacts

The presence of dogs in a natural area can have impacts on wildlife, people and habitat. Impacts to wildlife begins with displacement. The presence of dogs causes wildlife using areas along the trails to move away, temporarily, or permanently, reducing the amount of available habitat in which to feed and rest. Disturbance and stress are also impacts that dogs can have on wildlife. The scent of dogs may repel wildlife, and some may become less active during the day as a result (Hennings 2016). Some wildlife species are alarmed by the presence of dogs and halt routine activities of feeding or resting; some wildlife avoid areas with dogs altogether. The presence of dogs may flush incubating birds from nests (Yalden and Yalden 1990), disrupt breeding displays (Baydack 1986), disrupt foraging activity in shorebirds (Hoopes 1993), and disturb roosting activity in ducks (Keller 1991). The greatest stress reaction in wildlife results from the unanticipated disturbance of an unleashed or barking dog. Animals show greater flight response to unpredictable movement as opposed to those following a distinct path (Gabrielsen and Smith 1995). Off leash dogs that are running or chasing toys may cause wildlife to flee. Fleeing a perceived predator increases the amount of energy wildlife use while also reducing the time spent foraging. Repeated stress can lead to long-term impacts on wildlife including reduced reproduction and growth, suppressed immune system and increased vulnerability to disease and parasites. Finally, there are indirect and direct mortality impacts from dogs through transmission of disease. Dogs can host endo- and ecto-parasites and can contract diseases from or transmit diseases to wild animals. In addition, dog waste is known to transmit diseases that may threaten the health of some wildlife and other domesticated animals. Domestic dogs potentially can introduce various diseases and transport parasites into wildlife habitats (Sime 1999).

The presence of dogs can also impact people and their enjoyment of the refuge. Because Coquille Point is a popular location to walk dogs, some members of the public who are afraid of dogs may avoid using the interpretive trail all together. Allowing dogs to be walked on the refuge may discourage some visitors though we believe this impact to be minimal.

Repeated dog urination and feces impacts vegetation and can change soil chemistry. The scent of dogs and dog urine can remain long after dogs are gone, leaving

additional long-term impacts. The primary long-term impact associated with this use is that the site would likely never be able to host significant wildlife due to the constant presence of dogs; however, as the purpose of the unit is to serve as a buffer for sensitive wildlife habitat and give the public a location from which to view wildlife at a distance, this long-term impact to the purposes of the refuge is negligible.

While some wildlife is certainly present on the mainland at Coquille Point, it does not provide high value habitat to any known species and there is relatively low concern regarding these potential long-term impacts.

Public Review and Comment

The draft compatibility determination will be available for public review and comment for 14 days. The public will be made aware of this comment opportunity through our social media outlets and letters to potentially interested people such as neighbors and partner agencies. A hard copy of this document will be posted at the Refuge Headquarters (2127 SE Marine Science Drive, Newport, OR, 97365-5258). It will be made available electronically on the refuge website:

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/oregon-islands>.

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 Compatibility Determination.

Determination

Is the use compatible?

Yes

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility

1. Dogs will be required to stay on the interpretive trail, stairways and parking lot.
2. Use is restricted to daylight hours only.
3. Dogs must be kept on a leash (8 feet or less) and always under the control of their owner.
4. Visitors will be required to pick up and dispose of their dog(s)' feces in a sanitary manner.
5. A regulatory sign will be maintained to help keep visitors on the trail and inform them on regulations concerning dogs.
6. The Refuge Complex maintains a pet waste removal station along the interpretive trail and keeps it stocked with the necessary equipment to facilitate its use, including a trash can.

7. Monitor condition of facilities and schedule repairs and maintenance as needed to maintain universal accessibility.

Justification

The stipulations outlined above would help ensure that the use is compatible at Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Dog walking, 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 dog walking at Oregon Islands 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 Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Rather, appropriate and compatible dog walking contribute to the Refuges purpose by providing opportunities for the public to develop an appreciation for wildlife and wild lands through uses such as wildlife observation.

Signature of Determination

Refuge Manager Signature and Date

Signature of Concurrence

Assistant Regional Director Signature and Date

Mandatory Reevaluation Date

2033

Literature Cited/References

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