

# Draft Compatibility Determination

## Title

Draft Compatibility Determination for Camping, Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

## Refuge Use Category

Outdoor Recreation (General)

## Refuge Use Type(s)

Camping

## Refuge

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

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

The Refuge was originally established to preserve an important wintering and foraging habitat for migratory waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway with refuges purposes are:

“... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife ...”  
(Executive Order 7541, Willapa Harbor Migratory Bird Refuge, dated January 22, 1937)

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

“... suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species ...” (16 U.S.C. 460k-1, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, as amended)

“...for the development, advancement, management, conservation and protection of fish and wildlife resources...for the benefit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services...” (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, as amended [16 U.S.C. 742a-742j, not including 742d-1])

Additional clarification on the intent of Refuge management can be found in the following documents, Migratory Bird Conservation Commission Memorandum 16, Long Island Land Exchange, and Willapa Addition Environmental Assessment/Land Protection Plan and Conceptual Management Plan.

## 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 2011 compatibility determination for camping which was prepared concurrently with the CCP for Willapa National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS 2011).

What is the use?

Overnight camping and associated facilities

Is the use a priority public use?

No

Where would the use be conducted?

Camping would continue to occur at Long Island, located in the southern half of Willapa Bay within Pacific County, Washington (Figure 1). Long Island is composed of Sitka spruce forested habitats and estuarine tidal and intertidal wetlands. Under this proposal, camping would be allowed consistent with existing refuge-specific regulations. To accommodate this use, the Refuge has five campgrounds on Long Island (three on the west side of the island and two on the east side of the island). Lewis Campground has two campsites, Sawlog Campground has six campsites, Pinnacle Rock Campground has five campsites, Smoky Hollow Campground has four campsites, and Sand Spit Campground has three campsites.

When would the use be conducted?

Year-round

How would the use be conducted?

Camping on Long Island would continue to be limited to 20 designated campsites on a first-come, first-served basis. The only time registration will be required is for the week prior to and during the early elk hunt season. No more than five people are allowed per campsite, and maximum stay is 14 days to minimize the impacts on refuge resources. Access to Long Island is by boat, canoe, or kayak only. Willapa Bay is tidally influenced, which further limits access to the island. Because of the limited access to Long Island, almost all recreational camping is associated with other wildlife-dependent activities (hunting, shellfish harvest, wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education).

## Why is this use being proposed or reevaluated?

Camping on Long Island helps to facilitate and support other priority wildlife-dependent activities because of the limited access to the island. Maintaining a camping program is important for public safety due to the impacts of tides on island access.

Camping at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge was previously determined to be compatible (USFWS 2011). Camping is being reevaluated due to the 10-year renewal period ending (603 FW 2.11 H.).

## Availability of Resources

The continuation of camping would not require any new infrastructure or personnel. Base funding is available to cover these costs. Refuge staff would be required to occasionally monitor camping activities; maintain campsites, fire pits, picnic tables, signs, and vault toilets; and remove fallen or hazardous trees. Because the number of campers is limited, no additional personnel resources are anticipated and the impact on the existing staff should be limited to a few hours per week. It is expected that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife law enforcement personnel would assist with any enforcement related issues.

Maps, printed regulations, and other printed materials would be required to administer the camping program. Printing is anticipated to cost approximately \$500 annually. Signs designating campgrounds and campsites may need to be replaced on occasion.

**Table 1. Costs to Administer and Manage Camping at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge**

Category and Itemization	One-time Cost	Recurring Annual Expenses
Develop Plan/NEPA document/opening package	\$1,000	--
Develop signage and brochures	--	\$500
Staff time (LE, administration and management)	--	\$3,000
Maintenance	--	\$3,000
<b>Total one-time expenses</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	
<b>Total recurring annual expenses</b>		<b>\$6,500</b>

## **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, wilderness, 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**

Camping has the potential to affect the Refuge’s ability to meet its purpose of providing “refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife ...” and the management of the Refuge for migratory birds. Camping, by its nature, can cause disturbance to wildlife, which typically results in a temporary displacement of individuals. There would be some temporary displacement of waterfowl and waterbirds within the bay from both motorized and non-motorized watercraft used to access camp sites. However, displaced birds have easy access over short distances to other areas of the bay that are closed to public use.

Camping allows Refuge visitors to engage in priority wildlife dependent recreation opportunities such as wildlife observation and photography on Long Island. Without camping visitors would not be able to safely access these opportunities on Long Island. Therefore, camping would contribute towards meeting the Refuge purpose of “wildlife-oriented recreational development” and the Refuge System mission.

### **Short-term impacts**

Camping would likely result in limited and temporary displacement of eagles, elk, deer, bear, and other wildlife in the immediate vicinity of the campsites/campgrounds from the activities and movements of the campers themselves. People and gear can also be vectors of invasive plants potentially leading to spread of invasive species onto and throughout the Refuge.

Due to the low number of expected visitors and limited access to the campsites these impacts are expected to be minimal and temporary.

### **Long-term impacts**

Camping results in some vegetation trampling, soil compaction, and localized denuding of vegetation at campsites and where people congregate. Enforcement is

expected to decrease unauthorized camping outside of designated campsites. Campers may have campfires, which are restricted to designated campfire rings. There is the potential for an increase in wildland fire activity if campers are careless with the fires they ignite.

## **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 recreationists and partner agencies. A hard copy of this document will be posted at the Refuge Headquarters (7112 67<sup>th</sup> Place, Long Beach, Washington 98631). It will be made available electronically on the refuge website: [www.fws.gov/refuge/willapa/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/willapa/). 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**

To ensure compatibility and minimize impacts to refuge resources:

1. Camping is allowed in designated campsites only.
2. There are five primitive campgrounds with a total of 20 campsites on Long Island.
3. A maximum of five people are allowed per campsite for up to 14 consecutive days.
4. Fires are allowed only in designated campfire rings located in each campsite to reduce potential wildland fires.
5. Only downed wood is allowed to be used for fires.
6. All camping equipment, supplies, and other materials brought to campsites (including trash and garbage) will be packed out of the campsites by the user.
7. Law enforcement patrols will be conducted by refuge officers to ensure compliance with refuge regulations.
8. No powered tools and/or equipment are allowed on the island (this includes chainsaws, generators, etc.).

9. No dogs are allowed on the Long Island Unit of the Refuge.

### **Justification**

Because tides limit the timing and safety for accessing Long Island for those intending to engage in wildlife-dependent recreation, safe and adequate access cannot be ensured without providing camping opportunities on-site. Thus, campsites are offered for visitors engaging in one or more of the priority wildlife-dependent uses that all refuges are encouraged to facilitate, where compatible. The stipulations outlined above would help ensure that the use is compatible at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. Camping, 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 camping at Willapa 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 Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. Rather, appropriate and compatible camping contribute to the Refuges purpose by providing valuable recreational opportunities.

## **Signature of Determination**

Refuge Manager Signature and Date

## **Signature of Concurrence**

Assistant Regional Director Signature and Date

## **Mandatory Reevaluation Date**

2032

## **Literature Cited/References**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2011. Willapa National Wildlife Refuge: Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.  
<https://ecos.fws.gov/ServCat/DownloadFile/165919>

# Figure 1



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Willapa National Wildlife Refuge**  
Pacific County, Washington

**Campgrounds at Long Island**



0 1.25 2.5 5 Kilometers

0 1 2 4 Mile

