INTRA-SERVICE SECTION 7 BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FORM

Originating Person: Monica Williams
Telephone Number: 631-286-0485, ext. 2154
Date: December 18, 2019

I. Region: North Atlantic–Appalachian Interior Region 1

II. Service Activity (Program): NWRS, Long Island NWR Complex

III. Pertinent Species and Habitat

A. Listed species potentially present within the action area:

1) Roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii*)

2) Sandplain gerardia (*Agalinis acuta*)

3) Piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*)

4) Red knot (*Calidris canutus*)

5) Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

B. Proposed species and/or proposed critical habitat within the action area:

None

C. Candidate species within the action area:

None

IV. Geographical area or station name and action:

Seatuck NWR and Wertheim NWR recreational hunting plans.

V. Location:

A. **Ecoregion Number and Name:** The North Atlantic Coastal Ecoregion

B. **County and State:** Seatuck NWR is located in Islip NY, Suffolk County. Wertheim NWR is located in Shirley NY, Suffolk County.

C. **Section township and range (or latitude and longitutde):** Seatuck NWR is located at 40.717573, -73.207033. Wertheim NWR is located at 40.717573, -73.207033.

D. **The Refuge headquarters is located at:** The Long Island NWR Complex headquarters are located at Wertheim NWR.

E. **Distance (miles) and direction to nearest town:** Seatuck NWR is located within the Town of Islip. Wertheim NWR is located within the Town of Brookhaven.

F. **Species/habitat occurrence:**

1) Roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii*)

2) Sandplain gerardia (*Agalinis acuta*)

3) Piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*)

4) Red knot (*Calidris canutus*)

5) Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

VI. Description of Proposed Action:

The proposed action is to implement hunting plans for Seatuck NWR and Wertheim NWR in Suffolk County, New York during the 2020/2021 New York State hunting seasons. Seatuck NWR proposes to open for the first time to public deer hunting. The refuge is 209 acres, which includes approximately 100 acres of upland habitat (warm-season grasslands, old fields, shrublands, and forest) available for deer hunting. The refuge will be open for hunting during the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) archery season, October through January. To avoid potential impacts to northern long-eared bats on the refuge, we plan to start deer hunting on November 1. Hunting will be allowed on the refuge intermittently for up to 90 days. The use of portable tree stands and ground blinds will be permitted for hunting at Seatuck NWR.

Wertheim NWR proposes to expand the existing deer hunt program. The refuge is 2,688 acres, which includes 1,390 acres of white-tailed deer habitat (forest, shrublands, herbaceous old fields/grasslands, marsh, and open water). We propose to expand the current archery hunt from 7 days up to 90 days during the NYSDEC archery season, October through January. Hunting on the refuge will occur intermittently during 1-week sessions throughout the season. The use of portable tree stands and ground blinds will be permitted for hunting on the refuge.

Wertheim also proposes to open for turkey hunting. The fall turkey season is the last 2 weeks of November and spring turkey hunting is one 2-day weekend hunt in April, with a focus on youth hunters. Approximately 773 acres of upland habitat (forest, shrublands, and herbaceous old fields/grasslands) is available for turkey hunting on the refuge. These new hunting activities will go into effect during the 2020/2021 season.

VII. Determination of effects:

A. Explanation of effects on species in item III:

The hunting areas consist of habitats that is also used by northern long-eared bat. Bats may still be present on the refuges when the deer hunt archery season starts in October, but the remaining majority of the hunting season occurs after bats have left the refuge for their winter hibernaculum. Bats may also start to arrive on Long Island prior to the spring turkey season in April. Hunter tree stands may disturb bat roost sites.

Seatuck NWR: Roseate tern, red knot, and piping plover may use refuge beach and salt marsh habitats, but are uncommon. They are not consistently present and not observed in large numbers. Seatuck NWR was a potential transplant site for sandplain gerardia, because of its soil type and associated grassland plants. However, the transplant in 2001 was not successful in establishing a sandplain gerardia population at Seatuck NWR.

Wertheim NWR: Roseate tern and red knot may be present, but are uncommon and rarely observed on the refuge.

Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*; MYSE) have been documented at both refuges using acoustic detectors. Acoustic monitoring was conducted from 2012 to 2017 at Seatuck NWR (Figure 1) and Wertheim NWR (Figure 2). Auto-analysis of acoustic data conducted indicate MYSE presence at Seatuck NWR and Wertheim NWR. MYSE presence was also confirmed at Wertheim NWR through mist netting in 2012, 2015, and 2016. In 2016, radio telemetry was used to locate a maternity roost at Wertheim.

B. Explanation of actions to be implemented to reduce adverse effects:

The general timeline for bat hibernation is November 1 to March 31. Therefore, the refuge can permit deer hunting November 1 to January 31 to reduce impacts to MYSE. In addition, due to the short duration of the 2-day spring turkey hunt at Wertheim NWR in April, disturbance to MYSE is likely to occur on a rare basis.

As previously mentioned, roseate tern, piping plover, and red knot are not consistently present on the refuges and are not observed in large numbers. In addition, we do not expect any impacts to these species when hunting occurs since they generally migrate to the southeast coast, Gulf Coast, Central and South America. Hunting also primarily occurs in upland habitats where these species are not present.

Sandplain gerardia has not been found at Seatuck NWR since the unsuccessful transplant in 2001.

VI. Effect determination and response requested:

A. Listed species/ critical habitats:

Determination | Response requested

No Effect

Piping Plover, Red Knot, Roseate Tern, Sandplain Gerardia **Concurrence X**

Is Not Likely to Adversely Effect:

Northern long-eared bat **Concurrence X**

Is Likely to Adversely Effect:

Species:_____ Concurrence_____

B. Proposed species/ critical habitats:

Determination | Response requested

No Effect

Species:_____ Concurrence_____

Is Not Likely to Adversely Effect:

Species: NLEB Concurrence ✓

Is Likely to Adversely [jeopardize/modify habitat] Effect:

Species:_____ Concurrence_____

VII. Reviewing ESO Evaluation:

A. Concurrence ✓ Nonconcurrence_____

B. Formal Consultation Required_____

C. Conference Required_____

D. Remarks [Attach additional pages as needed]:

[signature] / USFO 1/17/2020

Signature [Title/Office of ESO Field Supervisor] Date

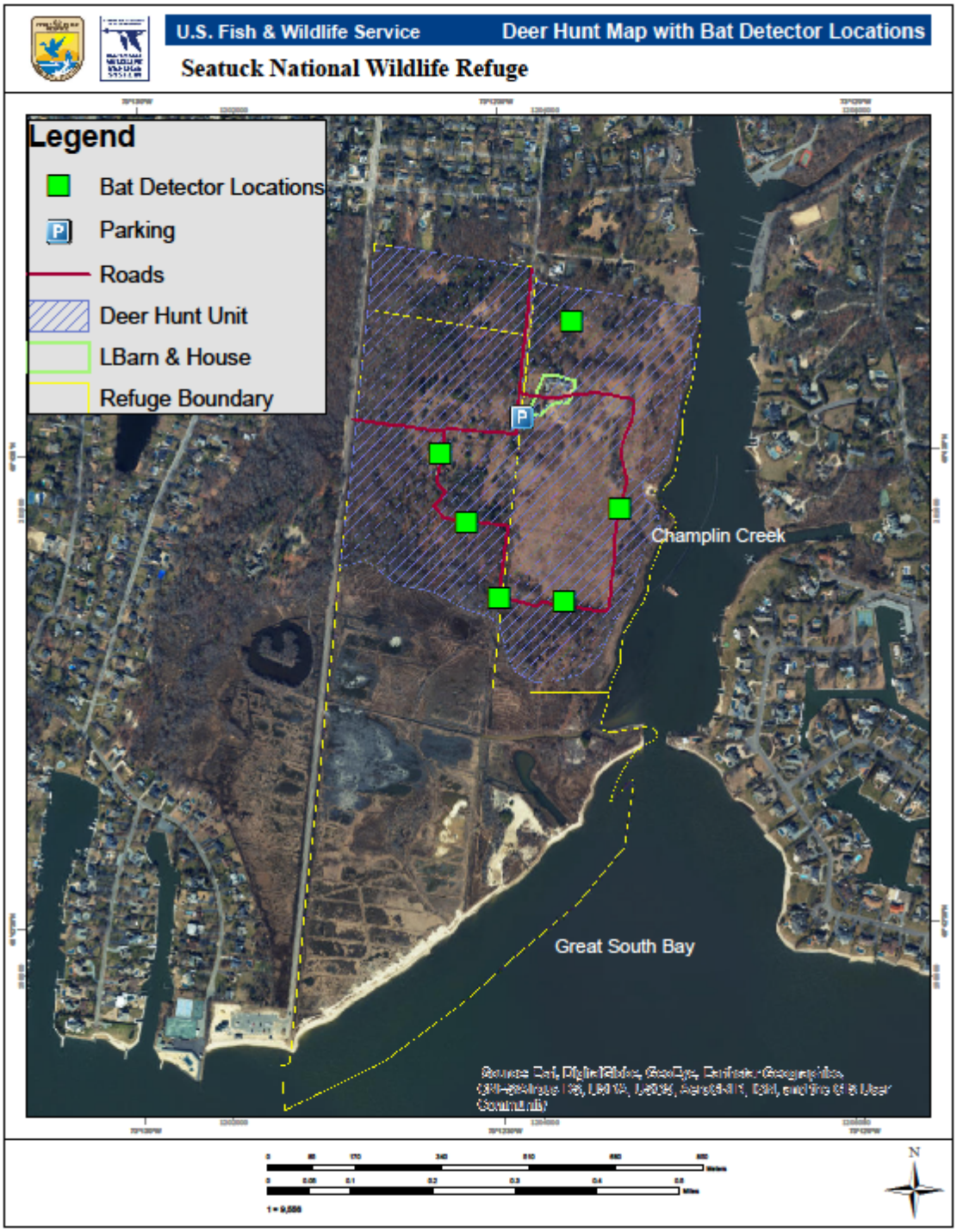

Figure 1C. Bat Study Locations at Seatuck NWR

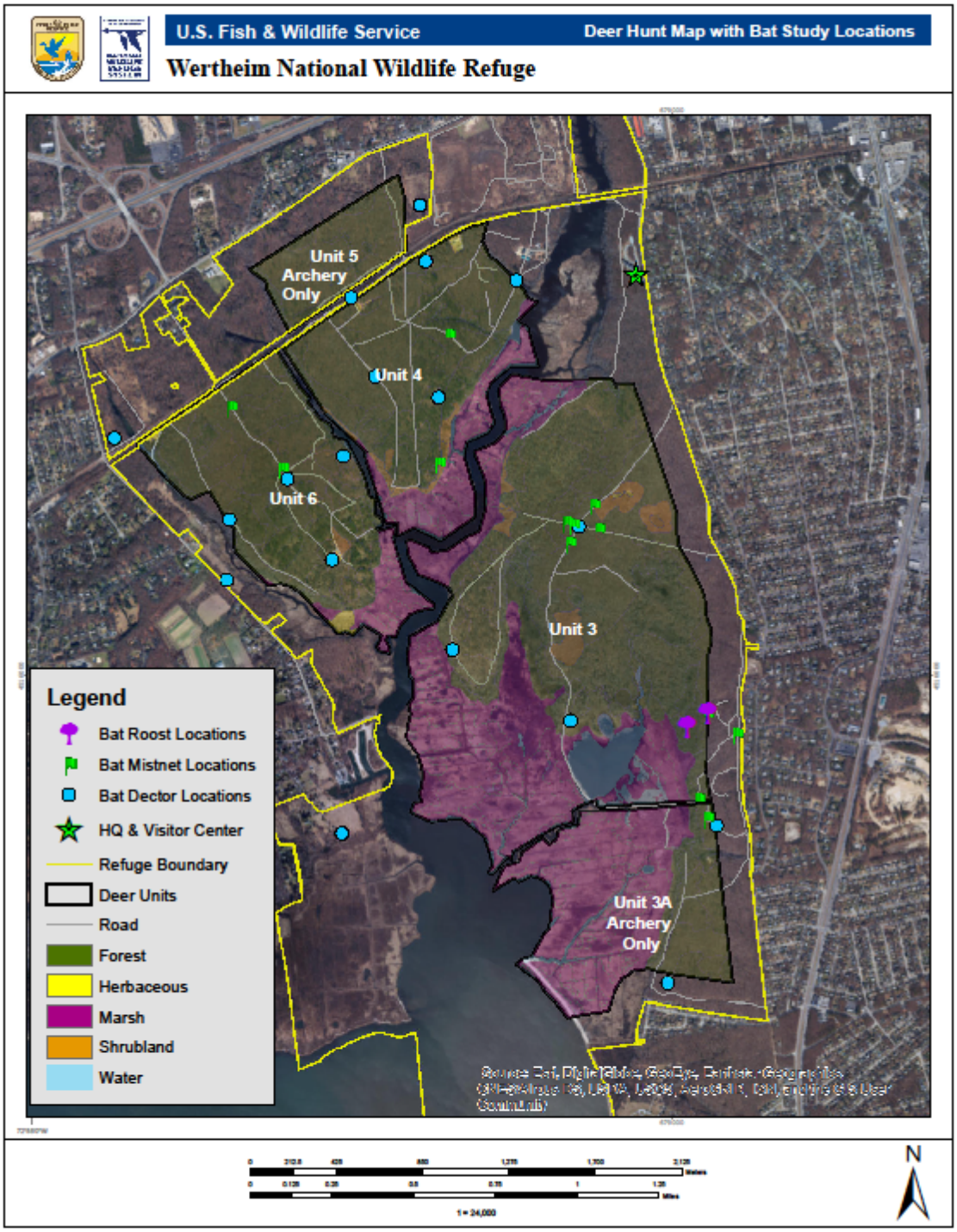

Figure 2C. Bat Study Locations at Wertheim NWR